

The Gnatcatcher

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

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as a benefit for members of the

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



www.JVAS.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by John Carter

Dear JVAS Community,

Happy New Year to you and your family!

At the end of each calendar year, I take time to reflect on how the birding world enriched my life and how I was able to give back to the birds. As many of us do, we participate in citizen science initiatives and programs such as the JVAS Earth Week Birding Classic, Shaver's Creek Birding Cup, Christmas Bird Counts, The Great Backyard Bird Count, attend Hawk Watches, or just create lists of the variety of bird species that we have seen or heard for the first time, or maybe for the thousandth time. Either way we are fascinated by our feathered creatures.

Thinking back on 2021, a sequence of bird watching events I would love to share with you all happened during mid-April, a time in which migration is increasing and a great opportunity to observe vagrant birds. For three consecutive days I was privileged to see and appreciate three new lifetime Pennsylvania birds. Spotting a rare vagrant is an unanticipated delight so when this occurred, I was beyond ecstatic.

*4/12/21: I made a trip to Lycoming Co. to visit the Williamsport Dam in which the first PA state record **Neotropic Cormorant** (NECO) was discovered the day before. It was a dreary day, but seeing this bird perched next to the more common Double-crested Cormorant of our area, was a treasure and a wonderful learning experience to see the differences. The NECO is typically found on waters of southern U.S. states, the Caribbean, and Latin America.*

*4/13/21: After work on this day, I did not have to contemplate at all after receiving a notification about a species I have only observed in North Carolina, an **American White Pelican** (AWPE). I arrived at the beautiful Shawnee State Park, Bedford Co. and was greeted by a thick orange billed all-white Pelican drifting on the lake. One thing I learned about this species from reading in a field guide is that groups of AWPE will work together in order to herd fish into shallow waters for easy feeding.*

*4/14/21: Could lightning strike a 3rd time, you betcha! At a residential backyard in State College, Centre Co., of all places, I was able to enjoy alongside many other local birders the 4th Co. record of a **King Rail**. This was my #295th lifetime PA bird species, and I enjoyed watching as it was consuming earthworms in the yard. The King Rail numbers have declined 90% in the last half-century, placing it as a species of high concern in the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan.*

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, continued

Juniata Valley Audubon Society (JVAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society and is dedicated to the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity.

Juniata Valley Audubon accomplishes its mission through advocacy, science, land stewardship, and education – working directly with Audubon Mid-Atlantic, the district office of the National Audubon Society.

The JVAS is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit, educational organization as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Gifts are deductible for income tax purposes (Tax ID # 25-1533496).

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Neotropic Cormorant
Lycoming County

-photo by John Carter



White Pelican
Bedford County

-photo by John Carter



King Rail
Centre County

-photo by John Carter

I want to thank each of you for your continued efforts supporting the birds and environment that we adore. Our mission cannot be accomplished without your help and dedication for conservation and restoration of our natural ecosystems.

I am also extremely grateful to work with amazing JVAS board members, who volunteer their own time to help with planning for new initiatives, programs, field trips, conservation, and financial efforts and much more. Thank you, Laura and Mike Jackson, George Mahon, Schawanne Kilgus, Matt Karabinos, Laura Palmer, Denice Rodaniche, Allison Cornell, Dave Bonta, Susan Braun, Michael Kensinger, Warren Baker, Sharon Clewell, and Catie Farr.

Here's to a stellar 2022 together and good birding!

John Carter

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY EVENING PROGRAMS

Note: Follow these instructions for the January 18 Zoom Meeting

Try to log in about 5 – 10 minutes before 7 pm.

- To join by computer, use this link:
<https://psu.zoom.us/j/97418229426>
- To join from the Zoom app on a smartphone: enter this meeting ID:
974 1822 9426
- To join by phone, call this number: +1 301 715 8592 (US Toll)
Enter the meeting ID followed by the pound sign.
974 1822 9426



JANUARY PROGRAM: Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022 @ 7 pm via ZOOM only

“What's all the fuss about free-roaming cats?” Presented by Clair Nemes

Millions of Americans own domestic cats and consider them to be part of the family, but free-roaming cats also present a major threat to wildlife and ecosystem health worldwide. Direct predation on birds and other animals is well-documented, but cats also have less obvious and sometimes surprising effects on birds, ecosystems, and public health. Learn more about the science behind free-roaming cats' impact on the environment, current and future solutions, and where bird lovers and cat lovers can find common ground on this sometimes-contentious topic.

Claire Nemes is a Ph.D. candidate in Dr. Emily Cohen's Animal Migration Research Group at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES) Appalachian Lab in Frostburg, Maryland. Her research focuses on songbird ecology and conservation, including migration phenology and the effects of free-roaming cats on wildlife. Prior to arriving at UMCES, she completed her M.S. on Cerulean Warblers in Indiana and has worked on a variety of bird-focused jobs across the U.S.

JANUARY PROGRAM: Lost Bird Project Documentary Film

Wed., Jan. 26, 2022 @ 5:30 pm Zoom and In-person

at Penn State Altoona Harry E. Slep Student Center, Penn State Altoona campus. Snow Date: Feb. 2, 2022 @5:30 pm

Join the Penn State Altoona Biology Club and Biology Honor Society, along with conservation partners, the Juniata Valley Audubon Society and Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, at the Penn State Altoona campus for a special screening of "The Lost Bird Project." The film is about an hour long and is in conjunction with a traveling art exhibit featuring five extinct North American birds, including the Greak Auk, located along the Reflecting Pool on campus. Discover the stories of these extinct species and learn how we can all work together to ensure the survival and success of Pennsylvania's wildlife.



Carolina Parakeets are no longer found in Pennsylvania as they are extinct.

The Zoom link for this program will be posted at:

<https://www.shaverscreek.org/public-programs-and-events/the-lost-bird-project/>

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY EVENING PROGRAMS

Note: Follow these instructions for the February 15 Zoom Meeting

Try to log in about 5 – 10 minutes before 7 pm.

- To join by computer, use this link:

<https://psu.zoom.us/j/97418229426>

- To join from the Zoom app on a smartphone: enter this meeting ID:

974 1822 9426

- To join by phone, call this number: +1 301 715 8592 (US Toll)

Enter the meeting ID followed by the pound sign.

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Collisions happen everywhere, at all times of the day

44%



**Residences
1-3 stories**

56%



**Low-rise
4-11 stories**

1%



**High-rise
>12 stories**

FEBRUARY PROGRAM: Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022 @ 7 pm via ZOOM only

“Glass: a silent killer” by Peter G. Saenger

Between 365 million and one billion birds die colliding with glass in the USA annually. The low estimate equals an average of one million birds each and every day. The Bird-window Collision Working Group (BCWG), using Dr. Daniel Klem’s decades of research put together what is called a “Tool Kit” to help educate the public on this serious and underappreciated conservation issue. The main part of this Tool Kit is a 72 slide PowerPoint covering the topic from the What, Where, When, Why, and How to Stop It.

Peter Saenger will present the PowerPoint and offer to review the Tool Kit for anyone interested in giving a presentation on the topic to other groups they may know.

Peter G. Saenger was raised in rural Berks County, Pennsylvania and was first attracted to and enjoyed studying birds during a second-grade field trip to nearby Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. From then on his interests in birds continued to increase and were nurtured at a professional level when he was selected to work on a research project to study the birds of Armenia at Muhlenberg College in the 1990s. His bird expertise resulted in his current appointment as an endowed research ornithologist and collection manager in the bird museum within The Acopian Center for Ornithology, Department of Biology, Muhlenberg College. He currently is the president of the Lehigh Valley Audubon Society and membership chair for the Wilson Ornithological Society.

**Please send your email so we can keep you updated on field trips
and important conservation issues!**

Email: jvas771@gmail.com

We will not share your email with anyone!!

WINTER FIELD TRIPS 2022

Birding the Bells Gap Rail Trail every first Tuesday of each month: 10-12 noon



Dates: 1/4, 2/1, 3/1, 4/5, 5/3, 6/2, 7/5, 8/2, 9/6, 10/4, 11/1, 12/6/2022

Join John Carter on the Bells Gap Trail every first **Tuesday of the Month** from 10 am-12 noon while enjoying outstanding views of eastern ridges, the Tuckahoe Valley, and the Bellwood Reservoir. We will stroll 2 miles of the trail that consist of fresh crushed limestone surface. Let's track what different bird species we see each month and have an enjoyable walk.

What to bring: binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, drink and snack as desired.


Directions to Bells Gap Trailhead: GPS coordinates 40.613171, -78.362070. Parking and Trail Access to Bellwood trailhead: 163 Igou Road, Tyrone, PA 16686. Let's meet at the pavilion in the parking lot.

If you have any questions or need more information please contact trip leader, John Carter, at 814-933-7426 or email carter0206@aol.com.

Saturday, January 15, 2022: 10 am - 12 noon with the State College Bird Club

Join John Carter on a bird walk at the University Park Compost Area and Hidden Retention Pond in search of Fish Crows and other wintering birds near the Innovation Park area. We will walk about 2 miles around this area.

What to bring: binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, drink and snack as desired.

Parking: Penn Stater parking lot: 215 Innovation Blvd, State College, PA 16803. See  on map below.

If you have any questions or need more information please contact trip leader, John Carter: email carter0206@aol.com.



2022 CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP IS DUE NOW!!

If you'd like to join or renew your chapter membership in JVAS, complete the membership form included as an insert in this newsletter.

We depend on your support to cover newsletter costs and conservation projects.

MORE WINTER FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, February 12, 2022: 10 am – 1 pm



Join John Carter as we explore the Killbuck Boat Ramp and Crooked Run Campground at Prince Gallitzin SP in Cambria County for potential Tundra Swans and other waterfowl and wintering birds.

We will walk between 3-5 miles.

What to bring: binoculars, spotting scope, comfortable walking shoes, drink and snack as desired.

Parking: Meet at the Killbuck Boat Ramp: 2100 Long Rd, Patton, PA 16668

If you have any questions or need more information please contact trip leader, John Carter: at 814-933-7426 or email carter0206@aol.com.



Saturday, Feb 26 and Sunday, Feb 27 - Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area on Saturday and optional Conowingo Dam on Sunday

Saturday: 11am - 4pm (7pm for owls) at Middle Creek

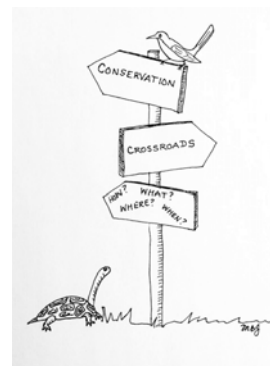
Join JVAS for a weekend trip to see snow geese and bald eagles. Meet at 11am at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area [visitor center](#), 100 Museum Rd, Stevens, PA 17578. We'll drive the wildlife drive and walk out to Willow Point. Bring food and drink.

We'll look for Short-eared Owls for anyone who wants to stay later.

Note: The Visitor Center is currently closed for renovations. Click here to find out when it opens: [Visitor Center Updates](#) If you aren't familiar with Middle Creek, you might want to print out the brochure – click here: [Middle Creek Brochure](#)

Sunday: 10am – 12 noon at Conowingo Dam. We'll head to Conowingo Dam, Shuresville Landing [parking area](#) in Darlington, Md. This is one of the best places to see bald eagles. Plan to overnight in Lancaster if you want to participate both days. Contact Susan Braun braun3112@gmail.com or call 814-574-0795 if you plan to attend.

CONSERVATION CROSSROADS is a section of *The Gnatcatcher* that features environmental issues across a spectrum of local, national, and global concerns. Contact JVAS Vice-President Laura Jackson, if you know of an issue that deserves our attention and subsequent action. More information on conservation concerns is found at www.JVAS.org Click on the Conservation tab.



1. Proposed Rutter's Gas/Convenience Store upslope from Old Crow

Wetlands near Huntingdon, Pa. In late December we learned that construction plans are moving forward, but DEP has not yet received an application. As soon as the application is made public, we will ask you to send comments to DEP.

JVAS members have repeatedly expressed their concerns and opposition at Smithfield Township meetings. We encourage you to attend the monthly township meetings and express your concerns. Township meetings are the first Tuesday of each month, at 6:00 pm. The location is the township building in Smithfield, on the corner of 13th Street and Mt. Vernon Avenue, or 2 blocks south of Rt 26 (Pennsylvania Ave.).

CONSERVATION CROSSROADS, continued

2. Proposed Rutter's Gas/Convenience Store upslope of Sandy Run Exceptional Value Wetlands along Sabbath Rest Road, beside the Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham in Pinecroft, Pa.

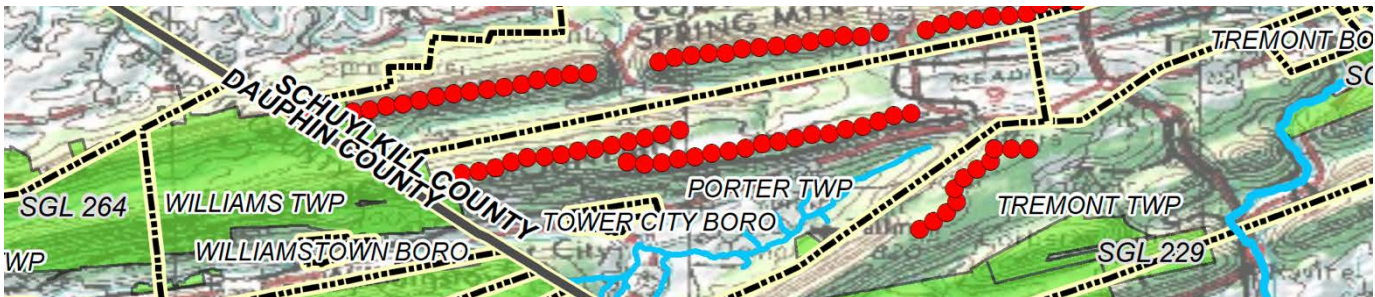
DEP and Rutter's are corresponding regarding a technical deficiency letter that DEP sent to Rutter's. In December, President Bill Anderson of The Little Juniata River Association sent comments to DEP regarding concerns over erosion and sedimentation controls, and stormwater controls, as well as repeating a request for a public hearing.

The concerns for this Rutter's Store (with parking for 53 trucks) are similar to those in Huntingdon. Stormwater and any hydrocarbon pollution will flow into the wetlands along Sandy Run, classified as a High-Quality Coldwater Fishery. The Pa. Fish & Boat Commission classifies Sandy Run as a Class A Wild Trout stream with naturally reproducing wild trout, thus making it an Exceptional Value wetland. JVAS and other groups asked DEP for a public hearing to address environmental concerns.

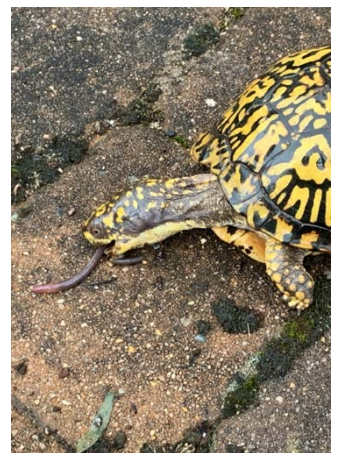
3. Anthracite Ridge Wind Project (proposed) impacting four mountain tops in Schuylkill Co.

The developer proposes 83 wind turbines (see map below), up to 499 feet tall, on four ridges, part of which includes a Natural Heritage Area for the state-threatened Allegheny wood rat. Four species of endangered and threatened bats are found in the project area, which is also a possible over-wintering site for Golden Eagles. The site is just north of the Kittatinny Ridge – a global Important Bird Area. JVAS is part of a Conservation Coalition comprised of Hawk Mountain Association, American Bird Conservancy, National Audubon, Pennsylvania Audubon Council, Save Our Allegheny Ridges, and Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. We sent letters to Hegins Township Zoning Hearing Board, which will issue a decision in mid-January either approving or denying this project.

Contact Laura if you'd like to read the letters sent by the Coalition. Email: jacksonlaura73@gmail.com



Summer memories (L – R): Eastern Bluebird eggs, Mating Cicadas, Hungry Black-capped Chickadee, Eastern Box Turtle and earthworm -Photos by Mike and Laura Jackson



INTRODUCING A NEW LIBRARY BACKPACK PROGRAM

Birds of Central Pennsylvania Backpack

The Blair, Bedford & Huntingdon County Library Systems are pleased to announce a new library backpack program in cooperation with the Juniata Valley Audubon Society, which received a grant to help cover some of the backpack contents. Laura Jackson worked with Katie Greenleaf Martin, MLIS, District Consultant and County Coordinator for the Blair County Library System.

Library patrons are invited to check out a FREE Birds of Central Pennsylvania Backpack from any of our 13 library locations.

Contents of the backpack include:

- 2 bird field guides
- 2 pairs of binoculars:
 - Opticron LE WP 8x32
 - Occer 12x25 Compact Binoculars
- Backyard Bird Bingo
- dry erase marker
- State park brochures & maps
- JVAS information
- binocular instructions



The backpack is currently available at all 13 Blair, Bedford & Huntingdon County Libraries including: Altoona Area Public Library, Bedford County Library, Bellwood-Antis Public Library, Claysburg Area Public Library, Everett Free Library, Hollidaysburg Area Public Library, Huntingdon County Library, Hyndman-Londonderry Public Library, Martinsburg Community Library, Roaring Spring Community Library, Saxton Community Library, Tyrone-Snyder Public Library and Williamsburg Public Library.

TIPTON WETLANDS: UNTIL NEXT TIME Article and Artwork by Michael Kensinger

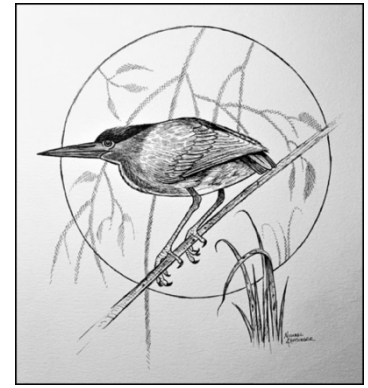
There is far more to Tipton, Pennsylvania than spaghetti sauce and roller coasters, and I'm here to prove it.

I for one, am not a fan of noisy crowds- but prefer to seclude myself in the quiet neutrality of nature. It is here I can process my thoughts, feelings, and goals - and reflect inward in peace. The distortion and cognitive dissonance created by social gatherings is something I can only handle in small doses, particularly in the current state of things. If I find myself in those situations for an extended period, I find I need to follow-up immediately with quiet time to recharge my soul. One of my favorite locations to recharge is at the Tipton Wetlands, in Blair County.

It had been a particularly long summer day when I decided to slip into a ghillie suit and drive to the Tipton wetlands to escape "life". Looking an awful lot like Sasquatch, or some kind of "Swamp Thing", I shuffled my way from my car to the wetlands edge. Along the path that leads up to the wetland, in puddles created by the tires of an ATV, I noticed the hoof prints of white-tailed deer were present. Among larger prints, I noted tiny fawn hoof prints. A mother had given birth. Raccoon, and Opossum footprints were also seen - indicating the spot was a popular place for a drink. Above me, a Great-blue Heron flapped, legs trailing behind as he made his way to the Little Juniata River.

TIPTON WETLANDS: UNTIL NEXT TIME, continued

As I continued walking the path that snaked between forest and wetland edge, I found an old duck hunting blind, in which I made myself at home and sat on a wooden bench. I took a deep breath and exhaled the day's worries, while gangs of Red-winged Blackbirds scolded me for intruding on their territory. I could see Killdeer, as well as a Spotted Sandpiper teeter-tottering at the far edge of a mudflat in search of food. A Green Heron sat stoutly; neck coiled back in preparation for whatever unfortunate snack happened to swim in front of it.



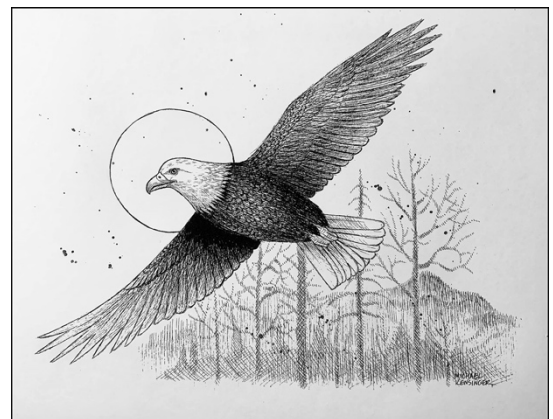
Once I settled in, things finally calmed down - and wildlife returned to business as usual while I sat motionless like a mound of grass in my ghillie suit. A female Wood Duck cruised the edges of the wetland quietly - before noticing me and disappearing completely from view. I never saw her fly, she simply vanished. A Warbling Vireo sang harmoniously from the thin strip of forest that separates the wetland from the Little Juniata River. On this path, you can remain secluded enough if you move slowly to enjoy the birding on both the river, and the wetland.

The shimmering sparkles that bedazzled the wetland were particularly calming on this day. Occasionally, an explosion of shimmers would catch my eye, revealing the large, humped carapace of Snapping Turtles breaking the surface of the wetland waters. It appeared to be the breeding season for these prehistoric remnants, as they wrestled one another and churned mud and bubbles around them in the process. The ancient beasts, despised by some people, are a welcome sight to a mitigated wetland such as this. I had absolutely no idea how well-populated this mitigated wetland had become with these armored brutes, but it was clear that mitigated or not - the wetland was home. It made me smile to see them having success, along with all the other wildlife that called this piece of land home.

Fish were also thriving in the wetland this summer - undoubtedly swimming in from the "Little J" and making the still waters of the wetland their home. Most common of all the fish appeared to be the Common Carp. While non-native, and not a fish I'm particularly fond of - carp provide a food source for the wildlife of the wetland. In years past, the wetland even dried up - stranding carp and making a buffet for a plethora of native wildlife. In 2021, however, the water levels remained high, and the carp, and other species of fish seemed to be thriving, and even spawning in the wetland. Other species of fish undoubtedly made their way in, and the wetland stayed deep enough with water that the fish were not faced with a mass death in 2021. At its lowest, the wetland did, however, become home to a Great Egret who became a 'wetland squatter' that took advantage of lower water levels to fatten up in July and August.

Aside from the lush vegetation that surrounded the wetland, an island of small trees stood firmly within its waters. There, a gathering of native river birches, with their peeling parchment-like bark stood proudly, leaves stirring in a warm summer breeze. It was almost as if they were whispering to one another about me. Gnarly groupings of buttonbush lined the edges of the island, providing dense cover for waterfowl to hide from peering eyes of predators. Within one of these native shrubs, a generally secretive Swamp Sparrow sang eloquently over his territory. The number of "little brownish birds" one overlooks in such a jaunt is astonishing. Every few yards, a small, modestly colored songster would flit from dense cover, to the thick of the marsh grasses, avoiding identification. I've learned to stop and really observe "little brown birds" because they, too, are worth the extra effort of identification.

Wheeling overhead, a magnificent Bald Eagle soared over the treetops, coming directly from the Little Juniata River. The "Little J" runs alongside the wetland, as discussed, and subsequently feeds it throughout the year. The eagle was working out a social dispute with one of the local Osprey. The two birds of prey did their part in taking down the local carp population, and unavoidably encountered one another daily along the stretch of the wetland. The shrill calls of the angsty birds were primarily what gave away their location. Seeing the two birds of prey interact was truly a spectacle.



TIPTON WETLANDS: UNTIL NEXT TIME, continued

Neither Osprey nor Bald Eagle allowed the situation to get out of hand however, as neither bird thought it worth the injury to battle it out over a food resource that was clearly loaded with scrumptious options. As they disappeared, I felt such gratitude. As a child, I would not have had the gratification of seeing the Bald Eagle here. I remember being a boy, sulking as I thumbed through my field guides reading about their extirpation for so many years. Now, Bald Eagles are plentiful in our area, and many sightings of both adult and immature bald eagles speak of their success in the valley that cradles the Tipton wetlands. My wish for them is that we never take their presence for granted. One of the big threats to these birds currently is lead poisoning - likely ingested when feeding on the carcasses of lost game animals.

My primary focus for these wetlands over the last year has been to improve the bird habitat by providing homes for the cavity nesting species. Upon its mitigation by PennDOT, the wetland had bat houses, Wood Duck boxes, and Bluebird boxes. For years they worked wonderfully, but after 5 years or so, PennDOT was not required to upkeep those boxes, and overtime most boxes have become dilapidated and served no purpose. This is where my group, "Friends of Tipton Wetlands," came into play. With my fundraiser, and thanks to the donations of many people in our area, some friends and I have been able to place Wood Duck, Bluebird, and bat boxes at several locations in Tipton's many mitigated wetland sites. I am proud to say that we, "Friends of Tipton Wetlands," have formally adopted the wetlands to bring attention to it, and to help keep it clean and beautiful for the wildlife that thrive there.

Still sitting in the duck hunting blind, I was able to enjoy the fruits of the project's success as a family of Tree Swallows spiraled and swooped overhead as masters of the air. Cliff Swallows were also present, having appeared from the bridge on the Grazierville exit. I did not observe their nests there, but I'm guessing that's where they were raising families each year. A pair of Eastern Bluebirds had surprisingly nested in one of the dilapidated nest boxes that were placed by PennDOT at the wetland's creation many years ago. Yet, the Wood Duck boxes I placed stood empty - devoid of any activity. Activity, that is, aside from serving as a perch for boisterous Red-winged Blackbirds declaring their presence while flashing their shoulder pinions for all to see.

Why hadn't the Wood Ducks nested in my Wood Duck boxes? The location seemed prime, the height seemed OK, and the depth of the wood chips seemed perfect. It was something that haunted me also at the Northern Blair Recreation Center wetland location, where I had also placed 4 Wood Duck boxes and experienced an equal amount of failure. I scratched my head as I pondered what it could be and then began seeking out people with more experience in Wood Duck conservation. In one such group online, I asked my question - including images of my boxes and detailed descriptions of when, where, and how they were mounted. According to one Wood Duck conservationist, it was in my TIMING of the placement of these boxes. They were placed in March, amid spring migration - which was, in hindsight, somewhat of a mistake. Apparently, Woodies coming through had already picked nest site locations the previous AUTUMN during migration - long before the boxes were ever placed. And so, even though I observed several Wood Ducks "checking out" the boxes and hanging out near them last spring -- those birds already had a destination in mind for their families.

With that said, a third Tipton Wetland location had been found, and if I was to place Wood Duck boxes, I knew it had to be done before fall migration ended if we were to have success. And, so, not too far up the road, at PennDOT's "site 11", we placed more Wood Duck boxes in addition to many more Bluebird boxes. With now 21 Bluebird boxes, 9 Wood Duck boxes and 1 bat box placed at various Tipton wetland locations, we were hoping for a prosperous 2022 for many birds who can once again nest along what I feel is Tipton's best feature. Far removed from the amusement park, it's a more quiet kind of amusement that not only gives me pleasure, but also benefits our wild friends who offer far more than they take from the world.

As I stood up and stretched my body after sitting motionless in the duck blind, I opted for a hike around the wetland perimeter. Pickerelweed grew in abundance and provided cover for a hen Mallard that was holding tight as I passed. At the farthest reach of the wetland, I passed the mudflat where in April and May I had observed a small group of Solitary Sandpipers, a lifer for me, as they used the wetland to fuel up on their journey north. Continuing around clockwise, bearing my trusty fishing waders, I crossed the small overflow of the wetland's mouth where I observed another very large snapping turtle. He made his way back into the wetland area, and I suspect he was hunting the pool of water for trapped fish. A small green frog leapt from the bank of the inlet as I continued onward to the small strip of woods that runs between the wetland and the river.

TIPTON WETLANDS: UNTIL NEXT TIME, continued

Carolina Wrens sang proudly as I progressed and slapped down stands of Japanese Knotweed with my walking stick. To my left was the river and on one of the rocks a Spotted Sandpiper stood arrested, as groups of Cedar Waxwings flitted from the sycamore canopy in the company of an Eastern Phoebe. Birds of many species appeared to be taking advantage of an insect hatch on the river. A small group of Common Mergansers made their way up the river, as I skulked silently behind a tree trunk to observe. The group found a large round rock on which they poised, preened, and relaxed for a while. Meanwhile, Belted Kingfishers called loudly up and down the river, and over top the wetland.

Upon reaching my car, I began reflecting on all the joyous moments of the day, and the year. I squinted upward, and breathed in a hearty helping of wetland air with a thankful heart as a Brown Thrasher seemed to bid me farewell atop a tree snag near the parking area. "Until next time little buddy!" I said, before getting in the car and driving home with a heart full of inspiration. "Until next time."

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE JVAS INTERNATIONAL ISSUES GROUP by Mike Jackson

Bruce and Marcia Bonta were the founders of the International Issues Interest Group (Group) in 1986. The purpose of this JVAS committee was to promote an appreciation for nature and the sensible relationship of humanity to the environment on an international level. Members worked to achieve that purpose through learning about environmental issues in other countries, reaching out to citizens in central Pennsylvania to inform them of the problems abroad, and forming supportive exchanges with conservation groups in other nations. Those linkages were based on an overriding spirit of mutual respect for the attitudes, hopes, perceptions and goals of environmental leaders with whom relationships were maintained.

The Group purchased audio-visual programs about tropical rainforest destruction which members of JVAS presented to school and community groups. A "sister chapter" with a conservation organization from Peru was established and grants were secured to fund a visit to the US for two Peruvian conservationists. They participated in a JVAS Earth Day celebration as well as other conservation and environmental programs in central PA.

Another exchange was developed with the Philippines office of the Asian Wetlands Bureau (AWB) which included correspondence on major environmental issues as well as a conservation-oriented classroom exchanges between elementary and high school classes in central PA and the Cebu region of the Philippines. Binoculars and spotting scopes were sent to AWB to support birdwatching and nature magazines to form a nature library.

Many boxes of books and scientific journals were also sent to the National University of Costa Rica. The Group launched a "Support a Costa Rican Garden" program to educate people of Costa Rica in sustainable agricultural and horticultural techniques.

As a result of the Group's efforts, JVAS members teamed up members from the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania and the Bucks County Audubon Society for an environmental educator's exchange from Peru, Costa Rica, and Venezuela for internship experiences. Pennsylvania environmentalists were supported with professional development experiences.

Bruce and Marcia's determination to see the International Issues Interest Group be successful was possible because of their belief in the words of Margaret Mead who said, "Never doubt that small group of committed people can change the world: Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Many thanks to the Group for all of their admirable efforts in bird conservation and people to people exchanges.

Although the International Issues Interest Group is no longer active, JVAS does have a newer committee called **Partners in Neotropical Bird Conservation (PiNBC)** that has been active since 2015. Inspired by a Golden-winged Warbler Workshop, this group promotes shade-grown coffee (see page 12) since that farming practice protects habitat for many migratory songbirds in Central America. **PiNBC** also supports the Marcala Bird Club in Honduras with donations, as well as binoculars and spotting scopes. We have not been very active the past two years due to Covid, but we hope that 2022 will see new efforts in the whole lifecycle conservation of birds.

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