

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,

I hope **Spring Migration** is treating you well. Birds that have not been here for months have started to find their way back to our beloved backyards and birding hotspots. I was enthusiastic to come across a pair of White-winged Scoters floating at the Bellwood Reservoir, Blair Co., and I observed two American Golden Plovers preening at a flooded field in Centre Co. in the month of April.

BBC broadcaster David Attenborough said, *"Everyone likes birds. What wild creature is more accessible to our eyes and ears, as close to us and everyone in the world, as universal as a bird?"*

How do we feel when a bird becomes extinct, having no living members, no longer in existence? This truly is a very sad and dark day. As individuals and as a group we can continue to elevate our voices to protect our feathered friends through conservation actions, education and outreach, and advocacy.

Other JVAS members and I were fortunate to partake in several of The Lost Bird Project events hosted by Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, one of which JVAS helped to co-host: a screening of "The Lost Bird Project" at the Penn State Altoona Campus. The events provided educational programs to highlight avian conservation issues in central PA. A link to The Lost Bird Project film – Trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHUEI47MFUs>.

Todd McGrain is an artist who strives to recognize the heartbreak of bird extinction by artistically developing North American extinct birds in sculpture. The mission – *"raising awareness in hopes that each of us will hear and respond to our own unique calling to engage with the shift toward a better relationship with the earth."*

Communities in central Pennsylvania are privileged to have five of his fascinating sculptures, the Great Auk, Labrador Duck, Passenger Pigeon, Carolina Parakeet, and Heath Hen spread out on display through August 2022 at various locations. Information about each of the sculptures can be found here:

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

continued on page 2 – Photos of Todd McGrain and the Lost Bird Project

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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).

OFFICERS

President, John Carter

- ♦ 814-933-7426
- ♦ carter0206@aol.com

Vice President, Laura Jackson

- ♦ 814-652-9268
- ♦ jacksonlaura73@gmail.com

Secretary, Schawne Kilgus

- ♦ 412-600-0663
- ♦ schawne@gmail.com

Treasurer, George Mahon

- ♦ 814-942-2658
- ♦ gsm815@hotmail.com

Immediate Past President, Catie Farr

- ♦ 570-651-3839
- ♦ catiegk5059@gmail.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership, Denice Rodaniche

- ♦ 814-502-8431
- ♦ denicrod@outlook.com

Conservation, Laura Jackson

Partners in Neotropical Bird Conservation,

- ♦ Laura Jackson

Education, Allison Cornell

- ♦ 814-494-5050
- ♦ aec5780@psu.edu

Field Trips, Mark Bonta

- ♦ 814-600-8394
- ♦ markabonta@yahoo.com

Publications & Publicity, Matt Karabinos

- ♦ 412-860-7297
- ♦ mattkarabinos@gmail.com

Hospitality, Catie Farr

- ♦ 570-651-3839
- ♦ catiegk5059@gmail.com

Historian, Mike Jackson

- ♦ 814-652-9268
- ♦ mljackson2@embarqmail.com

Website Administrator, Dave Bonta

- ♦ 814-686-7274
- ♦ bontasaurus@yahoo.com

The Gnatcatcher Editor, Laura Jackson

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

- ♦ Warren Baker
- ♦ Susan Braun
- ♦ Sharon Clewell
- ♦ Michael Kensinger
- ♦ Paola Jaramillo Calderon

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, continued from page 1



Top left: Sculptor Todd McGrain and John Carter with *The Lost Bird Project* book that John just purchased. Top right: **The Great Auk**, extinct partly because of the feather trade, looks over the Reflecting Pond at the Penn State Altoona campus.



The Passenger Pigeon sculpture resides at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center. At one time, Passenger Pigeons were the most abundant bird in North America and possibly the world. Todd's memorial is a stark reminder that human impact (in this case over-hunting and loss of habitat), can wipe out an entire species.

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY EVENING PROGRAMS

will be HYBRID: in person and by Zoom

Note: Follow these instructions for the May Meeting, if joining by Zoom
Try to log in about 5 – 10 minutes before 7 pm.

- To join by computer, use this link:
<https://psu.zoom.us/j/97418229426> Passcode: 123456
- To join from the Zoom app on a smartphone: enter this meeting ID:
974 1822 9426 Passcode: 123456
- 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**

MAY PROGRAM: Tuesday, May 17, 2022 @ 7 pm via ZOOM and In Person
at the Bellwood-Antis Library at 526 Main Street, Bellwood, PA.

"Each of us is a place to love." - presented by Peter Buck

In this talk, Peter Buck will share his experience, hope, and strength about living in our fractured world. He will invite us to slow down, connect with ourselves, our neighbors, and the web of life in the moment. He will then share a story about how his experiences with court cases and Lyme Disease, a potential water threat, dying hemlocks, and bad policy spurred him to action. Buck will share not just "why" he has acted, but "how" he has worked with others to develop climate action and adaptation in the Centre Region. Finally, we will return where we started, by centering ourselves.

Peter Buck works on and for a more just and sustainable world. He manages academic programming at Penn State's Sustainability Institute. He has served in elected and appointed office in municipal, regional, and school board government. He has authored, co-authored, and passed local and regional climate policy, chaired climate action and adaptation planning and solar power working groups, and testified on solar power, climate action, and redistricting before Pennsylvania commissions. Peter's favorite places are in the forests, mountain gaps, and recovering ruins of central Pennsylvania. He lives in State College with his son, Sacha.

June 14, 2022: Annual JVAS Picnic at Canoe Creek State Park – details on page 6

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

Starting in September, we will send the paper newsletter to chapter members only. If you are a National Audubon member, please share your email so we can email the newsletter to you. It's just too expensive to mail paper copies to everyone. Newsletters are also posted online at <https://www.jvas.org/gnatcatcher-archive/>

Send your email to: jvas771@gmail.com
We will not share your email with anyone!!



♦ **Birding the Bells Gap Rail Trail, the first Tues. of each month:
10 AM – 12 noon Dates: 5/3, 6/7, 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 different bird species we see 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.

Bellwood trailhead: 163 Igou Road, Tyrone, PA 16686. Let's meet at the pavilion in the parking lot.

Contact trip leader John Carter at 814-933-7426 or email carter0206@aol.com, if you have questions.

♦ **Saturday, May 7, 2022 PA Central Pa Native Plant Festival 10 AM – 3 PM**



Visit JVAS at the Pennsylvania Native Plant Sale at Boal Mansion at 163 Boal Estate in Boalsburg to celebrate and purchase native plants. Educational programs will also be offered at 11 am and 1 pm. Food vendors, too! You can order native plants in advance for pick up and payment on May 7.

Details: <https://www.panativeplantsociety.org/pnps-central-pennsylvania-native-plant-festival.html>

♦ **Sunday, May 8, 2022: 9 AM – 12 NOON – Mother's Day Bird Walk
at Blair County Game Fish and Forestry Association**

Meet in the parking lot at 301 Riggles Gap Sportsmen Rd, Altoona, PA.

Join wildlife artist and outdoor writer Michael Kensinger for a slow hike meandering through a variety of bird habitats to record and observe birds and wildlife on the trails of the Blair County Game Fish & Forestry Association. We will begin our birding at the parking area, recording our data into e-bird as we explore and see what makes this a great birding location. We will look for birds around the different habitats on the property which consists of mossy streamside forested trails, views across open country power lines and fields, as well as mixed hardwood forests. There is also a small, stocked trout pond which has attracted a variety of species of fish-eating birds. If you enjoy photography, feel free to bring a camera as we peruse the trails, which are stunning and peaceful, cloaked in moss along a native brook trout stream.

What to bring: binoculars, comfortable hiking shoes, bug repellent, drink, and snack as desired.

Contact trip leader Michael Kensinger at 814-505-3410 or email michaelkensinger@gmail.com if you have questions.



♦ **Saturday, May 14, 2022: Global Big Day of Birding**

This is an on-your-own activity using eBird to record birds you see on this day. You don't have to spend all day birding, but try to submit some checklists throughout the day. Details at: <https://ebird.org/news/global-big-day-2022>

SPRING FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS 2022, continued

- ◆ **Saturday, May 14, 2022: 9 AM-12 NOON. Fieldtrip to the Northern Blair Co. Rec. Center--Ray Amato Memorial Trail. Meet at 4080 E Pleasant Valley Blvd, Altoona, PA**

We will walk the 1-mile trail encompassing the wetland. This location is an eBird hotspot with 124 species observed. Angie has been restoring the biodiversity of this area for the past five years by removing invasive plants and replacing them with native species. She is focused on providing birds with natural food sources, such as berries and insects, with over 1,000 new trees and shrubs planted. Angie will explain the restoration process and the results of her master's research, which focused on the community effects of invasive plants on energy transfer through trophic levels.

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

Contact trip leader Angie Spagnoli at 814-889-5475 or send an email to angiespagnoli83@gmail.com if you have questions.

- ◆ **Saturday, May 21 Woods Walk for Wood Thrush at Mike and Laura Jacksons' Property: 9 AM – 12 NOON: 8621 Black Valley Road, Everett, PA.**

Audubon's Scott Parkhill, Forest Program Manager, will co-lead the walk to focus on birds and healthy forests. We'll explore wildflowers, birds, and compare forest habitats while learning what landowners can do to help Wood Thrush and other forest birds. Note that trails are uneven and rocky in places.

What to bring: binoculars, sturdy walking shoes, bug repellent, drink. Optional: bring a picnic lunch to enjoy afterwards.

Contact trip leaders Mike and Laura Jackson for more details: Call 814-652-9268 or email jacksonlaura73@gmail.com

- ◆ **ASK AUDUBON DAYS: Saturdays, June 4 and July 9 from 10 AM– 2 PM
Martin's Garden Center 3278 Birmingham Pike, Tyrone, PA**

Denice Rodaniche and Laura Jackson will be at Martin's to promote the importance of native plants that feed insects that feed the birds – as well as nourish pollinators. Martin's will have a wide variety of native plants for sale throughout the summer, but stop by to talk "Natives" on June 4 or July 9.

NATIVE TREES: river birch, white-flowering dogwood, black gum, black cherry, white oak, swamp white oak, scarlet oak, serviceberry

NATIVE SHRUBS: sweet pepperbush, red osier dogwood, Virginia sweetspire

NATIVE FLOWERING PERENNIALS: nodding onion, wild columbine, butterfly weed, blue wood aster, turtlehead, purple coneflower, cardinal flower, blue lobelia, sundrops, golden ragwort, Jacob's ladder, clustered mountain mint





CANOE CREEK STATE PARK at Pavilion #2

Tuesday, June 14, 2022: Maxine Leckvarcik Memorial Picnic 6 PM - 9 PM

Canoe Creek State Park Pavilion #2 just off parking lot #6

Click here for a map: http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_004826.pdf

What to bring: Plate and utensils, covered dish, salad, or dessert, drink.

JVAS will provide the chicken. Let Catie or Laura know what dish you plan to share.

Our annual summer picnic has many eats and treats for all tastes and appetites! Join us as we picnic together and celebrate another year of exploring and protecting nature in Central PA! After eating, we will have a nature walk from 7 to 8:15 PM. JVAS will provide roasted chicken for everyone. We hope everyone else will bring a covered dish to share.

We will end the evening with a visit to the bat church around 8:30 PM to see Pennsylvania's only flying mammals - bats! The bats exiting the church for their nightly feeding forays beat the odds of White-Nose Syndrome and their survival needs to be celebrated. Plan to stay until around 9:15 PM to see the bats.

Be sure to let Catie Farr or Laura Jackson know what you plan to bring to the picnic.

Call/email Catie at 570-651-3839 or catiegk5059@gmail.com

Call/email Laura Jackson at 814-652-9268 or jacksonlaura73@gmail.com

Become a JVAS Chapter-only member at one of the annual membership categories:

Check the appropriate box:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership, \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend of the JVAS, \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership, \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Membership, \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Membership, \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Membership, \$500 |

Membership Year runs from January 1st to December 31st

Make your check payable to **JVAS**

Mail to: Juniata Valley Audubon Society
P. O. Box 1013
Altoona, PA 16603

Or join online at
www.jvas.org/join-juniata-valley-audubon/

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
 Phone No. _____ E-mail Address _____

- ☐ Yes, I will accept the digital copy of *The Gnatcatcher*. ☐ No, I prefer to receive a paper copy

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 Truck Stop upslope from Old Crow Wetlands near Huntingdon, Pa. Rutters has submitted their application to the Huntingdon Co. Conservation District.

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.).

Join the Coalition to Save Old Crow Wetland FB page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/271112655092285>

Please write to or call these agencies:

Huntingdon County Conservation District

Celina Seftas, District Manager
10605 Raystown Road, Suite A
Huntingdon, PA 16652 Phone: 814-626-1626 Ext 5
manager@huntingdonconservation.org

PA Department of Environmental Protection

Scott Williamson
Regional Program Manager
S. Central Regional Office
909 Elmerton Ave.
Harrisburg, PA 17110 Phone: 717-705-4799
scwilliams@pa.gov

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 Hegins Township Zoning Board denied the application on Jan. 11, 2022, but the developer has appealed to the County Court of Common Pleas where the judge will decide the appeal.

Congratulations to Marcia Bonta



JVAS President John Carter congratulates Marcia on her award.

Acclaimed Author and Naturalist Marcia Bonta was honored on April 21, 2022, at the Penn State Altoona Campus for her dedication to the environment through her writings, actions, and nature observations. The Penn State Altoona Sustainability Council presented Marcia with an engraved wooden plaque to commemorate her conservation and education efforts. She is the author of nine books and over 300 articles. Her monthly nature column is part of her blog entitled, “The Naturalist’s Eye.” Marcia strives to “teach others to respect and save the environment” through her popular writings.

A longtime member of Juniata Valley Audubon Society, Marcia has served as President of the Society, as well as co-chair of the International Issues Committee. She and her husband, Bruce (who passed away in 2021), have been active in many other conservation organizations and have

protected their forested property with a conservation easement with Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

Marcia lives near Tyrone, Pa. She adds to her nature journal every day, hoping it will be useful to future naturalists. Her books include *Escape to the Mountain*, *Outbound Journeys in Pennsylvania*, *More Outbound Journeys in Pennsylvania*, *Women in the Field*, *American Women in the Field*, *Appalachian Spring*, *Appalachian Summer*, *Appalachian Fall*, and *Appalachian Winter*. Her blog is posted at <https://marciabonta.com>

EARTH WEEK BIRDING CLASSIC WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The **Bell Hollow Buteos** tallied the highest count: 104 different bird species. They won the RUFFED GROUSE category. Kudos!!

First place in the TOWHEE category was the team **Stork Raven Mad** with 86 species recorded. Members were Susan Braun, Roanna Fuller, Jen Lee, & Nora Serotkin. **The Amigos** came in second, with 74 species recorded. George Mahon, Larry McGraw, Michael Kensinger, and Denice Rodaniche were the Amigos.

The **Black Valley Bussards** won first place for the COOT Category with 61 species recorded. Mike and Laura Jackson comprised that team.

Teams raised almost \$1,000 in donations this year, which will be used for bird education and conservation. Half of the proceeds are donated to the Penn State Altoona Sustainability Council and half are kept by JVAS for local conservation projects.

A shout-out to new participants this year! We loved your enthusiasm and hope it spreads to new teams next year.



Bell Hollow Buteos: L to R: John Carter, Mark Nale, Lindera Nale, and Frank Nale. Congratulations for tallying the most species!

Photographers versus Birders by Mark Nale



Birders and photographers gather at Lake Nessmuk (Tioga County, Pa.) in August of 2017 in hopes of getting a glimpse of a rare White-winged Tern. Photo by Mark Nale

We all enjoy the beautiful bird photos found in Audubon magazine, “Living Bird” (Cornell Lab of Ornithology), and publications such as “Birds and Blooms.” We marvel at images that capture an unusual bird behavior, an inquisitive look, or the minute feather detail of our favorite species.

However, some birders have come to disdain photographers because they think that they disturb birds in an effort to get the best shot. Do photographers always want to get a good shot? Yes. Are there photographers who disturb birds? Sure. Are there birders who disturb birds? You bet.

It all comes down to respect, ethics, and education. I am an avid birder and a photographer. I will briefly address each.

Ethics are a personal code of conduct. It guides how one acts when people are not watching. One of the earliest lessons that I teach my Nature Photography students at Juniata College is about ethics. Ethics (doing the right thing) involve a variable scale with many shades of gray.

I believe that I am an ethical birder and photographer. However, I am sure that there are others who might disagree with my ethics. Let’s look at a few specifics. I will start with an easy one.

Nest Photography

We are all curious about what goes on in a bird’s nest (like when a mother Robin surprised me by feeding her nestlings blackberries during a dry summer). Photographers, or birders, should never disturb a nest or get so close to a nest that it keeps the parents away. This shows respect for the birds.

Birders versus Photographers by Mark Nale - continued

Use of Recorded Songs

Now, this is a tough one. I know birders who never use recorded songs to attract birds and they frown on others who do. There is evidence that an OVER-USE of recorded songs can cause birds to abandon their territories.

I use “pishing” as well as the recorded songs and calls on my Merlin cellphone app to attract birds for identification and sometime for photos. I don’t think that I over-use them, but there are others who might disagree.

I once saw a woman play the song of a Northern Parula over and over. It drove the bird crazy and I even saw the bird land on the woman’s player. Overuse in my opinion, but maybe not in hers. Or maybe she just didn’t know that she might harm the bird by doing that.



That Northern Parula even landed on the birdsong player -- over-use according to my ethics.

Photo by Mark Nale.

One of my Facebook friends is an excellent photographer who takes super shots of warblers. I have no in-the-field experience with him, but I have read online criticism claiming that he over-uses recorded calls. I also know that he freely shares his photos, photography advice and has a very nice, educational website about birds. In my book, if he does any harm, it is far outweighed by the good.

Getting too close

Here is where I certainly have a dual standard.

By myself or with another birder or photographer -- If I see a Cardinal (or another common bird) perched in good light, with a favorable background, I will move left or right or attempt to get closer for the best shot that I can get. If it is an unusual bird, I will move close enough for a positive identification, but I don’t want to disturb the bird – again respect.

With a group of birders looking at a rare bird – In this case, I will do what any knowledgeable birders and photographers should do. Knowing that others might travel for hours for a chance to see the rare bird, any respectful person would keep their distance in order not to spook the bird and potentially ruin it for others.

Birders versus Photographers by Mark Nale - continued

Often, it is just a case of education. A photographer friend of mine (not a birder) once irritated a group of birders because he was out in a field trying to get closer to a snowy owl, while the birders were standing 200 yards away. In talking with him after the fact, he just didn't understand birding ethics. I don't think that he will do that again.



The author used his pickup as a blind and a recorded song to capture this image of a bobolink. Photo by Mark Nale.

Photography and birding go hand in hand. Photography certainly supports my birding and helps me to be a better birder. There are times that I am unable to positively identify some birds until after I get home and put my photos on the computer screen. Without photos, even poor ones, I would be left with an "unknown" or worse yet an incorrect identification.

Just recently, I posted a photo of a White-crowned Sparrow on eBird, only to have another birder see it and point out that it was actually a very rare Gambel's form of the White-throated Sparrow. I'm sure glad that I took that photo.

George Lepp had this advice for readers of "Outdoor Photographer." "Here is the rule that I have established for myself: No photograph is worth jeopardizing your subject – and some subjects aren't meant to be photographed. Be alert to reactions to your flash or your presence, especially when photographing vulnerable subjects such as nesting birds. Back away if feeding is disturbed. After all, we're nature photographers, not paparazzi."

There are snobs and bad actors in every group, but I have found most photographers and birders to be friendly, considerate, and helpful people. As a photographer and a birder, I find that my most fulfilling outings are when I see new or interesting things AND capture good photographs.

When a photographer isn't a birder, I think that they just need a little education to point them along the ethical path.

Don't forget to join the JVAS Email List.
You'll get updates on programs, field trips, and special events.
Send your email to: jvas771@gmail.com
We will not share your email with anyone!!
You can unsubscribe at any time.

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON
PO BOX 1013
ALTOONA, PA 16603

Address Service Requested



Honduran Coffee for sale on-line

Emilio Garcia, our partner who produces shade-grown coffee in Honduras, has expanded his coffee sales to include sustainably harvested, shade-grown coffee from other countries. You can order freshly roasted coffee (ground or whole bean) from **Lenca Coffee Roasters**: <https://lencacoffeeroasters.com>

Fair Trade shade-grown **decaf coffee** from Colombia is also available.

Emilio sells his green coffee beans through <https://lencafarms.com>

Remember, shade-grown coffee is good for you and good for our birds!

