

The Gnatcatcher

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

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JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

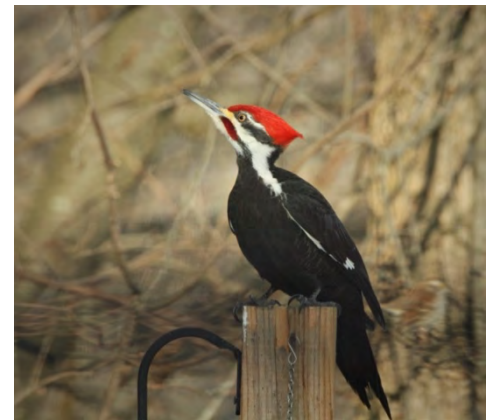


www.JVAS.org

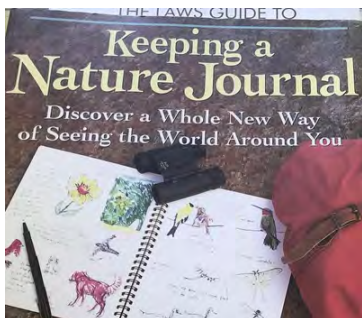
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by John Carter

Dear JVAS Community,

I was birding one of my beloved Central Pennsylvania local gems, *Canoe Creek State Park*, a few weeks ago and came across a parent and child uncovering the outdoors with their binoculars in hand. This made me smile seeing the bonding that was occurring. The boy proceeded to point toward the grove of Eastern hemlock trees with excitement after he heard a loud drumming into the state tree. The sound resonated along Mary Ann's Creek, which meanders back towards the historic Limestone Kilns. Both sets of binoculars rose and as suspected, a *Pileated Woodpecker*, was located next to the large oblong hole it was excavating. To make the sighting even better for this young lad and parent, the bird decided to take flight directly over their heads shouting its *wuk, wuk, wuk, wuk* call and displaying the white underwings that you would not usually notice while perched.



When in the field I typically document my observations by photograph and through eBird, but this instance inspired me to log the interaction in my nature field journal I call *Journey with Birds*. During the first Tuesday of the month JVAS bird walks on the Bells Gap Rail Trail, several members bring their own nature journals and reflect and document their experience. I have learned a lot from our talented members who keep a nature journal and how you don't necessarily have to be an artist, but it is an authentic way to fine tune observation abilities and to construct meaning, and a deeper understanding of the wildlife we encounter.



John Muir Laws, who is a pioneer and visionary of nature journaling, wrote an article for the Audubon Magazine you might be interested in checking out called, **"How Nature Journaling Can Make You a Better Birder."** He is an educator who has dedicated his passion to unite people to nature through art and science. I found the tools and methods discussed in the article for maintaining a nature journal beneficial and encouraging.

Continued on page 2

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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).

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, continued from page 1

If you are looking for a way to engage with nature through a different lens and working to understand the environment around you differently, starting a nature field journal might be something to try! It opens a door of curiosity and gratitude of the wonders that are around us.

I look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming field trips or programs. Thank you for your continued support of Juniata Valley Audubon Society!

Links:

Audubon article - How Nature Journaling Can Make You a Better Birder: <https://www.audubon.org/magazine/summer-2020/how-nature-journaling-can-make-you-better-birder>

John Muir Laws - Nature Journaling Getting Started:

<https://johnmuirlaws.com/nature-journaling-starting-growing/>



ATTENTION ALL JVAS MEMBERS!!



Due to an increase in postage and newsletter printing costs, we are asking members to sign up for the digital copy of The Gnatcatcher. It's easy to download from our website and, unlike the paper copy, it's in color. You can also click on hotlinks. Check it out at www.jvas.org/gnatcatcher-archive/

Please send your email address with a request for the digital Gnatcatcher to: JVAS771@GMAIL.COM. We will not share it with anyone.



FALL FIELD TRIP 2022

**Birding the Bells Gap Rail Trail the first Tuesday:
10-noon: November 1 and December 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. Parking and Trail Access to Bellwood trailhead: 163 Igou Road, Tyrone, PA 16686. Meet at the pavilion.

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

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY EVENING PROGRAMS

will be HYBRID: in person and by Zoom

Note: Follow these instructions, 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**

**The In-person meetings will be at the Bellwood-Antis Library and start at 7 pm.
526 Main St. Bellwood, PA 16617**

NOVEMBER PROGRAM: Tuesday, Nov. 15, 2022 @ 7 pm via ZOOM and In Person at the Bellwood-Antis Library

FREE DINNER at 6:30 pm: Chinese theme with vegan options, hot Honduran Coffee

BIRD STACK: TWO MIGRATORY SEASONS AT CHINA’S “CAPE MAY” by Dr. Mark Bonta

When the weather’s just right along China’s northeast coast, birds migrating on the East Asian-Australian Flyway pile up on the tips of peninsulas. Fallouts and other phenomena give these special places their reputations as “bird stacks,” none more famous than Laotieshan (Old-Iron-Mountain) at the southern tip of the Liaodong Peninsula. Purely serendipitously, Dr. Bonta landed a teaching job in the shadow of Laotieshan in 2018, at the Liaoning University for International Business and Economics (<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L7879806>).



Siberian Rubythroat

During one glorious year, he recorded 133 species on campus ponds, forest, and fields, and gained valuable insights to the many threats and opportunities facing Chinese bird conservation. Along the way, he saw clouds of Amur Falcons appear and disappear as if by magic, thousands of Chestnut-flanked White-eyes streaming over for days on end, orioles, bulbuls, snipes, flycatchers, grosbeaks, and Phylloscopus leaf warblers all over the ground and trees, and even Siberian Rubythroats flying into open classroom windows. Join Dr. Bonta for a slideshow on this spectacle, and a sobering assessment of the future of birds in one of the most biodiverse countries in the world.

Dr. Bonta is the field trip chair for Juniata Valley Audubon Society and well-known to many. Mark was raised on a Pennsylvania mountaintop and went on to explore the remote corners of the planet through service to the Peace Corps and academic research at several small colleges. He has traversed 40 countries and six continents in his pursuit of global citizenship and has been involved in environmental conservation efforts in the Philippines, Australia, Honduras, Mexico, and the US. His many passions include all things related to birds, including the wisdom traditions of avifauna among local and Indigenous peoples. Mark is also a leading expert on cycads, “living fossils,” that are the most threatened group of plants in the world. You can access his publications at <https://markbonta.academia.edu> and his eBird profile at <https://ebird.org/pa/profile/NDE4MTI5/world>



Amur Falcon

DECEMBER PROGRAM: CALLING ALL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTERS!

The JVAS CBC (the Culp Count) is Saturday, December 17, 2022



We need volunteers to scan the fields, skies, backyards, ponds, lakes – anywhere birds might be found.

If you live in the circle, you can be a **feeder watcher** and count your backyard birds, or you can be a **field observer** and cover a certain section of the count circle,

which is centered at Culp in Sinking Valley. We encourage counters to work in teams – the more eyes the better!

Sign up soon to be a counter!

Call or email Laura Jackson or John Carter, Count Coordinators.

Laura: Phone: 814-494-4439 Email: jacksonlaura73@gmail.com

John: Phone: 814-933-7426 Email: carter0206@aol.com



The **Tally Rally** will be held at the **U.S. Hotel Tavern**, 401 S. Juniata St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648.

Each person pays their way.

We'll meet at **5 pm in the Gold Room**, order from the menu, and after we eat, we will do the bird species tally. Menu: <https://www.ushoteltavern.com/tavern-menu/>

You don't have to be a counter to join us, but let **Laura know by Saturday, Dec. 10** if you plan to attend since seating is limited.

Counters will be assigned a section of the circle, so counts don't overlap. Let John or Laura know what section you'd like to cover.

Sections:

Northern Altoona

Bellwood

Tyrone-Tipton

Tyrone Treatment Plan

Brush Mountain (NE end)

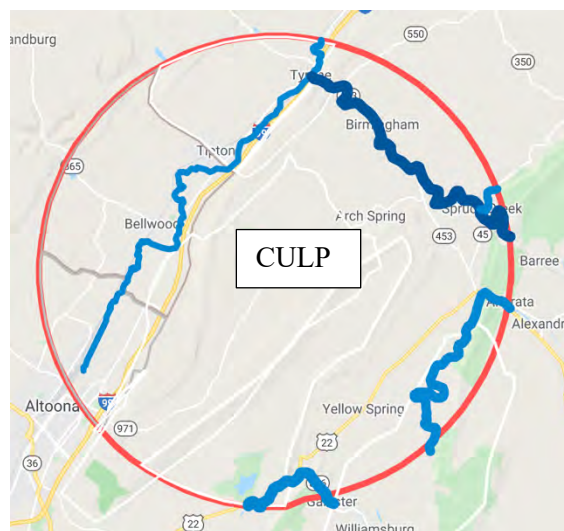
Sinking Valley

Canoe Creek State Park

Canoe Valley

State Game Lands

Juniata River Corridor



The Bedford Co. CBC is centered at Manns Choice, Pa. and will be held on Saturday, Dec. 31, 2022.

Contact compilers Mike & Laura Jackson: 814-494-4439 or jacksonlaura73@gmail.com if you are willing to help. The Tally Rally will be held at Hosses Steak and Seafood. 4308 Bus. 220, Bedford, PA, starting at 5 pm. Each person pays for their own dinner.

FALL FIELD TRIP



Pop-up Tyrone Golden Eagle viewing (sign-up list only)

Not the team but the bird! Up to 29 Golden Eagles have been sighted along Brush Mt in the Tyrone area in a single day in early December! A very small number of people will be able to access a private deck in Tyrone with a sweeping view of the Tyrone Gap, to tally eagles - weather permitting.

When: weekends between November 19 and December 11.

Exact days and times depend on the weather and the host's availability, so it is important to be flexible. If you are signed up, you will be contacted for confirmation; preferred dates will be considered.

Where to meet: Park and Ride, East 10th St, Tyrone, PA 16686.

What to bring: Spotting scope, binoculars, folding deck chair. Bathroom, kitchen, and inside space (warm) available. Must be able to climb steep stairs to the second floor.

If you would like to sign-up for a chance to view the "Tyrone Golden Eagles," contact Mark Bonta at 814-600-8394, email markabonta@yahoo.com.

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.

Rutter's application is under review being by the DEP.

JVAS members have repeatedly expressed their concerns and opposition at Smithfield Township meetings. Please attend the monthly township meetings to express your concerns: the first Tuesday of each month, at 6:00 PM 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>



Send your concerns about potential water pollution to DEP:

Scott Williamson scwilliams@pa.gov

Regional Program Manager

S. Central Regional Office

909 Elmerton Ave.

Harrisburg, PA 17110

Phone: 717-705-4799

Ask DEP to require an individual permit for this project and schedule a public hearing so our concerns can be raised.

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.

The concerns for this Rutter's Store (with parking for 53 trucks) are similar to those in Huntingdon. Stormwater and other pollution will flow into the wetlands along Sandy Run, a High-Quality Coldwater Fishery. The Pa. Fish & Boat Comm. classifies Sandy Run as a Class A Wild Trout stream with naturally reproducing wild trout, thus making it an Exceptional Value wetland. JVAS President John Carter and other local conservation groups participated in a DEP public hearing to share water pollution concerns. A decision from DEP is pending.



It was seven o'clock when my alarm went off on the morning of October 25th, which I'll add is **QUITE** early for a 'night owl' like myself. As an artist, I often find myself wallowing in pools of creativity well past midnight – which means waking up around 9 AM most days. Not many things will drag me out of bed before daylight, but **BIRDS** are one of them. On this morning, I had plans to meet a very special bird that resides in Centre County on private property, a beautiful male Ruffed Grouse. And so, I completed my morning chores – packed my camera and a sandwich and awaited the arrival of my chauffeur for the day, author, and professional photographer Timothy Flanigan.

Tim is one of the country's leading Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock experts and has published an incredible book with his writing and photography titled: "**GROUSE & WOODCOCK – The Birds of my Life**" which is available through Wild River Press. I met Tim at the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association conference in Tioga County, where I quickly became friends with Tim and his wife Deborah last spring. The couple was 'retiring' from the exhibition and show business and sold me a humungous and professional art display to aid in my career growth, at an extremely fair price. I was so grateful, that when my friend Kelsey messaged me about this curious Ruffed Grouse, I knew exactly who I wanted to bring with me; Ruffed Grouse connoisseur, Tim Flanigan.

We pulled into the camp property around 11:30 AM – which was surrounded by forest. Beside the camp a beautiful trout stream cut through the landscape, as autumn leaves dropped into the water. Immediately upon our approach in the vehicles, a mature Bald Eagle took flight – apparently hunting the long deep fishing hole created by camp members for kids that wanted to catch trophy trout. It would seem our eagle friend also had an eye on the prize – although he did not make a successful catch while we were there. This was the first time an eagle was observed at the camp, which is tucked deep within the forests of Centre County. A thick ceiling of leaves that formed on the surface of the pools aided in hiding the trout from predation.

As we gathered our gear, we headed down a leafy path, lined with massive trees, plenty of grouse cover, and fiery-colored cinnamon ferns. Partridge berries vined out of nearby moss, and the smell of damp leaves shifted in the air as I observed several different clusters of mushrooms on the ground. Suddenly, the forest pulsed with the dull thuds of a displaying grouse. Not just any grouse, it was "our grouse," and the one we had driven nearly an hour to meet.

Flanigan, who one might consider a bit of a 'grouse whisperer,' beat his hand rhythmically against his chest to imitate the sound. The grouse, which we will colloquially refer to as "Stony," responded with another series of wingbeats. As many of us know, the Ruffed Grouse typically displays this behavior in spring – but given the similarities in day-length and temperature in autumn, these territorial displays do occur in October, as well. To prove it, at least 3 other grouse responded to the territorial wing-beat display with vigor from their personal drumming posts.



Each post, usually a large stump or log, was hundreds of yards apart, but that sound carried like the heartbeat of the forest as we sat enamored by it. After all, Ruffed Grouse are declining in numbers, largely due to West Nile Virus, habitat loss, and mild winters.

"There he is!" Tim whispered, as a football sized brownish object paced toward us in the leaf litter.

It was Stony, a stunning male Ruffed Grouse that had not come to play games – but instead, deter us from overstaying our welcome on his territory.

I've read that this "brave" territorial behavior occurs in spring, but I have known at least TWO Ruffed Grouse that also display this behavior in autumn. Case in point – Stony trotted at Tim, Deborah, Josh, Kelsey, and myself with no inhibitions. He came to prove a point.

We dispersed into a circle formation around several tree falls, set up our cameras and prepared to observe and photograph Stony as he made his paces. Deborah Flanigan pulled out a jar full of red berries from a white-flowering dogwood – and scattered them across the ground and on several of the logs for Stony. It didn't take long for him to start gulping them down, swallowing each berry whole as he made his way from person to person.

Tim, who was trying to get me to photograph specific points of reference for my paintings, asked me to take notice of various anatomical features key to accurate representations. "Notice the hook to the bill, and how the top portion is longer, and curved almost like a bird of prey," Tim noted. "Notice how the top overlaps the bottom, like a pair of scissors for snipping vegetation. And Michael - take lots of photos of those FEET! Notice the shape, and how they shift with the bird's weight. Take note of the small growths on the toes – those are called pectinations. You'll want to include those on any bird you paint in a fall or winter scene."

I photographed everything. I had noticed the comb-like structures on the toes, but I had never heard of pectinations. As it turns out, these are lateral extensions of the toe scales, that serve as temporary "snowshoes" for grouse in winter. They only have these on their feet from autumn to spring, which is key to know when depicting Ruffed Grouse in paintings.



"Notice the leg feathers, those are temporary. The Ruffed Grouse grows its own long johns in the fall. It will molt them in spring, revealing the bird's bare legs again," Tim stated. All of this intrigued me deeply as I snapped photos of Stony. These were critical things to know if I were to improve my grouse art. After all, very few wildlife artists truly depict the bird accurately. I want to be in the company of those artists one day, and the only way to do it was by strict and detailed observation of the bird from life. Evermore, I sunk into gratefulness as I soaked in the experience.

While I had hoped for the grouse to jump on a log and begin drumming, that would not happen. "Grouse are very shy and secretive when doing this display. To capture it requires you set up a blind at his drumming log, and wait patiently, sometimes all day long. This grouse is in protector mode – so I doubt he will drum," Tim said.

In the canopy above us, a Red-breasted Nuthatch called, and the sound of Juncos could be heard chipping in the brush across the creek. Birds were everywhere, but none had my attention like the one before me. At this point, preening his feathers with a belly full of dogwood berries, Stony had relaxed. It is incredible to me how the markings on this bird work in various patterns to both bedazzle and HIDE the bird in its natural environment. Even the black ruff, which both male AND females have, contained a beautiful iridescence as the bird worked his feathers in front of me, like a model posing for the camera. Unfortunately, only male birds display this aggressive outward behavior that we were experiencing, so I achieved no photos of a female grouse.



Bidding him farewell, our group left Stony – not wanting to stress him anymore. Back at the picnic table, we ate lunch and chatted, while Stony slipped back to his 'drumming log' to display and contribute to the cacophony of pulsating thuds that resonated around us. The sun cracked through the leaves, as a pair of trout could be seen breaking water and spawning near a riffle. Today, we had truly witnessed a King, and a spectacle we will never forget. Thank you to Kelsey and Josh for your hospitality, as well as Tim Flanigan for the incredible lesson in Ruffed Grouse behavior on this beautiful autumn day. Now...time to get painting!

Juniata Valley Audubon Society Sticker Design Contest:

JVAS is having a sticker design contest and we want you to submit your best effort that resembles the mission of our amazing Audubon chapter!

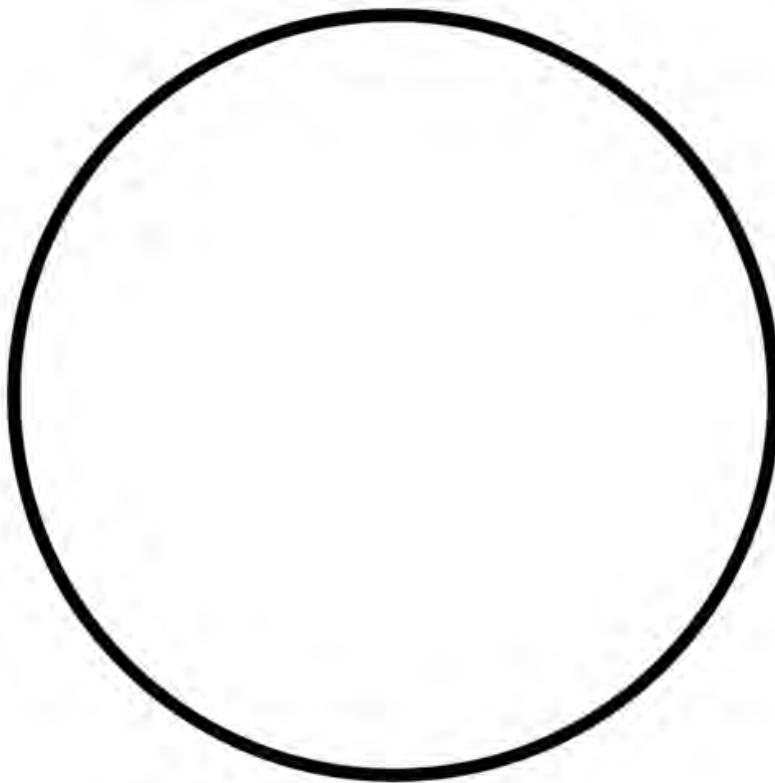
Contest Deadline: Entries must be received no later than **December 31, 2022**.

Subject Matter: Read and understand all the contest rules before creating a design. The design must be the artist's original creation and shall not be copied or duplicated.

- Design must be the same size and shape as circle below (4 in. x 4 in.).
- MUST USE: **JVAS.ORG** within the design.
- All colors must be flat and solid, with no shading, blending or halftones.
- Do not use a signature.

Entries may be submitted in one of two ways:

1. Send in via regular mail. The completed contest entry form must be included, and design sent to: ***Juniata Valley Audubon Society -- PO Box 1013 -- Altoona, PA 16603***
2. Save design file electronically (PNG or JPG). Electronic signatures are accepted on the entry form. Attach both the design file and the contest entry form to an email and send to:
carter0206@aol.com



ENTRY AGREEMENT

I, the artist, hereby enter into this agreement with the Juniata Valley Audubon Society, hereinafter referred to as the JVAS, and submit an original design to the JVAS sticker design contest subject to all the following conditions.

1. This entry is of my own creation and is not copied, manipulated, or duplicated from previously published photographs, artwork or electronic graphic images.
2. I understand that no prizes other than recognition will be awarded.
3. JVAS is not liable for any damage to or for the loss of any entry submitted by an artist. Insuring the entry, if desired, is the responsibility of the artist.
4. The artwork may be copied or reproduced, and the admission stickers may be provided to the public by JVAS. Reproductions of any artwork submitted may be published or otherwise reproduced by the JVAS for the distribution to others for copying and may be used for informational and educational purposes.
5. Any and all reproductions or copies of the design made or authorized by JVAS may identify the artist at the JVAS's discretion.
6. I verify that no copyright infringements have been made by my design and acknowledge that I am liable for falsifying information.

I verify that I have read and comply with all the contest rules

Print Name:

Email:

Signature:

Date:



www.JVAS.org

Exploring and Protecting Nature in Central Pennsylvania

President: John Carter

Vice-President: Laura Jackson

Secretary: Schawanne Kilgus

Treasurer: George Mahon

Address: P. O. Box 1013 Altoona, PA 16603

JOIN JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Your continued support will make a difference in our work to protect birds, their habitats, and the natural world we love. Even if you can't attend any of our activities, your membership provides important financial support. Please consider joining or renewing your Chapter-only membership in Juniata Valley Audubon Society.

Renewing members will continue to enjoy:

- 5 issues of our newsletter, *The Gnatcatcher*
- Local birding and community events
- A voice in the fight to protect birds and their habitats

Sincerely,

John Carter

John Carter

----- ✂ -----Cut here and return bottom portion-----

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

Check the appropriate box:

- ☐ Individual Membership, \$15
- ☐ Family Membership, \$20
- ☐ Supporting Membership, \$35

- ☐ Friend of the JVAS, \$50
- ☐ Corporate Membership, \$100
- ☐ Life Membership, \$500

Membership Year runs from January 1st to December 31st

Make your check payable to the JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail to:

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

NOTE: YOU CAN RENEW 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.

NOTE: If you join in June – December, your membership is good for the next year, too!

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!

