

The Gnatcatcher

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

Vol. LVI, No. 2 March – April 2023

Published bimonthly (except for July and August)

as a benefit for members of the

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



www.JVAS.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by John Carter

Dear JVAS Community,

It is with cheer and sadness that I share this will be my last JVAS President's message. I will be stepping down as I am planning to move back to my hometown in Chambersburg, PA to be near my family. I am fortunate to have a career where I can work remotely, and I could not pass this opportunity up to be closer to them. I am beyond grateful to have served as your President for the last 2.5 years, but look to serve as the immediate Past President, and participate in future events.

There are so many joyful memories that I have from being part of JVAS, but one I want to recount is a field trip I co- led at Canoe Creek SP with Mark Nale. We had about 12 people on the migration bird walk, and the warblers were just singing their hearts out. One of my favorite things about leading a bird walk is watching the excitement of others seeing a "life-bird," one that they laid eyes on for the very first time. A dazzling Hooded Warbler and a Yellow-billed Cuckoo helped fit the bill for many observers on this day.



Hooded Warbler photo by John Carter

As we continued our stroll, another shoe, was when an Osprey shouted from lake. This was such a fun morning I will



Osprey photo by John Carter

impressive bird-sighting that made people jump out of their the skies after it had just plunged its talons in a fish from the never forget!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President's Message.....Pages 1,2
Spring Banquet.....Page 3
Evening Programs.....Page 4
Field Trips.....Page 5

Earth Week Birding Classic.....Page 5
Old Crow Wetland Update.....Page 6
White-throated Sparrows.....Pages 7,8
Join JVAS chapterPage 9
Lenca Coffee for sale.....Page 9

Continued on page 2

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, Mark Bonta

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

Vice President, Laura Jackson

- ♦ 814-494-4439
- ♦ jacksonlaura73@gmail.com

Secretary, Schawne Kilgus

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

Treasurer, George Mahon

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

Immediate Past President, John Carter

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

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership, Denise Rodaniche

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

Conservation, Laura Jackson

Partners in Neotropical Bird Conservation,

- ♦ Laura Jackson

Education, Susan Braun

- ♦ 814-574-0795
- ♦ braun3112@gmail.com

Field Trips, Michael Kensing

- ♦ 814-505-3410
- ♦ michaelkensing@gmail.com

Publications & Publicity, Matt Karabinos

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

Hospitality, Catie Farr

- ♦ 570-651-3839
- ♦ catiekg5059@gmail.com

Historian, Mike Jackson

- ♦ 814-494-3631
- ♦ mljackson2@icloud.com

Website Administrator, Dave Bonta

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

The Gnatcatcher Editor, Laura Jackson

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

- ♦ Warren Baker
- ♦ Sharon Clewell
- ♦ Paola Jaramillo Calderon

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, continued from page 1

I would like to give a sincere thank you to Laura and Mike Jackson for their unending support and mentorship as I took on this role. I have learned so much and had many great experiences including completing a 3-year grassland survey on SGL 198, coordinating the Culp CBC together, raising funds for the Earth-week Bird Classic, participation on the PA Audubon council, program and field trip collaborations and the list goes on. Thank you both for your admirable efforts and dedication to helping birds thrive and our environment improve!

I would also like to provide special thanks and appreciation to Dr. Mark Bonta, who will step into the Interim-President's role, for first getting me engaged with JVAS by helping to secure funds for our research trip to Australia. This blossomed into taking on a bigger role as a director at large and then eventually serving as JVAS President. Mark your knowledge and love for birds are unparalleled. I look forward to another international trip with you.

A special thank you to all JVAS board members I have come to know well and that have helped move the mission forward. And of course, it has been absolutely wonderful getting to know and hear from our amazing JVAS members. Your continued support towards protecting birds and this beloved Audubon Society is truly valued.

"Nature has been for me, for as long as I remember, a source of solace, inspiration, adventure, and delight; a home, a teacher, a companion." -- Lorraine Anderson

The JVAS Spring Banquet is Back!!!

Tuesday, April 18, 2023, Bellwood Fire Hall
Catered Meal is just \$20 per person (BYO Alcohol)

Silent Auction

Door Prizes

Conservation Award to Greg Williams

Presenter Rob Fergus: "How Birds Made Us Human"

Registration and payment due Monday, April 3

More details on page 3

African
Crowned
Eagle



PLEASE
RESERVE
BY MONDAY
APRIL 3

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY SPRING BANQUET

TUESDAY, APRIL 18, 2023
BELLWOOD FIRE HALL

5 pm: Silent Auction

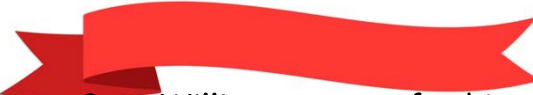
6 pm: Dinner

7 pm: Award Ceremony

7:30 pm: Presentation by Rob Fergus

The Fire Department is located at
399 South 1st Street, Bellwood, Pa.
There's plenty of parking in the rear.

We will enjoy a catered dinner featuring stuffed chicken breast, mashed potatoes with gravy, salad, green beans, and white cake. Drinks are iced tea, coffee, and ice water. BYO ALCOHOL.



After dinner we will honor **Greg Williams** (on left) for his exemplary efforts coordinating volunteers to remove invasive species and restore natural habitats with native species. These remarkable projects are focused along the Lower Trail, Detwiler Park, Walnut Springs Park, and other natural areas.



"How Birds Made Us Human," presented by Rob Fergus, PhD. (below)

People have been living and interacting with birds since before we were human. Many of the behaviors that we take to be inherently human—including walking upright, using tools, language, writing, music, dance, sewing, pottery, home building, and flight—were perfected by birds long before we became human. This presentation looks at the shared history of humans and birds and how we may have become human by copying these behaviors from birds in our shared environment.

Rob is the National Audubon Senior Scientist for Urban Bird Conservation. He currently teaches geography and environmental studies at Rowan University.



Eurasian
Kingfisher

Name(s) _____

Phone No. _____ Email: _____

Number of tickets _____ x \$20 = _____

Make check payable to JVAS. Mail this form and payment to Laura Jackson 8621 Black Valley Road Everett, PA 15537 no later than Monday, April 3, 2023, to reserve dinner, or pay at the March 21

Evening Meeting. Email or call if you have questions:

jacksonlaura73@gmail.com or call 814-494-4439



Lammergeier or Bearded Vulture

(you'll learn about this bird and others shown here in Rob's program.)

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY EVENING PROGRAMS

-----mark your calendar-----

Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at 7 pm: Artist Night (hybrid: in-person and via Zoom)

Tuesday, April 18, 2023, at 5 pm: Spring Banquet – see page 3

Tuesday, May 16, 2023, at 7 pm: Members' Night (in-person only)

Tuesday, June 20, 2023, at 5:30 pm: Picnic Pavilion #2 Canoe Creek State Park

Note: Follow these instructions for 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**

Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at 7 pm: Artist Night (hybrid: in-person and via Zoom)

Free Meal compliments of Catie Farr starts at 6 pm

Join Arlene Lennox, Denice Rodaniche, Sam Dietze, and Michael Kensinger for an evening of art in nature as they share their passion and creative interpretations of our natural world with artwork ranging from sketches of plants and birds, to landscape paintings and bird portraits. Here's a preview of their talent: L to R: (top) Arlene, Michael; (below) Sam, Denice.



BELLWOOD TROLLEY TRAIL FIELD TRIP IS CHANGED TO RAY AMATO MEMORIAL NATURE TRAIL behind the Northern Blair Rec Center – find out why:

The Wood Ducks at the Ray Amato Memorial Nature Trail inspired Michael Kensinger to create this winning painting that was chosen as the 2021 PA Waterfowl Management Stamp Design by the PA Game Commission, “Sycamore Retreat.”
Congratulations, Michael!



Update to LOCATION meeting for 1st Tuesday of the month bird walks. During the first walk at the Bellwood Trolley trail in which we had 11 people attend, we found out that starting in March the township will be closing the trail and will begin a coal reclamation project for the next 3 years. So, our plan is to switch the walks to **Birding the Ray Amato Memorial Nature Trail behind the Northern Blair Rec Center** every first Tuesday of each month led by George Mahon.

Dates: 3/7, 4/4, 5/2, 6/6, 7/4, 8/1, 9/5, 10/3, 11/7, 12/5/2023

Join George Mahon on Birding the **Ray Amato Memorial Nature Trail behind the Northern Blair Rec Center** every first Tuesday of the Month from 10 am-12pm. “We will stroll a little over a mile of the trail and get a close look at the Little Juniata River. Let’s track what different bird species we see each month, what different plants we encounter and have an enjoyable walk.”

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

Address for Northern Blair Rec Center: 4080 E Pleasant Valley Blvd, Altoona, PA



←—————→
Earth Week Birding Classic: Friday noon April 14 – Sunday noon April 23, 2023
Registration Deadline is Sunday April 9. Banquet and Awards at 1 pm, April 23.

The goal is for teams in seven different categories to count as many species of birds as possible over a 24-hour period any time beginning on Apr 14 at noon and ending at noon on April 23. This non-profit event is co-sponsored by the Environmental Studies program at Penn State Altoona and JVAS. Pledges that team members garner will support bird conservation and education in central Pennsylvania. Teams of 3 or more (2 or more for Senior citizens) will count birds in Blair and surrounding counties, and Trophies will be awarded during the closing ceremony immediately following the event. The banquet and awards ceremony will begin at 1 pm at the **Slep Student Center at Penn State Altoona located at 3000 Ivyside Park, Altoona, PA.**

Team Categories: Coot (age 65 and over), Osprey (Penn State Altoona students only), Towhee (bird single county), Mallard (only on campus at PSA), Pipit (on foot only), Phoebe (family), Ruffed Grouse (most species)

To register and for more information, please contact Catherine Farr at catiegk5059@gmail.com.

MARCH AND APRIL FIELD TRIPS: Michael Kensinger is our new Field Trip Chair
Thanks so much, Michael, for stepping up to plan and lead nature adventures!



Common Goldeneye Photo by Tim Bowman

SATURDAY, March 11, 2023: 9 AM - 12 PM

Migratory Waterfowl and general bird observations around riparian areas of Canoe Lake at Canoe Creek State Park.

Join wildlife artist, writer, and naturalist Michael Kensinger for a jaunt around the edges of Canoe Lake in search of various migratory and transient waterfowl species, in addition to other birds and wildlife. We will meet in the large parking lot near Pavilion 2.

March is the peak of migration for many species that use the lake, including many species of dabbling ducks, divers, loons, grebes, cormorants and more. Let's see how many species we can tally for the day! At the end of the hike, we can rendezvous and enjoy snacks and conversation as we go over the results of the morning's tally.

What to bring: binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, drink, packed lunch (optional) if you choose to hang out.

Address: Meet at Canoe Creek State Park parking lot beside PAVILION 2, located downhill of the Terry Wentz educational center. 205 Canoe Creek Rd, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

If you have any questions or need more information please contact trip leader, Michael Kensinger, at (814) 505-3410, or email him at MichaelKensinger@gmail.com. If inclement weather arrives this day, please contact Michael to verify that event is still taking place for the sake of safety.

SATURDAY, April 15, 2023: 5 PM - DARK. Woodcock Walk at Canoe Creek State Park

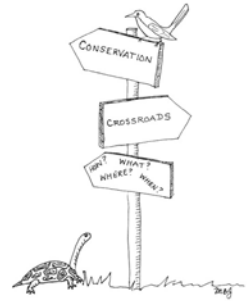
Join wildlife artist, writer, and naturalist Michael Kensinger as we saunter around the staging area for American Woodcock courtship displays.

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

Address: Meet at parking lot beside Canoe Creek State Park Office, 205 Canoe Creek Rd, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

If you have any questions or need more information please contact trip leader, Michael Kensinger, at (814) 505-3410, or email him at MichaelKensinger@gmail.com. If inclement weather arrives this day, please contact Michael to verify that event is still taking place for the sake of safety.

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 these concerns is found at www.JVAS.org. Click on the Conservation tab.



Old Crow Wetland Update – there is still time to take action!

Old Crow is a PennDOT mitigated wetland just outside Huntingdon, Pa. that provides much needed habitat for a variety of wildlife, but especially for nesting and migrating birds. Unfortunately, Rutter's wants to build a 7-acre paved truck stop/convenience store adjacent and upslope to the wetland, potentially sending harmful hydrocarbon pollutants into the watershed. In addition, there will be bright lights, litter, and other impacts that will degrade the wonderful habitat that Old Crow currently provides to wildlife.

Fortunately, Rutter's has not purchased or leased the land and they have not received any local or state permits. We hope you will join a coalition of folks who are concerned about the improper location of a truck stop next to this precious wetland.

We are waiting to hear DEP's response to plans that Rutter's submitted in January. All of the documents are on DEP's website: [Smithfield Township Rutter's 93 \(pa.gov\)](http://www.dep.state.pa.us/smithfield)

Some ways you can get involved:

Join our Facebook group: Join our Facebook group (a private group – ask to join it.)

[Coalition to Save Old Crow wetland \(Huntingdon PA\) | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CoalitiontoSaveOldCrowWetland/)

Call, email, or write to:

1. Rutter's Management. Ask them to build in another location.

Rutter's Gas Stations, 2100 N George St, York, Pennsylvania, 17404 (717) 848-9827

Scott Hartman -- CEO, Rutter's shartman@rutters.com

Eric Hershey -- M & G Realty, Inc. Eric.Hershey@rutters.com

Tim Bieber -- Project Manager, Site Development, Rutter's shartman@rutters.com

Brett Garner -- Director of Operations, Rutter's bgarner@rutters.com

Christopher Hartman -- vice president, Rutter's chartman@rutters.com

2. PA Department of Environmental Protection and Huntingdon Co. Conservation District (HCCD)

Ask for a DEP hearing on Rutter's application so members of the community can express their concerns.

Ask for Rutter's to be required to apply for an Individual permit, not a General permit.

Scott Williamson, DEP Waterways and Wetlands Regional Program Manager

SCRO (S. Central Regional Office), 909 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110 Call: 717 705 4799, and

Email: Scott Williamson scwilliams@pa.gov and Nathan Phillips natphillip@pa.gov

Copy your email to Celina Seftas, manager for HCCD. Email: manager@huntingdonconservation.org.

3. Smithfield Twp Zoning and Planning Office: attend meetings 1st Tuesday of each month at 6 pm

202 South 13th Street, Suite 3, Huntingdon, PA 16652 814-643-6702 smithtwp@comcast.net

<http://www.huntingdoncounty.net/Munic/SmithfieldTownship/>

4. PA Dept. of Transportation, District 9 8736 William Penn Highway, Huntingdon PA 16652 (814) 643-0150

<https://www.penndot.pa.gov/ContactUs/Pages/default.aspx>



Illustration by Michael Kensinger

The Bird with Four Sexes: The White-throated Sparrow by Michael Kensinger

Opposites attract when it comes to mate selection in the white-throated sparrow...

The White-throated Sparrow is primarily a non-breeding bird in Pennsylvania but is a common sight at many bird feeders and thickets from late October until May. Many hunters who consider themselves birders may recognize this delightful sparrow as it forages in leaf litter, garnering curiosity (or distraction) on those slow days in the woods.

Close observation of these ground-feeding birds will reveal two primary color morphs, one with white “eyebrows” and one with tan “eyebrows”. These “eyebrows” are simply stripes of color that run along the head, above the eyes. White-striped individuals are rather pretty for a sparrow; a bird that many people think of as “little brown jobs” that are difficult to identify. With a mouse-gray body, bold white throat patch, white stripes on the head, and a bright lemon-yellow spot in front of the eye, there is no other sparrow that looks like it. The tan-striped variety, however, looks like a white striped one that sat in a room of chain-smokers and became stained heavily with nicotine. It has much more non-descript plumage, making it more camouflage in the thicket.

The first reaction of many people is to assume the drab tan-striped variation is a female, and the more colorful, white-striped variation is male. This is called ‘sexual dimorphism’, and while common in many

bird species, you might be surprised to find that is not the case here. With white-throats, color is not indicative of sex. It is, however, indicative of the bird's overall temperament, particularly in the breeding season when it returns to Canada and northern New England states to reproduce.

The White-throated Sparrow forages primarily on the ground. Unlike some species, they shy away from perch feeders, doing their best to stick close to brush piles, thickets, and woody tangles. While observing these birds in action, birders and scientists noticed that the white-striped color morph was more aggressive than the tan-striped. This trait might not be quite as noticeable while the birds are in Pennsylvania – but the differences show up a lot stronger when they begin mate selection, migration, and choosing territories in the north.

So, as previously mentioned, color doesn't define the sex of the bird. And interestingly, studies show that no matter what the color of the given individual White-throated Sparrow, that bird will show a strong preference for a mate of the opposite color morph. So, a white-striped female, seeks a drabber, tan-striped male, or vice versa. Because of this unique phenomenon, there are four potential pair combinations, resulting in the bird being called "the bird with four sexes". So, one quarter of the population are white-striped males, one quarter are tan-striped males, one quarter are white-striped females, and one quarter are tan striped females. That means, as an individual, the bird will only have the option to mate with 25 percent of the population.

Whether male or female, the white-browed color morph of our White-throated Sparrows is a territorial bird. These individuals will fight valiantly to defend a territory and nest from intruders – including other white-throated sparrows who want to claim the spot as their own. Even at feeders, these plumed protagonists will chase invasive English Sparrows – who typically bully other birds. With a flip-flap, and a whirl of wingbeats, a determined white-throated sparrow can send several competing birds in all directions. As with all birds, the increase of testosterone in spring heightens the behavior. It has also been noted that the white-striped morphs, whether male or female, sing more often than tan-striped morphs. This makes perfect sense considering singing is primarily a territorial behavior, and white-striped morphs being the more territorial race of the species.

In sharp contrast, the tan-striped variety of this species tend to be more docile, at least in the breeding season. In the rare cases where two tan-striped birds attempted a nest – they were not aggressive enough to hold a territory. Studies show however, these birds are much more focused on nesting duties. For reasons we can't quite be sure of, the tan-browed morphs, whether male or female, are best at maintaining a clean nest, feeding young, and general maintenance of said nest – which is important to keep the nest free of parasites. Such a trait is just as vital as defending the territory.

Studies have shown that pairs of the more warrior-prone, white-striped morphs, spent so much time defending the territory, that nest care duties fell to the wayside, resulting in a lack of nest success. Spending all your time puffing your chest, singing, and chasing other birds has its drawbacks when there are mouths to feed. And so, nature designed these incredible birds to prefer the opposite race. This adaptation has allowed for a better balance regarding parental duties.

With white-striped birds spending more time defending the territory, and their tan-browed mates spending more time tending to nest duties, white-throated sparrows have proven that they know the recipe for success. Instinctively, this fantastic bird species understands that opposites attract, and that both 'personalities' are vital to the survival of their offspring. Perhaps humans too, can look at this as further confirmation that they too, could benefit from pairing up with a person who is very different from themselves.



Become a JVAS Chapter-only member – we need your support!!

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 _____



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!

