

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 CORNER by Mark Bonta

Dear JVAS Community,

Why migrants? Think twice!

Buried in popular coverage of the climate crisis a few years back was this piece at <https://www.futurity.org/migration-from-central-america-2214952-2/>, 'Is climate change driving migration from Central America?' Around 2019, there were a flurry of reports claiming climate change in countries such as Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador were responsible for a massive outflow of people northward.

The article discusses a National Science Foundation-funded study by geographers at the University of Arizona and elsewhere that reached a conclusion similar to mine: Hogwash! "Migration is complicated and there are many reasons that people migrate...[this] doesn't mean that an individual climate event can't have an impact, but there are other driving forces...such as limited land and resources, violence, and corruption," the leader researcher explained.

As a geographer myself, and a life-long student of Central America, I find that this study resonates with my own experience. I've been engaged with Honduras since 1991, and climate change was a primordial reason I first worked in Honduran national parks while I was a Peace Corps Volunteer. Climate change brought together impoverished rural communities to save the environment and protect their water sources, fomenting—there and across Latin America—a veritable local-grown environmental revolution that has received scant coverage in US media. Why, then, am I agreeing with the study?

Microclimate change

Because the climate change that communities were concerned about was (and remains) microclimate alteration. Decades of deforestation funded by North American and European agricultural and forestry development projects had reduced rainforests and pine forests to grasslands during the Green Revolution. Tiny mountaintop water reserves called "cloud forests" were among the last hope for communities in surrounding lowlands, where deforestation had otherwise wrecked watersheds. USAID, the World Bank, and numerous other aid and lending agencies had transferred billions of dollars into the pockets of "entrepreneurs" who rotated between political office and ownership of logging companies, agro-export corporations, and other rapacious ventures. In living memory, places had become hotter and dried as forests turned into deserts.

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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, Mark Bonta

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

Vice President, Laura Jackson

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

Secretary, Catie Farr

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

Treasurer, George Mahon

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

Immediate Past President, John Carter

- ♦ 814-933-7426
- ♦ carter@0206@aol.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership, Denice 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 Kensinger

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

Publications & Publicity

- ♦ VACANT

Hospitality, Catie Farr

- ♦ 570-651-3839
- ♦ catiegk5059@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

WHY PROMOTE SHADE-GROWN COFFEE?

It's simple – it's healthy for birds and for you!



Most coffee that you buy is **SUN COFFEE**— all native plants are destroyed, and the coffee shrubs are grown in big fields where they are sprayed with pesticides, and often irrigated and fertilized. Just like a corn field! Since the natural habitat has been destroyed there are very few insects to support birds. Most of the coffee sold in grocery stores is **SUN COFFEE** and is often poor quality.

SHADE-GROWN coffee farmers don't use pesticides and often create their own compost to naturally fertilize the coffee shrubs. Farmers plant their coffee shrubs on the forest floor, under the canopy of native trees. This means there are a lot of insects for birds to eat.

Researchers have found that many of our songbirds spend the winter in **SHADE-GROWN** coffee farms because they are able to find abundant insects to eat and abundant cover for protection.

Some JVAS members visited Emilio's coffee farm near Marcala, Honduras to verify that it is organic-practice, shade-grown coffee and we saw many species of songbirds on his farm. Emilio is now working toward getting **Bird-Friendly** certification for his coffee, which is the gold standard for quality and environmentally healthy coffee. We are proud to support Emilio and his efforts to produce healthy coffee and a healthy environment for birds, such as the (L to R) Black-and-White Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Kentucky Warbler.



Celebrate Earth Day Every Day Drink Shade-grown Coffee

Emilio Garcia, our partner who produces shade-grown coffee on his farm 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> Order the Honduran coffee if you want Emilio's single origin, direct trade coffee.

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!

**JVAS OFFICER NOMINATIONS DUE
BY TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2024**



Dear Members of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society,

This is a reminder that every two years we elect officers to lead our organization. The next election for President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer will be held at the March 19th evening meeting and installed at the April 16th Spring Banquet – see the Banquet Flyer insert.

A Nominating Committee was appointed at the February 2024 Board meeting to suggest nominees for these positions. **We are asking all members to please submit any individuals you would like to serve in the following positions:**

President - Directs the affairs of the Society, supervises activities, acts as spokesman, prepares budget, plans Annual Meeting program, presides at all meetings.

Vice President - Assists the President, directs affairs if President is unable, chairs Program Committee.

Secretary - Records minutes of proceedings, conducts correspondence.

Treasurer - Custodian of funds, disburses funds as directed by Board, reports on finances.

Feel free to nominate yourself. If you nominate someone else, please check with them to make sure they agree to serve in that position before contacting Catie.

To submit a nomination for any of these positions, please send the person's name, contact information, and the officer position to Catie Farr at catiegk5059@gmail.com.

The Nominating Committee will review all suggestions but is not required to nominate every person proposed. They will share their final slate of nominees at the March 19 Evening Meeting.

Thank you in advance for your participation! Submitting nominees helps ensure we have excellent candidates to lead JVAS.

Sincerely,
Catie Farr
Secretary
Juniata Valley Audubon Society



JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY EVENING PROGRAMS

MARCH PROGRAM: Tuesday, January 19, 2024 @ 7 pm In-person Only
Join us at the Bellwood-Antis Library, 526 Main St. Bellwood, PA

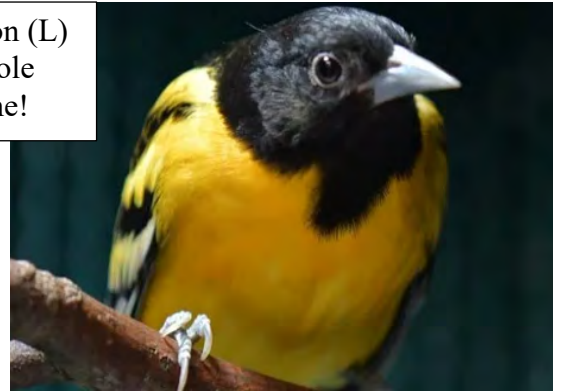
Join us for a **Walk on the Wild Side**, featuring 4 live animals. This program is geared for all nature lovers – young and old alike!

6 PM DINNER MENU: Pasta buffet with vegetarian and gluten free options. Gluten free oatmeal cookies and strawberry pretzel salad for dessert. Honduran shade-grown hot coffee is also available.

7 PM PROGRAM: Walk on the Wild Side: featuring 4 live animals from Centre Wildlife Care
-Presented by Robyn Graboski



Artemis the Peregrine Falcon (L) and Oreo the Baltimore Oriole are anxious to meet everyone!



Robyn Graboski, licensed wildlife rehabilitator, who founded and directs **Centre Wildlife Care** (the area's top wildlife rehab facility), will present a program featuring **Artemis** the Peregrine Falcon, **Oreo** the Baltimore Oriole, **Opal** the Opossum, and **Bruce Wayne** the Big Brown Bat. These animals are used for educational programs by Centre Wildlife Care since their injuries prohibit their return to the natural environment. For more information about Centre Wildlife Care: <https://centrewildlifecare.org/about-us>
Nature lovers of all ages will enjoy this program.

APRIL SPRING BANQUET: Tuesday, April 16, 2024, from 5 pm - 8:30 pm



Amber Weiwei, coordinator of the Third Pennsylvania Bird Atlas, will explain how we can get involved in this huge citizen science project, which officially starts January 1, 2024, but any birder can join at any time during the 5-year effort to document breeding birds in Pennsylvania.

See enclosed flyer to register and pay for the Spring Banquet.

Reservations Due: Tuesday, April 9, 2024

MAY PROGRAM: ART NIGHT Tuesday, May 21, 2024 @ 7 pm In-person Only

Join us at the Bellwood-Antis Library, 526 Main St. Bellwood, PA

6 PM DINNER MENU: Taco Night! Chicken, steak, and pulled pork, gluten free, and vegan options. Honduran shade-grown, organic hot coffee is also served.

More details in the May - June Newsletter

JVAS FIELD TRIPS and Special Events Spring 2024

Please contact Field Trip Chair Michael Kensinger if you have any suggestions for field trip locations, questions about a trip, or would like to lead a trip, contact Michael at (814) 505-3410 or MichaelKensinger@gmail.com. Please note that if inclement weather arrives, the Field Trip Chair reserves the right to cancel for the safety and well-being of all involved.

FIRST TUESDAY of Each Month: 3/5 and 4/2 from 10 AM TO 12 PM

Birding the Ray Amato Memorial Nature Trail behind the Northern Blair Rec Center

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

Join George Mahon to bird the **Ray Amato Memorial Nature Trail behind the Northern Blair Rec Center** every first Tuesday of the month from 10 AM to 12 NOON. 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 birds and mammals 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.

Saturday, March 2nd 9 AM – NOON Little Juniata Natural Area

Join us as we bird and saunter through the Little Juniata Natural Area with George Conrad at Barree in Huntingdon, County.

The area is known for its resident Bald Eagles, with one person reporting five at once!

The trail is regarded as "easy" in difficulty.
Here is a link for the location in Google Maps:

https://maps.app.goo.gl/hd1xjxudH2Y8VLRM9?g_st=ic

Directions for those who don't use GPS:

Take I-99 to Rt 453 east. Drive to Rt 22 east at Water Street and then bear left onto Main Street to Alexandria. Then take the first left, Barree Road, to the Village of Barree. Drive across the bridge over the Little Juniata River and turn onto the first left, Mountain Road. The Little Juniata Natural Area parking lot is at the very end of the road.

What to bring: warm and comfortable hiking clothes, binoculars, water, and anything you might want to bring on a hike. We will bird and saunter as we observe the work George has done clearing the trail for naturalists, birders, and anglers.

We will meet afterward for an optional lunch at Blue Gill's Bar and Grill in Alexandria @ 214 Main Street. Lunch is pay on your own.

For questions or concerns, or in case of inclement weather, please email JVAS Field Trip Chair Michael Kensinger, or call (814) 505-3410 to verify the event has not been cancelled. We hope to see you there!



JVAS FIELD TRIPS and Special Events Spring 2024, continued

WOODCOCK WALK @ RAY AMATO TRAIL SUNDAY, March 10th, 2024: 6 PM – dark.

Meet at Northern Blair Rec parking lot.

ADDRESS: 4080 E Pleasant Valley Blvd,
Altoona, PA 16601



We will walk around the Ray Amato Trail in search of “the shorebird that abandoned the shore,” the American Woodcock. Early spring is the perfect time to locate this incredible bird as it performs its elaborate displays at dusk and dawn around wet forested areas. At this location, we had 7 American Woodcocks displaying last year, and several flew right over our head!

WHAT TO BRING: binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, drink, or snack if desired.
Trail conditions are level, flat, but occasionally wet in places.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact JVAS Field Trip Chair 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 this event is still taking place for the sake of everyone’s safety and well-being. Field Trip Chair reserves the right to cancel at the last minute should unexpected dangerous weather patterns occur. We hope to see you there!!!!

EVENING WATERFOWL WATCH@ CANOE CREEK STATE PARK

SATURDAY, March 23rd, 2024: 5PM – dusk.

ADDRESS: 205 Canoe Creek Rd, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. Meet near Pavilion #2 in big parking lot (where we meet for the JVAS picnic).



This one is for the night owls who don’t like to get up early! Please join us for a nice meander around Canoe Creek State Park where we will observe waterfowl and other birds from the edge of the lake, and possibly, marsh trail.

WHAT TO BRING: binoculars, camera, comfortable walking shoes, drink, or snack if desired. JVAS will provide a spotting scope, but you are welcome to bring your own.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact JVAS Field Trip Chair 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 this event is still taking place for the sake of everyone’s safety and well-being. Field Trip Chair reserves the right to cancel at the last minute should unexpected dangerous weather patterns occur. We hope to see you there!!!!

JVAS FIELD TRIPS and Special Events Spring 2024, continued

30th ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY @ The NED SMITH CENTER

SUNDAY, March 24th 8 AM – NOON

ADDRESS: RIVER FRONT PARK, River St, Millersburg, PA 17061

Join the Ned Smith Center's seasoned bird-watching volunteers along the banks of the Susquehanna River during their annual Waterfowl Survey. Each year, volunteers record the numbers and species of birds observed, contributing to important scientific data. Warm beverages and snacks will be available inside the Rod and Gun Club building.

WHAT TO BRING: Binoculars, portable chair, if possible, warm clothing (the river wind can be cold and breezy at this time of year). Various spotting scopes will be provided. You may also choose to bring your own lunch. Note: we may arrange to meet up for lunch afterward at The Wooden Nickel.



This count is done from one stationary location. Wear comfortable shoes, dress warmly, and it is recommended that you bring a chair if you plan or need to sit and rest.

NOTE: This program will be held at the Millersburg Gun and Conservation Club at the south end of Riverfront Park in Millersburg. This is approximately a 2-hour drive one way from Altoona – and slightly less from State College. We always seem to get some good birds here in Dauphin County. Please register for this event (it's free) ahead of time by calling the center at 717-692-3699.

JVAS WOODCOCK WALK @ CANOE CREEK STATE PARK

SUNDAY, APRIL 7th, 2024: 6 PM – dark. Meet at the RANGER STATION



Artwork by Michael Kensinger

ADDRESS: CANOE CREEK STATE PARK,
205 Canoe Creek Rd, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648.

We will walk around Canoe Creek SP in search of “the shorebird that abandoned the shore”, the American Woodcock. Early spring is the perfect time to locate this incredible bird as it performs its elaborate displays at dusk and dawn around wet forested areas. At this location, we had several American Woodcocks displaying last year, and several flew right over us!

WHAT TO BRING: binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, drink, or snack if desired.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact JVAS Field Trip Chair 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 this event is still taking place for the sake of everyone's safety and well-being. Field Trip Chair reserves the right to cancel at the last minute should unexpected dangerous weather patterns occur. We hope to see you there!!!!

JVAS FIELD TRIPS and Special Events Spring 2024, continued

2024 Earth Week Birding Classic: Friday noon April 12 to Sunday noon April 21 Registration Deadline is Sunday April 7, 2024



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 during the week beginning on Apr 12 at noon and ending at noon on April 21. 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. Trophies will be awarded during the closing ceremony immediately following the event. Location of the closing ceremony is to be determined.

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

TRILLIUM WALK @ LOWER TRAIL SATURDAY, APRIL 20th, 2024, 9 AM – NOON ADDRESS: 4598 William Penn Hwy, Alexandria, PA 16611

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND:

Join Michael Kensinger in the parking lot at Water Street Flea Market for a (hopefully) beautiful saunter on the LOWER TRAIL in search of Trillium and other fauna. We will walk slowly on an even grade path with occasional benches for resting to stop and listen for birds. Ferns, wildflowers, birds, mammals, and fungi are in no short supply at this location, so bring field guides, cameras, or whatever you feel you may want. Dutchman's Breeches, Jack-in-the-Pulpit and many others are just a few of the glorious plants to behold here. In the past this was a very enjoyable walk, so we hope to see you there!



WHAT TO BRING: Binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, field guides (if you'd like) and water. We may meet up for lunch afterward. Eatery to be determined.

If you have any questions or need more information, contact JVAS Field Trip Chair Michael Kensinger at (814) 505-3410 or MichaelKensinger@gmail.com. If inclement weather arrives, the Field Trip Chair reserves the right to cancel for the safety and well-being of all involved.

JVAS RESERVOIR PARK WALK SATURDAY, April 27th, 2024, 9 AM – NOON

ADDRESS: 901 W 15th Street, Tyrone, PA 16686



Join us at the parking lot beside the Tyrone Pool across the road from Reservoir Park in TYRONE for a fun saunter around the trails and loop of Reservoir Park in Tyrone in search of birds, wildlife, wildflowers, and fungi. The trail runs along streamside habitat, so we are hopeful for a myriad of species.

WHAT TO BRING: binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, drink, or snack if desired.

If you have questions or need more information, contact JVAS Field Trip Chair 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 this event is still taking place for the sake of everyone's safety and well-being. Field Trip Chair reserves the right to cancel at the last minute should unexpected dangerous weather patterns occur. We hope to see you there!!!!

PA NATIVE PLANT FESTIVAL AND SALE

SATURDAY, MAY 4th, 2024, 10 AM – 3 PM

ADDRESS: Millbrook Marsh Nature Center
548 Puddintown Road
State College, PA 16801

Join JVAS and other native plant enthusiasts at one of the largest native plant sales in central Pennsylvania. Native shrubs, trees, and wildflowers are on sale that will attract beautiful butterflies like Eastern tiger swallowtail butterfly on the buttonbush flower, shown on the right.

Admission is free! Vendors and plants for sale will be listed on the PA Native Plant Society's webpage after April 1st, 2024: www.panativeplantsociety.org



Photo by
Laura Jackson



Golden-winged Warbler
Photo by Mike Jackson

JVAS WARBLER WALK at the LOWER TRAIL

SATURDAY: MAY 11th, 2024, 9 AM – NOON

ADDRESS: 4598 William Penn Hwy, Alexandria, PA 16611

WHAT TO BRING: Binoculars, comfortable hiking shoes, bug repellent, drink, and snack as desired.

Join us at the LOWER TRAIL behind the Water Street Flea market for a morning meander to find and tally migrating warbler species, along with other birds. We will meet in the parking lot. Help us celebrate the Global Big Day 2024!!

JVAS FIELD TRIPS and Special Events Spring 2024, continued

JVAS MOTHER'S DAY WALK SUNDAY, MAY 12th, 2024, 9 AM – NOON

Address: Meet at parking lot of Blair County Game Fish and Forestry Association: 301 Riggles Gap Sportsmen Rd, Altoona, PA

WHAT TO BRING: binoculars, comfortable hiking shoes, bug repellent, drink, and snack as desired.

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 eBird 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.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact JVAS Field Trip Chair 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 this event is still taking place for the sake of everyone's safety and well-being. Field Trip Chair reserves the right to cancel at the last minute should unexpected dangerous weather patterns occur. We hope to see you there!!!!

President's Message, continued

Talking about a revolution...

The environmental revolution of 1990 to 2010 in Central America was not bloodless. Many environmentalists lost their lives; some were my close friends. The weather wasn't kind, either, with hurricanes wrecking infrastructure as fast as it could be rebuilt. The US's appetite for illicit substances didn't help, as somewhere close to 90% of the world's cocaine flowed through in the early 2010s, and the environment was hit hard as those who laundered the profits—moguls, politicians, billionaires—did so through mining conglomerates, timbering, real estate, dam building, and the expansion of cattle (see, for example, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264837719303187>).

Nevertheless, against incredible odds, many of the most at-risk forests and other precious habitats that had seemed doomed in the 1980s, in countries such as Honduras, were saved. Water sources were saved as well, so entire villages didn't have to be abandoned. For most ordinary citizens, protection of the environment became a sacred duty, and in my experience, ideas such as animal rights, habitat protection, and the values of clean and safe natural resources such as water and air are much more popular and less contentious there than in the US. It is far from a perfect system, of course: great swaths of unprotectable rainforest are still being cut down, and the greenwashing practiced by domestic and foreign interests is too often given the stamp of approval by big environmental NGOs.

Continued page 11

President's Message, continued

Why leave Central America?

You'd be hard pressed to find anyone in Central America who would tell you honestly that climate change at the macroscale is the principal driver of migration from the region. Indeed, even with changing microclimates due to deforestation, there is an incredible diversity of environmental conditions to choose from, and each little niche has distinct growing conditions that can theoretically support just about any crop or domestic animal known to humanity. On top of that, there are factors such as abundant natural resources that can be utilized sustainably, family and culture ties, and other positive reasons to keep people there.

However, negative push factors far outweigh the positives. The fact is that for the vast majority, it is nearly impossible to survive economically, thanks to, as the authors above point out, "limited land and resources, violence, and corruption." Land isn't limited, but access to capital and credit is, and few people control most capital and most land. The rule of law belongs to those who control the capital and the land. This means that if you are poor and you step out of line, you have few options.

(Note: where social and political conditions are much more stable, particularly in Costa Rica but also in Panama, out-migration is negligible.)

Teaching us a thing or two?

The crisis in Central America that drives people to choose to flee is a social and economic crisis, not an environmental crisis nor a climate crisis. I would go so far as to say that, in the environmental realm, Central Americans could teach Central Pennsylvanians a thing or two about how to protect the environment. After all, we share many of the same birds. I have to wonder what the birds coming north after nine months in a shaded coffee plantation think when they find yet another convenience store in place of where they nested last season, or when they have to choke their way through another Canadian burning season, or when yet another unnecessary suburban subdivision cuts down the elms and the maples to make way for Elm Street and Maple Street.

What's an Auduboner to do?

- ✓ Research your food, and pay more for it: because cheap coffee, bananas, and other tropical fare signify that people are paid little to produce it, perpetuating poverty. Find the food that economically benefits small farmers.
- ✓ Work to preserve bird habitat here, so that Central American birds have decent places to breed.
- ✓ Spend your ecotourism dollars in Central America, in ecologically sustainable places that benefit local and indigenous communities, not wealthy elites or corporations.
- ✓ Think twice before letting profit-seeking, corporate media conglomerates convince you that the reason for the migrant crisis is the climate crisis rather than the same-old, same-old: greedy corporations, corrupt governments, entrenched power structures... Remember that it's easier and safer for the media to invoke an all-powerful, impersonal foe such as climate change than to name and shame the actual powerful entities perpetuating the desperation that is driving millions northward.
- ✓ Educate elected officials about the right policies for the US to pursue in Central America, environmental and otherwise, that will lead to sustainability.

**In honor of the hundreds of environmental leaders who have lost their lives in this fight over the last decade, activists such as Aly Dominguez and Jairo Bonilla*

*(<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/12/un-calls-for-probe-into-killing-of-two-honduran-environmentalists>).**

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 then click on the Conservation tab.



DEP APPROVES RUTTER'S APPLICATION



Proposed Rutter's Gas/Convenience Store upslope from Old Crow Wetlands near Huntingdon, Pa. Unfortunately, DEP approved the Rutter's application to build a truck stop adjacent to Old Crow Wetland.



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 township building in Smithfield, is 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>

Update from Claire Holzner (holzner@fastmail.fm), Coalition to Save Old Crow Wetland:

"Some members of the Old Crow Coalition are refining arguments for the appeal of the DEP stormwater permit for Rutter's that was issued on January 31, 2023. Their lawyer will file our appeal with the Environmental Hearing Board by the deadline, March 1, 2024.

Rutter's plan has to be approved by the Smithfield township supervisors. Most likely it will go to the Huntingdon County Planning Commission (on the third Thursday of the month, March 21) and the Smithfield Planning Commission (on the last Tuesday of the month, February 27), but the Smithfield office said the planning commission now has only two members and won't take any action until a third member is appointed. They might consider the Rutter's plan on Tuesday, March 26. After the planning commissions' decisions, the Smithfield supervisors will vote on the Rutter's application. If the Township approves it, it can be appealed. We'll send an email when we know of meetings when Rutter's plans will be considered, and we encourage you to attend those.

Please let people know that this issue is not yet decided, and we need to speak up to the Smithfield supervisors. Rutter's is planning a large, disruptive truck stop, not a convenience store. Old Crow needs us to defend it, and we don't have to accept the burden that Rutter's is trying to put on us. **To donate to the legal fund, send a check made out to Coalition to Save Old Crow Wetland to: Coalition to Save Old Crow Wetland, P.O. Box 7, Huntingdon, PA 16652, or donate to fundrazr.com/saveoldcrow** Any donation would be greatly appreciated."



2023 – a Record Breaking CBC for the Culp Circle by Michael Kensinger

Last year, in December of 2022, the Culp Circle Christmas Bird Count (CBC) tallied 72 species, which was an all-time high for our count. As we prepared for the 2023 CBC, JVAS members wondered how we would top that number. After all, one of the highlights of last year's CBC was a Cape May Warbler (only the 5th record in 40 years) and we had good weather for birding that day. Would 2023 even come close? Much to our surprise, we would break our record again!

A grand total of 81 bird species were confirmed and approved this year for the Culp Circle Christmas Bird Count. We didn't just break the previous record, but we broke it by 9 bird species!



This year's count occurred December 23rd, 2023, where participants were greeted with prime weather conditions for birding. There were several factors that undoubtedly played a role in this high achievement. John Carter located the first Northern Saw-whet Owl within the Culp Circle CBC first thing in the morning. Another factor was moving the "tally dinner" to a later time, allowing my own team to finally see the elusive Short-eared Owl. Weather played a role, and perhaps a later start date enabled the habitats to settle down from hunting season.

Other highlights were findings of elusive birds such as Red-headed Woodpeckers. A total of five were tallied – mostly in the Sinking Valley area. These beautiful birds appear to be making a comeback in Blair County as we also documented a breeding pair at the Ray Amato Trail in spring of 2023, in addition to the ones already known to breed in Sinking Valley.

As previously mentioned, the Saw-whet Owl was a first for us, picked up by former JVAS President John Carter at Canoe Creek State Park. Despite no longer being in Blair County, John agreed to join in our bird count and help contribute to our wonderful team of birders. When he resided here, John was consistently the "Top" eBirder in Blair County and continues to make interesting discoveries in the birding community, including the Greater Flamingos we all heard about not far from his home in Franklin County. Another big contribution to this year's count from John's team were two American Pipits (only the 4th sighting for the CBC), also at Canoe Creek State Park.

The one bird that required a "rare bird report" form to be filled out was discovered by our interim President Mark Bonta – who happened upon a Double-crested Cormorant on the Little Juniata River. By the time the CBC rolls around in December, most of the cormorants have arrived at coastal wintering grounds, or in the deep south. To find one on the Little Juniata River in December was quite an experience, I'm sure, so kudos to Mark for that amazing find. It's the first one for the Culp CBC.

My own team, which consisted of George Mahon, Conner Schmitt, and Joseph Glass, was lucky to unveil a handful of rarities in Sinking Valley aside from the Red-headed Woodpeckers. An Eastern Meadowlark singing from the center of a grassy field proved to be a surprise, and a Merlin (the 8th time for the Culp CBC) was observed hunting a field not far away from that location. Thanks to members agreeing to move the dinner forward to 6 PM, my team was able to stick around a vast meadow where we tallied several Northern Harriers, and the star of the show, the Short-eared Owl.

Before wrapping this up, I'd like to say thank you to our compiler Laura Jackson who pieced together the data to make this project happen. I'd also like to commend several new birders who have joined our team, and some new "experienced" birders who have recently joined in our efforts. If you or someone you know is interested in participating in the next Christmas Bird Count, tentatively scheduled for December 21st, 2024, we encourage you to reach out and let us know. Also – we are targeting Ruffed Grouse as a species we keep missing, due to a decline in population. Any information regarding the grouse or other rare birds is welcome to be shared with us.

Now let's break that record again! Next up: Earth Week Birding Classic!!!!

To see a video about the Culp CBC, follow the "Dirty Birder" on YouTube, created by Joe Glass. Thanks, Joe!

<https://youtu.be/5TciJCWW4Ls?si=ubn00RfRu0PFuu6i>

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY SPRING BANQUET

TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2024

The BULLPEN and SPORTS BAR

207 Jefferson Ave, Tyrone, PA 16686

5 pm: Silent Auction (Please bring items to donate)

6 pm: Dinner

7 pm: JVAS Business Meeting

7:30 pm: Presentation by Amber Weiwei



PLEASE
RESERVE
BY TUESDAY
APRIL 9

6 pm: We will enjoy a buffet dinner featuring baked chicken, baked potatoes, broccoli, and tossed salad. Save room for a homemade cake buffet. Drinks are iced tea, coffee, and ice water. You can order alcohol at the bar, or you can start your own tab with the waitress.



7 pm: JVAS Business Meeting

7:30 pm: "Let's (Try to) Count all the Birds in Pennsylvania!"

By Amber Weiwei, Pennsylvania Bird Atlas Coordinator



PA birds and will inform conservation and management of birds and their habitats. Find out how you can contribute by counting birds in Pennsylvania during this 5-year project!

Amber grew up in Missouri where she first fell in love with birds in the Ozarks. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri and a master's degree from Iowa State University. She worked as a wildlife biologist for the US Geological Survey before taking on the role of Pennsylvania Bird Atlas Coordinator in 2023.

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MAIL BY TUESDAY APRIL 9 - to have dinner guaranteed.

Name(s) _____

Phone No. _____ Email: _____

Number of tickets _____ x \$25 = _____ Make check payable to JVAS.

Mail this form and payment to Catie Farr at 1201 Meadow Lane, Duncansville, PA 16635 no later than Tuesday, April 9, 2024, to reserve dinner. Or, pay at the March 19 evening meeting. Email or call if you have questions: Catie Farr: catieqk5059@gmail.com. Phone: 570-651-3839

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON

PO BOX 1013
ALTOONA, PA 16603

Address Service Requested



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



**Point your phone's
camera at the QR code
above to join online!**

Name _____

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