

# NATURALLY

THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Naturally

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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## ON THE RECORD

by Donna Hocker

Terri and Bob Kochert led an early March trip to Heisey Orchard to see the Woodcock mating display. Eleven observers saw and/or heard at least two Woodcocks peenting. Five other species were also seen.



Above, The Gang  
Below, White-throated Sparrow  
Photo credits: Dave Cooney, Jr.



## President's Corner

by Terri Kochert

Though this must be one of the earliest springs I've ever experienced (warmer temperatures, trees in blossom, flowers blooming, birds establishing nesting territories), we need to be aware of the potential good-citizen science available to us. I have several things on my mind.

First, report your daily or weekly findings of bird sightings on eBird.org, which compiles bird-migration statistics electronically worldwide. This way you are contributing to citizen science, helping us all to know more about the migration habits of the birds we love.

Secondly, it's time to put out your hummingbird nectar feeders. There have already been sightings of the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in our state since March 28, 2021 (Duncannon, PA). This is according to the 2021 interactive map at "Hummingbird Central," <https://hummingbirdcentral.com/hummingbird-migration-spring-2021-map.htm>

Thirdly, there's been a request from one of our members for help to install bluebird boxes on her property on the southwestern side of Chambersburg. If you like constructing bluebird boxes and/or would be available to dig post holes and attach the boxes to the posts, please contact Tanya Nitterhouse at [Tanya@sunnyhillproperties.com](mailto:Tanya@sunnyhillproperties.com). She has indicated that she will pay for prefabricated bluebird boxes or buy the materials to build them.

This "newly created" bluebird trail would be **separate** from our CAS monitored Bluebird Trail, chaired by Jim Hook. Keep in mind that as part of our CAS citizen science project, our CAS monitored Bluebird Trail remains our first priority to any subsequent bluebird trail developments. If you already maintain and diligently monitor bluebird boxes along your property lines, please report your findings to the Bluebird Society of PA.

Fourthly, if you enjoy watching live cams, watch the three eaglets and parent Bald Eagles at <https://hdontap.com/index.php/video/stream/pa-farm-country-bald-eagle-live-cam>. If you are interested in seeing the hatching of (hopefully) four baby Peregrine Falcons, please watch the Pittsburgh National Aviary cam here <https://www.aviary.org/birds-habitats/live-streams/>.

Fifthly, as of March 8, 2021, Dr. Elizabeth Gray joined National Audubon Society as President and Chief Conservation Officer, reporting to CEO David Yarnold.

Get out there and enjoy our own spring migration! It's already happening!

# Happy Spring from the Conservation Conversation (CC)

by Jim Hardy

Spring is upon us and in full swing. Before the daily temperatures began to rise, the first signs of spring began to appear. Suddenly there were Common Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds at the feeder station and the American Robins all through the yard chasing one another. Buds on the tree branches began to appear and the crocuses burst into blooms with the grass thickening and becoming green. Now the neighborhood is full of outdoor activity. My neighbors are mowing grass and working in the flower beds and occasionally you will get a big whiff of good food cooking on the grill. The other evening I heard the distinct sound of an aluminum baseball ball hitting a ball. Spring is just so exciting!

Spring is also an exciting time for bird watching. Our winged friends who winter in the southern latitudes are migrating to and through our part of the country (the Atlantic Flyway). I'm a big fan of the sounds and songs of the spring and summer birds. We not only get to see many different species in the spring, we also get to see the birds prepare a nest and raise their young before returning south for the winter. This combination of desirable weather and increased population of birds gives us excellent opportunities to observe the migration with field trips and counting activities. It also gives us opportunities to participate in both formal and informal conservation activities aimed at protecting birds and their habitats. I'm sure that a number of you have already cleaned and repaired birdhouses and maybe installed a new one or two. You plant and maintain bird friendly plants and shrubs for food and habitat. How many of you have a small brush pile from the sticks that you pick up in your yard? I bet the sparrows hang out in the pile.

For this article I've decided to share and discuss conservation in terms of the Audubon Society at the state level. The Audubon's conservation statement is relatively simple but provides us with insight as to what areas of conservation we need to focus our efforts on. If I may refer you to <https://pa.audubon.org/conservation> as my reference, the following is the Conservation Statement:

## ***“Conservation Protecting birds and their habitats***

“Audubon implements strategic initiatives to further the protection of all birds, with an emphasis on our most threatened birds, across the East Coast as part of the Atlantic Flyway.



*Barred Owl*

Photo credit: Bob Keener

“What’s in the Plan?”

## **“CONSERVATION**

“At the heart of Audubon’s work are programs that drive full-life cycle conservation for birds throughout the Americas. We organize our work around highly scalable core strategic priorities:

***“Climate Change:*** Our work focuses on actions that reduce the impact of climate change on birds and protect the habitats they will need to survive in a changing climate.

***“Working Lands:*** Audubon works with policy leaders and landowners and managers to influence land management to support a sustainable future for birds while maintaining the economic productivity of the land.

***“Water:*** Audubon is bringing its historic focus on fresh water together under a single strategy built on unique regional needs. Key target areas include the Colorado River and Delta, the Salton Sea, the Everglades, the Mississippi, and the Great Lakes.

***“Bird-Friendly Communities:*** This is the local face of the Audubon network’s conservation work, connecting supporters with community, state, flyway, and national opportunities to enjoy birds and to take meaningful conservation action to protect them.”

That covers a lot of ground but makes it clear that in order to protect birds and their habitats we need to pay attention to climate change, the land, the water and bird-friendly communities. In future articles we will take a closer look at these four areas of conservation.

## BIRD BEHAVIOR

### Migration: "Majestic Global Pageant"

*Excerpt from the March 29 WITF-Radio "Fresh Air" program with host Dave Davies and guest Scott Weidensaul. Edited with permission.*

**Dave:** Scott Weidensaul has spent decades studying migratory birds, doing fieldwork and tracking and conservation efforts. In a new book, "A World On The Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds," Weidensaul writes about what he calls "this majestic global pageant" and about the threats the animals face.

Scott, you describe in the book that there are times when overhead there is this massive nighttime migration happening. What's the scale of this?

**Scott:** Most birds migrate after dark. The night sky is cooler and the air is calmer. There are fewer predators. Every spring and fall, billions of migratory birds pass through the darkness over the roofs of people who have no idea that, if you could strip away the night sky, this would be probably the largest, greatest natural spectacle on the planet.

If you have a pair of binoculars or a telescope pointed at the full moon, especially in early evening right after the moon has risen in April and May or September and October, you can actually see birds flying across the disc of the moon.

**Dave:** I want to talk about the changes the bodies of migratory birds go through in their life cycle. You write about a bird called the godwit, which makes a 7,000-mile, nonstop journey from New Zealand to West Alaska. What do they do about sleep?

**Scott:** The Bar-tailed Godwit has the longest non-stop migration of any land bird that we know of. It takes this bird 11 days to cross the Pacific and it can't rest on the water, so it's got a whole host of physiological challenges to overcome, including sleep.

Migratory birds use an approach called *unihemispheric* sleep, where they put one half of their brain to sleep for a couple of seconds at a time, back and forth, almost continuously.

In August and September, before the godwit leaves Alaska to return across the Pacific to New Zealand, it undergoes a process called hyperphagia, which just means binge feeding. They just eat and eat and eat; they soon double their weight. They are 50 percent fat by the time they take off. They are

squishy when you pick them up – they jiggle like water balloons.

At the same time, their heart muscle and their flight muscles increase in mass by 50 percent. After they have eaten as much as they possibly can, their digestive organs shrink dramatically: Stomach, intestines, and liver all shrink dramatically; basically, they jettison their digestive system before they make this flight.

They then fly anywhere from seven to 11 days nonstop across the ocean, land in New Zealand or Australia, regrow their guts and spend the austral summer down there feeding again. And they do this again and again. And this is a bird that can live for 25 or 30 years.



*Tundra Swans at Greencastle Reservoir Feb 2.*

*Photo credit: Dave Cooney, Jr.*

**Dave:** How do they stay hydrated?

**Scott:** What they do is catabolize [break down the molecules of] the tissue in their organs and their muscles and, basically, drink from this reservoir of metabolic water that they have in their bodies. They are kind of sipping from their organs as they're making these flights.

**Dave:** And oxygen? They fly at pretty high altitudes, where air pressure is thinner. How do they have the oxygen to keep flapping those wings for 11 days?

**Scott:** Birds have a system of air sacs that run through their bodies and connect with their lungs. It takes them four respirations for each breath to move all the way through this system of lungs and air sacs. So they're able to extract 90 percent of the oxygen from every breath they take.

*Migrating birds face intense threats over urban night skies of the heavily-populated eastern United States. Scott Weidensaul discusses how cities such as Philadelphia are learning to accommodate birds' night flights. To read or listen to the full program, visit <https://www.npr.org/2021/03/29/982232107/naturalist-traces-the-astounding-flyways-of-migratory-birds>.*



## PA Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation June 18-21, 2021

by Terri Kochert

As the website indicates, this event is scheduled as a competition between Pennsylvania teams of bird watchers to the benefit of all PA birds and the three conservancies (listed below) that are working hard on their behalf. Here at CAS we are fortunate to have a team of locals; our very own Bob Keener and young Jefferson Shank (15), Bob's brother, Dan, and his son, Sammy (14), of Lancaster area, comprise the only registered Youth Team thus far.

As of April 16, the Blue Mountain Avian Seekers team leads in the amount raised toward the three conservancies. The lofty goal of the PA Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (B4C) is \$5,000, which will be evenly distributed among the three conservancies. At this point, B4C has raised \$816. Because we have local members involved in this event, I adjure you all to contribute toward their team



*The Blue Mountain Avian Seekers' team photo features this Blue Grosbeak.*  
Photo Credit: Sammy Keener

and toward the good work of these three PA conservancies. Do so at <https://www.breedingbirdblitz.org/donate> Press PayPal. Search for their photo and team name to contribute.

Conservancies:

The **Manada Conservancy** "is a land trust dedicated to preserving the natural, historic, agricultural and scenic resources of Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, through land conservation, environmental education, and community engagement."<sup>1</sup>

In 2019, thanks to a grant through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Manada Conservancy acquired a 44.3-acre property, now known as Manada Conservancy's Elizabeth Woods property, in Lower Paxton township. "This forested property on the Ridge provides important Wood Thrush habitat that will forever be maintained for wildlife habitat and passive recreation such as birding. We hope to showcase the property during this year's Breeding Bird Blitz! Your donation to the B4C will help fuel our efforts of preserving the Kittatinny Ridge Corridor and protect prime bird habitat."<sup>2</sup>

"The **Western Pennsylvania Conservancy** (<https://waterlandlife.org/>), a nonprofit conservation organization that works to conserve native habitats in central and western Pennsylvania, is proactively addressing the issues facing forest birds by protecting important high-quality forests, conducting science-driven ecological studies of priority bird species and their habitats, and assembling powerful conservation partnerships.

"The Conservancy is working on different forested land protection projects in central and western Pennsylvania that would protect habitat for the Wood Thrush, one of the flagship birds identified by the PSO for the Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation (B4C). The Conservancy is also considering management actions at some of its own properties, such as removing invasive species, that would benefit the Wood Thrush. With funding awarded to the Conservancy through the B4C program, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy's goal is to permanently protect at least one of these properties or complete habitat restoration at one of its properties within the year that contains forest habitat likely to support the Wood Thrush. Your donation to the B4C will help make this a reality."<sup>3</sup>

Founded in 1934, **Hawk Mountain Sanctuary** "is the oldest and largest, member-support raptor conservation organization in the world."<sup>4</sup>

"Hawk Mountain seeks to work with neighboring landowners to keep key properties in forest, wetland and grasslands. Twenty-two acres of farmland were recently purchased and are being restored to grasslands. In 2018, 78 acres were purchased and donated to the Game Commission to manage in native grasses and flowers. In both sites, habitat for nesting or migrating Northern Harrier and Bobolink as well as other grassland birds is being developed, as well as countless warblers that may feed on stopover sites along the riparian and woodland edges.

"In 2021, Hawk Mountain is raising funds to purchase 43 acres along their border that would protect a forested stream ravine that harbors nesting Louisiana Waterthrush, Wood Thrush, Broad-winged Hawk, and a stream with native brook trout. Hawk Mountain has pledged to use B4C funds to conserve Northern Harrier habitat in the Kittatinny Ridge corridor. Your donation to the B4C will help make this a reality."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.manada.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.breedingbirdblitz.org/project>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hawkmountain.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.breedingbirdblitz.org/project>

## Apt Birding Apps by Valerie Barnes

At our regular April 2021 meeting using Zoom, we learned about some of our members' favorite birding tools. Val Barnes pointed out that most traditional field guidebooks now have an app version, often for laptop and iPhone and Android cell phones. She advised that folks explore before birding – studying what you might see and learning how to use the field guide or app.

Some of the more popular field guides and identification tools include: iBird Pro Guide to Birds app, Merlin Bird ID app, National Geographic Birds (uses artists' renderings), Peterson's Birds of North America (uses art), Sibley Guide to Birds of Eastern North America (uses art), Audubon Field Guide: North America (uses photos), as well as others. There are also guides tailored to bird families (e.g., Raptors, Shorebirds). Tools that help to identify bird songs include: BirdNet, Song Sleuth, Larkwire, ChirpOMatic, Bird Song ID, and most of the field guide/identification apps. eBird, Birds Eye, and Bird Journal offer ways to record what you see in the field and find where birds can be seen.

John Greer walked us through how to use eBird to explore a region. From his laptop computer, he "Explored" Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, narrowing in on a range of months when he planned to visit. The tool showed birds seen during the specified date range over the years he chose. When he clicked on a particular species, eBird automatically brought up the Merlin Bird ID information about that bird. Sue Greer demonstrated how to use the eBird application on her phone to record what she was seeing in the field. She could enter species and numbers, choose her location, and specify how long she spent observing at that location. When you enable location on your phone, eBird tracks your observation route. When you are ready to submit your checklist, eBird allows you to share it with others in your party. eBird also keeps your life list. You can choose to receive alerts about rare birds and/or about species you need for your list at a particular location.

Josh Donaldson showed us Raptor ID from a cell phone. Josh is a raptor enthusiast, so this app focused on raptors is perfect for him. When he chose Rough-legged Hawk, the app provided options to see an overview of the species, images of different sexes and ages, videos, range, and vocalizations. Josh especially likes the videos, where an expert narrates to point out the flight characteristics of the bird.



Josh also showed us BirdNET from a cell phone. This app helps you identify what you are hearing. He had recorded a bird's sound and played it back for this demonstration. He chose the segment of the recording he wanted the app to use. When he chose "analyze," the app compared the sound to its files and came up with Cooper's Hawk – the correct answer! The app from Cornell Lab uses your cell phone's microphone to record what you are hearing. You select what part of the recording you want to identify, tell it to analyze and, *voilà*, it tries to identify the sound. The app also lets you link to Wikipedia, the Macaulay media library at Cornell, and All About Birds at Cornell to learn more about the species.

Although technology was not friendly to Terri Kochert, she spoke to us about using iBird Pro on her cell phone. She told us that when you select a species, the app gives you options to view basic information about it, what it looks like, where it can be found, and what it sounds like. The app can also help you identify what species you might have seen based on location, size, shape, and colors.

I think I'll expand my toolkit to try to become a better birder!

**MEETINGS – Free**, held in the Community Center at Norlo Park,

**FIELD TRIPS – Free**, most take place on Saturdays. Contact the leader in advance if you plan to go. Times listed are departure times; please arrive early. If you cannot go on a scheduled trip, contact leader for a potential mid-week option on his/her scouting trip.

**Note: Activities are still tentative due to COVID-19.**

**Check our website for updates:**

**[www.ConococheagueAudubon.org](http://www.ConococheagueAudubon.org)**

**May 1, Saturday** **FIELD TRIP**

6:30 AM Horse Valley for SPRING MIGRANTS. Meet at North Pointe Center, US 11 north of Chambersburg. Bring scopes, binoculars, CBs and lunch. **Valerie Barnes**, 717-352-4397; or **Donna Hocker**, 717-401-0604.

**May 1 and 15, Saturdays** **WORK DAYS**

9:30 AM Work at NORLO PARK native garden. Bring garden tools and gloves. **Josh Donaldson**, 717-264-6920.

**May 6, Thursday** **FIELD TRIP**

6:30 AM Path Valley for SPRING MIGRANTS. Leave from Keener's, 5207 Heisey Road. Bring scopes, binoculars, CBs, lunch. **Bob Keener**, 717-532-9723 or 717-658-8765

**May 7, Friday** **FIELD TRIP**

6:00 **PM** Lehman property for SPRING MIGRANTS. Meet at 750 Tallow Hill Road, Chambersburg, to walk around a pond, meadows and woods. **Larry Lehman**, 717-263-7203

**May 10, Monday**

**MEETING**

7:00 PM *Invasive Plants: Not for the Birds* by Kimberly Bohn, Penn State Mont Alto. Arranged by Ron George.

**May 22, Saturday**

**FIELD TRIP**

5:30 PM Edenville area for WHIP-POOR-WILLS and BOBOLINKS. Leave from Sunnyway Foods parking lot, 49 Warm Spring Road, Chambersburg. Bring scopes, binoculars, and CBs. **Eric and Rhetta Martin**, 717-597-8675

CAS WEBSITE: <https://conococheagueaudubon.org/>

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**Send all newsletter articles and photos to the editor.**

**Send all mailing changes to [conaudubon@outlook.com](mailto:conaudubon@outlook.com).**

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**CONOCOCHAEAGUE AUDUBON OFFICERS:**

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<b>Immediate Past President</b>	Debby Hook

**Directors: Bob Kochert, Janet Tice, Ron George, Eric Martin. Sue and John Greer replace Conway Bushey and Marguerite Fries effective May 1.**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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