

NATURALLY

THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Naturally

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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President's Corner

by Terri Kochert

Welcome to our 2021-2022 season of Conococheague Audubon, which corresponds to the 60th year since our founding in 1961! I have much good news to share with you.

Before I do though, I must let you know that we need a vice president. Due to emergency family health issues, our vice president had to resign. Thus, we are searching for capable candidates.

What does a VP do? He/she attends general meetings (9 x/year on the second Monday of the month) and executive/board meetings (6 x/year), and leads any of the meetings in the event that I cannot be there. In addition, the VP is responsible for becoming familiar with the president's duties and the workings of CAS, as he/she will step into the president's position May 1, 2022, for a two-year term. Contact Terri at our CAS website if interested.

As you may have read in my monthly letters, CAS has a new location for our general meetings. We will be meeting in the Fellowship Hall of St. Luke

Evangelical Lutheran Church, located adjacent to Luther Ridge, 2695 Luther Drive, Scotland. The room is large enough to accommodate our audience, and is equipped with a kitchen, a flat screen, and Wi-Fi for Zoom meetings.



Carolina Wren and friend
Photo credit: Dale Gearhart

This season's activities include some new and some familiar field trips. We scheduled a revised Cape May trip Sept. 22-24, 2021. We also plan a new field trip to the C & O Canal on April 23, 2022.

We have an exciting array of general meeting titles this season. They include scientific research, birds' health and their environment, scientifically correct illustrations, and award-winning photography.

Please find a list of all titles in our 2021-2022 Activities List. Notice that some of these meetings listed will be zoomed. Some of our speakers live a great distance away but are willing to share with us via Zoom. With the four planned Zoom programs, you may choose to view from home or on the larger screen at St. Luke. We have the "Tentative Schedule" watermark on each side of the Activities List and have included several requests to check our website for updates. With possible new variants of COVID, we need to be prepared to Zoom if necessary. Although we have again included three Nature Films for January, March, and April 2022, this depends on the COVID situation and the rental availability of CAMS South. Please check our website, <https://conococheagueaudubon.org>, for updates and film titles. Let's remain positive for a full year of activities!



Black-bellied Whistling Duck
Photo credit: Bob Keener

Happy Summer from the Conservation Conversation (CC)

by Jim Hardy

Summertime has been hot and muggy. Unfortunately, there has been little rain, and it is dry. The streams, creeks and ponds are all extremely low. Everyone is saying "We need rain." That is why I have chosen to discuss water conservation. This will be a two-part article with Part 1 focusing on the definition, basic water facts and Audubon's water conservation initiative (the macro); Part 2 will be about what we can do in our homes and communities to conserve water (the micro).

So what is water conservation? Of all the definitions I looked at, the most inclusive one comes from the online source Wikipedia: "Water conservation includes all the policies, strategies and activities to sustainably manage the natural resource of fresh water, to protect the hydrosphere, and to meet the current and future human demand." Let's explore this definition and relate it to our everyday activities and birds.

First, all living organisms need water to exist. No water means no people, no plants, no animals. NO BIRDS! We live on a planet that is mostly water. The Central California Area Office of The Bureau of Reclamation California-Great Basin provides these facts about the worldwide water supply: (1) Water covers about 71% of the earth's surface. (2) 97% of the earth's water is found in the oceans (too salty for drinking, growing crops, and most industrial uses except cooling). (3) 3% of the earth's water is fresh. (4) 2.5% of the earth's fresh water is unavailable: locked up in glaciers, polar ice caps, atmosphere, and soil; highly polluted; or lies too far under the earth's surface to be extracted at an affordable cost. (5) 0.5% of the earth's water is available fresh water.

Our definition brings up the word *sustainable*, which we know is about preservation for the future (something worth saving), and the word *hydrosphere*, which is all the water on the surface of the earth and in the atmosphere (clouds).

According to its website, Audubon is focusing its water quantity and quality initiatives on lands that are "are paramount to bird survival." In addition to addressing current public water policies and seeking affordable ways for businesses to manage water use, Audubon and its partners plan to continue their work of restoring wetland, river and delta habitats.

The following two points -- Theory of Change and How To Get There, are taken directly from the website:

Theory of Change

Audubon will focus its technical and policy expertise and bring our network to bear to influence water-management decisions; these should balance the needs of birds, people, and economies in targeted rivers, lakes, and deltas across the United States. By directing our resources and involving our technical experts and network, we will improve water quality and increase water flows to enhance the functioning of habitats across priority landscapes.

How to Get There

Audubon will:

- Expand our knowledge of water needs for birds and other wildlife and establish a solid foundation of information on the impacts of water scarcity and water pollution on birds.
- Strengthen the Audubon network of members and partners to advance balanced water-management decisions that benefit birds, habitat, and people.
- Engage our conservation team and network in on-the-ground restoration actions that support our water goals.
- Develop and advance market-based mechanisms to provide flexibility in water-management decisions.
- Expand international partnerships to address water issues on a hemispheric scale.

<https://www.audubon.org/water>

That's the big picture, the macro. Up next, what we each can do to conserve water, the micro.

I want to know ... by Debby Hook

***Naturally* editor Jane Bussard asks: Why do I see a lot of birds at my feeder one day, and not a single bird the next?**

A: For the sake of clarity, let's first assume birds are **not** leaving Jane's feeding station because:

1. The seed is no longer fresh, or it has gotten wet and moldy.
2. The feeder is brand new, frequently empty, or not cleaned regularly.
3. The wrong type of seed blends are being used.
4. Feeders are too close together or in inappropriate places.
5. A raptor or another predator is lurking.

Birding is the fastest-growing outdoor activity in America. A 2016 survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported an estimated 46 million birders (now updated to 51 million) in the country. You may have noticed that more of your neighbors are now feeding wild birds.

But why would "your" birds visit other places as long as you are keeping fresh seed and suet in your feeders?

Birds continually search for food to supply their tiny bodies with energy needed to breed, build nests, defend territory, feed young and, for many, migrate. Some travel a great distance each day seeking food. They may come across a new feeding site just because they happen to fly over a particular area. Those finches you see at your feeder in the morning may not be the same ones you see in late afternoon.

Many birds also tend to feed in flocks. Artist and naturalist David Sibley wrote that flocking behavior allows groups of songbirds to search larger areas for food (much as Christmas bird counters rely on many eyes to spot winter birds!). They are in constant communication with one another, Sibley wrote, emitting soft tweets and chirps to one another as they forage and feed, which alerts other species to the bounty.

"It's just fascinating that there's a sound realm that humans rarely enter – these tiny chip notes say a thousand words," said Conococheague Audubon member and avid birder Bob Keener. "You'll hear a Chickadee make a little chip sound; it's hardly anything at all. I compare it to body language. You can tell more by watching someone's body language than by the words they're saying."

Bird behavior authors Donald and Lillian Stokes say that House Sparrows establish smaller daytime "roosts" near feeding sites. Then, as these sparrows flock together at night – some traveling up to four miles to an overnight roost – they alert less successful birds to join them the next day.

Certain species seem to be the most attentive to other birds' food alert "tseeps." Keener calls them "the big three – Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and Nuthatches."

Donald Stokes wrote that throughout the year, family groups of Tufted Titmice live in loose flocks in an area of 15 to 20 acres. In winter, these titmice split into smaller flocks to forage with Chickadees, Downy Woodpeckers and Nuthatches, to raise their chances of finding good food.

Birds also need to drink fresh water daily, so they listen for the sound of water. By offering moving water, such as a fountain in a birdbath, at your feeding station, you satisfy both these needs of wild birds.

Sources:

<https://www.fws.gov/>

<https://springfieldil.wbu.com> (Wild Birds Unlimited)

<https://sciencing.com/>

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/> (Cornell Lab)

The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior, by David Allen Sibley

A Guide to Bird Behavior: Volume I, Volume II and Volume III, by Donald & Lillian Stokes



American Goldfinch

Photo credit: Bob Keener

New Christmas Bird Count in Franklin and Fulton Counties

by Vern Gauthier

Though it is still summer, Christmas Bird Counts will be here before you know it! There is a new count in the area being planned. It will go by the name of Buchanan Trail CBC. This seemed an appropriate name for the count, as the geographic center will be on Route 16 (The Franklin/Fulton Buchanan Trail) 4/10ths of a mile north of the Franklin Fulton Line. It also includes a few tracts of the Buchanan State Forest and Buchanan's Birthplace State Park.

The count, which is split equally between western Franklin and eastern Fulton counties, is designed to be held as early as possible in the count season without interfering with the existing Chambersburg CBC. It provides an additional opportunity for those who have interest to take part in a Christmas Bird Count. In 2021 it will be held on December 14, which is four days prior to the Chambersburg Count.

The Buchanan Trail CBC has been divided up into six zones. Zone Captains are as follows:

Zone 1 Deb and Greg Grove

Zone 2 Vern Gauthier

Zone 3 Tracy Mosebey

Zone 4 Bill Oyler

Zone 5 Val Barnes

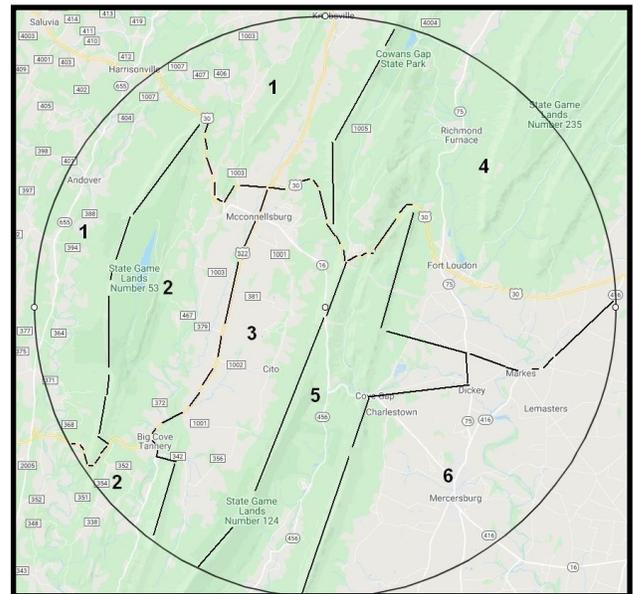
Zone 6 Doris and Steve Brookens

Vern Gauthier is serving as the Compiler for the Count. If you are interested in possibly taking part, you can email him at verngauthier14@gmail.com or call him at (717) 385-9526.



Roseate Spoonbill

Photo credit: Bob Keener



Buchanan Trail CBC Zones

On the Record

by Donna Hocker

Spring saw members of Conococheague outdoors watching birds. Nine participants led by Val Barnes and Donna Hocker made the May 1 trip to **Horse Valley**. While no new birds were sighted, the group saw 71 species.

The **Path Valley** trip had 15 observers and was led by Bob Keener. New birds were the Hooded Merganser, Wild Turkey, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Rusty Blackbird. A total of 88 species were recorded.

Walking the **property of Larry and Helen Lehman**, six birders saw a total of 68 birds, with 12 new birds added to our records. New were: Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Turkey Vulture, Broad-winged Hawk, Least Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, American Crow, Fish Crow, Common Raven, Black and White Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler.

Eric and Rhetta Martin led an evening trip to the **Edenville area**. The 11 participants saw 47 species with two new to the list: American Woodcock and Eastern Screech-Owl.

Eric and Rhetta also led the **South Mountain/Caledonia/Michaux IBA** trip with six observers. They saw 50 species and added the Great Horned Owl to the trip list.

On the final 2020-2021 trip, led by Debby Hook, three birders saw 16 species on the **Chambersburg section of Cumberland Valley Rail Trail**.

I Can Fly!

Story and photos by Valerie Barnes

A friend gave me a seed-covered birdhouse (about 4" x 5") for Christmas, and the winter birds enjoyed eating most of the seeds. I never got around to removing it from the shepherd's hook. In May I noticed Carolina Chickadees checking it out. They would go in and out several times a day. Eventually they seemed to settle in for nesting activity.

According to The Birder's Handbook (Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye, New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1988) both sexes incubate the eggs and tend the young. Incubation takes 11-12 days, and the young leave the nest after 13-17 days. Development is altricial, meaning that the young are initially immobile, downless, with eyes closed, and parents feed them. Cornell's [All About Birds](#) website says clutch size is typically 3-10 eggs. I watched the nest when I could. By May 19th, parents were carrying food to the box and removing fecal material. On May 25th, the action picked up.

At 2:40 PM the first youngster seemed interested in getting out of the box, sticking its head out farther and farther. By 3:11, it had toppled out of the box, landing on the small ledge on the front, just under the hole. It sat there for a few minutes.



#1 "I'm out . . . now what?"

When Mom/Dad came to feed the young still in the box, Baby #1 wanted to be fed, too. No such luck. Baby #1 skipped up to the top of the box briefly, then flew to the nearby White Pine tree at 3:15. Fledging was official!



#2: "Whew . . . I'm off!"

Baby #2 wasted little time in following its sibling. At 3:24, it was out. It flew immediately to a tree, no stopping on the ledge or the top of the box.

Baby #3 emerged at 3:36. #4 flew out immediately after that.

Baby #5 was reluctant. That one kept sticking its head out and then ducking back inside. Mom/Dad kept bringing food, but nothing could persuade that one to come out for quite a while. A House Wren visited the box, looking inside, but did not enter. (Good thing, because I was ready to dash out and interfere with any of that behavior!) Finally, at 6:25, #5 flew out. Mom/Dad came to the box several



#5: "I'm not ready to come out yet, but I am hungry!"

more times with food, but there were no takers left inside, so they left with their food offerings intact.



"House Wren Male: Ah, this is a good angle to get the stick in!"

By 6:35, just 10 minutes after #5 left, the House Wren decided the box was up for grabs and started to clean house. It made several trips in and out, dumping the nesting material on the ground. The Chickadees did not return to the box. I didn't see any Chickadees in the yard until a week later. Since then I've seen up to 4 at a time.

The House Wren male built a preliminary nest with sticks. The female apparently decided it was a good location, finished the nest, and has taken up residence, presumably with eggs. I hope they succeed, too. Very exciting!

MEETINGS – Free. (NEW LOCATION) held at Fellowship Hall, St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church, 2695 Luther Drive, Scotland, PA 17254

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 tentative due to COVID-19. Check our website for updates: <https://conococheagueaudubon.org>

Sept. 4, 2021, Saturday **FIELD TRIP**
7:15 AM for FALL MIGRANTS. Meet at 7:15 AM at the Park and Ride, Scotland Exit 20, I-81 northbound. One mile walk in wet grass at Heisey Orchard. Then by car on Michaux SF roads with additional walk(s) of up to half mile, with trip ending between 12 and 1 PM. Bring binoculars and snack. **Bill Oyler**, oylerbill@gmail.com or 717-360-5191.

Sept. 13, Monday **ZOOM or HYBRID MEETING**
7:00 PM *Cape May Fall Migrants* by Chris & Rebecca Payne. Preparation for the Cape May trip this month. Arranged by John and Sue Greer.

Sept. 18, Saturday **FIELD TRIP**
9:00 AM Chambersburg section of Cumberland Valley Rail Trail. Meet at Big Lots, 184 Southgate Mall, parking lot next to Washington Street. Bring binoculars. **Terri Kochert**, 717-263-3692.

Sept. 22-24, Wed-Fri **FIELD TRIP**
Trip to Cape May NJ, for FALL MIGRANTS, WARBLERS, RAPTORS and SEABIRDS. Bring scopes and binoculars. Signup deadline is Sept. 15. Contact **Sue Greer**, 443-255-9559 or sgreer412@gmail.com

Sept. 25, Saturday **FIELD TRIP**
11:00 AM for HAWK MIGRATION. Leave from Sunnyway Foods parking lot, 49 Warm Spring Road, Chambersburg, to “The Pulpit.” Beginning hawk watchers are welcome. Bring binoculars. **Bob & Marion Carmack**, 717-597-8631.

Oct. 11, Monday **ZOOM or HYBRID MEETING**
6:45 PM **Youth Contest Bird Photos & Lists due tonight.** 7:00 PM. *Wood Thrush Nest Success and Productivity in Central Pennsylvania Contiguous Forests* by Penn State Grad, Eric Zawatski. Arranged by Terri Kochert.

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

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