

NATURALLY

THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Naturally

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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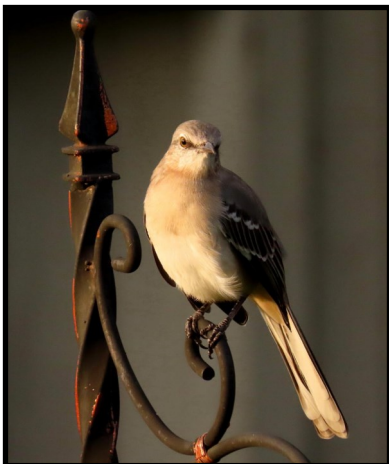
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Northern Mockingbird

Photo credit: Dave Cooney, Jr

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

Sadly, again due to COVID-19, we will not hold a dinner in conjunction with the Christmas Bird Count.

President's Corner

by Terri Kochert

CAS is grateful for the satisfying accommodations at St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church, which hosts our general meetings the second Monday evening of the month. It is exhilarating to meet again in person. We hope you enjoy having the choice of meeting in person or staying at home to view our meetings through Zoom.

This summer, CAS was able to participate in the North Square Farmers Market five times: June 26, July 24, August 28, September 25, and October 23. Meeting and greeting people is both stimulating and fun. Volunteers were able to engage 350 different people, with 140 of these being children! CAS inquired about birds they recognize and personal bird stories. The children were genuinely excited to share their experiences with birds. Some shared about holding and feeding chickadees, hummingbirds, and titmice, showing they were truly knowledgeable about birds.

We distributed coloring sheets and bird stickers to the children and gave various brochures to adults: 7 Simple Actions to Help Birds, 2021 Birdy Dozen (about which native plants to plant), Preventing Window Bird Deaths, our 2022 Nature Film list, and our Activities List. Debby Hook, Educational Outreach chair, prepared an attractive display to please the eyes and titillate the brain.



CAS at North Square Farmers Market

Photo credit: <http://www.northsquarefarmersmarket.com/>



Measuring "wingspan"

Photo credit: Terri Kochert

Volunteers also participated in two other student outreaches, engaging the younger, beginning birders. One was through NETWORK Ministries, meeting during one of their late-July summer camp days. Bob and Terri Kochert played a rousing true-false bird information game with the twelve children and five young staff members, shared a photo PowerPoint of birds and their sounds, and took the children on a nature scavenger hunt.

President's Corner, cont'd, p. 3, col.2.

Greetings from the Conservation Conversation (CC)

by Jim Hardy.

Autumn is here. Daily temperatures and the leaves on the trees are starting to fall. Suddenly, there are no more hummingbirds at the feeder, and many other birds are preparing to move to warmer climates. I'm pleased to say that we have had significant rain since our last conversation about water conservation. I wish to continue the conversation because we know how important water is to human, animal, and plant life.

I originally stated that this would be a two-part conversation. Well ... it is going to more than that. Kudos to my wife, who happened upon a press release about water conservation in Franklin County. She shared it with me, and I find it so important that I in turn have to share it with you. This is big!

The Penn State Extension office has announced the launch of the Master Watershed Steward (MWS) Program in Adams and Franklin counties. Please read the following announcement and be sure to check the Penn State Extension website for the MWS programs in Cumberland, Franklin, and Adams counties. We will resume the "micro" of water conservation in the next edition of CC and I'll tell you about my new water conservation project, which involves an old swimming pool filter tank.

Local Master Watershed Steward Program Begins

Penn State Extension announces the launch of the Master Watershed Steward (MWS) Program in Adams and Franklin counties. The MWS program, which began in Lehigh County in 2013, is now active in 30 counties in Pennsylvania, with more than 500 volunteers active across the state. Holly Smith, who has been coordinating the MWS Program in Cumberland County since its launch in 2019, will also coordinate the program in Adams and Franklin counties.

"The three counties will be combined into one program, but stewards can stay within their home county for volunteer projects if they choose," Smith said. "Each county has its own set of program partners, as well as its own individual challenges and opportunities. Our efforts are very place-based. We work with local audiences and partners and strive to assess and improve water quality and native habitat in our neighborhoods."

The MWS program also helps implement Countywide Action Plans, which aim to meet pollution-reduction goals outlined in Pennsylvania's Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan. These efforts will ultimately improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. The Master Watershed Steward Program, modeled after the successful Master Gardener program, recruits community volunteers with an interest in water quality and natural resource conservation. The volunteers are formally trained in classroom and hands-on settings in environmental resources, stewardship, and education, and are then engaged in watershed education, research, and restoration projects.

To become a certified MWS, a 40-hour training program and 50 hours of volunteer service is required the first year. Certification is maintained in subsequent years by contributing a minimum of 20 volunteer hours and 10 hours of continuing education annually.

Examples of Steward projects include installing rain and pollinator gardens, participating in stream side or community habitat enhancement projects/plantings, conducting stream clean-ups, organizing educational workshops about conservation landscaping or homeowner storm water management, writing newsletter articles, developing educational materials, and working with schools to provide meaningful watershed educational in-class and field experiences.

The next 12-session training program for the three counties will begin in March 2022. Classes will likely be conducted at rotating locations among the Extension offices and partner organizations and may have a live-streaming option. The curriculum also aims to have three hands-on Saturday field trips. For more information about the MWS Program or to request an application for the 2022 training program, email coordinator Holly Smith at hps5293@psu.edu. Information sessions will be held in late 2021 and early 2022 for those wishing to learn more. Applications are due by Feb. 11, 2022.

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/watershed-stewards/counties/cumberland-county>

BIRD BEHAVIOR

by Debby Hook

Having recently acquired David Allen Sibley's newest book, "What It's Like To Be A Bird," I would like to share in this issue some things I found most interesting within its pages.

By highlighting various bird groups such as pelicans, hummingbirds or woodpeckers, Sibley presents universal aspects of bird behavior that we may have noticed in birds around us.

First, I often wonder how long a bird actually lives. Sibley says most songbirds live less than one year; those which live to their first breeding season have a 50-50 chance of surviving each year. That said, banding records show the oldest known songbird was an American Robin, almost 14 years old.

We know that bird survival begins in the egg. A nest full of Mallard hatchlings, for example, has a 15 percent chance of fledging any young. Fewer than half of the ducklings survive the first two weeks, and of those, only about one third live to fledge six weeks later.

Most birds can, and do, balance on one leg. Their leg structure and center of gravity have much to do with this ability. A knob on the pelvis allows the standing leg bone to angle only so far upward. As a bird leans into this "locked" leg, its body mass is centered directly above the foot. In addition, along with a balance sensor in the inner ear much like humans, an extra balance sensor near the pelvis helps birds stabilize themselves in this position.

Some birds' voices are really loud! How do they not go deaf from their own calls? First, if a bird's hearing does become damaged, it can be restored by the growth of new hair cells inside its ear. Wish I could do that! And the mechanics of a bird's jaw are connected to the ear canal, so the outer ear closes automatically when the mouth opens. Increased pressure in the inner ear then helps soften the vibration taking place in the bird's "throat."

Birds create sound in the *syrinx*, at a juncture of two airways, one from the left lung, one from the right. This modification allows the formation of two sounds at once – a higher pitch and a lower pitch. I notice this double pitch, for instance, in the song of the Black-throated Green Warbler. Sibley says thrushes also sing such intricate harmony by creating a separate, distinct sound from each airway.

Now, a word about those pesky Brown-headed Cowbirds that lay their eggs in other birds' nests: In my March 2017 column, I discussed how

other species react to these unwanted eggs and hatchlings, but wait'll you hear this: Mother cowbird does not simply dump her egg and abandon her child. Oh, no! She waits in the wings, so to speak, to follow the progress of her maturing baby. If she finds her egg has disappeared, she may seek revenge by destroying all other eggs in that nest. Linger nearby until long after her young has hatched, she has a chance to imprint her voice to her own offspring. Researchers report cowbirds as young as six days responding to the tuneless chatter of their birth mothers.

Yes, but how do they know ... ? We may never know!

Source: "What It's Like To Be A Bird: From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing, What Birds Are Doing, and Why," by David Allen Sibley (2020, Alfred A. Knopf). A full 11 pages of source notes reference the depth of work in this collection of essays.

This Black-legged Kittiwake was seen visiting Chambersburg

Photo credit:
Dave Cooney, Jr.



President's Corner, cont'd from p. 1.

We measured children to determine which bird they represented through their "wingspan," and we gave them a card with that bird's photo and information. They earned bird and nature stickers, a favorite. Children were also introduced to the use of binoculars. Their excitement was contagious!

The second youth outreach was at Tuscarora Wildlife Education Project (TWEP), where Debby Hook and Terri Kochert asked about bird recognition, using a colorful bird poster Debby provided. Some of the 12 5th and 6th grade girls were well informed about birds. Students were given information about the steady decline of bird species and some tips to help preserve birds for the future. Suggestions were made about professions available to people with an in-depth knowledge of birds. Also noted was the important citizen-science contribution of reporting bird sightings via eBird. Then, after teaching proper use of binoculars, we walked the beautiful trails behind the TWEP center. Unfortunately, there were few birds to see on this late September afternoon. CAS is grateful to director, Sheila Snider, for this partnership activity.

It was a rewarding summer; we were able to touch 380 lives in our community. May this continue!

Announcing Youth Contest Winners

by Terri Kochert



Townsend's Solitaire

Photo credit: Nick Putt

We are immensely proud to announce the winners of our two Youth Contests, which ran from Dec. 1, 2020 to Oct. 11, 2021. Prizes will be awarded at the next regular meeting of CAS, November 8, 2021, at St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church.

First Prize winner of the **Best Bird Photo Contest** is **Nick Putt, 11**, for his photo of an errant **Townsend's Solitaire**. Nick took the photo December 1, at the parking lot behind the Visitors Center of Caledonia State Park using a Panasonic Lumix DCFZ80 camera to take his photo. He is the son of Terri and Marina Putt, Chambersburg. He will be awarded a \$50 prize check.



White-throated Sparrow

Photo credit: Gabe Putt

Second Prize winner is **Gabe Putt, 15**, for his photo of a **White-throated Sparrow**, taken along the Ship Harbor Trail, Acadia National Park, Maine on June 6, using a Panasonic Lumix DCFZ80 camera. Gabe, the older brother of Nick, will be awarded a \$35 prize check.

Winner of the **Biggest (Longest) Bird List Contest** is **Cash Monn, 15**, who presented a list of **104 distinct species**. Though he saw most of these birds locally, he also saw 12 at the Outer Banks, and 23 at Cape May, New Jersey, during our Cape May Field Trip. Cash began his list Dec. 19, 2020, catching the Townsend's Solitaire, and he finished Oct. 6, 2021. The son of Abram and Anya Monn of Greencastle, Cash will be awarded a \$50 prize check.

We thank participants in our 2021 Youth Contests.

Congratulations to all!

On the Record

by Donna Hocker

The **Fall Migrants** field trip started at Heisey Orchard and then followed the roads in Michaux State Forest, led by Bill Oyler. Forty-five (45) species were seen, including 12 warblers. New to the 104 on the list was the Swainson's Thrush.

The trip to the Chambersburg section of the **Cumberland Valley Rail Trail** was led by Terri Kochert. No other observers attended but Terri was able to see 15 species. The list of birds for the trail is 35.

Following a general meeting with Chris and Rebecca Payne, who discussed the variety of birds at **Cape May NJ**, 12 observers were led by Sue and John Greer to various locations there. These included Garrett Family Preserve, Cape May Point Hawk Watch, Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area, South Cape May Meadows, Nummy Island and the Wetlands Institute. The records show this trip made in 2009 and 2010 also included Bombay Hook. This being the third time Conococheague has gone to Cape May (and only Cape May), the sighting of 100 birds is quite a record. Fifteen (15) were new to the list, making the total number 149 species.

Chambersburg Christmas Bird Count December 18, 2021

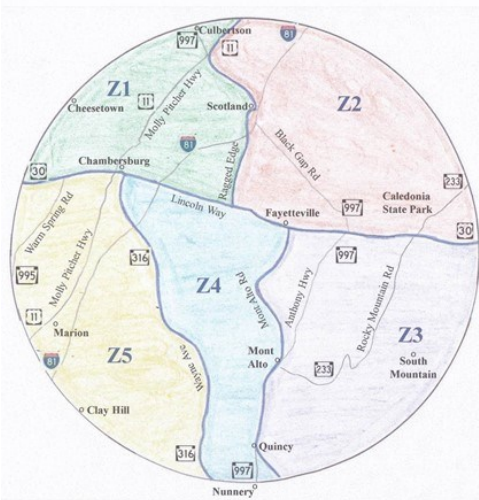
by Valerie B. Barnes

We've scheduled this year's Christmas Bird Count for Saturday, December 18, 2021. This long-running citizen science project helps Audubon to assess the health of bird populations and guide conservation action. You can start counting just after midnight on the 17th; owls sometimes sound off in the wee hours of the morning. We need volunteers to count all the birds seen and heard in this 62nd count in our designated 15-mile diameter circle. Our count area center is at a point just off Spring Road near the headwaters of the Falling Spring, east of Chambersburg, PA. Zone captains organize volunteers in different sections of the circle.

Again, in this year of COVID-19, things will be a little different. To be safe, participants should wear masks and should count only with folks who are not ill and have not been exposed to someone who tested positive for the virus. If the number of COVID-19 cases spikes dramatically in the weeks leading up to the count, we may cancel it; please check our [website](#) or check with your zone captain or with the compiler (Valerie Barnes) for the final plans.

If you don't feel comfortable going out, please let your zone captain know well in advance. If you live inside our circle, you may want to switch to counting at your feeders this year.

See the map below for our circle. If you can't tell whether you are inside the circle or not, please contact Valerie Barnes, our compiler. **To count at your feeders, please sign up well in advance with Marguerite Fries (717-263-2934).**



- Zone 1 Bill Oyler 717-360-5191
- Zone 2 Bob Keener 717-658-8765
- Zone 3 Bill Franz 717-776-4463
- Zone 4 Eric and Rhetta Martin 717-597-8675
- Zone 5 Jim Hardy 717-404-8989



Tufted Titmouse
Photo credit: Bob Keener

If you participated before, your zone captain should contact you, but if he/she doesn't call you, please contact him/her to sign up again. If you are new to the count this year, have a new phone number or email address, or

don't remember who your captain is, please contact Valerie Barnes (717-352-4397). If watching your feeders is your style, and you live inside the circle, call Marguerite Fries (717-263-2934) so she can send you a recording form and instructions, and assign you an observer number. Forms used by observers will be available for download from our website, along with a new detailed map of the circle. The files are on the December 18th calendar page for the [CBC event](#).

Please help! The length of time you count is up to you. The Christmas Bird Count is fun, and you never know what you might see. Make it a family affair! Note that if the weather forecast calls for really bad weather, we may try to reschedule the count; your zone captain will contact you if that happens.

There will be **no tally dinner this year**, due to COVID-19. Zone captains will still collect results and provide them to the compiler.

National Audubon asks for donations to support the CBC. If you would like to donate toward the expense of the count, donations may be given to any zone captain or the treasurer. Please make your check out to CAS and note it is a donation for the CBC; mail to CAS, PO Box 20, Fayetteville, PA 17222. Audubon appreciates your support.



Hermit Thrush
Photo credit: Bob Keener

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>

Nov. 8, Monday ZOOM or HYBRID MEETING

7:00 PM *Research and Techniques in Ornithological Illustration* by Liz Wahid, Certified Science Illustrator. Arranged by Valerie Barnes and Anne St. John. **Youth Contest Winners announced tonight.**

Dec. 13, Monday MEETING

7:00 PM *The Beauty and Fragility of the Everglades* by Dave Graff, Floridian naturalist. Arranged by Terri Kochert.

Winter FIELD TRIP

Sign up by Dec. 14, for **possible visit** to Gettysburg Battlefield for SHORT-EARED OWLS (name, contact information). **Bob Kochert**, 717-263-3692, will advise as to sightings. Meet at Norlo Park Community Center.

Dec. 14, Tuesday CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (new)

All day, Franklin/Fulton Counties. For information, **Vern Gauthier**, 717-385-9526 or vernauthier14@gmail.com

Dec. 18, Saturday CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (ours)

All day, Chambersburg area. **Valerie Barnes**, 717-352-4397.

Dec. 29, Wednesday CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

All day, York Springs area. For information, **Tim Johnson**, 717-409-4805, tj359@sbcglobal.net

Jan. 1, 2022, Sat. CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

All day, Newville area. For information, **Vern Gauthier**, 717-385-9526 or vernauthier14@gmail.com

Jan. 10, Monday MEETING

6:00 PM Covered dish dinner and members' photo show. All are welcome.

Check website for updates

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

Newsletter Editor - Jane Bussard (717-401-3210)

janenbussard47@gmail.com

Send all newsletter articles and photos to the editor.

Send all mailing changes to conaudubon@outlook.com.

COPY DEADLINE DECEMBER 15 FOR JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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