

NATURALLY

THE CONOCOCHIEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Naturally

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOCHIEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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In this Issue:

- Page 2 Conservation Conversation: Water Conservation
- Page 3 Bird-Feeding Basics
- Page 4 Buchanan CBC
- Page 5 Wreath Wins First, Snowy Owls in February
- Page 6 Calendar



President's Corner

by Terri Kochert

Considering your safety and health, Conococheague Audubon (CAS) board recently decided to cancel our advertised January 10, 2022, covered dish dinner. We did this due to the threat of the recent Omicron variant of COVID-19 outbreak. Thus, we also canceled our first free nature film, Return of the Clouded Leopards, scheduled for Jan. 20, 2022. We hope to show our second film on March 24 and the third film on April 14, both at 7:30 p.m. at our new film viewing location, Living Faith Chapel, 8770 Possum Hollow Road, Shippensburg, PA 17257. Please check our website for updates concerning the films.

The other day I received a request for volunteers to install four American Kestrel boxes in parts of Franklin County and four in Fulton County along the Kittatinny Ridge. These eight boxes, provided by the Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape, must be installed no later than March 31, 2022. If there are any willing volunteers who would like to lend a hand, please contact me at ConAudubon@outlook.com. I hope to have more details within the coming week as to locations. Many hands make light work; if you are able to put up ONE box, that would be greatly appreciated.

In addition, Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) is searching for owners of large tracts of land who would agree to work with PGC, the Franklin County Conservation District, and numerous other partners to restore portions of their private lands' habitats along the Conococheague and the Conodoguinet watersheds. The goal is to improve habitats within the larger landscape, because wildlife is not limited by contrived, man-made boundaries. In his letter to me dated December 2, Dr. Scott Bearer, Chief of the PGC Habitat Planning and Development Division, wrote that PGC has been working with "Letterkenny Army Depot to restore grasslands/prairie habitats, and this work is already showing meaningful results—as evidenced by the new observations of Dickcissel this past year."

We are all aware that many birds are in peril. We as individuals can help our feathered friends by restoring their habitat via planting native plants on our own properties or contributing portions of our land to the restoration of particular bird species, as outlined by the PGC and others. If interested, please contact me at ConAudubon@outlook.com.

Season's Greetings, Happy New Year!

Photos at left, from top: Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow
Photo credits: Dave Cooney Jr.

Greetings from the Conservation Conversation (CC)

by Jim Hardy



Common Redpoll
Photo credit: Bob Keener

Winter is my favorite time of the year for bird watching. I admit I am no fan of leaves on the trees when it comes to looking for birds. Winter is also a great time for back-

yard bird feeding. For the past several years, I have employed a heated bird bath at my feeder station. I credit the water with making my feeder station more attractive than others in the area. For years I have wished for a Common Redpoll to show up at the feeders. Recently, I was finally rewarded. What will be the next surprise?

Let's get back to water conservation. We have discussed the importance of water to all living organisms and the importance of conservation and sustainability of this precious resource. With only a half of a percent of all of the earth's water available as fresh water, it is prudent to take steps to preserve this resource. So what can we do as individuals to conserve water and use it effectively and efficiently? Here are just a few suggestions:

Consider Dishwasher vs. Hand Washing

Dishwashers save water. According to bobvila.com, average water usage for hand washing a load of dishes is 26 gallons. Energy Star appliances use about 3.5 gallons per load. So if you wash dishes every three days, for example, you will save 2,737 gallons of water per year. This also equates to saving some cash if you are on municipal water and have to pay for it.

Install Rain Barrels

Install a rain barrel for outdoor watering. By using any online rainwater runoff calculator, you can determine the amount of water that you can catch coming off your roof. For example, if the roof area of your house is 1,500 square feet, you could collect 467 gallons of water with a half an inch of rain. Wow! Those barrels will be overflowing. I did notice that home improvement stores are now selling large water tanks, 1,000 to 3,000 gallons. I

am currently converting an old swimming pool filter tank into a rain barrel. It has the correct plumbing, including an overflow.

Repair Leaking Faucets

The US Geological Survey (USGS) offers a calculator for determining lost water from a dripping faucet. If a faucet drips one drop of water every minute, nearly 35 gallons of water has gone down the drain in one year.

Install a Dual Flush Toilet

Are we thinking about how much water we flush down the drain in our toilets? While visiting Denmark and Sweden back in October, I could not help but notice that all toilets had two options...one for solid waste (a full flush) and one for liquid waste (a reduced flush). Obviously, liquid waste does not require as much water to remove from the toilet bowl. The federal standard for a toilet flush is 1.6 gallons per flush (epa.org). Depending on the model purchased, reduced flushes are 0.8 gallons to 1.1 gallons per flush. That's saving half a gallon water per liquid waste flush. If you are not going to rush right out and purchase a dual flush toilet, there is an alternative. "If it's brown, flush it down. If it's yellow, let it mellow."

Install Reduced Flow Shower Heads

The typical American shower uses approximately 15.8 gallons of water and lasts for 7.8 minutes at an average flow of 2.1 gallons per minute (Home-Water-Works.org). Low flow shower heads at home improvement stores are rated between 1.25 to 1.8 gallons per minute. A 1.5 gpm shower head would save 0.6 gallons of water compared to the average, resulting in a savings of nearly 5 gallons of water per 8 minute shower.

In addition to the above suggestions, there are numerous common sense actions that can be taken, such as turning water off while shaving or brushing our teeth. We can also reduce lawn irrigation and maximize our clothes washer loads. In a world where countries are contemplating war over water (Nile River region and the Aral Sea), the most important suggestion for conservation may be to just simply be aware of how much water we are using every time we use it.

Bird-Feeding Basics

by Valerie B Barnes

Birds need food with high nutritional value – especially protein and fat. According to David Horn, Professor of Biology at Millikin University, results from Millikin research in 2011-2014 found that the health of individual birds improved with supplemental feeding, including reduced stress and rapid feather growth. Birds that had access to supplemental food were in better physical condition but were also subject to disease if feeders were not cleaned regularly. Dr. Horn recommends using Black Oil Sunflower seeds for the widest variety of birds. Be sure to keep your feeders clean to avoid the spread of disease among birds. Use a 10% solution of bleach and warm water at least monthly; rinse well before refilling.

Sunflower seed options: Many stores offer Striped Sunflower, Black Oil Sunflower, and/or Sunflower Kernels. When birds work on both Black Oil and Striped Sunflower seeds, they open and discard the shell, eating only the kernel. In many bags of both Striped and Black Oil Sunflowers, some shells are empty. Striped Sunflower is usually the cheapest variety, but the shells are larger than Black Oil. Hence, you may be paying more in the long run for the part the birds eat. Sunflower Kernels are more expensive than either variety with shells, but there is much less waste (only a little dust). Birds also want to avoid predators, so food that they can eat quickly is preferable.

Bird seed isn't universally "fresh," and some birds seem to notice. Of late at my feeders, this seems to be the case for Nyger (Thistle) seed. I wish I had



Sunflower kernels enjoyed by Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, and House Finch

Photo credit: Valerie Barnes

some clear advice about how to tell the freshness of the seed you are buying, but I don't. Try asking at the store where you purchase your seed.

Squirrels seem to find ways to get into the seeds at many feeders. If you put their preferred food on the ground, that seems to help a little bit. They are especially fond of cracked corn. You can also buy "Squirrel Snack" blocks that contain corn, peanuts, almonds, and walnuts. Squirrels do not like White Millet, but Juncos, White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows and other ground feeders do.

If possible, try to offer a source of water to the birds. An inexpensive heater will keep ice at bay in the cold months. Scrub the dish/birdbath and change the water at least several times each week.



Purple Coneflower, Echinacea purpurea

Photo credit: Josh Donaldson

Native plants such as coneflowers, cosmos, hickories, dogwoods, sumacs, serviceberries, junipers and other berry bushes, crabapples, and hollies are magnets for birds. Visit [National Audubon Society's Native Plants Database](https://www.nationalaudubon.org/native-plants-database) to learn what to plant in our area.

Enjoy seeing our feathered friends in your yard. They appreciate your efforts!

Native Habitat Seedlings Available

Free native trees and shrubs are available this spring through the Keystone Ten Million Trees Partnership. These very small seedlings are available in 25 per species; Jim Hook is assembling requests into an order by Jan. 4. For a list and more information email jimbhook@gmail.com.

Inaugural Buchanan Trail CBC a Success!

by Vern Gauthier

As most of you know, the first Christmas Bird Count occurred in 1900 as an alternative to the Christmas "Side Hunt" which was a contest to see who could shoot the most animals and birds on a single day. That first year, 25 CBCs with 27 participants marked the beginning of the Christmas Bird Count tradition. Our own Chambersburg Count goes back to 1955, when there was one participant and 10 species reported.

Last year in the 121st Christmas Bird Count season, 2,459 circles took part, with 1,842 counts in the United States, 451 in Canada, and 166 throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands.

This year, in Pennsylvania there are 82 counts scheduled to take place during the CBC season of December 14 through January 5th. Included in these counts is the brand-new Buchanan Trail CBC. It is named such due to the count center being located at the Franklin and Fulton County line on Pa. 16 (the Buchanan Trail).

The count, which is located half in Franklin and half in Fulton, took place on December 14, with 20 participants, including CAS members: Bill Oyler, Val Barnes, Jim and Debby Hook, Tracy Mosebey, Donna Hocker, Chris Payne, and yours truly, Vern Gauthier, as Count Compiler. Some of the public areas in the count include Cowan's Gap State Park, the Knobsville and Kerper Tracts of Buchanan State Forest, Buchanan's Birthplace State Park, Haines-Seville Wetlands, Meadow Grounds Lake/SGL 53, and Fort Loudon Historical Fort.

For the count itself we ended up with 73 species. Some observations about the species include the following:

- Waterfowl were in short supply, with only six species being reported including: one Wood Duck, two American Black Duck, two Northern Pintail, and one Bufflehead.
- Shorebirds included 14 Killdeer and six Snipe. There was only one Ring-billed Gull seen on the day, and 52 Wild Turkey (No grouse or pheasants).
- It was a tough day for raptors, but we were still able to get one Northern Harrier, five Bald Eagles, and eight Red-shouldered Hawks.

- Four species of owls were heard, including two Northern Saw-whet.
- All expected species of woodpecker except for Red-headed. There were 88 Red-bellied leading the way and only 13 Hairy bringing up the rear.
- American Kestrel was the only falcon species reported.
- While there was a good count of 14 Common Ravens, there were no Fish Crows to be found.
- We did manage to find eight Red-breasted Nuthatches and three Purple Finches in this non-invasion year. Unfortunately, there were no Pine Siskins or other winter finches to be found.
- Counters out in the field were able to find five Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 10 Winter Wrens and 13 Brown Creepers, but Eastern Phoebe was a miss.
- There were 16 Hermit Thrushes found and 35 American Robins. Also, there was one Gray Catbird hanging out waiting to be counted.
- Field birds were in short supply with only four each of Horned Larks and American Pipits, and no Lapland Longspurs or Snow Buntings.
- There were eight species of sparrows found including: eight Field Sparrows, only one American Tree Sparrow, 24 White-crowned Sparrows, six Swamp Sparrows, and two Eastern Towhees.
- We had four species of blackbirds including: four Eastern Meadowlarks, and seven Rusty Blackbirds.
- The only species of warbler were 21 Yellow-rumped.

One of the interesting things about a new count is to see what will develop over the next few years. Are there species we got this year that, more often than not, we will miss in future years? Are there species we missed this year that will be found on a regular basis as we move forward? How will numbers of particular species trend in years to come?

Speaking of the future, the 2022 PABT will take place on Wednesday, December 14, 2022. New participants are always welcomed. Finally, thank you once again to CAS for supporting the count. It would have been difficult, at best, for the CBC to take place without your help.

A Look at Snowy Owls in February

by Debby Hook

We're sure you will LOVE our February 14 program, Snowy Owl: A Visual Natural History, by award-winning author and wildlife photographer, Paul Bannick, whose work focuses on birds and habitat. His program will come to us via Zoom beginning at 7 p.m.

Bannick, an accomplished public speaker who lives and works in Seattle, Oregon, is the author and photographer of two best-selling bird books, *Owl: A Year in the Lives of North American Owls* (Braided River 2016) and *The Owl and The Woodpecker, Encounters with North America's Most Iconic Birds* (Mountaineers 2008). His photography honors include awards in *Audubon Magazine*.

Sponsoring this out-of-the-ordinary media show is Jim Bousom, owner of Bousom Transfer LLC, Petersburg, PA. We thank Jim Bousom for his generosity in providing our chapter a closer peek at one of our favorite birds.

We also express our great appreciation to former vice president Jessica Ferguson for arranging the sponsorship.



Yellow-rumped Warbler

Photo credit: Dave Cooney Jr.



CAS' wreath and swag was voted Best of Show among the 10 wreaths entered in Franklin County Visitors Bureau's 2021 "Festival of Trees."
Photo credit: Debby Hook

CAS Wreath Wins Best of Show by Debby Hook

The wreath and swag submitted by our Audubon chapter to Franklin County Visitors Bureau's 2021 "Festival of Trees" was voted Best in Show among the 10 wreaths entered in that category.

This is the second year our chapter was invited to participate in the tree-and wreath-decorating contest that benefits local cancer treatment. This year's beneficiary is Cumberland Valley Breast Care Alliance. Money was raised through popular votes cast for trees and wreaths, as well as through the purchase of each tree and wreath in a silent auction. Our wreath was purchased for a high bid of \$50.

Valerie Barnes, Marguerite Fries and Debby Hook decorated the CAS wreath and its accompanying swag. Our theme, "Go Native!" featured miniature "seed packets" picturing native flowers that are good sources of bird food or nesting material.

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>

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 verngauthier14@gmail.com

Feb. 14, Monday ZOOM or HYBRID MEETING
7:00 PM *Snowy Owl: A Visual Natural History*, by award-winning author and wildlife photographer, Paul Bannick of Seattle, WA. Arranged by Jessica Ferguson. (Please see the article by Debby Hook in this volume of The Naturally.)

Feb. 18-20, Fri.-Sun. FIELD TRIP
Blackwater NWR, Maryland, auto tour for WATERFOWL. Leave from Martins' home at 6:00 PM Friday. Bring scopes, binoculars, and lunch. Make your own motel arrangements. **Eric and Rhetta Martin**, 717-597-8675.
Check website for updates

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

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Send all newsletter articles and photos to the editor.
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