

NATURALLY

THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Naturally

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Josh and Susan Donaldson look for pollinators among the coneflowers in Conococheague Audubon's native plants garden in Norlo Park. See story on page 4.

Photo credit: Jim Hook

President's Corner

by Valerie B. Barnes

Fall migration has started, first with shorebirds, but songbirds won't be far behind. To see shorebirds locally, you might want to visit Antrim Commons, the Greencastle Reservoir, and local farm ponds. To help identify the large terns, check out National Audubon's "[The Big Tern Cheat Sheet](#)." Caledonia State Park, any of the State Game Lands, and the nature trail behind Wilson College are good places to see migrating songbirds. Your own backyard may also be a hotspot!

By now you should have received our annual fundraising letter and this season's Activities List. We would appreciate any donation you can make to help Conococheague Audubon. Mail your donation to PO Box 20, Fayetteville, PA 17222. Please visit our website www.ConococheagueAudubon.org for updates about activities. September's scheduled activities include our year-round Bird Walks led by Larry and Sharon Williams, a search for Fall Migrants led by Bill Oyler, and the trip to Cape May in search of warblers, and led by Sue Greer. Don't miss our September 12 Zoom meeting about "Weird and Wonderful Birds," led by Jeanne Verhulst, for a fun look at unusual birds. See the calendar on page 6 for details.

Again this year our regular meetings will be at St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church (off Route 997, near the Scotland exit off I-81), 2695 Luther Dr, Chambersburg, PA 17202, with Zoom as an option for most meetings.

Youth are encouraged to submit entries to the "Best Bird Photos" contest and the "Longest Bird Species List," both to be judged in October. Youth should be aware of the due date for both their "Best Bird Photos" and/or their Longest Bird Species List" entries, which are **due by 6:50 PM on October 10** at our CAS meeting. All contestants are invited to stay for our educational program too.

We are still looking for someone to contact local media outlets with publicity about our activities. Most of this happens through Facebook. If you are on Facebook, please step up, because we need your help. Terri Kochert will set up a display table for our last visit to the 2022 Chambersburg Farmers Market on September 24 between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Please contact Terri (717-263-3692) if you can join her. Folks enjoy stopping by to talk about "their" birds.

May you have a fun and birdy fall season. Stay safe.

Conservation Conversation: Land Management

by Jim Hardy

So far it has been a hot summer and it's a little on the dry side. I hope everyone had an opportunity to enjoy something fun, relaxing and/or interesting over the summer months. My wife and I celebrated our milestone birthdays by traveling to Morocco, Spain, and Gibraltar for a little 10-day getaway. I did add a few life birds to my life list on the trip.

The last time I wrote this column, song birds were in the nest and the first hatchlings were blindly squealing for a meal. Since then I have observed a number of young birds after they left the nest. One day while hiking on the C&O Canal, I saw a young fuzzy Barred Owl that may have been outside the nest for the first time. Mama owl was close by and made her presence known. I also saw a full dozen Canada Goose goslings trailing behind mother on the Potomac River and just several weeks ago, near the village of Claylick I saw 6 young turkeys following mother turkey. The young awkward little turkeys were fun to see. Let us not forget the young sparrows and finches squatting and fluttering about as they beg their parents to feed them.



Cedar Waxwing
Photo credit: Dale Gearhart

The survival of a young bird depends on many things but probably the most important is the habitat from which it gets its food, water, and shelter. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines habitat as: "the

place or type of site where a plant or animal naturally or normally lives and grows." I immediately think of forests, meadows, lakes, and streams. These are natural habitats but what about the habitats that have been affected or created by mankind? I'm talking about residential developments, industrial parks, school campuses, cities, towns, and agricultural land.

Over the last year or so we have been learning about water conservation. Now I want to shift the focus of the Conservation Conversation to explore land conservation. What are we doing with the land? People are building houses, farmers are planting crops and pasturing livestock in the fields, logging companies are harvesting trees, and businesses are opening new facilities. As a casual observer, I can't help but notice an increase in the number of warehouse facilities and solar farms in and around the county. All of these activities are considered development or use of the land. Now the question for our conversation: How does the use and development of the land affect the bird population?

I want to keep the conversation close to home so I've

decided the conversation will be about land use in Franklin County. Now the word for the day is "land." Dictionary.com defines land as: "any part of the earth's surface not covered by a body of water." The land area of Franklin County is nearly 773 square miles which makes it the 27th largest county



Redtail Hawk
Photo credit: Dale Gearhart

of the 67 counties in Pennsylvania. As of 2020, the population of Franklin County was 155,932, a 4.2% increase since 2010, making it the 10th fastest growing county in Pennsylvania, according to the Franklin County Area Development Corporation.

More than half of Franklin County's land usage is for agriculture. The official Franklin County website, www.franklincountypa.gov, states that 255,500 acres are in farm use. That converts to just over 399 square miles or 54.4% of all of the county. It also states that there are 39,780 acres (62 square miles) of state forest lands with approximately 15,178 acres as state game lands.

So far we have accounted for 60% percent of the land in Franklin County. That leaves the remainder of the land in the hands of private owners, commercial businesses, municipalities, and government. For future discussions we will concentrate on the remaining 40%.

So what does affect the way we use the land? We are going to look at several topics that impact land use. First will be the geography, climate, and natural resources of our county. How do we adapt land usage to the features of the land? What role does the weather play in land use decisions? Second, we will explore the population and its demographics. The population is growing, and more land and resources will be needed. Third will be location, location, location, and economic growth. Franklin County is in a unique location in our country in regard to major highways and railroads. Finally we will investigate current land use regulations and laws that are related to protecting the environment along with developing sustainable solutions for protecting the habitats of our avian friends.

Until next time, start looking at land that is being newly developed. Is that a new house being built? Why is that parcel of land being bulldozed? Is that a new solar farm being built? How will it affect the birds?

September Trip to Cape May, by John Greer

Travel with CAS to one of the top birding locations in all of North America: Cape May, New Jersey, located in the very heart of the Atlantic Flyway. This September 20-22 trip is sure to appeal to both avid & novice birders alike, as it is timed to catch all the birding action of the fall migration along the Eastern Seaboard.

Cape May's location makes it a special birding hot spot. It is positioned on the southernmost tip of New Jersey, and is situated exactly where birds that are migrating from points north "drop out" before crossing the Delaware Bay. Warblers, raptors, and waterfowl all abound here during the month of September, as do a myriad of shorebirds.

As you can see from the itinerary, the trip will cover sites that are well known for quality birding, including Cape May Point State Park, Nature Conservancy South Cape May Meadows, Higbee Beach, Nummy Island, Stone Harbor Point, and Wetlands Institute. There will be a group "Pizza in the Park" dinner the first night where we can get to know each other better and get updates on the trip. Participants should find and make their own lodging arrangements. There are many options in and around Cape May to fit a range of budgets. For more details on the area, including places to stay, see <https://njudubon.org/centers/cape-may-bird-observatory/>

If you plan to go, please contact Sue Greer by September 16 at sgreer412@gmail.com or call her at 443 255-9559.

Itinerary CAS Trip Cape May, N.J.

"World's Best Destination for Birding,"

National Geographic

(Subject to change depending on the birds and weather)

Tues., Sept. 20

- 1:00 p.m. Meet at Cape May Point State Park Hawk Watch parking lot
- 1:00 p.m. Bird for migrants at Cape May Point State Park (leaders will walk short trails, option to stay at Hawk Watch)
- 3:00 p.m. Bird the blind-side trail for shorebirds at Nature Conservancy South Cape May Meadows
- 5:30 p.m. "Pizza in the Park:" Group dinner at Cape May Point State Park

Wed., Sept. 21

- 7:00 a.m. Meet at Higbee Beach to bird for migrants (directions to be provided)
- 9:00 a.m. Breakfast at McDonald's
- 10:00 a.m. Bird for migrants at Cape May Point State Park (leaders will walk longer trails, option to walk shorter trails or to stay at Hawk Watch)
- 1:00 p.m. Lunch in Cape May (TBD, be prepared for cash only for meal; bring quarters for parking meter)
- 2:30 p.m. Beach walk in Cape May for shorebirds

4:00 p.m. Bird full trail with beach extension at Nature Conservancy South Cape May Meadows for shorebirds and migrants

Thurs., Sept. 22

- 8:00 a.m. Bird at Nummy Island for shorebirds and migrants (directions to be provided)
- 9:30-ish a.m. Bird at Stone Harbor Point for shorebirds and migrants (directions to be provided)
- 11:00-ish a.m. Bird at Wetlands Institute for shorebirds (directions to be provided)

On the Record

by Sue Greer

Spring brought a flurry of productive and exciting field trips. The first was a walk led by Jim Hardy along the **C & O Canal at Big Slackwater and Dam #4** in late April, where seven observers saw 35 species.

The **Little Cove field trip** in mid-May was led by Donna Hocker and Val Barnes. Their group of nine birders saw 73 species, including a Cape May Warbler spotted for the first time in 30 years.



*Cape May Warbler; Lorraine Minns/
Audubon Photography Awards 2019*

Next was a three-day **field trip to Magee Marsh** led by Terri and Bob Kochert. This group of ten birders included two boys ages 11 and 13. They also visited

Ottawa NWR, Metzger Marsh, Howard Marsh MetroPark, Mallard Club Marsh Wilderness Area, Maumee State Park (all in Ohio) and PA SGL 330/Piney Tract, seeing a total of 106 species.

Following that was Eric and Rhett Martin's annual field trip to the **Edenville area for Whip-poor-wills**. A first for this trip was the sighting of a Belted Kingfisher. Fifty-four species, including the Whip-poor-will, were seen by eight observers, which included three children.

June started with the **Beginning Birders Workshop** at Caledonia State Park organized by Janet Tice and Dave Cooney. Forty-six species were seen by the eight workshop participants.

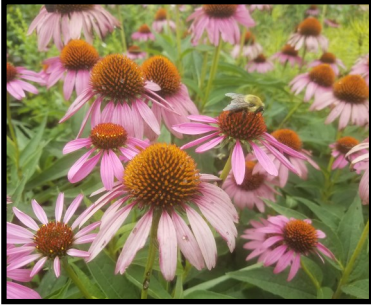
The next field trip was to several areas of **South Mountain** led by the Martins. Ten birders saw 46 species, including seven species of warblers.

Debby Hook led the last field trip of the year along the **Chambersburg portion of the Cumberland Valley Rail Trail**. Eight birders saw 35 species of birds. A rare sighting by the two boys in the group was a Yellow-crowned Night Heron wading in the creek!

Native Garden is a Pollinator's Dream

by Debby Hook

The air was abuzz this summer as Josh Donaldson, Conococheague Audubon's native garden coordinator since 2014, announced the garden's recent certification as a Pollinator-Friendly Garden by Penn State Extension.



The purple coneflowers attract pollinating bees in Conococheague Audubon's native plants garden in Norlo Park.
Photo credit: Jim Hook

While the space attracts its share of birds – 23 different species recorded this year – Josh noticed one day that pollinating insects were quite as busy among the blooms as he and his wife Susan were.

Disappointed that the primary bird species populating our garden is the English Sparrow,

Josh and Susan have been looking for a way to redeem the garden's purpose. Why not try to qualify as a pollinator-friendly garden?

"We already have the plants that attract pollinators," Josh said.

Indeed we do, thanks to the original native garden committee who, in 2005, completed the first stage of landscaping the bare plot we were given in Norlo Park.

Ruth Ann Smith, chapter president during the years of development, described the process. "It started with Russ Martz and Henry Betz suggesting (we) put plants along a path leading from the farmhouse," she said. "That led to (Guilford Township Supervisor) Greg Cook providing a large area for a garden, much larger than we anticipated. Leading the effort . . . was (the late) Corinne Anderson with her extensive knowledge of native plants. She, along with the help of the Boy Scouts, Audubon members and friends, and especially the committee, produced a nice garden that has only gotten better with time."

"I credit all of them for (our success in qualifying)," said Josh. Referencing a book titled "Butterflies of Pennsylvania" by James Monroe and David Wright, the Donaldsons determined that our garden has host plants known to be used by 43 of the 72 butterfly species historically reported in Franklin County.

The couple applied for certification in mid-June, and by July 7 received notice that ours was accepted as a Pollinator-Friendly Garden. (A copy of the certificate is in the kiosk). Penn State's qualifications include four species of native trees and shrubs; at least three species of native plants blooming each season; a source of water; and a stone wall or pile for shelter.

"The only recommendation they gave us was to get rid of invasive plants," said Josh, who added that Connie Schmotzer, the certification coordinator, was surprised to see a native garden that had been developed so many years ago. She told the Donaldsons that back in 2005, awareness of native plantings was very low, and she commended our chapter as being ahead of the curve at the time. She also said very few public gardens have applied for the status.

Our garden will be featured as a "Garden of Merit" in the January 2023 issue of the Master Gardener newsletter, *The Buzz*. This newsletter is sent out to more than 1,000 owners or representatives of similar gardens in Pennsylvania.

Susan made it clear that Connie used the term "invasive" to mean *non-native* plants that tend to wander. "She would use the word 'aggressive' when describing *native* plants that spread," explained Susan.

The Donaldsons' proficiency in native horticulture was evident as we strolled pathways around the garden. They pointed out Lemon Sundrops that are thriving in a new, sunnier spot and Blazing Stars that are holding their own among tall grasses. Seasonal blooms have taken on new importance, too.

"(Master Gardener) Linda Silverman told us that the Number One fall plant for pollinators is asters," Susan said. Knowing this, Susan is allowing some of the weedy-looking, wild Frost Asters to remain among some taller specimens because of the great numbers of bees and butterflies she sees on them.

Garden Volunteers Needed

"The greatest challenge to maintaining the native plants garden is finding volunteers," said Josh Donaldson.

What is required of garden volunteers? First, confirm with Josh that you are weeding or working in the garden. You may request to do any of the following:

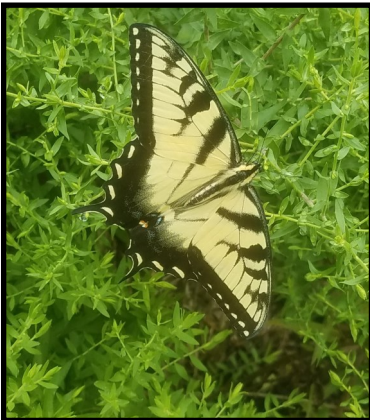
- Stick with pulling one specific weed, such as thistle or non-native strawberry, anywhere in the garden.
- Adopt a plot, no matter how small.
- Weed around the stone path and kiosk, where we don't want any plants to grow.

Help on any of the three work days in spring.

Contact Josh Donaldson at
jd425@embarqmail.com or 717-264-6920.

This year, the couple have gotten lots of help by sharing photos with native plant Facebook groups – there are dozens of them out there, Josh said – and using Smartphone apps such as PlantNet and iNaturalist to identify live photos. Josh named the Pennsylvania Native Plant Society’s Facebook page as a major go-to source (<https://www.facebook.com/PAnativeplantsociety>).

We also talked about the birds – a pair of Northern Cardinals that lives within the garden; Cedar Waxwings seen once among the elderberries and Gray Dogwood; a Yellow Warbler that stopped by in May; and every year, at least one family of Tree Swallows fledges from our nest boxes. Some years there are Eastern Bluebirds fledglings, too.



An Eastern Tiger Swallowtail lands on an Aromatic Aster bush at Conococheague Audubon’s native plants garden in Norlo Park.
Photo credit: Jim Hook

At the end of our walk, as if on cue, a large, yellow Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterfly landed on a yet-to-bloom Aromatic Aster bush. It appears that this garden has the pollinators’ stamp of approval.



Matthew Wedd (left), executive director of the Conococheague Institute, accepts binoculars from Conococheague Audubon President Terri Kochert on May 28. Club members gave eight pairs of binoculars and a monocular for the institute’s birding and youth programs in the Greencastle-Mercersburg area.
Photo credit: Jim Hook

Return of the Clouded Leopards

by Terri Kochert

Making a third try, CAS plans to show this film at 7 on November 10 at Chambersburg Area Middle School South, 1151 E. McKinley Street, Chambersburg. On November 17, it can be seen again at Living Faith Chapel, 8770 Possum Hollow Road, Shippensburg. There will be NO music prior to the film. Shows begin promptly at 7 PM and end with door prizes at about 8:30 PM, allowing school-aged children to view the film too. In the spring, CAS will offer another great PBS film using the same two locations and the same earlier time.

The film tells the story of two young, orphaned Clouded Leopard cubs rescued from poachers and raised to live in the wild once again. It’s an incredible story of human tenacity and effort to wean the cubs and then acclimate them to their home environment. Orphaned cubs usually end up in zoos. Find out how this first attempt to return Clouded Leopards to their natural environment went.

Farmers Market Report

by Terri Kochert

CAS took advantage of free advertising at the Chambersburg North Square Farmers Market on four Saturday mornings. CAS agreed to display our brochures and other educational materials on the fourth Saturday of each month, June -September. Volunteers included Lisa Coombs, Ron George, Benjamin and Allyson Lehman, and Terri Kochert. This year we set up our display at 8:40 and spoke with passing patrons from 9 AM – 11 AM. Our stand sits at the eastern side of the foot bridge. To attract more families, CAS designed two new games in addition to offering our bird-coloring pages. One is *Bird Fact Trivia* (True or False) and the other, *Name that Bird*, using a small wiffle ball to select the correct bird photo. Prizes are bird/animal stickers or a bird craft ornament. Volunteers passed out coloring pages and/or free “bird crafts.”



“Name that Bird” game challenged children
Photo credit: Terri Kochert

Volunteers interacted with 44 individuals in June and 53 individuals in July. Please stop by with your children and/or grandchildren.

MEETINGS – Free, 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; arrive early.

Year-round BIRD WALKS

SOAR (Studying Ornithology Around the Region) walks, 8:00 AM first and third Saturdays; various locations in Franklin County. **Larry and Sharon Williams**, 717-655-7414; or The Institute, 717-762-0373, <https://natureandcultureinstitute.org/events/>.

Sept. 10, 2022, 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**, 717-360-5191, oylerbill@gmail.com.

Sept. 12, Monday MEETING

7:00 PM *Weird and Wonderful Birds*, *Jeanne Verhulst*. A fun look at unusual birds. Speaker via Zoom. Arranged by Janet Tice.

Sept 20-22, Tues.-Thurs. FIELD TRIP

Trip to Cape May NJ for WARBLERS. Options for migrating raptors and seabirds. Bring scopes and binoculars. Find and make your own motel and meal arrangements. Signup deadline is Sept. 16. **Sue Greer**, 443-255-9559, sgreer412@gmail.com. Check our website for updates: www.ConococheagueAudubon.org

Oct. 10, Monday MEETING

6:50 PM Youth Contest Bird Photos & Lists due. **7:00 PM** *Bird Monitoring Project in Michaux State Forest*, Mike Wright, Bureau of Forestry. Arranged by Sue and John Greer.

Oct. 22, Saturday FIELD TRIP

8:00 AM “Introduction to Bird Monitoring Project in the Michaux, Part 1.” Meet at Mont Alto State Park parking lot on Rt 233 (across from pavilion). Bring binoculars, snack, and sturdy walking shoes. Expect an easy approx. 3-mile walk. **John Greer**, 443-255-8871, jngreer@aol.com.

Oct. 29, Saturday FIELD TRIP

8:00 AM “Introduction to Bird Monitoring Project in the Michaux, Part 2.” Meet at Mont Alto State Park parking lot on Rt 233 (across from pavilion). Bring binoculars, snack, and sturdy walking shoes. Expect an easy approx. 4-mile walk. **John Greer**, 443-255-8871, jngreer@aol.com.

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

Newsletter Editor - Jane Bussard (717-401-3210)
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Send all newsletter articles and photos to the editor.
Send all mailing changes to conaudubon@outlook.com.

COPY DEADLINE : OCTOBER 15 FOR NOVEMBER 2022 NEWSLETTER

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