

NATURALLY

THE CONOCOCHIEGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Naturally

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOCHIEGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Eastern Phoebe
Photo credit: Bob Keener



Red-headed Woodpecker
Photo credit: Dale Gearhart

President's Corner

by Valerie B. Barnes

The winter finch forecast is available at <https://finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2022>. There's nothing too exciting forecast, but we should watch for Redpolls, Red and White-winged Crossbills, Pine and Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins, and Purple Finch. Pine Siskin and Purple Finch have been seen in Franklin County in recent weeks.

The U.S. Committee of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), a coalition of 29 federal and state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and bird-focused partnerships that advance biological, social, and scientific priorities for North American bird conservation, recently published *State of the Birds 2022*. The report "sounds an alarm about steep population losses in virtually all habitats. The report identifies 70 Tipping Point species that have lost half or more of their breeding population since 1970." Those species "could be next to face threatened or endangered status."

Researchers found that species across all habitats except wetlands are declining. Decades-long efforts to protect and restore wetlands are paying off. Numbers of geese, swans, dabbling/diving ducks, and other waterbirds are rising. Authors recommend scaling up conservation and restoring habitats to improve the quality of life for wildlife and humans. "Actions and initiatives to bring back birds can also play a role in achieving national goals for broader biodiversity protection, climate resilience, and environmental justice—all while staying true to the principles of benefiting all people, strengthening economies, using science as a guide, honoring Tribal sovereignty, and empowering private landowners as conservation drivers. The bottom line is that bird conservation benefits everybody: wildlife, people, entire ecosystems, and Planet Earth." You may read the report at <https://www.stateofthebirds.org/2022/>.

Our 2021-2022 Youth Contests ended on October 12. Winners will be honored at our November 14 meeting. Please support CAS's first nature film of the 2022-2023 season this November. You may view the National Geographic film, "Return of the Clouded Leopards," at CAMS South, Chambersburg, on Nov. 10 at 7 PM or at Living Faith Chapel, Shippensburg, on Nov. 17 at 7 PM. Remember that donations are welcome. There will be free door prizes, and each evening a pair of binoculars will be given to one youth between the ages of five and eighteen years. We look forward to seeing you there.

We continue to look for someone to handle Publicity for our activities. Please contact Valerie Barnes to volunteer.

Thanks to all who have donated to keep Conococheague Audubon alive. It's never too late to mail a check to CAS at PO Box 20, Fayetteville, PA 17222. May you enjoy fall and see lots of good birds,

Conservation Conversation: Land Management

by Jim Hardy

Fall is upon us. The temperatures are slowly decreasing, and the green leaves are rapidly changing to brilliant yellows, oranges, and reds. It will soon be like the lyrics from a Led Zeppelin song... "Leaves are falling all around." Fall is also the time to see birds migrating south following warmer temperatures and for many, the warm weather insect food sources. I suppose some of you have been to the "Pulpit" to observe the hawk migration. I personally prefer the riparian zones along the creeks and rivers. My favorite migrant of all is the Tundra Swan. I just love hearing their calls. Be on the lookout for them in November when a large frontal system moves through. This has often been the scenario when I have seen them.

In our last CC we began a discussion about land conservation. We know from previous articles that conservation is the preservation and protection of natural resources for current and future generations. Now we will focus on the land itself. We defined land as any part of the earth's surface not covered by water or as I like to say... "solid terrestrial surface of the earth." That sounds very scientific, but we commonly call it "ground." So what is land made up of? How about dirt, soil, rock minerals and vegetation. In a cold climate, a glacier could be part of the land.

There are many types of natural land in the world. Mountains (with and without trees), forests, rain forests, woodlands, tundra, plains, desert, and wilderness, to name a few. Think of these as virgin types of land untouched by humans. Now let's introduce humans to the land. Humans need water, food, and shelter and in most cases land provides these three components to living. To obtain any of these necessities requires using the land. Early settlers to Franklin County would have found vast woodlands to obtain food and build shelters. Trees were cleared and the gardens were planted as the first acts of agriculture. That is three land uses already: hunting, farming and residential. It's the human altering of the natural land or environment that becomes "land use."

In my hypothetical early settler example above, you can guess that the next land use would be commercial. Another settler comes along and wants to settle and build a house too. So the first settler cuts down trees on his land and sells them to

the new settler to build a house.

Today we use our land in many different ways. It would appear that very little land is unused or untouched. I live in the village of Welsh Run in the southern part of Franklin County, in a village of 24 houses. Outside the village we are surrounded by farms that seem to go on to the next village. There are some small, wooded areas but not very many. Then as you get closer to Mercersburg or Greencastle, you start to see commercial and industrial properties. It appears that all the land is in use. The village would be all residential use and farms would be agriculture.

While researching information for this article, I came upon Franklin County, PA Forward. <https://franklincountypa.gov/ckeditorfiles/files/Planning/planning-FranklinCountyForward.pdf> It is a comprehensive plan for Franklin County. I suggest giving it a look, but I will warn you, it is 386 pages long. It is heavy on growth and development and why everyone should live in Franklin County. In this plan, I found Land Use Coverage for 2010. This is how the land of Franklin County was classified:

- Low Intensity Residential 2.33%
- Med. Intensity Residential 3.08%
- Low Intensity Non-Residential 2.18%
- Med. Intensity Non-Residential 1.52%
- High Intensity Non-Residential 0.38%
- Active Strip Mining 0.16%
- Transportation 1.83%
- Row Crops 14.34%
- Pasture/Grassland 29.32%
- Golf Course 0.29%
- Forest 43.37%
- Barren Land 0.03%
- Surface Water 0.33%
- Wetlands 0.83%

In the next addition of the Conservation Conversation, we will discuss changes in agriculture, solar farms and industrial warehouses and their impact on the environment and our friends, the birds.

I want to know ... Do female birds get fatter before laying eggs?

by Debby Hook

You may be nodding your head right now, saying, “Yep; chunky spring robins.”

While I found no definitive answers on this topic, I gleaned the following bits of bird-weight information from various online sources regarding wild birds as well as pet birds.

Since birds do not become pregnant, they do not have the accompanying weight gain for carrying a growing embryo. However, as an egg grows inside her body, a female bird will gain a little weight and develop a slightly swollen, firmer abdomen. The change is small, though, and difficult to observe.

After mating, a female songbird’s body develops an ova into an egg yolk in just a few days. David Allen Sibley’s book, “What It’s Like To Be A Bird,” describes the final 24 hours of the egg before being laid into the nest: Albumin is added in about four hours; the shell in 15 hours; and coloration in five hours. Sibley says a completed egg is between 2 percent and 12 percent of a female bird’s weight, depending on the species. The egg then rotates 180° before being forced from the bird’s cloaca.

During this 24-hour period, the female is generally less actively feeding and more present at the nest, preening and preparing for her family.

So, what might cause some birds to appear fatter at our spring feeder sites? An April 9, 2021, Audubon Magazine article by Kevin Johnson mentions that birds preparing to migrate are capable of shrinking their internal organs – thus changing their body structure – as a means to lighten the load during migration. He uses as an example the Bar-tailed Godwits, long-distance-champions which can absorb into their bodies 25 percent of the tissue comprising their liver, kidneys, and digestive tract. They eat less, too.

Perhaps some near-emaciated birds that appear in spring at our feeders tend to pile on the pounds after a few days of eating heartily.

Now, about those chubby robins in springtime, you can find few answers but lots of entertainment in this fun-filled article at the Massachusetts-based news site Wickedlocal.com: <https://www.wickedlocal.com/story/archive/2009/05/07/ask-bird-folks-chubby-robins/987631007/>

Sources:

<https://www.thayerbirding.com/do-birds-get-pregnant/>

<https://birdstracker.com/how-long-is-a-bird-pregnant-before-laying-eggs/>

<https://www.backtobirds.com/lovebird-laying-eggs/>

<https://www.animalshq.com/how-long-does-it-take-for-a-bird-to-lay-an-egg/>

<https://www.audubon.org/news/five-incredible-ways-birds-change-their-bodies-spring-and-fall-migration>

<https://birdwatchworld.com/the-fascinating-facts-of-how-birds-lay-eggs/>

On the Record

by Sue Greer

This year’s **Fall Migrants** field trip, led by Bill Oyler, yielded 15 species of warblers! The group saw a Nashville Warbler and Northern Parula for the first time. Seven participants birded Heisey Orchard and roads in the Michaux State Forest, seeing a total of 57 species. The **Cape May** field trip, led by John and Sue Greer, yielded migrating raptors and warblers. The 11 species of raptors included Bald Eagles, American Kestrels, Merlins, and Peregrine Falcons. The nine species of warblers included Magnolia, Cape May, Black and White, Black-throated Blue, as well as a first-time sighting of a Prairie Warbler. Other “firsts” this year included Wood Duck, Pectoral Sandpiper, White-eyed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Scarlet Tanager. Three observers saw a total of 88 species.

Educational Outreach Report

by Terri Kochert

CAS engaged 139 adults and 127 children through outreaches this year at Red Run Park, Shippensburg University Chemistry Camp, and North Square Farmers Market. Volunteers distributed brochures on planting native plants, bird deaths with windows, our activity lists and the upcoming nature films. They challenged children and adults with a bird trivia game and offered the children “bird” crafts: pine cone bird feeders and clothes pin and pine cone “birds.” The children enjoyed the stickers and bird-ornament prizes along with the coloring pages. In a non-windy environment, CAS offers a bird wingspan, fun for all ages.

Please inform Terri Kochert of any club, scout troop, or organization that may benefit from our outreach committee’s information.

Clear Out of the Blue: Adventures Along the Bluebird Trail

By Dorian and Lynn Runt
and 22 Volunteers

When the Penn National Bluebird Trail re-opened in Spring, 2022, we had no idea we were in for quite the adventure! We experienced many challenges, a number of surprises, and great satisfaction. But first, some background.



Penn National Bluebird Trail

Photo credit: L. Runt

This trail winds around the perimeters of two golf courses in Penn National Resort Community, a growing community of retirees. This region runs along Michaux State Forest in Fayetteville, Pennsylvania, and continues to be a favorite habitat of Eastern Bluebirds and many other bird species. As you probably know, bluebirds especially love the wide swaths of mowed golf course fairways where they can swoop down to catch insects and other invertebrates. We saw the potential: We could expand the trail to 33 nest boxes, increase the frequency of monitoring to once per week, and add more monitors to help achieve the goals. We submitted a proposal to Patti Nitterhouse, co-owner, and gained her support for the project. In addition

to providing some of the wood posts for mounting nest boxes, she provided the grounds crew who assisted with installation. Conococheague Audubon Chapter funded the purchase of lumber for the additional nest boxes, and Lynn Runt, a coerced volunteer, built 11 new nest boxes. We held a training session for volunteer monitors in the spring and we were "ready to roll." Well, almost....

The logistics were challenging at first. Volunteer monitors would need to find the nest boxes in an area of 200 acres! To reduce stress levels, we divided the "trail" into five smaller trails and provided maps of how to navigate each smaller trail. Volunteers could choose one or two of the sub-trails to monitor each time they visited, and their visits could be weekly or bi-weekly, but each nest received weekly monitoring. (We were fortunate to have ample volunteers to do this). Each trail had five to seven boxes and a walking/driving time of about forty-five minutes. We are considering the use of golf carts for next season as an option.

A second challenge appeared in mid-May. The tall grasses which grew around some of the nest sites restricted the monitors' access, or at least made it difficult. The bluebirds didn't relish flying over the tall grasses either! To address this issue, we now have permission from maintenance to keep access pathways open. Also, we will relocate some nesting boxes to locations closer to the regularly maintained areas. We will need some volunteers in the early spring to help move posts.

A third challenge is the direct threat to the bluebirds posed by the House Sparrow. We are attempting to provide information to Penn National residents about the House Sparrow, a non-native invasive species. House Sparrows are very aggressive and will enter the nest boxes to attack the adult bluebirds and their chicks. The swelling numbers of House Sparrows can easily be witnessed at Lowe's or McDonald's. This species of sparrow is not protected by law, so their nests, eggs, and adult birds can be removed. Our trail monitors have been trained to recognize the nest and eggs of this species and to remove both from the nest box. If monitors are not comfortable in doing this, we then call upon our volunteer "hit squad" to use traps and handle the sparrows humanely. We are also encouraging the residents of the Penn National community to become monitors in their own yards as well as participate on the trail. If they need help with sparrow removal or



Nest box with sparrow spoiler and baffle
Photo credit - L. Runt

information about sparrow deterrents, we have volunteers who are willing to help them. We have also used more passive techniques of discouraging the House Sparrow, such as installing monofilament line along the entry hole of a problem box, and the use of a "sparrow spoiler" above a box which has mylar streamers to frighten them. Surprisingly, the bluebirds which have a nest and have started laying eggs will most of the time accept this weird contraption. If not, it is removed.

Some surprises along the trail included this "hybrid" nest in Box 7 on Founder's Course. You can identify the first layer of the nest (with the feather) as a Tree Swallow nest. Tree Swallows are



"Hybrid Nest"
Photo credit - D. Runt

fun to watch as they dive for the insects they help control. The swallow chicks all fledged from this nest in mid-June. Now look at the second layer of the nest. You may recognize it by its characteristic rounded shape and its tightly woven sides. It is the nest of a bluebird which built on top of the swallow nest and laid four eggs in mid-June. She was incubating those eggs and was quite protective of her eventual two chicks. By mid-July those two chicks appeared limp and weak, as the terrible heat wave hit. Would the chicks survive? Unfortunately, there was no intervention possible other than to leave a side of the box propped open for increased ventilation, despite the predator risk that posed. Fortunately, both chicks survived and did eventually fledge.



Two Surviving BB Chicks
Photo credit: Robin Yaure

The Penn National Bluebird Trail concluded this season with the following numbers of chicks fledged into the world; Bluebirds - 67, Tree Swallows - 33, Wrens -7. Also, there were 44 House Sparrow nests removed. All of this was possible due to the dedication and perseverance of the trail monitors and the support from the Conococheague chapter and Penn National staff. Thank you all! If you are interested in being a part of next year's trail monitoring team, please let us know. We will need trail monitors, periodic mowing around some boxes, and muscle power to assist with relocation of some boxes. Sign up at C.A.S. meetings or call the Runts at 717-352-4995 or Ruth Barton at 301-367-6968.

Spotted Lanternfly: What to Know, What to Do

by Valerie B. Barnes

The Spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) is an invasive, non-native insect that threatens native trees. It can be especially harmful to grapevines, fruit trees, and hardwoods. This illustration by Emily Damstra, taken from the Penn State Extension's 2021 Spotted Lanternfly Management Guide, shows the life cycle:

All Pennsylvania counties in our area are covered by the "[Spotted Lanternfly \(SLF\) Order of Quarantine and Treatment](#)" and related addenda. The order regulates *movement of articles on which any living life stage of the Spotted lanternfly may be found*. Regulated articles include but are not limited to landscaping, remodeling or construction waste; logs, stumps, or any tree parts; firewood of any species; grapevines for decorative purposes or as nursery stock; nursery stock; packing materials such as pots, crates, pallets, etc.; outdoor household articles including recreational vehicles, tractors and mowers, grills and furniture and their covers, tarps, mobile homes, tile, stone, deck boards, mobile fire pits, any associated equipment and vehicles not stored indoors. Read the order for details, including property owner actions and permit processes. The PA Department of Agriculture [website](#) has additional pertinent information and links. Check the Penn State Extension [page](#) for a wealth of information on reporting, identifying, and managing the pest as well. The [Manage](#) section is particularly helpful.

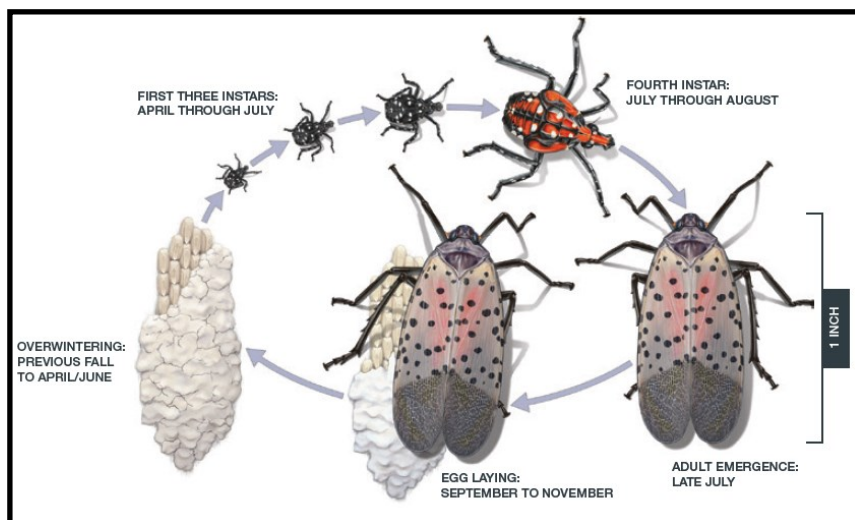


Figure 1 Spotted lanternfly life cycle. Illustration by Emily Damstra.

In the fall, the lanternflies lay mud-like egg masses about an inch long on outdoor gear (e.g., lawnmower, bicycle), tree bark, and vehicles. Inspect trees and outdoor gear for egg masses. If you find some, crush them and scrape them off into a plastic bag. Add hand sanitizer or rubbing alcohol, seal the bag, and dispose of it in the garbage.

Amy Korman, at the Penn State Extension Center, says Spotted Lanternflies are fairly fragile. For many homeowners, they are mostly a nuisance. In large numbers, they can be a stressor to healthy mature trees, but generally will not cause a healthy hardwood tree to die. They are a threat to grapevines. If you see a Spotted Lanternfly that is beyond the egg stage, kill it. If there are just a few, step on them or hit them with a flyswatter. If there are too many for you to deal with that way, you can use a contact or systemic insecticide or hire a professional exterminator. Try to use the least toxic chemical to avoid harming other species, including birds and beneficial insects. Use only an EPA-registered insecticide. Read the label carefully and follow instructions. Be sure it is intended for use on the tree species on which you want to use it. Insecticides won't work on eggs.

For additional details, see the [2021 Penn State Extension Spotted Lanternfly Management Guide](#); EE0524; Authors: Heather Leach, Emelie Swackhamer, Amy Korman, and Brian Walsh; updated August 12, 2021. Several illustrations by Emily Damstra.

For more information, visit these websites

<https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly>

https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants_Land_Water/PlantIndustry/Entomology/spotted_lanternfly/Pages/default.aspx

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/resources/pests-diseases/hungry-pests/slf/spotted-lanternfly>

Help with Zoom

If you haven't tried connecting to our general monthly meeting via Zoom because you don't know how to use Zoom, John Greer is willing to help you get started. Contact John at 443-255-8871 or via email at jngreer@aol.com.

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.

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.

Nov. 5, Saturday

FIELD TRIP

8:00 AM for FALL MIGRATION at The Conococheague Institute. Meet at the Visitor Center, 12995 Bain Rd, Mercersburg. Bring Binoculars. **Larry and Sharon Williams**, 717-655-7414.

November 10, Thursday at CAMS

FILM

November 17, Thursday at Living Faith Chapel FILM

7:00 PM *Return of the Clouded Leopards* (National Geographic). A pair of rare leopard cubs are rescued from poachers and raised to learn how to live in the wild. Door prizes.

Nov. 14, Monday

MEETING

7:00 PM Youth Contest Winners announced tonight. *Conococheague Creek Cleanup Project*, by Eric Grace. Arranged by Debby Hook.

Dec. 12, Monday

MEETING

7:00 PM *The Movement Ecology of Vultures: Tracking Nature’s Essential Workers*, by David Barber. Arranged by Lisa Coombs.

Winter

FIELD TRIP

Sign up by Dec. 12 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.

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.

COPY DEADLINE : DECEMBER 15 FOR JANUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER

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