

**In this Issue:**

Page 2 Conservation Conversation—Land Management

Page 3 Zen Curtains Work, On the Record, Species Decline

Page 4 Youth Contest Winners – Photos, On the Record, NPR: Bird Species Decline

Page 5 Youth Contest Winners— Birding Lists, New Bluebird Trail Help Wanted

Page 6 House Finch? Purple Finch?

Page 7 Owl Wreath Wins, Bluebird Trail Help Wanted

Page 8 Calendar

**President's Corner**

by Valerie B. Barnes

We sponsor contests for Best Bird Photo and Longest Bird List for youth in two age groups: 5-15 and 16-18. The new contests started December 1 and will run until the October 2023 general meeting. First-place winners earn \$50 each; second-place winners earn \$35 each; and third-place winners earn \$25 each. If you missed this year's contests, be sure to get started for the next round! Details for the next contests have been posted on our website, [www.conococheagueaudubon.org](http://www.conococheagueaudubon.org).

Many thanks to Anne St. John for stepping up to handle Publicity. As of this moment, we have no vacant leadership positions! Conservation Chair Jim Hardy and Recording Secretary Rhetta Martin have announced their intentions to step down. John Greer has volunteered to become Conservation Chair, and Debby Hook will take over Recording Secretary duties. Many thanks to Jim and Rhetta for their service, and to incoming workers John and Debby.

Our covered dish dinner and members photo show will take place on Monday, January 9, 2023 at **6 PM** at St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church. All are welcome. Members typically contribute one dinner item (casserole, meat, vegetable, salad, pasta, fruit, rolls, etc.) and/or a dessert. Coffee, tea, and pots/jugs of water will be provided. Bring your own table setting, including napkin, flatware, plate, bowl, and mug/cup. Let's try to avoid plastic and disposable items! If you have a few photos you wish to share (no more than 15, please), please bring them on a USB thumb drive.

Officers and Board members are looking for ways to increase diversity in our organization and leadership. Please contact one of us if you have ideas.

Due to a schedule conflict, the program originally planned for February will be moved to March. Ron George will talk about "Where the Birds Are: A Review of eBird Data for Franklin County" in February, and Bracken Brown will talk about raptors in March.

We lost Conococheague Audubon charter member Joan Bowen in late November and will miss her wry wit, historical knowledge, and excellent birding skills. She introduced many of us to local hot spots. A Varied Thrush visited her Caledonia



*Snowy Owl*  
Photo credit: Dale Gearhart

# Conservation Conversation: Land Management

by Jim Hardy

It's December. The outdoor temperatures have been consistently in the 40's and 30's. Most of the trees have lost their leaves with the exception of a stubborn few. As for the birds, the pass over of the southern migration is pretty much finished. In our winter bird counts, we hope to see those that are slow to migrate. I'm guessing that folks who have feeder stations are full of anticipation for the birds from the north that sometimes winter here, such as the Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch and of course the Junco. Who knows? We may see Snowy Owls soon.

Our conversation about land conservation has had me thinking about how we use the land. I'm almost obsessed with it when I drive. I often commute to Virginia for work, so I get to see a lot of land in up to four different states. I see the transition from rural to suburban to city and everything in between. The one thing I see that stands out the most to me is the enormous size of new transportation and logistics facilities and how quickly they are erected. The majority appear to be going up on agricultural land, while some are being built where undeveloped wooded lands need to be cleared. Some are so large that concrete plants are set up on-site to service the projects. Large chunks of land the size of multiple football fields are being bulldozed. Then there are huge amounts of concrete being poured and tons of steel being erected on the building site.

Now I've always been a proponent of development and modernization, but I have to ask what this new development of the land is doing to the bird and animal habitat. I'm no expert, but I'm pretty sure there is displacement. Would we feel better if trees, bushes, and gardens were installed on the roofs of these buildings along with living walls (flowers and other vegetation) incorporated into the building plans? I suppose we would. I also suppose that it would require a huge effort to encourage businesses to adopt habitat replacement policies, let alone mandate it in building requirements. It would appear that there is an opportunity here for advocacy for adopting sustainable natural habitat practices in building requirements.

Recently I traveled to Egypt for vacation. The land there is so very different than here. It is literally all desert. In flying over Egypt, I could see the green strip of land on both sides of the Nile River. Over the mountainous Sinai Peninsula, I thought I was seeing lakes and rivers in the valleys, only to discover that it was all sand. Of course I packed my binoculars and a field guide, and I hoped to get an

opportunity to do some bird watching. I did some bird watching but I did not see a lot of birds. One day I went to a national park with hopes of seeing birds only to find that the national park was underwater, and I had to go scuba diving instead. When I saw birds, I saw relatively common birds like the Kestrel, Rock Dove, House Sparrow, White Pelican, and Pied Wagtail. In Cairo we saw different egrets and a Pied Kingfisher diving into the Nile River. Needless to say I was somewhat disappointed overall. There just weren't any birds there to see. There were no trees, bushes, and grass outside of the resorts. There just wasn't water, plants, and trees to support large numbers of birds or a diverse number of species. I gained quite an appreciation for the diversity of habitats and land that we have in our county and nearby.

Previously I presented Franklin County land usage numbers in percentages of total county land (Remember 773 square miles). There were 14 categories. After a closer look, I decided to simplify it to 7 categories.

Residential 5.41%

Non-Residential 4.58%

Transportation (Roads and rail) 1.83%

Row Crops/Pasture/Grassland 43.66%

Forest 43.37%

Surface Water 0.33%

Wetlands 0.83%

I think we can simplify it even more by combining the first 3 categories and calling them "developed," totaling 11.82%. Then combine the last 4 categories and call them "undeveloped," with a total of 88.19%, depending on whether you consider farmland developed or not. Agricultural land use is nearly half of the undeveloped land use in this scenario. In looking at it this way, the numbers don't seem so bad. In the big picture, the huge new warehouses aren't really impacting the land usage numbers much at all. They just seem so dramatic because of how big they are.

I suppose that due to population growth, developed land will most likely increase while undeveloped land will decrease. The challenge may be in developing the land with habitat-friendly architecture considerate to what is removed.

Next time we'll talk about solar farms and agricultural land.

# Zen Curtains Really Work!

by Debby Hook

In the spring of 2021, Jim and I began an experiment in deterring birds from flying into our reflective windows.

Following instructions from the Acopian Bird Savers website (<https://www.birdsavers.com>), we created our own “zen curtains,” in much the same way that our fellow Auduboner, Bob Keener, had done a year earlier. I had interviewed Bob for our March 2021 *Naturally* newsletter in my search for successful ways to keep birds from dying as a result of window strikes.

Let me tell you right from the start – they work for us!

Like the Keeners, Jim and I live in the woods. Windows on all sides of our house reflect mostly trees. Birds consistently flew into our windows. In winter especially, it seemed to happen at least four times a week. Many died on site; Jim held some until they could fly away. We don’t know what happened to those who flew off.

The parachute cords that we hung – four inches apart in front of each window – sway gently in the breeze, all year long. Although they are quite visible, we don’t even notice them when we look out



*The new sliding glass door is now protected.*

Photo credit: Jim Hook



*The Hooks' front window; note the knots at the top.*

Photo credit: Jim Hook

the windows; they have become “white noise” against our pretty scenery.

Last winter, I was aware of just one window strike. Our stay-at-home habits are no different than they were before we installed the cords.

In September, to prepare for a sliding glass door replacement and front window reframing, we removed the cords from those windows and door. During the three or four days the glass was unprotected, we heard two separate window strikes. This result is similar to what Bob reported in 2021.

Birds still fly at our windows, but here’s what we have noticed: With exceptional finesse, small birds are capable of instantaneous action. A finch or chickadee or sparrow (once, even a hummingbird!) will catch itself at the last minute and grab onto a cord. Swinging harmlessly for no more than five seconds, the bird safely flies away. I imagine each one saying to itself, “Gee, what was THAT all about?”

# Announcing Best Bird Photo Youth Contest Winners

by Terri Kochert

We, the officers of the Conococheague Audubon Society (CAS), which meets at St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church, are immensely proud to announce the winners of our two Youth Contests, which began Dec. 1, 2021 and terminated on Oct. 10, 2022. Here are the winners of the Best Bird Photo Contest.

**First Prize winner, 5-15 age group** is **Nick Putt**, 12, for his photo of an errant **Red-tailed Hawk Eating Meat**, which was taken June 27, 2022, across the road from his home using a Panasonic Lumix DC-FZ80 camera. Nick is the son of Terry and Marina Putt, Chambersburg. He was awarded a \$50 first prize check at our CAS meeting on Nov. 14.



*Red-tailed Hawk Eating Meat*

Photo credit: Nick Putt

## On the Record

by Sue Greer

Our three field trips in October and November, all to sites new to CAS, yielded a total of 42 species of birds. The Greers introduced ten birders to the seven Michaux State Forest sites CAS was asked to monitor by the Bureau of Forestry.

Over two Saturday mornings in October, the groups saw a total of 35 species. Both species of vultures and kinglets were seen, as well as a Sharp-shinned Hawk, a Palm Warbler, and several Yellow-rumped Warblers. In early November, Larry Williams led a group of 11 birders around the grounds at Conococheague Institute. The 20 species they saw included a Wild Turkey and a Cooper's Hawk.



*Palm Warbler Eating a Bug*

Photo credit: Gabe Putt

**First Prize winner, 16-18 age group, is Gabe Putt**, 16, for his photo of a **Palm Warbler Eating a Bug**, taken along the Ship Harbor Trail, Acadia National Park, Maine, on June 7, 2022. Gabe, also the son of Terry and Marina Putt, used a Panasonic Lumix DC-FZ80 camera. He was awarded a \$50 first prize check at our CAS meeting on Nov. 14.

The contests for the coming year are now underway, but there is plenty of time for new contestants to join in the competition.

## Hear Details of Bird Species Decline on NPR

by Debby Hook

The weekly program “Science Friday” on National Public Radio piqued my interest on December 9 with the episode titled “The Joy and Sadness of Bird Counting.” In this segment of the program, “Science Friday” host Ira Flatow interviewed Dr. Amanda Rodewald of Cornell Lab of Ornithology and science writer Ryan Mandelbaum to discuss the alarming decline of birds, among them many of our common grassland species. The guests also mentioned the value of winter birding and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

Anyone can “tune in” to the episode or read the transcript by visiting <https://www.sciencefriday.com/radio/> and choosing the December 9, 2022 episode; or choose the SciFri podcast at <https://www.sciencefriday.com/sciencefriday-podcasts/>. Science Friday airs live from 2 to 4 p.m. Fridays on NPR (locally at 89.5 or 93.3 FM).

## Announcing Longest Birding List Youth Contest Winners

by Terri Kochert

The officers of the Conococheague Audubon Society (CAS) are also enormously pleased to announce the winners of our two Longest Birding List Contest.

**First Prize winner is Ethan Long, 13**, for having seen a total of **147 distinct species**. He saw most of his birds locally, 33 in the Magee Marsh, OH area during our CAS field trip there, and two in Clarion County. Perhaps the most exciting bird he saw was a Swallow-tailed Kite flying over his uncle's property. He began his list April 22, 2022 and finished Oct. 7, 2022 with a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Ethan is the son of Beth Long of Greencastle, PA. He was awarded a \$50 first prize check at our regular CAS Monday meeting, Nov. 14, 2022, at the St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church.

**Second Prize winner is Dietrich Long, 11**, also the son of Elizabeth Long of Greencastle, PA, saw a total of **134 distinct bird species**. Most of them were seen locally. He also managed to pick up 39 species on the CAS Magee Marsh field trip and two others in Clarion County, PA. Dietrich also began recording his bird list on April 22, 2022 and finished on Oct. 7, 2022 with the same Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Dietrich received his \$35 second prize check at our Nov. 14, 2022 regular CAS Monday meeting at St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Congratulations to all! And best wishes for the coming year's contests.

---

### New Bluebird Trail Opens March 2023 at Penn National Golf Course, Fayetteville, PA

by Dorian Runt



Volunteers are needed to monitor nest boxes along the trail. Help in the continued conservation of Eastern Bluebirds. Learn about their nesting habits and see their nestlings as they grow.

- ◆ Flexible schedules from late March through mid-August.
- ◆ Golf carts provided.
- ◆ Minimum age 16.
- ◆ Orientation held at Penn National Clubhouse, 3720 Club House Dr.

Thursday, March 2, 1:00 - 3:00pm

or

Thursday, March 9, 9:00 - 11:00 am

Please pre-register for either session by February 27. Email: [adams-mail@centurylink.net](mailto:adams-mail@centurylink.net), or phone 717-352-4995 or 301-367-6968

Sponsors: Conococheague Audubon and Penn National Golf Club & Inn



*Purple Finch on left, House Finch on right*

*Photo credit: Bob Keener*

## House Finch? Purple Finch? Which is it?

by Bob Keener

Winter has arrived. On our feeders, those confusing finches wearing red beg identification with careful study. I use two basic characteristics to tell the difference.

1. The amount of overall red on the males.
2. The “high eyebrow look” or lack thereof on both males and females.

Both the male Purple Finch and male House Finch are reddish, thus the confusion. The Purple Finch has more red throughout, including on the back and farther down the belly. The females of both species are streaked brown.

The Purple Finch, both male and female, have that



*Purple Finch, male*

*Photo credit: Bob Keener*



*The female Purple Finch's brow is white,*

*Photo credit: Bob Keener*

The House Finch, on the other hand, lacks the “browed” look and both the male and female have a plain face. The House Finch male’s red is concentrated in the head and breast, with less reddish wash on the rest of the body compared to the Purple Finch.

A word of caution: The shade of red, leaning towards more wine-colored for the Purple Finch male, may be helpful, but it can be very subjective if the two species aren’t right beside each other for direct comparison.

# OWL WREATH WINS PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

by Debby Hook

The “Winter Owls” wreath our chapter entered in Franklin County Visitors Bureau’s 2022 Festival of Trees was a favorite among the voting public, winning the People’s Choice Award for wreath entries. This was our third year to take part in the visitors bureau’s annual holiday display and silent auction, which featured 51 decorated trees and 18 wreaths.



*Pictured is the “Winter Owls” wreath our chapter entered in this year’s Festival of Trees in Chambersburg.*

Photo credit: Franklin County Visitors Bureau

This year’s event raised \$6,250 for Cumberland Valley Breast Care Alliance.

In addition, this year the visitors bureau joined Homeless Matters and Grocery Outlet to host a concurrent collection of gloves, hats, scarves, blankets, coats, games, grocery cards, gas cards, and toys for distribution across Franklin County. More than 600 items were donated at the Festival of Trees.

Conococheague Audubon’s “Go Native” wreath last year won the Best in Show award among the wreath entries. It appears we’ve got our work cut out for us next year!

## Join us in 2023!

A small white birch tree may be in our future for the 2023 Festival of Trees. It will be our first attempt at decorating a tree rather than a wreath. That’s where our members come in, helping us collect the following items to design our winter tree:

- 2- to 3-inch realistic Blue Jays, American Goldfinch, Northern Cardinals, native woodpeckers and chickadees.
- Bunches of small (not real) holly, pine, berries and pine cones.
- Birdfeeder ornaments, no larger than 5 inches tall or long.
- Narrow red or green ribbon

If you have or would like to donate any of the above items, text Debby Hook at 717-372-0228 or email [debbyk@pa.net](mailto:debbyk@pa.net) or contact any Conococheague Audubon board member.

## President's Corner, Continued from page 1.

cabin in 1978, and she found a Lark Sparrow along Shatzer Road north of Chambersburg one winter. Her American Woodcock “peent” imitation was legendary. She was a chapter officer, zone captain and the overall compiler for the Chambersburg Area Christmas Bird Count for many years.

Thanks to all who have made a donation 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 have a wonderful New Year and see lots of good birds.



*Eastern Towhee*

Photo credit: Dale Gearhart

**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.

**Jan. 9, 2023 Monday MEETING**

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

**Feb. 13, Monday MEETING**

7:00 PM *Where the Birds Are: A Review of eBird Data for Franklin County* by Ron George.

**Feb. 17-19, Fri.-Sun. FIELD TRIP**

Blackwater NWR, Maryland, auto tour for WATER FOWL. Leave from Martins' home at 1:00 PM Friday. Bring scopes, binoculars, and lunch. Make your own motel arrangements. **Eric and Rhetta Martin**, 717-597-8675.

**March 4, Saturday FIELD TRIP**

6:30 AM Middle Creek WMA, Lancaster County auto tour for WATERFOWL. Meet at the Park & Ride, Scotland, Exit 20, I-81 northbound. Bring scopes, binoculars, and lunch. **Eric and Rhetta Martin**, 717-597-8675.

**March 6, Monday FIELD TRIP**

**5:45 PM** Tentative outing for WOODCOCKS at Heisey Road orchard with Bob Keener. Meet at the Park & Ride, Scotland, Exit 20, I-81 northbound. Bring flashlights.

**Bob Kochert**, 717-263-3692.

**March 13, Monday MEETING**

7:00 PM *Raptors* by Bracken Brown, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association. Arranged by Terri Kochert.

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

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

[janenbussard47@gmail.com](mailto:janenbussard47@gmail.com)

**Send all newsletter articles and photos to the editor.**

**Send all mailing changes to [conaudubon@outlook.com](mailto:conaudubon@outlook.com).**

COPY DEADLINE : FEBRUARY 15 FOR MARCH 2023 NEWSLETTER

**CONOCOCHHEAGUE AUDUBON OFFICERS:**

**President** Valerie Barnes

**Vice President** Lisa Coombs

**Recording Secretary** Rhetta Martin

**Corresponding Secretary** Valerie Barnes

**Treasurer** Donna Hocker

**Immediate Past President** Terri Kochert

**Directors:** Dave Ebbitt, Ron George, Sue Greer and John Greer, Eric Martin, Anne St. John

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Conococheague Audubon  
P.O. Box 20  
Fayetteville, PA 17222