

# NATURALLY

THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Naturally

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Above: A rare sighting, 4/9/12, of a Lesser Goldfinch recorded only a few times in the state. The other bird is a House Finch.

Photo credit: Dale Gearhart

Below, a Cardinal in yard on 1/27/23

Photo credit: Dale Cooney Jr.



## President's Corner

by Valerie B. Barnes

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Winter is here, but I'm glad we haven't had much snow to deal with (yet). Not many birds are coming to feeders at my house. Sometimes there's a Sharp-shinned Hawk hanging around, but I can't always attribute the paucity of birds to that.

Coming up soon: You can count birds anywhere for the Great Backyard Bird Count! The 26th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 17, through Monday, February 20, 2023. Please visit the official website at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) for more information. Anyone can count anywhere for as little as 15 minutes, or as long as you wish. Keep separate lists for each location on each day that you bird. Report results via [eBird](http://eBird). The Great Backyard Bird Count is an inter-organizational effort between the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, and Birds Canada.

### Volunteer opportunities:

Monitor Bluebird Trail boxes. Contact Dorian/Lynn Runt, [adams-mail@centurylink.net](mailto:adams-mail@centurylink.net) or 717-352-4995.

Clean up and help maintain the native plants garden at Norlo Park. Contact Josh Donaldson, [jd425@embarqmail.com](mailto:jd425@embarqmail.com) or 717-264-6920.

We are looking for help at a new Bird Day event being planned by the Franklin County Visitors Bureau for 4-5 May. Contact Terri Kochert, [bob-terri81@comcast.net](mailto:bob-terri81@comcast.net) or 717-263-3692.

We need 2 new Directors to serve a 3-year term starting in May. Contact Ron George, Eric Martin, or Terri Kochert.

Plant trees at the new Furnace Run Park in Southampton Township ~ April 14-16. Contact Ron George, [writinron@comcast.net](mailto:writinron@comcast.net) or 717-446-4183.

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.

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) would be happy to have you as a member. They publish a periodic report about birds seen in the state, sponsor the PA Bird Atlas projects, hold meetings, and conduct field trips. To learn more about PSO, visit [pabirds.org](http://pabirds.org). To join, visit this link: [Join PSO](#).

## Conservation Conversation: Warm Greetings

by Jim Hardy



*White-throated Sparrow at Creekside Trail Menno Haven 05 FEB 23*  
Photo credit: Dave Cooney Jr.

It's February and it is way warmer than when I last wrote for you back in December. What's up with that? I have to admit that I am enjoying the warmer weather. The nature of my work requires me to be outside a lot, so I get to enjoy nature in some really cool places. In addition to seeing birds constantly, I've noticed some unknown flowers blooming at a client's house and daffodils alongside my own house that are ready to burst their yellow blossoms. On my walk this past evening I saw five noisy Killdeer fly out in the farm pasture. Warmer weather is definitely here.

I keep thinking that it's a little early for spring. However, if you think about it, the spring equinox is only five weeks away. But then again, Pennsylvania's most famous marmot (a type of rodent), Punxsutawney Phil, said there will be six more weeks of winter. I haven't checked The Farmer's Almanac yet. What does it all mean? My primary concern for the weather is for work-planning purposes. For that I find the weather.com 15-day forecast to be quite reliable and I'm liking what I'm seeing. Ultimately, we have no control over the weather. But I do wonder when I will see my first spring migrants.

When my wife and I are out and about, running errands and shopping, we are always on the lookout for birds, and we call them out when we see them. The other day we were driving through an area where we often see birds of prey in the trees in the farmer's fields. I said, "Keep your eyes peeled for eagles." My wife asked where did that

phrase come from, "Keep your eyes peeled?" We speculated about peeled fruit and the opening of eyelids. I wondered about sharp eyesight being like a sharp knife for peeling fruits and vegetables.

We weren't that far off in our thinking. For my research, I chose a simple internet search. As it turns out, there are a couple of different sources for the origin of this phrase. There does however seem to be a consensus among the sources. There are references to peeling the rind or skin back on fruit to get to the improved part of the fruit and peeling back your eyelids to see better. This also lends credence to the phrase "Keeping your eyes skinned." I remember that phrase from my first days of deer hunting.



*Cooper's Hawk in yard on 26 DEC 22*  
Photo credit: Dave Cooney Jr.

Per BookBrowse.com, another common story goes back to 1829, when "Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel established the Metropolitan Police Force in London, the first professional police force. Before long the policemen had picked up the nicknames 'Peelers' and 'Bobbies' for the unpopular fact that they reported directly to Peel at the Home Office. 'Bobbies' lives on to this day as a friendly nickname for the police in England. 'Peelers' is not used but may have left its marks in the expression to keep your eyes peeled, as per their founder's instructions."

Regardless of where it came from, Collins English

Dictionary says, "If you tell someone to keep their eyes peeled for something, you are telling them to watch very carefully for it." Now that is what we do with birds. We keep our eyes peeled for them. We watch carefully for them. We try extra hard to see them.

We can also apply this phrase to our conservation activities. Let's keep our eyes peeled for opportunities to carry out acts of conservation. I don't necessarily see myself as a conservationist. I do see myself as someone who always has conservation on my mind, and I take action in ways that I think are best for conservation of our natural environment.

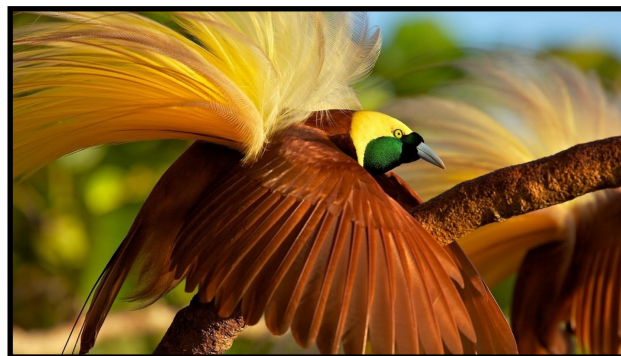
I try to let my deeds do the talking for me. Sometimes it works. This past week while on an evening walk, a passerby in a car stopped and asked if I was picking up trash and, of course, I was. The stranger then thanked me for picking up the trash along the road. Someone did take notice.

I personally believe that every single individual act of conservation makes a difference. For me, conservation is a habit, a way of life. I try to stick to the basics. as in basic information and common sense activities. I hope you can see the pleasure I get out of learning about conservation and incorporate it into your lifestyle as I have done. Bird watching activities make conservation fun and interesting. Thanks to bird watching, conservation has always been a part of my life.



### **On the Record** by Sue Greer

On January 26, Bob and Terri Kochert went to Bigham Road in Gettysburg in search of Short-eared Owls. After nearly an hour of waiting and watching, they saw a lone owl fly over the road, heading southward. Donna Hocker and Val Barnes visited the same location on January 31, seeing two Short-eared Owls. Several Northern Harriers were also seen by both groups



*Cendrawasih Kuning Kecil or Lesser-yellow Bird of Paradise*

### **Nature Film: Birds of the Gods** by Terri Kochert

Although we have some beautiful birds here in our area, especially the Ruby-throated Hummingbird and the lovely migratory warblers, they can't compare to the birds of paradise found on the island of New Guinea.

Our two 7 p.m. free showings of the nature film, *Birds of the Gods*, are scheduled for March 16 at Chambersburg Area Middle School South and March 23 at Living Faith Chapel, Shippensburg. The film should be a treat for all and a feast for your eyes. We hope you make plans now to view this splendid film.

Two native research scientists return to the rainforest of Papua New Guinea with the intention of viewing the birds as they are displaying their various mating rituals, showing off their gorgeous feathers. The researchers hope to determine the fate and the number of surviving birds of paradise. These two scientists exhibit great patience, waiting nine days amidst rain and mosquitoes to get a glimpse of mating ritual dances. The natives still use the feathers and sometimes the movements of these birds in their native dances.

This has all been caught on film for us to enjoy. The researchers are concerned with how many birds have been captured to provide the native dance headdresses. This film not only captures unique bird behaviors, but also highlights the tenacity of scientists to capture these birds on film, with the hope of informing the native people of the importance of preserving these exquisite birds.

# Chambersburg, PA (PACH) Christmas Bird Count 2022 Report

Valerie B. Barnes, Compiler

Conococheague Audubon and friends conducted the 63<sup>rd</sup> Chambersburg Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 17, 2022. We had an average count in terms of the number of species, with no new species added. Weather conditions were: ~30-37 degrees; partly sunny to partly cloudy.

Each CBC takes place in an established 15-mile diameter circle, and is organized by a count compiler and zone captains. Count volunteers cover specified areas in the circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day. It's not just a species tally—all individual birds are counted, giving a snapshot of the total number of birds in the circle that day.



*Eastern Phoebe at Kriner Rd Pond,  
Chambersburg, 1/28/23  
Photo credit: Dave Cooney, Jr.*

Participants in the field: 59 (average is 57)

Participants at home watching feeders: 25 (average for past 12 years is 29)

Field counters spent: 69.5 hours on foot, walking 68.25 miles; 57.5 hours in cars, driving 410.25 miles; 7.5 hours listening for owls, covering 17.2 miles.

Feeder counters spent 64.75 hours watching at home (average for past 12 years is 74 hours)

Total species counted: 69 (average is 71)

Feeder species counted: 38 (average for past 12 years is 36)

Total individual birds counted: 16,296 (average corrected for unusually high blackbird counts in 1984 is 21,795)

1,159 of total birds counted were seen at feeders (average for past 12 years is 1,388)

**Bold** indicates high count.

Snow Goose 1  
Canada Goose 426  
American Black Duck 3  
Mallard 544  
Redhead 1  
Wild Turkey 2  
Great Blue Heron 16  
Black Vulture 85  
Turkey Vulture 98  
Bald Eagle 7  
Northern Harrier 5  
Sharp-shinned Hawk 5  
Cooper's Hawk 16  
Red-shouldered Hawk 4  
Red-tailed Hawk 68  
American Kestrel 18  
Merlin 2  
Peregrine Falcon 1  
Killdeer 1  
Herring Gull 3  
Rock Pigeon 836  
Mourning Dove 947

Eastern Screech-Owl 1  
Great Horned Owl 3  
Barred Owl 4  
Belted Kingfisher 9  
**Red-bellied Woodpecker 190**  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 21  
Downy Woodpecker 159  
Hairy Woodpecker 33  
Northern Flicker 42  
Pileated Woodpecker 13  
Eastern Phoebe 1  
Blue Jay 274  
American Crow 211  
**Common Raven 24**  
Horned Lark 243  
Carolina/Black-capped Chickadee 255  
Tufted Titmouse 172  
Red-breasted Nuthatch 33  
White-breasted Nuthatch 151  
Brown Creeper 14  
Carolina Wren 128  
Winter Wren 12  
Golden-crowned Kinglet 19  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 4

Eastern Bluebird 127  
Hermit Thrush 16  
American Robin 287  
Gray Catbird 1  
Northern Mockingbird 70  
European Starling 6422  
Cedar Waxwing 39  
Yellow-rumped Warbler 2  
Field Sparrow 2  
**Savannah Sparrow 8**  
Fox Sparrow 1  
Song Sparrow 158  
Swamp Sparrow 5  
White-throated Sparrow 423  
White-crowned Sparrow 32  
Dark-eyed Junco 1097  
Northern Cardinal 491  
**Red-winged Blackbird 394**  
Common Grackle 234  
Brown-headed Cowbird 93  
House Finch 395  
American Goldfinch 291  
House Sparrow 603

## Comments:

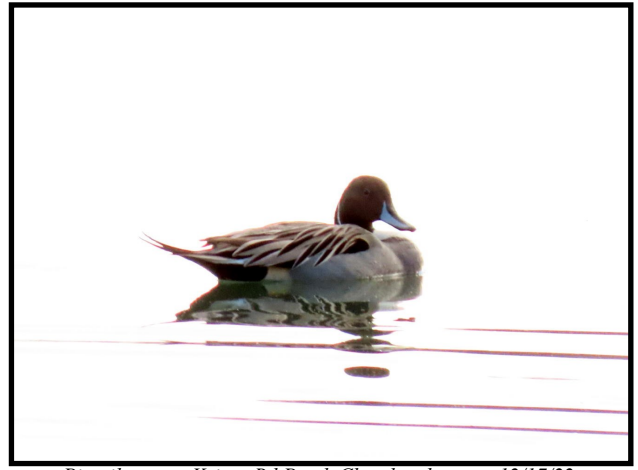
The total number of species seen was two below our average. The total number of individual birds observed was ~75% of the average adjusted for large blackbird flocks that were seen in 1984. The count of individual birds seen at feeders this year was 229 below the average for the last 12 years. Four fewer feeder watchers than average participated, and the total hours they spent was approximately ten fewer than average.

We saw new high numbers of four species as indicated in **bold** font above: Red-bellied Woodpecker, Common Raven, Savannah Sparrow, and Red-winged Blackbird. No additional species were seen only in count week.

For birds seen in more than 30 counts:

Teams reported unusually low (<25% of average) numbers of American Black Duck, Wild Turkey, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe\*, American Crow, Fish Crow\*, Eastern Towhee\*, American Tree Sparrow\*, Chipping Sparrow\*, Field Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark\*, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch\*, Pine Siskin\*, and Evening Grosbeak\*. Note: species marked with \* were not observed in this count.

Teams reported more than the usual numbers (>125% of average) of Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Common Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch,



*Pintail seen at Kriner Rd Pond, Chambersburg on 12/17/22*  
Photo credit: Dave Cooney, Jr.

Carolina Wren, Winter Wren, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Swamp Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, and Red-winged Blackbird.

Of birds seen in at least 41 prior counts, we missed Ring-necked Pheasant, Wilson's Snipe, Red-headed Woodpecker, Fish Crow, Eastern Towhee, American Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Purple Finch, and Pine Siskin.

Birds reported from all zones included: Canada Goose, Mallard, Turkey Vulture, American Kestrel, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, American Goldfinch, and House Sparrow.

Birds reported from only one area included:

Zone 1: Snow Goose, American Black Duck, Field Sparrow

Zone 2: Herring Gull

Zone 3: Eastern Screech-Owl, Gray Catbird

Zone 4: Savannah Sparrow

Zone 5: Redhead, Peregrine Falcon, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Fox Sparrow

Our next Christmas Bird Count will be scheduled for Saturday, December 16, 2023. Join us!



*Barred Owl seen on Peckman Drive, Franklin County on 02/04/23*  
Photo credit: Dave Cooney, Jr.

**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.

**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 Rheta 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 *Hawk Mountain Sanctuary's PA Farmland Raptor Project* by Bracken Brown, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association.

**March 16, Thursday at CAMS** **FILM**  
**March 23, Thursday at Living Faith Chapel** **FILM**  
7:00 PM *Birds of the Gods*. David Attenborough introduces a young team of New Guinean scientists on a grueling expedition to find and film these Birds of Paradise; the holy grail of wildlife filmmakers. Door prizes.

**April 10, Monday** **MEETING**  
7:00 PM Annual business meeting and elections. All chapter members welcome. Followed by *The Birds and the Bees*, Tracy Snyder, Penn State Bee Monitoring program. Arranged by Anne St. John.

**April 15 and 29, Saturday** **WORK DAY**  
9:30 AM Work at NORLO PARK native garden. Bring garden tools and gloves. **Josh Donaldson**, 717-264-6920.

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.**

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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