

NATURALLY

THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Naturally

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Above: Josh Donaldson talks about the phlox growing in the garden.



Below: Common Merganser ducklings catch a ride with mom in May on the Clarion River near Cook Forest State Park.
Photo credit: by Jim Hook

President's Corner

by Valerie B. Barnes

Do you remember when and where you saw your “fallout” of warblers? Mine was May 10, 1975, at Middle Creek. I was with others from the Lancaster County Bird Club and recorded my first Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, American Redstart, Hooded, and Canada Warblers. We were on the road along the woods just south of the Visitor Center. It was amazing and I wondered if it was typical to see so many different kinds (alas, no). The experienced trip leaders were very patient, and I learned much from them on that and many other field trips. Birding is always fun, but better, for me, when with other birders.

I miss Mag. She was an excellent birder and friend since my college days. I have notes from several trips to Chincoteague/Assateague, marveling over the waterfowl (Green-winged Teal was an early favorite), ocean, and ponies. On one spring trip, we saw a Wood Duck tucked into a small pond and paused ever after to look for one there, even years later. We went on guided tours and on our own to Arizona, Oregon, Michigan, Maine, Texas, California, and parts of Canada. I got 95 lifers on our first trip to Texas! On a return “clean-up” trip 35 years later, I only saw 5 new species, including the endangered Whooping Crane, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and Bachman’s Sparrow.

Let’s try to renew our early sense of wonder and enthusiasm for birds. Invite a friend, neighbor, or family member to join you on a birding outing. Share what you know and learn from those around you. If we can engage another generation or group of birders, we will help our feathered friends and Conococheague Audubon. Good birding!



From top: Blue-winged Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Kentucky Warbler
Photo credits: Dave Cooney, Jr.

Gardeners Buzz Native Plants Garden

by Jim Hook

Josh and Susan Donaldson recently guided visitors along grassy paths to discuss the flowers, shrubs, and trees growing in the Native Plants Garden at Norlo Park.



Josh Donaldson, chairman of the garden committee, leads a tour of the native plant garden at Norlo Park.

Photo credit: Jim Hook

Susan Donaldson said that gardeners should be patient when planting native perennials— “The first year they sleep, the second year they creep, and the third year they leap.”

Native plants are those that occur naturally in a region in which they evolved. They are the foundation for native wildlife populations.



Susan Donaldson points out Liatris and ornamental grasses in the garden.

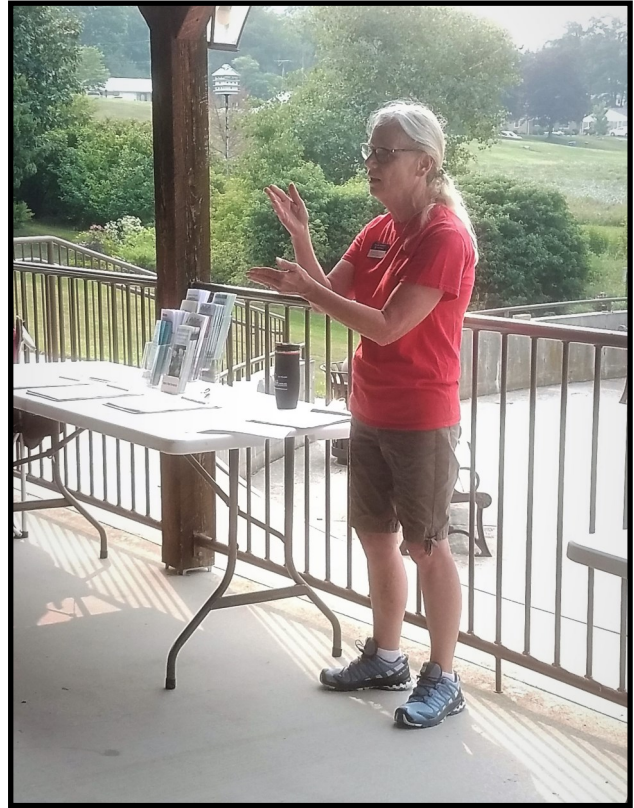
Photo credit: Jim Hook

More than 20 people visited the garden on Monday morning, July 17, to learn more about native plants and monarch butterflies. Volunteers from the Conococheague Audubon Society maintain the Native Plants Garden in the Guilford Township park at 3050 Lincoln Way East, Fayetteville.

Josh Donaldson, chairman of the garden committee, said the garden traditionally has focused on plants that provide berries and seeds for birds, but

many birds thrive on insects. A chickadee couple catches more than 6,000 caterpillars to raise their clutch of chicks.

Penn State Master Gardener Anne St. John said that oaks support more caterpillar species than any other genus of plants in North America. They are keystone plants, and if removed from the local food web, the food web collapses. Oak trees support more than 500 species of butterflies and moths.



Anne St. John, Master Gardener, tells the tour group about native plants.

Photo credit: Jim Hook

Brett Snyder, a local resident who has raised monarch butterflies for many years, explained how people can help the threatened butterflies. He catches monarch caterpillars on milkweed that is threatened by mowing and keeps the larvae in containers until they change into butterflies.

Organizers plan to have the next garden tour at 1 p.m. on Monday, August 12, 2024. The rain date is Aug. 14. Penn State Extension has certified the 17-year-old garden as “pollinator friendly.”

This year, 21 Conococheague Audubon volunteers have spread mulch, weeded, and planted in the garden. To help with the gardening, contact Josh Donaldson at jmdonaldson@embarqmail.com or 717-264-6920.

CONSERVATION

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by John Greer

As I settle into the Conservation Chair, I want to share what you can expect from me for the upcoming season. This season's theme is **Fight Plastic Pollution**.

Plastic is everywhere. All you have to do is walk around to realize what a problem it is for us and for the environment. Most plastics are not biodegradable and, when littered, remain for years if not decades. Because they are made from fossil fuels, plastics contribute to climate change. Many plastics are not recyclable and end up clogging landfills. Microplastics are leaching into the soil, drinking water, and the oceans, affecting the health of humans and wildlife.

We can do something about plastic pollution. Over the course of the season, I will share practical tips on how you can make a difference. These tips will be voluntary, low cost, and common-sense efforts in five areas:

- Reduce
- Refuse
- Reuse
- Recycle
- Remove

Look for these tips in *The Naturally* (like the one below), in the Society's monthly message, and at regular meetings. Less plastic means a healthier environment for us and for the birds.

TIP: Reduce use of single-use plastic water bottles. Reuse your own water bottle. They are available at reasonable cost at many retail outlets or online and should be free of the chemical BPA (bisphenol A).



Eastern Towhee

Photo credit: Dave Cooney, Jr.

Bird Atlas Coordinator Announced

by Val Barnes

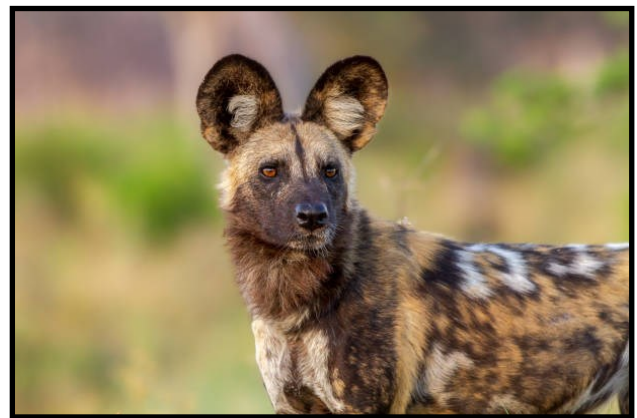
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Pennsylvania Bird Atlas Steering Committee, announced that they have selected Amber Weiwel as the coordinator of the 3rd Pennsylvania Bird Atlas. See the Hawk Mountain [website](#) for additional details. The atlas project will take place from 2024-2028. Stay tuned for additional details. At our May meeting, Vern Gauthier will highlight plans for the Bird Atlas project.

Nature's Fear Factor

by Terri Kochert

Have you ever planted flowers or vegetables only to have an annoying predator or invasive species decimate your garden produce? I have. It's quite irritating and equally frustrating! Our nature film (scheduled for 7 p.m. on November 9 at Chambersburg Area Middle School South) is a reversal of my opening scenario.

In Gorongosa National Park in Mozambique, the rangers reintroduce a formerly "banned and expelled" natural predator. Soon after its expulsion, the park rangers become painfully aware of the growing imbalance: an overwhelmingly increasing number of common park species caused by the absence of the expelled predator. The name of the removed and now reintroduced predator is the African Wild Dog.



African Wild Dog

Photo credit: Pexels/Flickr

Please attend our initial nature film by PBS, *Nature's Fear Factor*, to learn the importance of maintaining a balanced, healthy ecosystem even in the wild. Sometimes it's even necessary to incorporate the "fear factor" to maintain this balance.

A Very Veery Paddling Adventure

by Lisa Coombs

Since 2018, my brother, my son, and I have been paddling on the “area” rivers and lakes for four days every summer. The guys are in a heavily loaded canoe (their gear, all the food, fishing rods, and tackle, etc.) while I’m in my kayak, watching birds. We camp on islands or at campsites like those along the C & O Canal.

Last year we paddled the Connecticut River from White River Junction to Bellows Falls, Vermont. Our last day was an unplanned 30 miles, and while the campsite resounded with bird calls of species I’d never seen or heard, I was too tired to get my binoculars and go looking for them. I especially liked the call of the Veery, and I have wanted to see one ever since.

This year we decided to do another stretch of the Connecticut River, this time from Woodsville to Orford, New Hampshire. While unloading the truck and filling the boats with our supplies, my phone (via Merlin) told me I was hearing a Chestnut-sided Warbler, another bird I’ve never seen (and still haven’t). I was really hoping to see a Veery and was excited to hear them calling from both banks of the river shortly after we pushed off.

This part of the river runs along the border between Vermont and New Hampshire, and both sides were heavily wooded and lush from recent rains. Wild roses, phlox, and other flowers provided pops of color. After an initial area of rapids, the water slowed, and for most of the trip, we just floated downstream, fishing and birding. The first day was filled with Spotted Sandpipers hopping along the shore and dozens of Yellow Warblers flitting through the trees and brush along with Cedar Waxwings and Kingbirds. The air over the river was filled with Tree Swallows and what I’m guessing were Bank Swallows, but they were too fast to get a good look at. At our campsite that night, we could hear Veeries calling but never saw one.

We cast off the next day under cloudy skies; both sides of the river became less wooded and more agricultural. Along the shore, I began seeing more Red-winged Blackbirds and Grackles with the Spotted Sandpipers. I also saw a Great Blue Heron fishing and a Green Heron preening.

Around midday, I spotted a bird flying into a small tree and I paddled upstream to try and get a better view of it. All I could see was a bird that was brown on top and white on the bottom, and I was sure I’d never be able to identify it.



Veery, South Bass Island, OH, Biggest Week 2019

Photo credit: Dave Ebbitt

After setting up camp that afternoon, the guys continued fishing for a couple of hours while I explored the island and got the fire ready for cooking dinner. After setting up my tent, I looked up the Veery on Merlin and was stunned to realize that the bird I’d seen earlier was exactly what I’d been looking for. I was even happier when one parked itself in a tree near our picnic table that night and sang for us!

The next morning started with a Pileated Woodpecker calling and a beaver slapping his tail on the river, the best wake-up calls ever. Before leaving that site, I also saw Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and several Baltimore Orioles. Very early into the day, my son asked me what was in a tree along the shore. I was startled to see five Turkey Vultures all with wings spread wide to catch the sun. Later, I floated within three feet of a juvenile Tufted Titmouse hanging on a branch over the river. He had the wide-eyed look of someone still seeing everything for the first time.

While the guys fished every minute they could, they only got some smaller fish (perch, small-

mouth bass, and one walleye). It's a good thing I always bring enough food for the proverbial army. At one point on the last day, I thought I was hearing a Kingfisher, but the call was muted. Turns out he had a fish in his mouth which he proudly displayed while flying over the two fishermen several times.

As we said good-bye over breakfast in Fairlee, Vermont, we were already planning next year's adventure. The guys are hoping that that's the year we'll have enough fish for a meal, and I'm hoping to see a Chestnut-sided Warbler.

On the Record

by Sue Greer

Last spring CAS hosted 9 field trips with approximately 80 participants. Here are the details of the trips reported:

- We began with a new field trip to the Fort McCord area where 74 species, including 8 warbler species, were seen by 6 observers.
- At the Lehman's property, 10 observers saw 36 species, including a Rose-breasted Grosbeak for the first time.
- Horse Valley's 10 participants observed 13 species of warblers out of a total of 74 species.
- Ten warbler species, out of 43 total species, were seen during the trip to Heisey Orchard and Stillhouse Hollow areas.
- During the 3-day trip to Magee Marsh and its environs, 108 species were observed by 10 participants. These included 19 species of warblers. Ten new species were seen, including Black-crowned Night-Heron, Black Tern, Virginia Rail, and Clay-colored and Grasshopper Sparrows.
- Fifty-five species (a new record) were seen by 5 observers on the Edenville outing. Three new species were also seen: Sharp-shinned Hawk, Barred Owl, and Black-capped Chickadee. And, for the first time since 2000, a Wild Turkey appeared.
- This year's Beginning Birders' Workshop had 22 participants, including six children. Of the 46 species observed, a Fish Crow was recorded for the first time.
- The outing to South Mountain IBA yielded 48 species, including 7 warbler species and a first-time Hairy Woodpecker.



Eastern Kingbird on July 15 on Keefer Rd. Franklin County
Photo credit: Dave Cooney, Jr.

CAS Has Been Busy!

by Terri Kochert

As the Educational Outreach Chair, I thought I would bring you up to date about our successful outings since May 1, 2023. On May 4 and 5, the seven CAS volunteers engaged 90 adults and eight children at the Franklin County Visitors Bureau "Lunch and Learn Event" and the first Friday of the month event. On June 10, three volunteers interacted with 95 adults and 42 children at the Appalachian Trail Festival at Red Run Park in Waynesboro, PA. On June 24, two CAS volunteers conversed with 45 adults and 32 children at the Chambersburg North Square Saturday Farmers Market day.

In May, two volunteers taught the 12 members of this year's Pennsylvania Master Naturalists a class about ornithology. On June 3, 15 volunteers introduced 16 adults and 6 children to birding at the Beginning Birders' Workshop. One other significant event took place in July at our Norlo Park garden of native plants. On July 17, there was a presentation and tour of the Norlo Park garden with 23 interested individuals. On July 29, two CAS volunteers interacted with 39 adults and 32 children at the Farmers Market.

As Outreach Chair I am pleased to announce that CAS is increasing the awareness in our community of the need to conserve and restore natural ecosystems focusing on birds, wildlife in general, and their habitats. We do this by sharing mostly about birds, their feeding and nesting habits, their calls, their predators, but also, the importance of pollinators and cleaning up and protecting the environment for the enjoyment of all. We have informative brochures, games, crafts for children and prizes too. Thus far this year CAS volunteers have engaged a total of 320 adults and 120 children.

MEETINGS – Free, held at Fellowship Hall, St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church, 2695 Luther Drive, Chambersburg, PA 17202.

FIELD TRIPS – Free, most take place on Saturdays. Contact the leader; arrive early.

Sept. 2, 2023, 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 Oylar**, 717-360-5191, oylerbill@gmail.com.

Sept. 9, Saturday

FIELD TRIP

7:30 AM, for FALL MIGRANTS Walk along part of Cumberland Valley Rail Trail in Chambersburg. Meet at Big Lots, 184 Southgate Mall, parking lot next to Washington Street. Bring binoculars. **Debby Hook**, 717-372-0228, debbyk@pa.net.

Sept. 11, Monday

MEETING

7:00 PM *Birding Belize*, by Chris & Rebecca Payne. Arranged by John Greer.

Oct. 9, Monday

MEETING

7:00 PM Youth Contest Bird Photos & Lists due. *Birding Antarctica*, by Mike & Cheryl Saylor. Arranged by Dave Ebbitt.

Oct. 28, Saturday

FIELD TRIP

8:00 AM *Secrets of the Forest, Avian and Human*. Join us at Pine Grove Furnace State Park as we look for fall migrants and learn about the secret history of the area. Meet in the parking lot of the Park office at Rt. 233 and Pine Grove Rd. We will bird the area

and then drive to Camp Michaux, to learn its history. We will also check out the nearby bird blinds newly installed by the Bureau of Forestry. Wear sturdy shoes. Contact in advance **John Greer** at 443-255-8871 or jnagreer@aol.com.

November 9, Thursday at CAMS South

FILM

7:00 PM *Nature's Fear Factor*, PBS. A bold experiment to bring rare and fierce African Wild Dogs back to Gorongosa National Park in Mozambique reveals how predators – and the fear they trigger – play a surprising and crucial role in keeping wild ecosystems healthy. Door prizes.

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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