

**Naturally**

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

**May 2024**

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### President's Corner

by Valerie B. Barnes

Hello, spring! As we say farewell to some winter visitors, we welcome those who come in spring. Come on, warblers!

We held elections on April 8; see the article later in this issue. Thanks to all who voted – we need you! Please welcome our new directors: Larry Williams, Sharon Williams, and John Carter.

We extend thanks to our outgoing directors John Greer, Sue Greer, and Linda Kaiser. We really appreciate their support. Fortunately, John has agreed to continue as Conservation Chair, and Sue will keep our Records. All other Committee Chairs are also continuing in their roles, as are the officers and board members. Conococheague Audubon is an active organization because of all the volunteers who help in so many different ways. Thank you, everyone!

#### Volunteer opportunities include:

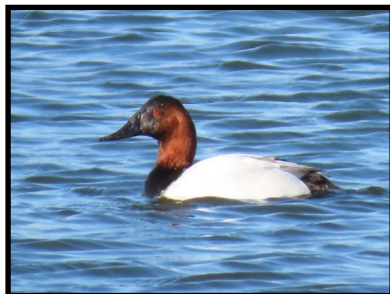
**Bluebird Trail** coordinators Lynn and Dorian Runt and Ruth Barton are always looking for volunteers to monitor the trails. To volunteer, please contact the Runts at 717-352-4995 or email [adamsmail@centurylink.net](mailto:adamsmail@centurylink.net), or Ruth Barton (301-367-6968).

- Janet Tice and Dave Cooney are starting to plan for this year's **Beginning Birders' Workshop**. The next planning meeting will be before our next General Meeting, on Monday, May 13. Come early – at 6 PM – if you would like to help at the workshop.
- Seventh grade students at **Greencastle-Antrim Middle School** participate in PA's **Trout in the Classroom** program and will be releasing fingerlings at Caledonia State Park on Thursday, May 16, 2024. Along with releasing the fish into the stream, the coordinator would like to have science-related presentations for the students to participate in throughout the day. Students will be in 10 groups (about 25 students per group) and rotate to different stations every 20 minutes. Students will arrive at the park around 9 and will be departing around 1:15 pm. Contact Terri Kochert.
- **Master Gardeners** have invited us to set up a display table at their annual Plant Sale on Saturday, May 18, 9 AM – 1 PM. Contact Terri Kochert.



Above: Red-tailed Hawk taking off.  
Photo credit: Bob Keene

Below: Canvasback  
at Keefer Rd. Pond 3/22/24 r  
Photo credit: Dave Cooney, Jr.



Continued on p. 7, bottom of column 2



by John Greer

## Your Choice of Coffee Matters for Birds

As we savor our morning cup of coffee, few of us pause to consider the impact our brew choices may have on the environment and its inhabitants. Yet, the cultivation of coffee can significantly impact bird populations, particularly in regions where traditional mono-culture agriculture prevails. Enter bird-friendly coffee, a conscientious choice that not only satisfies our caffeine cravings but also supports avian biodiversity.

Why is bird-friendly coffee better for our feathered friends? The answer lies in the cultivation methods. Traditional coffee farms often clear large swathes of land, eliminating natural habitats crucial for birds. This loss of habitat threatens numerous bird species, including the migratory birds we see in Franklin County, like warblers, thrushes, and tanagers, which rely on shaded forests for breeding and wintering grounds. This is particularly true for coffee grown in Mexico, Central America, and South America where much of the coffee consumed in the United States comes from.

Enter the **Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's Bird Friendly certification program**, which sets stringent criteria for coffee cultivation to ensure it sustains bird habitats (<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/about-bird-friendly-coffee>).

Farms certified under this program maintain diverse shade canopies, resembling natural forest ecosystems. These shaded environments provide essential habitat for birds, safeguarding their populations while also fostering soil health and biodiversity. Bird Friendly farms are 100% organic certified—no harmful pesticides—so they are better for the people and the planet. Bird Friendly certification protects birds and habitats through the hard work of 5,100 Bird Friendly farmers in 11 countries growing 34 million pounds of coffee annually.

When shopping, look for this logo. To buy online, try <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/buy-bird-friendly-coffee-online>. Smithsonian certified



*Fox Sparrow at SGL235 Bricker Rd. Franklin County, 3-8-24*  
Photo credit: Dave Cooney Jr.

coffee may also be purchased through the National Audubon Society at <https://nas.birdsandbeans.ca>, as well as through Amazon.



When shopping, look for this logo. To buy online, try <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/buy-bird-friendly-coffee-online>. Smithsonian certified coffee may also be purchased through the National Audubon Society at <https://nas.birdsandbeans.ca>, as well as through Amazon.



**Rainforest Alliance** standards for shade cover are less stringent than Bird Friendly, but more than 70 percent of Rainforest Alliance certified farms maintain shade cover and the standard promotes preserving forest in reserves and along waterways. (<https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/insights/rainforest-alliance-certified-coffee>) On farms where forest canopy is not the native ecosystem type, conservation area set-asides of 30 percent or greater are required in the standard.

Accessibility and affordability are crucial factors in coffee selection. If Smithsonian-certified bird-friendly or Rainforest Alliance coffee does not work for you, **shade-grown coffee** presents an alternative. Shade-grown coffee may be cultivated beneath a canopy of diverse trees, providing habitat for birds while maintaining soil fertility and biodiversity. Look for “shade-grown” on the label when shopping locally or online. Know, however, there are no universally accepted standards on what constitutes “shade-grown” and that this type of coffee can be grown among sparse trees on farms that lack diverse forest structure. Some



shade-grown coffee is even grown under only the flimsy cover of banana trees fed artificial fertilizers and pesticides.

Should shade-grown coffee not fit your needs, **organic coffee** offers the next best bird and environmentally friendly option. While not specifically designed for birds, organic farming practices avoid synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, reducing harm to both birds and the broader ecosystem. To be sold as organic in the United States, imported coffee must meet US Department of Agriculture standards. Look for the USDA logo. Several local grocery stores carry organically grown coffee, and it is readily available online.



If organic coffee is not feasible, consider opting for **fair-trade coffee**. Inspired by humanitarian concerns, Fair Trade labeling helps to ensure that the workers on coffee farms get paid fairly for the work they do. The higher prices that Fair Trade products earn help to provide an alternative to the price leverage that large coffee buyers can wield. However, a Fair Trade label does not convey any specific information about environmental practices and is not inherently bird-friendly.

Our morning cup of coffee holds the potential to make a meaningful difference for bird populations and the environment at large. By choosing bird-friendly coffee, whether Smithsonian-certified, Rainforest Alliance-certified, shade-grown, organic, or fair-trade, we can sip with purpose, supporting biodiversity and sustainable agriculture one delicious brew at a time.

## Thank You To CAS

by Donna Hocker

Each year, Conococheague makes charitable contributions to local organizations. We thought we would share the thank-you notes we've recently received. Here they are:

St. Luke E. Lutheran Church said with Joy and Gratitude they received the \$200.00 check from Conococheague Audubon. Many thanks for your continued support.

Thank you for renewing your Cumberland Valley Rails-to-Trails Council membership of \$50.00. Your continued support is greatly appreciated. Sincerely, the Treasurer.

On behalf of the Fort Loudoun Historical Society, President Mike Strausner thanks Conococheague for their support and dedication with a donation of \$150.00. This enables the Society to continue to improve the site, provide quality living history programs and helps to achieve a goal of becoming one of PA's premier historic sites.



*A male Trumpeter Swan displays for a female on the evening of Feb. 20 during their stopover at Gamelands 169 near Newville.*

*Photo credit: Jim Hook*



## Birding Blitz Update

by Vern Gauthier

### B4C

The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) will hold its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Breeding Bird Blitz for Conservation, running from June 7-17, 2024.

Bird enthusiasts are encouraged to participate by forming teams and raising funds in either the "Cumulative Count" or "Big Day" categories. Teams gather support through donations, which will be evenly distributed among three conservation projects.

People of all ages and skill levels can get involved by visiting [www.breedingbirdblitz.org](http://www.breedingbirdblitz.org) to register a team, learn more about our partner projects, or donate. Team registration is open until June 5th.

New features added to this year's Blitz include a "Cumulative Count" option, allowing species totals to be tallied over multiple days, and a "Block Boosting" category in collaboration with the 3rd PA Bird Atlas (PBA3).

The 2024 Blitz aims to raise \$20,240 to support the following conservation projects:

Rider Park, Lycoming County: Enhancements for American Woodcock populations, including habitat management and public education initiatives.



Taking part in or donating to the Blitz provides habitat for the American Woodcock.

Photo credit: Laura Jackson

Pocono Environmental Education Center (PEEC), Pike County: Bird safety improvements at the



Taking part in or donating to the Blitz will decrease window strikes by birds like this Black-and-white Warbler.

Photo credit: Laura Jackson

Visitor Activity Center to reduce fatal bird strikes and promote public awareness.

Allegheny Land Trust (ALT), Allegheny County: Wetland restoration and educational outreach at Wingfield Pines, increasing habitat area and providing educational programs to the public.

In its first 3 years, the Breeding Bird Blitz has raised over \$45,000 for nine partner projects across the state. In 2023, over 100 birders on 21 teams raised \$19,310 while documenting 175 species over 11 days in June.

To register a team, donate, or learn more, visit [www.breedingbirdblitz.org](http://www.breedingbirdblitz.org). Questions should be sent to [blitz4conservation@gmail.com](mailto:blitz4conservation@gmail.com), where a member of the PSO Conservation Committee will be happy to assist you.



White-crowned Sparrow at SGL235 Bricker Rd. Franklin County, 3-8-24

Photo credit: Dave Cooney, Jr.

# Election Results

by Debby Hook

Voting for officers and directors in this year's election officially closed on April 8, 2024, at our annual business meeting.

More than 40 ballots were cast, which was sufficient to meet the necessary quota to comply with CAS voting requirements. All votes were in favor of listed officer candidates and three new directors, one of whom will complete the term for outgoing director Linda Kaiser.

The ballot also included two proposed amendments to our Constitution and By-Laws. All but two ballots cast were in favor of the by-law amendments; those two ballots did not include a vote either for or against the proposed amendments.

Our officers for the next two years, beginning June 1, continue as follows:

**President:** Valerie Barnes

**Vice President:** Lisa Coombs

**Recording Secretary:** Debby Hook

**Corresponding Secretary:** Valerie Barnes

**Treasurer:** Donna Hocker

**Immediate Past President:** Terri Kochert

Newly-elected directors for the three-year term beginning June 1 are John Carter, who will complete the term for Linda Kaiser; Larry Williams; and Sharon Williams.

The latest amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws are:

Amendment 1: By-Laws Article IV Nominations and Elections, section 2:

The Nominating Committee may present a slate that includes two or more persons for the same office, having determined that the nominees prefer to share the duties for that office rather than serve alone. They would serve as "Co-" whatever-the-office-is.

The Nominating Committee may present a slate that includes one or more "Interns" who are considering becoming either a director or officer but want to learn more about what that involves.



*Red-tailed Hawk flying over home in Chambersburg, 2-4-24*  
Photo credit: Dave Cooney, Jr.

Amendment 2: By-Laws, Article V Duties:

Co-Presidents, Co-Vice Presidents, Co-Recording Secretaries, Co-Corresponding Secretaries, or Co-Treasurers will share the duties for the office as they see fit. No formal plan is required.

An Intern for any position is expected to attend the meetings for that position and may participate in any discussion, deliberation, or work effort. The Intern's term is the same as the actual officer's or director's term. The Intern does not vote. The Intern may resign at any point during her/his term.

We offer many thanks to our outgoing directors, John Greer, Sue Greer, and Linda Kaiser. We appreciate all you've done and look forward to your continued involvement and support.



*Red-headed Woodpecker on the feeder with Downy Woodpecker*  
Photo credit: Bob Keener

## A Birder with a Camera

by Ron George

A small portion of Gettysburg National Battlefield near Devil's Den is underwater. An ever-busy beaver has dammed the stream and built its house in the middle of a shallow pond next to the road. Trees and shrubs that once stood on dry ground protrude from the water. Here and there, a Canada Goose pokes its head above the tall grass along the pond's edge. On the other side toward Little Round Top, a Great Blue Heron stands as still as a battlefield monument. Interestingly, a Least Bittern has been seen here as well. While I enjoy the heron and would love to see the bittern, right now I'm looking for a reclusive bird whose name is so short it doesn't even need one of those four-letter abbreviations—Sora.

As I search for the Sora, I see several other people walking the road next to the pond. Each of us is carrying a camera, but strangely, I'm the only one who is also saddled with binoculars. Some of those cameras are attached to massive lenses—the kind that cost more than my first car. Setting aside my lens envy, I continue to scan among the water-soaked thickets. My birding partner points to a dark brown bird the size of an underfed chicken tip-toeing out of the brush not far from where I stand. I quietly exclaim, "There it is!"



*A just-barely-visible Common Yellowthroat.*

Photo credit: Ron George

As the Sora takes a few cautious steps into the open, one of the no-binocular people asks, "Where?! Where?!" I point to the bird, happy to help others enjoy this super-cool sighting. As the bird wades farther from cover, I lift my camera to my eye, anticipating the great shot I'm about to get: its dark tones and striking contrasts illuminated in lovely light with a mirror-perfect reflection on the water. As the bird comes into focus, I try to hold steady despite my excitement. Just then, the camera's autofocus goes berserk and blurs out. I lower the camera to discover that the person who had needed my help locating the bird is now wading through the grass to the water's edge, almost on top of the bird and directly in my line of sight! Unsurprisingly, the bird disappears back into its thicket. The person who blocked my shot walks off. I bite my tongue and wait for another opportunity.

As it turned out, I never did get a really good shot of the Sora. Of course, I know that photographing birds doesn't always work out, but even though there are a million things that can go wrong, getting that "good shot" has become part of the joy of birding for me. When I was down with COVID for a week last spring, I missed several days of birding during peak migration (as if being sick wasn't bad enough!). However, one morning, I managed to drag myself into the backyard with my camera, where I captured a good shot of a just-barely-visible Common Yellowthroat. It wasn't an extraordinary sighting, yet I was extraordinarily grateful to that bird for wandering into my neighborhood when I was too sick to wander any further myself. Since then, that photo has become a valued reminder to appreciate all birds—even the unsurprising, the common, the usual.

When I began birding, part of the magic was finding out that so many amazing birds were actually unsurprising, common, and usual. Before that, I had never seen a Common Yellowthroat, not because it was hard to find but because I wasn't looking. For me, birding was about "discovering" things that often went unnoticed. It was like inheriting a fortune from a long-lost uncle I never knew; I woke up to discover a wealth of birds all around. I just needed to look.

Before learning some common calls, I used to wear my eyes out trying to find a bird in a rhododendron thicket. Back then, I had to see a bird to identify it. All this looking combined with the visual appeal of birds themselves makes

photography a natural fit for birders, and I imagine that almost every birder has tried to take a picture of a bird at some time or other.

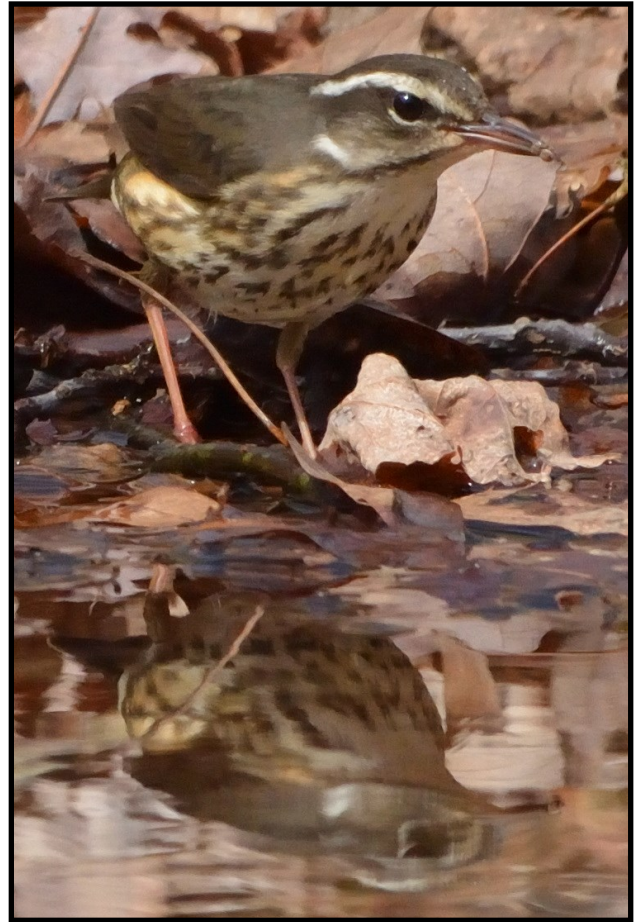
As I've enjoyed photographing birds over the last several years, I sometimes have to remind myself that I am a birder with a camera—not a photographer with binoculars. This means I'm trying to get that really good shot not for the sake of the photograph but for the joy of birding. I don't want to be a photographer stalking and "shooting" birds with a camera. I want to be birding first and taking pictures second. I want to be glad to see a bird, not disappointed that I didn't get a photo of it.



*Tree Swallow, a spring migrant*  
Photo credit: Ron George

This is easy to say but not always easy to live by, especially when a Sora is almost within reach, walking so close and in such perfect light that you forget that anything or anyone else exists, the allure of the perfect photo charming you, drawing you nearer and nearer, compelling you to water's edge, making you reach with your camera as if to grab the bird—as if to have the photo were to capture the bird itself and possess its wild soul.

In the end, birding is like life. The secret is to enjoy the moment. For me, part of the fun is taking photos, but the bird in front of me should always be more important than taking a photo of it. Whenever I lose sight of that, I remind myself that I am a birder with a camera.



*A Louisiana Waterthrush found something to eat on April 14 in a vernal pool at King Gap Environmental Center near Carlisle.*  
Photo credit: Jim Hook

## On the Record

by Sue Greer

Our first field trip of 2024 was to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in February. A group of ten participants set a record by observing 86 species over the three-day trip.

On March 14<sup>th</sup>, a group of fifteen participants gathered at Heisey Orchard for the annual outing to see the American Woodcock. In addition to four or five woodcocks, the group also saw Song Sparrows, American Robins, and Common Grackles.

## President's Corner, cont'd from p. 1.

Other opportunities will arise soon. So, let us know what you want to do and when you might be available!

See the [Calendar](#) for upcoming CAS activities

As always, please check our [website](#) to make sure a CAS event's plans are unchanged. Spring migration is underway. Join us for a field trip, keep an eye out for visitors to your neighborhood, and good birding!

**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.

**April 27 and May 11 Saturdays**                      **WORK DAY**  
9:30 AM Work at NORLO PARK native garden. Bring garden tools and gloves. **Josh Donaldson**, 717-264-6920.

**May 2, Thursday**                                      **FIELD TRIP**  
7:00 AM Fort McCord area for SPRING ARRIVALS/MIGRANTS. Meet at North Pointe Center, US 11 north of Chambersburg. Some walking. Bring lunch and binoculars. **Bill Oyler**, 717-360-5191.

**May 4, Saturday**                                      **FIELD TRIP**  
7:00 AM Little Cove for SPRING MIGRANTS. Meet at the entrance of Buchanan’s Birthplace State Park. Bring lunch and binoculars. **Valerie Barnes**, 717-352-4397 or **Donna Hocker**, 717-491-2171.

**May 9, Thursday**                                      **FIELD TRIP**  
**5:00 PM** Edenville area for WHIP-POOR-WILLS and BOBO-LINKS. Leave from Sunnyway Foods parking lot, 49 Warm Spring Road, Chambersburg. Bring scopes and binoculars. **Eric and Rhetta Martin**, 717-597-8675.

**May 10, Friday**                                      **FIELD TRIP**  
**6:00 PM** Lehman property for SPRING MIGRANTS. Meet at 750 Tallow Hill Road, Chambersburg, to walk around a pond, meadows and woods. **Larry Lehman**, 717-263-7203.

**May 13, Monday**                                      **MEETING**  
7:00 PM *Citizen Science – Breeding Bird Blitz and PA Bird Atlas*, by Vern Gauthier. Arranged by Dave Ebbitt.

**May 16, Thursday**                                      **FIELD TRIP**  
6:30 AM Stillhouse Hollow, Heisey Road Orchard, and some local farms for SPRING MIGRANTS. Leave from 5207 Heisey Road, Shippensburg. Bring scopes, binoculars, and lunch. **Bob Keener**, 717-532-9723 or 717-658-8765.

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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**CONOCOCHHEAGUE AUDUBON OFFICERS:**

<b>President</b>	Valerie Barnes
<b>Vice President</b>	Lisa Coombs
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	Debby Hook
<b>Corresponding Secretary</b>	Valerie Barnes
<b>Treasurer</b>	Donna Hocker
<b>Immediate Past President</b>	Terri Kochert

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

Dave Ebbitt, Sue Greer, John Greer, Jim Hook, Linda Kaiser, Anne St. John, intern Cindy Thrasher

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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