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*Spicebush Swallowtail*  
Photo credit: Josh Donaldson

On June 19, Josh Donaldson reported, “We found something really cool at Norlo garden today - a Spicebush Swallowtail butterfly caterpillar. The primary host plant for these caterpillars is the Spicebush, of which there are three planted at the garden. But we never found one of these caterpillars there previously. The leaves fold up like a taco shell to hide and protect the caterpillar, so I had to hold the leaf open to take this photo.”

**President's Corner**

by Valerie B. Barnes

Shorebird migration is underway. Subscribe to eBird alerts to be notified about Franklin (or other) County rarities so you know what’s in the area.

According to an [article](#) about "Bird Olympics" in the Washington Post, in a race of birds flying horizontally, the Mallard would win, with a speed of about 103 mph. While we often think of the Peregrine Falcon's fast dive (at about 242 mph), it's the Mallard that flies fastest horizontally. Who knew?! In terms of flying quietly, the Barn Owl is hard to beat. And an Ostrich could outrun any human in the 100 m dash - finishing in just 6.04 seconds. Birds are pretty amazing!

Why did you join Audubon? If you are like me, you joined because you enjoy birds: seeing and hearing them in the wild, sharing your love of them with others, exploring new birding sites, adding to your life list, ... Along the way we get to be outside, in nature, and revel in the peace, sights, smells, and sounds that surround us. If we participate in some of the opportunities for citizen-science, we record what we observe for a Christmas Bird Count, Breeding Bird Atlas, Climate Watch, or simply what we see when we are birding for fun. At chapter events, we learn from interesting speakers, catch up with friends, see how this year’s field trip compares to those in years past, and enjoy free nature films.

Birding can be solitary or with a group. It can be a chance to wind down or socialize. You can assiduously record and report what you observe or just mostly keep it casual and enjoy the birds and other flora and fauna.

I recently rediscovered a fundraising brochure from National Audubon that proclaims: “Together, we can save the birds we love.” These are some of the key actions National Audubon and its members undertake:

- Defending vital bird habitats
- Restoring habitats that have suffered from human or natural actions
- Taking climate action for birds and communities
- Advancing policies that protect birds
- Spreading our love of birds and nature

It struck me as a good list of aspirations and accomplishments. So, Auduboners, keep up the good work!

If you haven't already received it, watch your snail mail for our annual fundraising letter and the 2024-2025 Activities List. We depend on and appreciate your financial support. Good birding!

# CONSERVATION

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by John Greer

Are you looking for a meaningful way to give back to our community and to help keep Pennsylvania beautiful? The Conococheague Audubon Society has joined PennDOT's Adopt-A-Highway program, and we need volunteers to support this worthwhile effort.

On September 28, 2024, we will focus on our adopted highway: A two-mile stretch of Route 997, running west from I-81 to Main Street in Scotland. (Two miles is the standard length in the program.) This portion of the road has wide shoulders making it safer for our crew. You may volunteer to help clean up all or a portion of this section.

This is an excellent opportunity to make a tangible impact on our environment while connecting with fellow community-minded individuals. By participating in this event, you will contribute to our roadways' cleanliness and aesthetic appeal, enhancing the quality of life for everyone who travels this route.

The Adopt-A-Highway program is designed to foster community pride and environmental stewardship by encouraging volunteers to help maintain the beauty of our roadsides. This initiative not only keeps our highways cleaner but also reduces the cost of highway maintenance, making it a win-win for both the environment and taxpayers.

## Why Participate?

- **Community Impact:** Your efforts will directly improve the appearance of a critical stretch of road, helping to create a cleaner, more inviting environment for residents and travelers alike.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** By removing litter and debris, you are playing a crucial role in protecting local wildlife and natural habitats.
- **Social connection:** Join a team of like-minded volunteers who share your commitment to keeping Pennsylvania beautiful. It is a great way to meet new people and build community spirit.

## Event Details

- **Date:** September 28, 2024
- **Time:** 9:00 a.m.

- **Meeting Location:** Park-and-Ride at the intersection of I-81 and Route 997

To ensure your safety and comfort during the cleanup, we will provide safety training, gloves, safety vests, and trash bags. Refreshments will also be available, keeping everyone energized and hydrated throughout the morning.

## How to Sign Up

Ready to make a difference? Sign up by contacting our event coordinator John Greer at [jngreer@aol.com](mailto:jngreer@aol.com) or 443 255-8871. You may also sign up at our meeting on September 9, 2024. Your commitment to this cause will not only help beautify our community but also foster a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Join us on September 28th to roll up your sleeves and make Route 997 shine! Together, we can make a significant impact and show that when a community comes together, we create a cleaner, greener Pennsylvania for all.

## On the Record

by Sue Greer

Last spring Conococheague Audubon hosted seven field trips with forty-eight participants. Here is a summary:

On May 9<sup>th</sup> five observers drove the Edenville area seeing forty-five species, including a Northern Harrier and an American Kestrel for the first time.

The May 10<sup>th</sup> walk of the Lehman Property by five birders yielded thirty-two species, but no firsts.

Ten observers saw seventy species, including nine species of warblers, on May 16<sup>th</sup> at Heisey Orchard and in the Stillhouse Hollow Road area,.

On May 20<sup>th</sup> sixty-eight species were seen in the Fort McCord area by six birders. Several new species were added to the list including Wild Turkey, Green Heron, as well as Acadian and Willow Flycatchers.

This year's Beginning Birder's Workshop on June 1<sup>st</sup> had only two attendees. Going along with eight volunteers, their walk around Caledonia State Park yielded thirty-six species.

Seven participants drove the South Mountain IBA on June 8<sup>th</sup>. Two of the forty-four species observed were new for the trip: a Sharp-shinned Hawk and a Pine Siskin.

On June 15<sup>th</sup> thirteen birders (including several teenagers) walked the Cumberland Valley Rail-Trail in downtown Chambersburg, seeing thirty-one species.

# A Busy Spring and Summer for CAS!

by Terri Kochert

Though I don't relish the thought of "tooting one's own horn," I think that in this case, it is necessary. First of all, I want to thank all the wonderful, faithful volunteers that we had this past spring and summer at CAS: Val Barnes, Ruth Barton, Conway Bushey, Lisa Coombs, Dave Cooney, Josh and Susan Donaldson, Dave Ebbitt, Marguerite Fries, Ron George, John and Sue Greer, Jim and Debby Hook, Bob and Terri Kochert, Rhetta and Eric Martin, Lynn and Doreen Runt, Anne St. John, Janet Tice, Greg von Schmid. Please forgive me if I have forgotten to mention any other volunteer's name. For an organization that typically has 30-40 people attending our educational meetings, we have a solid core group of helpers! Just look at the number of events that have taken place since April 2024 and how many people CAS has engaged.

April 3 Display table at Shippensburg University's Climate and Justice Education Week program by Doug Tallamy, *Nature's Best Hope*, at the Luhrs Performing Arts Center: ~60 adults.

April 11 Master Gardeners Lunch & Learn + CAS Presentation & Display table: 85 adults/5 children.

April 13 Conococheague Institute "Get to Know Nature" Day: 45 adults/ 50 children.

April 18 Video recording for Franklin County Visitors Bureau weekly TV highlights.

April 26 A special presentation to the Greencastle Senior Citizens group: 15 adults

May 9 and 15 Waynesboro Area Senior High School Special Needs students: 14 adults/ 22 students

May 16 Trout Release Day while engaging 250 7<sup>th</sup> graders and 27 adults.

May 18 Master Gardeners Plant Sale with CAS Display table: 32 adults/ 8 children.

June 1 Beginning Birders' Workshop: 3 adults/2 children.

June 8 Appalachian Trail Festival at Red Run Park, Waynesboro, PA: 67 adults/ 30 children.

June 29 North Square Farmers Market: 23 adults/24 children.

July 15 Norlo Garden Tour: 25 adults.

July 27 North Square Farmers Market: 39 adults/ 41 children.

Total people engaged thus far: 435 Adults and 432 Children. That's 867 people!

There are two more Farmers Markets this year, on August 24 and September 28, and a Franklin County Visitors Bureau Lunch and Learn presentation on Bird Migration on September 17. All the while the Bluebird

Trail volunteers have been hard at work and the Norlo Garden workers have also been giving much of their time and energy to make the garden "glow" with beauty. Thanks again to all the many CAS volunteers willing to bring the enjoyment of nature and birds to the public and to impress upon all the need to take care of the environment.

## A Repurposed WHAT?

by Terri Kochert

If you haven't had the opportunity yet to visit North Square Farmers Market in Chambersburg on a Saturday morning, you should try it sometime. Not only will you find fresh vegetables, fruit, and meat, but also some vendors with other wares. Vendors change from time to time. While engaging the passersby for CAS with our interactive display table, I met the vendor to my right. It turns out she takes plastic "feed bags" of all types—for cows, horses, deer, dogs, cats, and even birds—and turns them into attractive, sturdy, all-purpose tote bags. She lines them with fabric and even inserts a pocket to hold your phone or other valuables. They're great for carrying groceries, garden tools, etc. and they are reasonably priced.

So, I am putting out a plea to you that if you have any empty birdfeed bags or dog food bags that she could use, please contact her, Linda Fahnestock. Call her at (717) 372-9032. She has even volunteered to come pick them up! Now that's service! She says she enjoys working on them during the winter months. Please take a look at some of her wares in my photo below.



## Have You Seen Anything Good?

by Ron George

It's the same every time: We head out birding, always hoping to see something good but never knowing what we'll see. It's the fundamental proposition of birding. If we go out looking for birds, we might see some. That's my frame of mind as I am parking my car near the trailhead. My feet crunch the gravel as I walk. The road rises slowly through tall beech trees and tulip poplar. The stream below the bank runs a twisted course in the deep shade of tall trees. The trail climbs at a gentle pace, leaving the stream far below the trail/road, which has been cut into the hillside. The up-slope trees tower to my right, but to my left, I look into the canopy of the down-slope trees. Down where the stream runs, a Louisiana Waterthrush calls as it walks along a fallen tree, bobbing feverishly in its constant, probing search. Overhead, a Red-eyed Vireo chirps repetitively.

Somewhere down there an Ovenbird prattles "teacher-teacher-teacher." Another one calls from the hillside above. As I walk, I hear another up ahead. With a rush of wings, yet another Ovenbird appears on a striped maple next to me, pausing for a moment on a long, thin branch that bends tenderly under the weight. Close by, its white-ringed eye seems enormous. Fine streaks scatter across the breast. Turning its head, the bird shows off an orange cap, its one piece of flare. This bird is designed to disappear in the shady understory and to see in the dim light with those big eyes.

Today, this shady patch of forest has been overrun by Ovenbirds. Another one swoops to the same branch, bending it further. In less than a moment, a third Ovenbird flashes toward the other two who dive from the perch and disappear over the steep bank. Ahead on the trail, "teacher-teacher-teacher."

In less than a mile, I counted more than thirty Ovenbirds. At least that's what I told eBird; there were probably more. When there seems to be an Ovenbird calling from every direction, it's hard to say for sure. Meanwhile, Red-eyed Vireos call continually until I don't even notice, and I wonder how many I missed while trying to count Ovenbirds.

Spring migration can bring a large variety of species, and it can also produce large numbers of a single species. I once encountered a flock of 84 Yellow-rumped Warblers. Unlike counting Ovenbirds, I felt fairly confident about that number be-

cause I was on the edge of a woodlot where they were pausing before flying across an open field in twos and threes. Unfortunately, birds just don't seem to care if they are counted accurately or not.

In some places, 30 Ovenbirds wouldn't be noteworthy during spring migration, and 84 Yellow-rumped Warblers would be an incredibly slow day in Cape May during the fall. But for me, these were high counts. This is not to say that the number matters that much. Seeing a Yellow-rumped Warbler is fun. Seeing 84 is even more fun—probably not 84 times as much fun—but fun. Still, it can be challenging when you're trying to identify other birds, and everywhere you look, there's another Yellow-rumped Warbler. Of all the challenges of birding, that's a good one to have, "an embarrassment of riches."

For many, the abundance of a species has an inverse relationship to the appreciation we have for it. The more we see a species, the less we appreciate it, and vice versa. This seems to be the source of another birding-related challenge that I still struggle with: how to respond when someone asks, "Have you seen anything good?"

In general, I am glad to stop and talk to any binocular human walking along the trail—never mind what Mom told me about talking to strangers. Most birders are nice people, and chatting with other birders is often interesting and educational. I might pick up ID tips or leads on new birding locations, but I am often stumped when they inevitably ask, "Have you seen anything good?" The question implies that they're not interested in what I've seen unless I've seen something good, but even after all



*Eastern Kingbird, taken in Chambersburg*  
Photo credit: Ron George

of these years, I'm still not sure what counts as a "good" bird.

Does "good" simply mean "rare"? If so, how rare does it have to be? Is "unusual" close enough? Of course, it probably depends on who's asking the question. If they're not really a birder, in all likelihood, they just want to know if you've seen a Bald Eagle. Bald Eagles are not really rare anymore (hooray!), but they're still a "good" bird for most people. On the other hand, if I meet a new birder who doesn't know a kingbird from a kinglet, all birds are "good" birds, and I may get the chance to introduce someone to a bird they never saw or heard of before—along with the chance to look like a birding genius. However, if I meet a more seasoned birder, it's much harder to say what counts as a "good" bird. An old pro who can confidently id all the calls and even the chips that you're hearing probably doesn't care if you saw a Yellow-rumped Warbler no matter how many.

Of course, I don't often see unusual birds, so when someone asks, "Have you seen anything good?" I'm likely to respond with the best birds on my list for that day, and by best, I mean the ones that appeal to me, my favs—the ones that make me smile. That could include just about any bird, from the most common to the most surprising.

I once saw a White-breasted Nuthatch at work on a nest. It flew from its tree-hole to the trunk of a nearby tree, broke off a bit of bark, flew back, and disappeared into the hole. A moment later it emerged, paused on the threshold, and repeated the process. However, on the third try, it re-emerged from the nest still holding the bit of bark, which apparently wasn't a good fit. To my surprise, instead of discarding it, the bird returned the bark to the tree it came from, tucked it neatly into a crevice in the bark, and carefully tapped it in place. Smile.

Another time, I was watching an Ovenbird walking near the trail when it suddenly vanished into thin air. With a closer look, I discovered it had gone into its domed ground-nest—the "oven" that the bird is named for—which was perfectly camouflaged among the leafy detritus. Smile.

White-breasted Nuthatches and Ovenbirds aren't rare, but these moments are. For me, that counts as a good bird, and if someone had asked, "Seen anything good?" I would have mentioned the White-breasted Nuthatch or the Ovenbird—wrong answer, at least for some. With some birders, I don't

even get a simple acknowledgment response for such answers. In those situations when my good bird isn't good enough, I get the feeling that they regret asking, and they probably suspect that I can't tell a cat from a catbird.

In situations like this, it's good to remember that there are as many kinds of birders as there are kinds of birds, maybe more. Birding-ability is one dividing line, but the biggest differences are in what motivates us—why we bird.

Among the many reasons I go birding, one keeps me coming back. When I go birding, I'm not just looking for birds; I'm looking for moments and future memories. A "good bird" for me is one that will stick in my mind's eye, evoking the moment when I saw it, recalling not just the bird for all its subtle beauty and charming behaviors but also the feeling of being in the right place at the right time. The Nuthatch with its bit of bark and the vanishing Ovenbird aren't just species; they are golden moments.

Those moments can happen at any time, but they don't happen every time. Still, I go birding. When we head out looking for birds, what are we hoping for? Is it something we haven't seen before? Something to add to our list? Something that we can brag about to other birders? Something that we can write an article about? Something we can photograph? Something to post, tally, or tick? Something to remind us of the changing seasons, to keep us in tune with the cycles of nature? Something hidden and secret from the uninitiated non-birders?

Are we hoping for something to amaze us, to astound us, and to give us a hit of dopamine? Something to marvel at, to dream about, to talk about, to remember, and to share? Something to say when someone asks, "Have you seen anything good?"

## **Return of Northern Bobwhites**

by Valerie B. Barnes

University of Delaware faculty and students are bringing Northern Bobwhites back to Pennsylvania. Working with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, UD is playing a key role in a reintroduction project at Letterkenny Army Depot in Franklin County. Click here to see the [article](https://www.udel.edu/academics/colleges/canr/news/2024/april/conservation-bobwhite-quail-jeff-buler-chris-williams/), or find it at <https://www.udel.edu/academics/colleges/canr/news/2024/april/conservation-bobwhite-quail-jeff-buler-chris-williams/>.

**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.

**Year-round BIRD WALKS**

SOAR (Studying Ornithology Around the Region) walks, 8:00 AM first and third Saturdays; various locations in Franklin County.

**Larry and Sharon Williams**, 717-655-7414; see <https://buttonwoodnaturecenter.org> for schedule. 717-762-0373

**Sept. 2, 2024, Monday 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 Oyler**, 717-360-5191, [oylerbill@gmail.com](mailto:oylerbill@gmail.com).

**Sept. 9, Monday MEETING**

7:00 PM *Eastern Australia, A Birding Tour*, by Jeanne Verhulst. Arranged by Janet Tice.

**Sept. 14, Saturday FIELD TRIP**

7:00 AM for FALL MIGRANTS. Walk part of Cumberland Valley Rail Trail in Chambersburg. Meet at Big Lots parking lot, 184 Southgate Mall; carpool to rail-trail parking. Bring binoculars.

**Debby Hook**, 717-372-0228.

**Sept. 28, Saturday CONSERVATION CLEAN-UP**

Adopt-A-Highway clean-up on 2 miles of Route 997 (Black Gap Road) west from I-81. Pick up trash on section with wide shoul-

ders, easy walking. Supplies provided. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Scotland Park & Ride, I-81 exit 20. Sign up with John Greer, 443-255-8871, [jngreer@aol.com](mailto:jngreer@aol.com).

**Oct. 14, Monday MEETING**

**6:45 PM** Youth Contest Bird Photos & Lists due. 7:00 PM *Adrenaline Birding; Big Day/Big Months/Big Years*, by Andy Mar- kel. Arranged by Dave Ebbitt.

Check our website for updates and maps to all locations:

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 OCTOBER 15 FOR NOVEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER

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