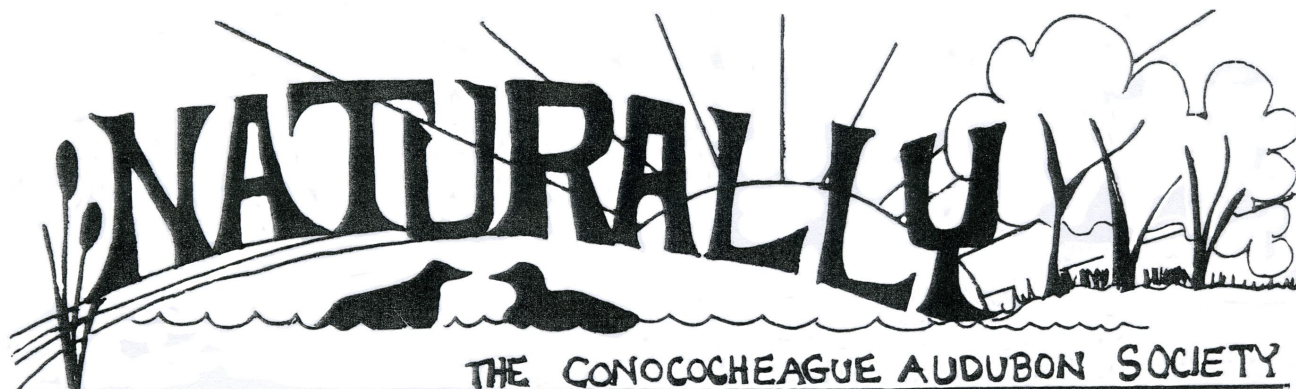




Naturally

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOCHIEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

May 2026

Published: September, November, January, March, May Vol. 50, No. 5

In This Issue:

Page 2 Conservation Corner:

Scarlet Tanager/State Bird

Page 3 Beginning Birder

Workshop, On the Record,
Elections

Page 4 Brain Games for Bird
Brains

Page 5 Thank You, Annual
Report Highlights, cont'd.

Page 6 Help Save Our Eastern
Bluebirds, Volunteers Clean Up

Page 7 Bluebird Videos

Page 8 Calendar

President's Corner: Annual Report Highlights

by Valerie B Barnes

Conococheague Audubon Society (CAS) submits a report annually to National Audubon Society (NAS). The report fulfills our requirement to be a chapter in good standing and triggers NAS to deposit a modest fixed stipend into our checking account. Here are some highlights from the 2025 report:

- ♦ 123 volunteers provided 2,765 hours of effort to support the chapter. This includes attendance at meetings; participation in field trips, work days, and Christmas Bird Counts, Bluebird Trail monitoring, and community outreach.
- ♦ 2,526 people (we don't know how many unique individuals) participated in our activities. Activities included general meetings, nature films, preparation and distribution of newsletters, maintaining website, field trips, bird counts/surveys, garden maintenance and event, beginning birders' workshop, 6 community outreach events, contests for youth, highway cleanup, 5 direct interactions with school-age children, and 24 presentations about birds. We engaged with about 35 partners, ranging from Guilford Township (Norlo Park Garden) to the Franklin County Visitor's Bureau (they print material for us and we support their outreach events), Community Cloud Forest Conservation (we donate to this organization in Guatemala), Greencastle-Antrim School District, Penn National Golf Club and Inn (houses the Bluebird Trail), St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church (where we hold meetings), Caledonia State Park (workshop location), Furnace Run Nature Park, and many others.
- ♦ Our priority goals for 2025 were to continue our connections with school-age children, shift our scholarship support from our membership to a local school district, and encourage more Audubon or community members to participate in our activities. We continued and strengthened our connections with Greencastle-Antrim school children. We awarded a scholarship to a Chambersburg Area School District graduating senior, and extended outreach to potential new members at meetings and a new local



A Black-crowned Night Heron breaks through the grass at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge on the eastern shore of Maryland during a CAS field trip in late February.

Photo credit: Jim Hook

President's Corner, continued on page 5

Conservation

o
r
n
e
r



Scarlet Tanager proposed as State Migratory Bird

by Jim Hook

Birders have a piece of feel-good legislation flittering in Harrisburg.

A Pittsburgh area legislator has proposed that the Scarlet Tanager be named Pennsylvania's official State Migratory Bird. HB2316 does not offer protections for the bird or its habitat. The designation would "celebrate Pennsylva-



A Scarlet Tanager feeds in the Carbaugh Run Natural Area of Michaux State Forest on May 2, 2025.

Photo credit: Jim Hook

nia's biodiversity, promote environmental education and inspire the next generation of conservation leaders," according to Rep. Mandy Steele, D-Fox Chapel, who introduced the bill a month ago.

Of all the states, Pennsylvania hosts the highest percentage of the global Scarlet Tanager population (17 percent during the breeding season). The bird winters in South America.

As an indicator species, the Scarlet Tanager's presence signals the health of Pennsylvania's mature oak forests that provide insects and sanctuary to warblers and other migrants. The Scarlet Tanager is a bird of least concern on the international Red List of Threatened Species and researchers consider the bird's population to be stable.

Some birders might prefer that a threatened warbler be named state migratory bird, but the honor is more about optics than conservation. Warblers are small, elusive, and rarely seen.

Because of its striking brilliance and popularity, the tanager would be a strong ambassador for the Eastern woodlands. Even its *chip-burr* call is easily recognized. Let's hope the Scarlet Tanager is as effective as the Bald Eagle was in the campaign against DDT and is not just another canary in the coalmine.

The bill has bipartisan backing and is in the House Game and Fisheries Committee.

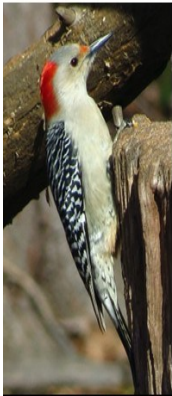
Audubon Mid-Atlantic is asking people to note the time and place of their Scarlet Tanager (SCTA) sightings at

<https://forms.gle/2EKFZSdJmXx1x5nQ6>.





Conococheague Audubon presents



Beginning Birder Workshop

Caledonia State Park

FREE Workshop for Beginners

Saturday, June 6, 2026

7:45 AM – noon

All families, adults, teens, and children age 6 or older are welcome. Activities include; Bird Walks, Kid's Crafts, Nature Walk, Birding Bingo, Scavenger Hunt, and Refreshments. "Birding Buddies" will help participants identify birds. Register early!

Meet at the first parking lot beyond the Visitors' Center in Caledonia State Park. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them. Loaners for adults and children will be available. Pre-registration appreciated but not required.

To pre-register, contact Dave Cooney Jr. at (717) 264-2116 or slant1cm@yahoo.com or Janet Tice at (717) 372-0379 or jwticel@comcast.net

On the Record

by Sue Greer

Our first field trip of 2026 was in February to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Four participants saw a remarkable 68 species. A first-time sighting for this trip was a Black-crowned Night-Heron.

After a six-year hiatus, eight people traveled to Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area in Lancaster County in March. Fifty-four species were seen that day, including the Snow Geese that migrate through there and, for the first time, a Red-headed Woodpecker.



Tree Swallows prepare for breeding season in early April at Pennsylvania Gamelands 169 near Newville

Photo credit: Jim Hook

Elections

by Valerie B Barnes

Over the past few weeks and at our April meeting, we received 50 ballots to elect Ron George as President, Debby Hook as Recording Secretary, Valerie Barnes as Corresponding Secretary, Cinda Liggon as Treasurer, Vanessa Miller as Director, and Doug Powless as Director. Valerie Barnes shifts from President to Immediate Past President. We welcome Cinda and Vanessa to the leadership ranks of Conococheague Audubon, and welcome Ron and Doug back in new roles.

We bid a fond farewell to outgoing Directors Jim Hook, John Carter (who resigned late last year) and his replacement, stand-in Conway Bushey. We thank all three of them for their service on the Board and look forward to their continued engagement and support. We also thank Terri Kochert, Donna Hocker, and Lisa Coombs for their years of service as officers and are grateful for their continued support in new and continuing roles.

Brain Games for Bird Brains

by Debby Hook

Brain games.

They're the latest catchwords in mental health news: Quizzes, puzzles and other mental exercises are touted as a big assist for our memory functions.

However, when we need to retrieve details from a vast store of mental data, there's another whole family of memory games that help speed up the process. The name of this game is *mnemonics*.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a *mnemonic* (nih-MAH-nik) as a technique "intended to assist memory."

We've all used mnemonic devices since childhood, in the form of songs, catchy phrases and acronyms. When I was three, I sang "A B C D E F G ..." to learn the alphabet. In primary school, I quoted the phrase "I before E except after C ..." And my fifth-grade teacher gave us the acronym "HOMES" to recall the names of the five Great Lakes.

In this manner, a collection of easy-to-learn mnemonic phrases has long been a fun way to identify birds by their songs. One of the most recognized is the call of the Black-capped Chickadee: "Chick-a-dee-dee-dee!" Say it aloud: Hear the bird calling its own name?

Jesse Hague loved using mnemonics. Skilled at hearing bird calls even at a distance, the late Chambersburg birder kept a mental cache of phrases as instant identifiers: "Tea kettle, tea kettle, tea kettle," she would say aloud, then look at you and grin. "Carolina Wren."

More of her favorites, recalls Eric Martin, were the Ovenbird's "teacher, teacher, TEACHER, TEACHER," and "Trees, trees, beautiful trees" sung by the Black-throated Green Warbler. What a blast to ride with Jesse during spring migration, hearing the seasonal warbler calls! "I can still hear her," Val Barnes reminisced, "saying 'Pleased to MEET cha' (Chestnut-sided) and 'Sweet, sweet, I'm

so sweet'" (Yellow).

Reading the words is one thing; hearing them spoken in our regional intonation is quite another. Many American English-speaking birders can hear the Barred Owls asking "Who cooks for YOU? Who cooks for YOU all?" We readily acknowledge the Olive-sided Flycatcher's demand, "Quick! Three beers!"



An Eastern Towhee sings "Drink your tea-ea-ea-ea!" from the top of an evergreen tree.

Photo credit: Jim Hook

It takes a bit more imagination to interpret the Eastern Towhee's crisp, sharp notes ending in a trill: One alert birder heard it say, "Drink your tea-ea-ea-ea!" and the phrase stuck.

Here are a couple aids to help you learn some memorable mnemonics before your next bird outing:

- Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a compelling interactive lesson at [30 Mnemonics to Help You Remember Bird Calls | All About Birds](#).

Continued on page 5.

- A report, *Quick Guide to Bird Songs for Beginning Birders*, by Ben Poscover, is found at Baltimore Bird Club's site [QUICK GUIDE TO BIRD SONGS](#).

Thank You!

by Valerie B Barnes

As I step away from serving as President of Conococheague Audubon Society, I want to say thank you. It truly has been a privilege to work with and for you over the past four years. This is a welcoming group that wants to share our love of birds with one and all. Folks step up and help out. So, I give thanks to all of you who put in the extra time and effort to get things done. We schedule about 10 field trips every season, maintain and show off the Norlo Park Native Plants Garden, pick up trash along a stretch of Route 997, participate in multiple Christmas Bird Counts, donate to other conservation-minded organizations, and conduct a workshop for beginning birders. We give talks about birds, show free nature films, present bird-related programs, and engage the public at many outreach events.

So thank you to Lisa, Donna, Terri, Bob, Debby, Jim, Dave, Jody, Anne, Greg, Larry, Sharon, John, Bill, Linda, Rhetta, Eric, John, Sue, Vern, Tim, Bob, Leslie, Josh, Susan, Janet, Dave, Lynn, Dorian, Ruth, Ed, Jane, Conway, Bill, Marguerite, Jeff, Sue, Mike, Cinda, John, Ron, Tracy, Leah, Jim, Joe, Vanessa, Carl, SueAnn, Doug, Kyle, Andy, and all the others who participate in our activities. We need you and we value you.

In these tumultuous times, may you find peace in nature and birding. May your love of birds bind you in the best possible ways to your community, friends, and family. Let the bird-song of spring lift your spirits and remind you that some sounds are NOT just noise.

May you enjoy spring and all the birds that are coming back and promise to keep us guessing / scratching our heads with their songs and flitting. Thank you for your continued commitment to Conococheague Audubon!

park.

- ♦ Goals for 2026... Our new Film Series chair, Leslie Cerf, is working with her committee to develop new source(s) for films or alternative community outreach. We are continuing collaboration with the Chambersburg Area Education Foundation for a student scholarship and a teacher innovation grant. With the recent elections, we are enlisting new leaders for the chapter. **We still need a Vice President, so, someone, please step up!**

Conococheague Audubon is doing well, thanks to all the efforts of its members. We are especially grateful to those who have devoted so many years and hours to nurture the chapter. Terri Kochert is ending her tenure as Immediate Past President and Film Series Chair; but she's staying on as Outreach Chair. Donna Hocker is handing over Treasurer duties to Cinda Liggon; but she is staying on as Hospitality Chair. Lisa Coombs is ending her vice presidency, but is continuing as Membership Chair and Christmas Bird Count compiler. Ron George is replacing me as President.

I'll still be involved as Immediate Past President, Corresponding Secretary, and website content guru. Debby Hook has agreed to expand her role as Recording Secretary to help with some of what are typically the Vice President's duties. Although Jim Hook is ending his term as a director, he is now the Conservation Chair.

To the other directors and committee chairs who are continuing in your roles – many thanks! Without you and other volunteers, we would be lost. Thank you and good birding!





"I'll get by with a little help from my friends."

Photo credit: Clare Hayes, Mercersburg, Pa.

Help Save Our Eastern Bluebirds by Lynn and Dorian Runt

This beloved and charismatic native bird was once extremely threatened by a loss of suitable habitat, climatic events, urban sprawl and predation. From 1920-1970, the Eastern Bluebird numbers declined by 90%! Today the Eastern Bluebird population has recovered mostly due to conservation practices such as bluebird trails supported by volunteers.

Unfortunately, many of the same issues - habitat loss, climate change and aggressive, invasive species are still present and don't appear to be going away anytime soon. Without assistance from people like you, Eastern Bluebirds (and many other native birds) will continue to have difficulty surviving and thriving.

YOU can make a difference by volunteering for one of our regional bluebird trails.

Bluebird Trails In Southern Franklin County, PA.

Antrim Township Community Park Trail
12315 Grand Shook Rd.
Greencastle, Pa.

Contact; Richard Bell email;
16sdbell16@gmail.com Ph. 717-597-3939
Volunteer monitors needed

Caledonia State Park Bluebird Trail

9515 Golf Course Rd.

Fayetteville, Pa.

Contact; Jim Hook email;
jimbhook@gmail.com Ph. 717-262-5865
Substitute volunteer monitors needed

Penn National Bluebird Trail

3720 Club House Drive

Fayetteville, Pa

Contact; Lynn and Dorian Runt email; adams-mail@centurylink.net Ph. 717-352-2069
Volunteer monitors needed



*Eastern Bluebirds tangle in the air on an early April morning
at the old orchard on Heisey Road in Greene Township, Franklin
County.*

Photo credit: Jim Hook

Volunteers Clean Up

by Vanessa Miller

On March 28, eight dedicated volunteers from Conococheague Audubon braved the cooler temperatures to clean up a major portion of our adopted highway, Route 997. Working east from Scotland to I-81, we collected 25

Continued on p. 7, above photo of volunteers



This is the Pine Warbler that visits my feeder most every day in this last month, the first warbler to arrive every year at our house and often arriving early March.

Photo credit: Bob Keener

Volunteers, cont'd from p 6.

large bags of trash for PennDOT. Many thanks for their hard work go to Rhetta Martin, Lisa Coombs, Jeff Schmaltz, Ron George, Dave Ebbitt, Debby Stitely, and Joe Miller. Be on the lookout for the next clean-up date in September!

Bluebird Videos

by Valerie B. Barnes

At the end of the program on 13 April, we attempted to show four videos related to Eastern Bluebirds. The technology stymied us, so here are the links; you can check them out yourself. Apologies for the ads...

#1 Eastern Bluebird Song (American Bird Conservancy) 0:28 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0CkR4O7JRM>

#2 A Fascinating Look at Baby Bluebirds (time lapse video) (Birds Walking Down) 10:25

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKRUCoEd1JQ>

#3 Adorable Baby Bluebirds Feast on Praying Mantis, Spiders(Blue birds Walking Down) 8:15 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7gnmHvMS9o>

#4 The UGLY Truth About House Sparrows (Badgerland Birding) 5:22

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pOAC_VffUQ



These volunteers really cleaned up!

Photo credit: Debby Stitely

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

April 25, Saturday

WORK DAY

9:30 AM Work at NORLO PARK native garden. Bring garden tools and gloves. **Josh Donaldson**, 717-264-6920.

May 7, 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**, 717-658-8765.

May 8, 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. **Josh Donaldson**, 717-264-6920.

May 9, Saturday

WORK DAY

9:30 AM Work at NORLO PARK native garden. Bring garden tools and gloves. **Josh Donaldson**, 717-264-6920.

May 9, Saturday

FIELD TRIP

7:00 AM Little Cove for SPRING MIGRANTS. Meet at the entrance of Buchanan's Birthplace State Park. Bring lunch and binoc-

ulars. **Valerie Barnes**, 717-352-4397 or **Donna Hocker**, 717-491-2171.

May 9, Saturday

FIELD TRIP

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

May 11, Monday

MEETING

7:00 PM *Birds with a Gettysburg Address*, by Bonnie Portzline. Arranged by Lisa Coombs.

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

Send all newsletter articles and photos to the editor.

Send all mailing changes to conaudubon@outlook.com.

COPY DEADLINE AUGUST 15 FOR SEPTEMBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

CONOCOCHEAGUE AUDUBON OFFICERS:

President	Ron George
Vice President	Vacant
Recording Secretary	Debby Hook
Corresponding Secretary	Valerie Barnes
Treasurer	Cinda Lignon
Immediate Past President	Valerie Barnes

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Mike Fagan, Vanessa Miller, Doug Powless, Jeff Schmaltz, Larry Williams, Sharon Williams

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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