



Naturally Newsletter of the Conococheague Audubon Society Sept. 2026

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Osprey

Photo credit: Ron George

President's Corner

by Ron George

I love fall migration. While spring migration seems to hit like a tidal wave, the fall migration unwinds gradually with a shifting cast of characters from the earliest songbirds starting their journey in August to the last flocks of Tundra Swans passing overhead in late November.

Whether you prefer searching shorelines and flooded fields for sandpipers or sitting on a rock at a hawkwatch scanning the skies for raptors or puzzling over challenging warblers along a forest road, fall migration has something for every birder, so take time to enjoy it. After all, there are more birds now—with both adults and hatch-year birds—than at any other time of year.

To see some of those fall migrants, join Bill Oyler for a field trip on September 5th to Heisey Orchard and Michaux State Forest. If you don't find at least one Olive-sided Flycatcher, you can have your money back (just kidding, it's free like everything we do!). I hope you'll take advantage of this opportunity to see some cool birds and to see a really good birder in action!

If you're a beginning birder or new to Conococheague Audubon, join us on September 14 from 6:00-6:30 (prior to our regular program/meeting) for a half-hour Introduction to Birding and Welcome to CAS. I'll walk you through some of the joys and challenges of birding and share photos of fifty different birds. On the following Saturday, September 19, I'm leading a bird walk for beginners at Furnace Run Park to help everyone develop the skills needed to find and identify birds on their own. *Let's go birding!*

Our first regular meeting is September 14 at 7:00. However, you're more than welcome to arrive early to meet some of our new members, connect with old friends, and chat about birds. At 7:00, James Thomson will share his passion for growing native plants with a *Native Seed Workshop (Site-prep, Pre-treatment, and Planting)*. Learn how to start your own native plant garden—the bees and butterflies will appreciate it.

Conservation

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by Jim Hook

AI: Global knowledge has a huge local impact

A French bioacoustics team has discovered the basic architecture of birdsong.

The scope of the research was unprecedented, according to the scientists. Computers analyzed databases of recordings – 116,000 songs from 3,160 songbirds worldwide.

Another team of researchers from the Argonne National Laboratory has developed a camera system that continuously monitors how birds interact with large arrays of solar panels. Preliminary results indicate that bird fatalities may not be as common as originally thought and that some birds are using the arrays as habitat.

Both studies used artificial intelligence and massive amounts of computer time.

This scientific number crunching only hints at the pervasive potential of machine learning. Systems are in use that detect fraud, maintain machinery, forecast shopping trends, spot tumors, interpret federal grant reports, identify high crime neighborhoods, and evaluate surveillance videos. AI systems also have a dark side. They can amplify biases or create convincing fakes.

Like it or not the AI tsunami is coming. We can't help ourselves. There's money to be made and knowledge to acquire. More data allows for better decisions.

The demand for AI is a global issue, but the siting of its computers is a local one.

The soon-to-be one trillion-dollar industry thirsts for electricity and water. Data centers used three percent of all U.S. power in 2022, and are projected to use eight percent by 2030, according to Goldman Sachs Research.

It takes as much electricity to cool a computer chip as to power it. A large campus of data centers dwarfs any warehousing complex in the Cumberland Valley and consumes as much water as the people and businesses in Chambersburg.

Construction has begun on a \$15 billion data center on three campuses across 700 acres along the Conodoguinet Creek northeast of Carlisle.

Already 500 U.S. jurisdictions, including the states of New York and Texas, have taken action



A Yellow-breasted Chat sings in May at the South Cape May Meadows Preserve in New Jersey. Researchers have identified 8 elements of birdsong with the help of AI.

Photo credit: Jim Hook

to stall data-center development. Pennsylvania politicians are considering whether data centers, rather than residential consumers, should pay for



Common Yellowthroat in July sings with his beak full at Pennsylvania State Game Lands 169 near Newville.

Photo by Jim Hook

the generation of electricity that will power the centers.

Who will subsidize the latest gold rush, and who will bear the cost? Will the communities hosting data centers see their water resources and landscapes abused? Will the AI users pay their fair share to implement the technology? Will lobbyists or citizens hold the upper hand?

It's up to people to make their politicians make challenging decisions.

Birdsong has eight building blocks

Researchers using AI have identified eight elements in all bird songs—slow, fast, and ultrafast trills; flat, slow-modulated, and fast-modulated whistles; harmonic stacks; and chaotic notes.

Birds in North American meadows and forests tend to have complex songs, like ultrafast trills, according to a French bioacoustics team.

Compared to birds in the tropical regions, they have less time to breed in smaller territories with sparser vegetation. Their elaborate songs do not travel far but share more information to would-be mates and rivals.

A French research team published their results in the July 23 edition of "Science."

On the Record

by Sue Greer

Most of this year's field trips took place in May and June. First up was Heisey Orchard/Stillhouse Hollow Road. Five participants saw 61 species that morning, including 13 warbler species. The following evening, 14 participants saw 40 species on the Lehman property. A Bald Eagle was seen for the first time, as well as three warbler species.

On a rainy Saturday morning, nine participants observed 64 species, eight of which were warblers, in the Little Cove area. Later that evening, three people saw 62 species in the Edenville area, including a Fish Crow and American Pipit seen for the first time.

Our new field trip to Letort Spring Garden Preserve yielded 39 species, four of which were warblers. There was one participant, a person from the Appalachian Audubon Society.

A teacher and nine students from the Portico River Brethren School went along on the scouting trip for the Fort McCord area. The 42 species seen included a Chimney Swift, seen for the first time, and five warbler species.

The nine participants attending the Beginning Birders' Workshop saw 41 species, of which six were warblers.

On the final field trip, six participants observed 47 species in the South Mountain/Caledonia area, including ten warbler species and a first-time sighting of a Brown Thrasher.

Chapter Membership News

by Lisa Coombs

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Lisa Coombs, and I've been the Membership Chair for the Conococheague Audubon chapter since 2021, when I replaced Valerie Barnes, who had been in the position temporarily.

The largest responsibility the position has is maintaining an accurate roster of our members in an Excel spreadsheet. National Audubon (National) provides us with monthly updates to our roster (new members, expired memberships, address changes, etc.) and the Membership Chair updates the Chapter U12 Master Roster. This Master Roster includes our National Audubon members and local-only members on separate worksheets.

National changed the system that they use to generate membership rosters. The new system, where rosters are stored in Box, was implemented in conjunction with the old system last October to give local chapters a chance to get used to it. In June, the old system was retired and the Box Roster provided by National monthly was supposed to reflect our Master Roster.

Unfortunately, there are some issues with Box Rosters that National either wasn't aware of or thought they could work around. We have alerted National to the discrepancies that we see in our Box Rosters.

If you have any questions about your National Audubon membership, please feel free to contact me at ConAudubon@outlook.com.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Photo credit: Ron George

Reporting Rare and Unusual Bird Observations

by Bill Oyler

As the volunteer compiler for Franklin County, I write quarterly summaries of birds of note and submit them to Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology to be included in their quarterly publication *Pennsylvania Birds*. A portion of that publication is dedicated to birds-of-note reports for each Pennsylvania county. The reporting periods are August-November (fall), December-February (winter), March-May (spring) and June-July (summer).

Birds of note can be rare bird species, unusually late or early out-of-normal-season birds, or special findings. A recent example of a rare bird would be the Glossy Ibis at Buttonwood Nature Center near Waynesboro in late May. Examples of out-of-season birds would be a phoebe, catbird, or oriole observed in winter and a siskin observed in summer. An example of a special finding would be the Northern Saw-Whet Owl fledglings photographed by a hiker along the Appalachian Trail north of Caledonia in late May. Most of what I write about is gleaned from birder reports submitted to eBird.

Conococheague Audubon has many members and friends who do not use eBird to report their findings. There may be special birds that should be included in quarterly reporting that are missed because the observer does not use eBird. If you have something of special note, you are encouraged to communicate that to me in a timely manner along with the location, date and approximate time of the observation. Some of what you observe may be worthy of inclusion in a quarterly report. I'm sure I've missed reporting some things in the past due to not being aware of something noteworthy. My email is oylerbill@gmail.com and my cell phone number to text or call is 717-360-5191. Thanks!

By-Laws Changes by Valerie B. Barnes

The annual report to National Audubon now covers activities for a calendar year. It used to cover our fiscal year, which is June 1 – May 31. Our annual business meeting includes elections and reports from leaders, and is scheduled for April (according to the By-Laws). Your officers and directors have discussed this and recommend updating Article II, Meetings, in the CAS By-Laws as shown below:

ORIGINAL

Section 2. The regular meeting in April each year shall be known as the annual business meeting and shall be for the purpose of electing officers, receiving reports of officers and committees, and for any other business that shall arise. One or more additional business-oriented meetings may be scheduled by the Executive Committee and Board of Directors.

PROPOSED

Section 2.

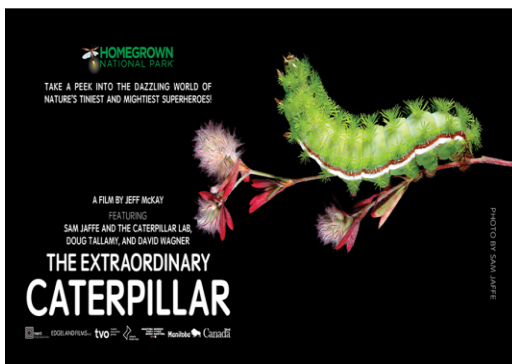
a. The regular meeting in April each year shall be known as the annual business meeting and shall be for the purpose of electing officers and for any other business that shall arise. One or more additional business-oriented meetings may be scheduled by the Executive Committee (officers) and Board of Directors.

b. Because the National Audubon Society has changed its requirement for an annual report to cover the calendar year, reports from officers and committees shall be requested towards the end of the calendar year, in the November-December timeframe. Additional reporting from the Treasurer may be requested after the end of the fiscal year (1 June – 31 May) and/or at other times.

Chances are that members are generally not interested in hearing the reports from leaders, so we will no longer require them to be provided at a meeting. In recent years, we've included highlights from annual reports in the *Naturally*. We recommend continuing that practice, and we will also report priority items, both completed and planned, at some meeting. Treasury reports will be made when necessary, including, at a minimum, at the annual business meeting in April.

Additionally, Article IV, Nomination and Election, specifies that "The Nominating Committee shall be appointed by the President at the February meeting." This will be reworded to indicate "*no later than*" at the February meeting."

Please vote to accept these proposed changes when asked via an upcoming email or by completing and returning the enclosed voting slip (only if you receive a snail-mailed copy of the *Naturally*). In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments, please send them to ConAudubon@outlook.com. Put "By-Laws changes" in the subject line of your message, Thank you!



Our First FREE Film of the Season

Come One, Come All!

The Extraordinary Caterpillar

Thursday, November 12 at 7 PM

Chambersburg Area Middle School South Auditorium

1115 East McKinley St, Chambersburg, PA 17201

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

September 5, Saturday

FIELD TRIP

7:15 AM for FALL MIGRANTS. Meet at the Park & Ride, Scotland Exit 20, I-81 northbound. Field trip includes walking in wet grass at Heisey Orchard and other possible walks as we travel Michaux SF roads, with field trip ending by 1:00 PM. Bring binoculars and snack or lunch. **Bill Oyler**, 717-360-5191, oylerbill@gmail.com.

September 14, Monday PRE-MEETING INTRO & MEETING

6:00 PM Introduction to Birding and Welcome to CAS for Beginning Birders and New Members, by Ron George.

7:00 PM Regular Meeting. *Native Seed Workshop (Site Prep, Pre-treatment and Planting)*, James Thomson. Arranged by Mike Fagan.

September 19, Saturday

FIELD TRIP

8:00 AM BEGINNING BIRDER WALK, Furnace Run Park, 2244 Lindsay Lot Road, Shippensburg. Meet at visitor center parking area. Bring binoculars (or contact leader to borrow some). Come practice basic birding skills during a one-mile walk along park trails where we hope to see and hear fall migrants. **Ron George**, 717-446-4183, writinron@comcast.net.

Sept. 26, Saturday

CONSERVATION CLEAN-UP

9:00 AM 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 shoulders, easy walking. Supplies provided. Meet at the Park & Ride, Scotland Exit 20, I-81 northbound. Sign up with **Joe & Vanessa Miller**, 717-385-9641, millerhouse@embarqmail.com.

October 12, Monday

MEETING

7:00 PM *5 Years of Birding in our Mobile Home – Part 2* by Jeff & Sue Schmaltz. 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 October 15 for November 2026 newsletter

CONOCOCHEAGUE AUDUBON OFFICERS:

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Vice President	Vacant
Recording Secretary	Debby Hook
Corresponding Secretary	Valerie Barnes
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Mike Fagan, Vanessa Miller, Doug Powless, Jeff Schmaltz, Larry Williams, Sharon Williams

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED