



**Naturally**

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

**Jan., 2019**

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### A Message from the President - Debby Hook

Each new year brings a sense of anticipation, hope and a fresh, new start – if for no other reason than knowing that the shortest day of the year is behind us! The anticipation of this year’s birdfeeder-watching is sightings of Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks here in the Mid-Atlantic states. Keep your eyes open for these occasional northern visitors in your own backyard.

We have had a change in two directors this fall. Shortly after elections, Larry and Sharon Williams asked to be released from their three-year-term due to family obligations; but in November, Conway Bushey and Marguerite Fries willingly accepted appointments as our Class of 2021 Directors. Conway is a past president and Marguerite exchanged her position as conservation chair to sit as a director.

If you are passionate about our planet’s health, the now-open position of conservation chair is for you. Duties include keeping abreast of local, state and national policies and actions affecting the conservation of natural resources, then informing members about issues at meetings and through our newsletter, *Naturally*. The chair also sends letters and e-mails to public officials and local newspapers regarding our concerns. It’s easy to stay informed and take action by signing up for email alerts at <https://www.audubon.org/takeaction>. Interested? Contact Debby Hook at 717-372-0228 or [debbyk@pa.net](mailto:debbyk@pa.net).

Thank you, members and friends, for your concern for birds and trust that your gifts will be turned into action. Treasurer Donna Hocker is thrilled with the early stream of donations following our annual fundraising letter in August. So far, we have received \$3,080, which exceeds our 2017 comparative giving. Chambersburg’s Evening Kiwanis once again gave \$400 toward Audubon Adventures in the Classroom; Chambersburg Garden Club presented us with \$50 following a presentation about “Birds at Your Feeder”; we received \$25 for hat purchases; \$35 from Harry and Catherine Little of McLean, Va.; and an anonymous \$250 gift will offer a second scholarship this year, if needed.

In November, we gave \$50 to the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, Millersburg; and \$200 to Norlo Park Foundation, both budgeted for this year’s giving.

Visit the new John James Audubon Center for Art and Conservation in Mill Grove next summer and you’ll see our society’s name engraved at your feet. CAS is participating in the center’s Buy-A-Brick project that will pave a Meadow Overlook patio using bricks engraved with donors’ names. Once the patio is completed, donors will receive notice as to the location of their bricks. We’ll let all of you know where our brick is located.

### Save the Date!

Jan. 12 Meeting:  
Covered Dish Supper and  
Photo Show

Jan. 24  
Audubon Nature Film  
DUCKumentary



Feb. 11 Meeting:  
Birds of Antarctica and  
South America

Feb. 22-24  
Waterfowl trip to BWR

### Make your Dollars Work

Remember, if you order something through Conococheague AmazonSmile page, Amazon will donate to us a dollar amount equal to 0.5% of the order. Prices are not affected by using the site. So, if you place orders on Amazon, please consider using the following site instead of the generic one: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/25-1485719>.

## CAS Offers Free PBS Nature Film, *DUCKumentary* — Terri Kochert

When we come together for our January 24, 2019, *free* PBS nature film, *DUCKumentary*, expect to see thousands of ducks take to the air. We'll observe them on our nation's lakes and ponds.

Learn about the mating habits of our beloved, yet secretive, Wood Ducks. Did you know that male and female Wood Ducks pair up months in advance of mating? Did you know that they are faithful to each other for only one season? It's the female who chooses her mate. Did you know that female Wood Ducks lay their eggs over the course of several days, yet all the eggs in the nest hatch within 24 hours of each other? The day after hatching, these little fluffs of feathers, weighing less than an ounce, will launch themselves from their lofty tree cavities—sometimes from 70 feet in the air—at mother duck's beck and call.

Learn the difference between *dabbling* ducks and

*diving* ducks. Did you know that hatchlings know instinctively from their DNA which kind they are? They have different means of taking off from the water. Come see which kinds take off vertically and which ones need a long runway.

Did you know there's a story behind the term *sitting duck*? Come hear about the vulnerability of ducks at certain times of the year. Learn about their migratory habits, traveling thousands of miles by night and by day. Learn how some ducks can withstand freezing cold temperatures. We'll also see an Australian species of duck and learn how it attracts its mate. All in all, this should be a very informative film for all hunters and nature lovers.

**PBS Film, *DUCKumentary*, 7:30 PM Thursday, Jan. 24, at Chambersburg Area Middle School South, 1151 E. McKinley St., Chambersburg. Live music, with pianist Olivia Colli, at 7 p.m.**

### **Volunteer for Membership Committee Chair**

The C.A.S. Membership Committee needs a permanent chairman. Duties include maintaining our membership list; mailing newsletters to those who request hard copies; coordinating the annual fundraising letter mailing in early August; and sending welcome packets to new members. It is an interesting job for someone who is looking to contribute to CAS leadership.

Please contact Debby Hook at 717-372-0228 or [debbyk@pa.net](mailto:debbyk@pa.net) for more information or to apply.

### **Scholarship Available to Teens — Debby Hook**

Each year, CAS budgets \$250 toward helping a youth or adult learn more about wildlife or conservation through attending an appropriate class, camp or outdoors-related institution. Pennsylvania's Wildlife Leadership Academy provides this kind of educational opportunity for students ages 14 through 17 who show an interest in the outdoors and in wildlife or fish conservation.

Wildlife Leadership Academy is now accepting nominations for highly motivated students to join one of its five-day summer sessions focusing on one of the following: White-tailed Deer, Bass, Brook Trout, Ruffed Grouse or Wild Turkey. Completing the field study program qualifies students as Conservation Ambassadors, a designation which is beneficial as they apply for college and career futures.

Tuition for one week of study is \$500 (the Academy also offers scholarships). Dates and locations of each camp are as follows:

- ◆ White-tailed Deer, June 11-15 at Camp Krislund in Centre County
- ◆ Bass, June 18-22 at Camp Krislund in Centre County
- ◆ Brook Trout, July 23-27 at Seig Conference Center in Clinton County
- ◆ Ruffed Grouse, July 23-27 at Camp Krislund in Centre County
- ◆ Wild Turkey, July 30-Aug. 3 at Camp Krislund in Centre County

Nominations are accepted through January. Application packets will be mailed after the start of the new year. To learn more, visit <https://wildlifeleadershipacademy.org>.

If you know a student age 14 through 17 who you feel should be nominated, contact me at 717-372-0228 or [debbyk@pa.net](mailto:debbyk@pa.net).

## Interpretive Sign Coming Soon! — Terri Kochert

An “Interpretive Sign Committee” at work behind the scenes is glad to announce that a large, durable, fiberglass embedded sign (24” X 36”) identifying birds seen along the Cumberland Valley Rail-Trail in downtown Chambersburg is expected to make its appearance by September 2019.

The CAS executive committee and board of directors voted to move forward with this project.

The Chambersburg Borough Council

also granted its approval.

The trail-side sign will feature bird photographs taken by our local society members. It will include the names of featured species. The committee is selecting photos after developing a potential list of birds. To help cover the cost of the sign, grant applications are being written and submitted, and downtown businesses are being solicited for sponsorship donations.

Hopewell Manufacturing, Inc. of Waynesboro stands ready to produce the sign within eight weeks of receiving the go-ahead.

We hope that this sign will make trail users aware of the beauty of birds, teach them the names of those birds

along the trail, and instill in them the importance of caring for and preserving nature around us. Also, our sign will broaden our network by connecting with people who do not frequent our meetings. The sign could reach 30 to 40 people along the trail each week.

By including a “QR code,” a symbol that can be “read” by Smartphones, the sign will link tech-savvy passersby to our website, where they can



*White-throated Sparrow*

Photo credit: Dave Cooney



*Pine Siskins*

Photo credit: Bob Keener

learn of our local Audubon Society, our many activities and our contributions to our local environment.

It is our hope that you, too, will frequent the trail to view our sign and offer your expertise as birders and lovers of nature to those you encounter along the trail. In the future, we hope to unveil the sign with a ribbon-cutting, and we intend to conduct a field trip along the rail-trail, stopping by the sign to check out the potential birds to be seen along the trail.

The committee will keep members informed of the exact date of the sign’s appearance.

## Reminder of Two Current Youth Contests — Terri Kochert

Our two contests for youth, which began in November, 2018, continue through fall of this year. The *Best Bird Photo of the Year* contest, open to young people 5-18 years of age, ends September 9, 2019. The *Biggest Birding List of the Year* contest, also open to youth 5-18 years of age, ends October 14, 2019. Please visit our website: [www.ConococheagueAudubon.org](http://www.ConococheagueAudubon.org) for all the details.

There’s still plenty of time to get those lists going! Also, wintertime provides some exquisitely beautiful snow scenes involving our backyard birds. So, get your cameras clicking! Remember, cash prizes will be awarded for the two age groups (5-15 years of age and 16-18 years of age) for each contest. All four first-prize winners will receive \$50; second-prize winners, \$35; and third-prize winners, \$25.

Good luck in advance to all participants! If you come to our next *free* Nature Film on January 24, 2019, at CAMS South, we will show you some youth photos submitted in National Audubon’s 2018 Photo Awards Contest.

## Proposed Changes to Voting — Valerie B. Barnes

We need a quorum to elect officers and board members and to change the constitution or by-laws. At our last election, not enough people attended the meeting. So, the current officers and board members recommend we revise the rules for elections to allow alternative ways for members to cast their votes.

Please see below for the current and proposed text for the relevant section of the By-Laws (*Article II, Meetings, Section 6*). As a matter of routine, whenever an upcoming vote is planned and announced in advance, members will be advised that if they are unable to attend the meeting, they should submit their votes now.

**Current text:** The lesser of either one-tenth (1/10) of all voting members or thirty (30) voting members shall constitute a quorum at any meeting of members at which SOCIETY business is to be conducted. Members may be present in person or by proxy.

**Proposed text:** The lesser of either one-tenth (1/10) of all members or thirty (30) members shall constitute a quorum for voting on SOCIETY business. A member may submit his/her vote in person at the meeting where the vote occurs. Any member unable to attend the meeting may vote by proxy, by telephone, by email, or other electronic means. The President shall designate to whom members should submit votes.

*Article IX, Amendments* should also be changed to align with the new voting options.

**Current text:** This Constitution and By-Laws may be amended by a majority vote of members present or by proxy at the annual business meeting. The notice of such meeting shall recite the wording of each proposed amendment.

**Proposed text:** This Constitution and By-Laws may be amended by a majority of the members who participate in the voting process as described in Article II, Meetings, Section 6. The notice of the planned vote shall recite the wording of each proposed amendment.

Please be prepared to vote on these proposed changes at the annual business meeting on Monday, April 8, 2019. Contact Valerie Barnes no later than February 11 if you have suggestions about the proposed changes.

## Stay Tuned for Christmas Bird Count Results — Valerie Barnes



*Northern Cardinal*

Photo credit: Dave Cooney

**This season's Christmas Bird Count took place on Saturday, December 15, 2018.** We enjoyed the tally dinner on December 17<sup>th</sup>. At press time for this issue of *The Naturally*, results are still being tabulated. Stay tuned for a report in the next issue. In the meantime, keep watching your feeders and other favorite birding spots for rare visitors. Who knows what might drop in!



*Ring-billed Gull photographed December 1 at Dunkirk Harbor, near Jamestown, New York.*

Photo credit: Dave Cooney

## **Join our Midwinter Feast**

Come for dinner at 6 on Jan. 14. when our meeting will be the annual covered-dish dinner and members' photo show. Bring place settings and a cold beverage (if desired) plus a potluck dish to share. We'll provide hot and cold cups, cold water, decaf coffee, hot water and a variety of teas, dairy or non-dairy creamer, sugar and sweeteners. Following dinner, we will enjoy a narrated slide show of bird and nature Photographers should upload desired photos onto a USB flash drive to give to Debby Hook, president, prior to Jan. 14 or before dinner begins.

## Netting the Secretive Saw-whet Owl — Deidra Bryant

Happy New Year! Winter is officially upon us and fall migration season is a memory.

As you may already know, migration is common in autumn months, especially among raptors. One raptor that migrates each year is the Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aeolis acadicus*). These owls are tiny, with adults ranging from 6.5 to 8.5 inches long, and weighing between 2 to 5 ounces. That's lighter than most Smartphones! Northern Saw-whet Owls are commonly found in coniferous forests, and sometimes in mixed or deciduous forests, of North America. However, they are difficult to find due to their small size and ability to camouflage into their environment.

People can observe these tiny hunters on clear nights between October and December atop South Mountain at Kings Gap Education Center, where they are captured



Photo credit: Deidra Bryant

and measured as part of a large-scale study, Project OwlNet. Each autumn as these secretive owls migrate southward from Canada, licensed banders and volunteers capture, band, and then safely release them back into the wild.

This project, dating to 1997, is coordinated by award-winning author and respected natural historian Scott Weidensaul. Researchers are mapping the movements of these tiny owls to contribute to an informal network of data from at least 120 stations across the continent. Kings Gap is one of three stations in South Central Pennsylvania that provide an opportunity for people of all ages to perform citizen science. Volunteers can help set up mist nets, record data, and even learn how to properly hold and restrain the tiny owls so that accurate measurements can be taken.

Cold, calm, moonless nights are optimal conditions for netting Northern Saw-whet Owls. On a typical night, the owls are lured into mist nets with the use of an audio recording of their call, while volunteers, waiting in another location, take turns checking the nets every 40 minutes.



Photo credit: Deidra Bryant

When a Northern Saw-whet Owl is caught, one or two volunteers will carefully remove it from the net and put it into a cloth bag to keep it calm en route to the processing location, where the bird gets weighed and measured – the length of its wings, the size of its beak, and how much fat it has on its body (tail fat, keel, and breast). Fat store measurements help with sexing and aging the owl, too. For instance, females tend to weigh more and have a longer wingspan than the males. A blacklight is used to observe color patterns in the feathers and estimate the age of each bird. For example, darker feathers indicate new growth.

After measurements are documented, the bird is then fitted with a uniquely-numbered band on its leg, and released back into the wild. Some owls are eager to fly off into the night, while others won't mind hanging out for a little while longer, and require a gentle push to get them going. Each owl differs in temperament, which adds to the experience.

After all is done, the resulting metrics allow researchers to use Project OwlNet to not only track owls' migration paths but also observe the growth of owls that have made the journey before.

The best part of citizen science is that anyone can help. I've participated in this project during my first year of graduate school and loved every minute of it. Bonding with fellow volunteers and banders over hot chocolate and homemade snacks while waiting for the next net check was an unforgettable experience. I highly recommend signing up next fall! Getting hands-on experience working with such an enigmatic species and learning first-hand about their natural history is a memorable experience.

*Deidra Bryant, a biology graduate student at Shippensburg University, is studying Purple Martins.*

**MEETINGS** – Free, held in the Community Center at Norlo Park, 3050 Lincoln Way East, Fayetteville.

**FIELD TRIPS** – Free, most take place on Saturdays. Contact the leader in advance if you plan to go. Times listed are departure times; please arrive early. If you cannot go on a scheduled trip, contact leader for a potential mid-week option on his/her scouting trip.

**FILMS** – Free, all begin at 7:30 PM in Chambersburg Area Middle School South, 1151 E. McKinley St., Chambersburg, PA. Pre-show musical entertainment begins at 7 PM.

**Jan. 14, 2019, Monday** **MEETING**  
6:00 PM. Covered dish dinner and members' photo show. All are welcome.

**Jan. 24, Thursday** **FILM**  
7:30 PM. *DUCKumentary*. The world's 120-plus species of ducks possess an uncanny knack for survival and behavior that never ceases to entertain us humans. Music at 7 PM.

**Feb. 11, Monday** **MEETING**  
7:00 PM. *Birds of Antarctica and South America*, by Earl Nollenberger.

**Feb. 22, 23, 24, Fri.-Sun.** **FIELD TRIP**  
Blackwater NWR, Maryland, auto tour for WATER-FOWL. Leave from Martins' home 6 PM Friday. Bring scopes, binoculars, CBs and lunch. Make your own motel arrangements. **Eric and Rhetta Martin, 717-597-8675.**

**March 9, Saturday** **FIELD TRIP**  
6:30 AM. Middle Creek WMA, Lancaster County auto tour for WATERFOWL. Meet in parking lot at Scotland exit, I-81 northbound. Bring scopes, binoculars, CBs, and

lunch. **Eric and Rhetta Martin, 717-597-8675.**

**March 11, Monday** **MEETING**  
7:00 PM. *Birding in Vietnam*, by Bob Keener.

**March 12, Tuesday** **FIELD TRIP**  
7:00 PM. Tentative outing for WOODCOCKS. For update, contact **Bob Kochert, 717-263-3692.**

**March 14, Thursday** **FILM**  
7:30 PM. *Rhino Rescue*. Music at 7 PM.

**April 8, Monday** **MEETING**  
7:00 PM. *Spring Warbler Tune-up*

**April 11, Thursday** **RESCHEDULED FILM**  
7:30 PM. *Great White Odyssey*

**CAS WEBSITE:** [www.conococheagueaudubon.org](http://www.conococheagueaudubon.org)

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Send all newsletter articles and photos to the editor.  
Send all mailing changes to [conaudubon@outlook.com](mailto:conaudubon@outlook.com).

COPY DEADLINE FEBRUARY 15 FOR MARCH 2019 NEWSLETTER.

**CONOCOCHIEAGUE AUDUBON OFFICERS:**

President	Debby Hook
Vice President	Terri Kochert
Recording Secretary	Rhetta Martin
Corresponding Secretary	Bobbie Stewart
Treasurer	Donna Hocker
Immediate Past President	Valerie B. Barnes

**DIRECTORS:** Conway Bushey, Margaret Fries, Jim Hook, Bob Kochert, Eric Martin and Earl Nollenberger

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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