



Naturally

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Jan, 2020

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First Prize winning photo: White Ibis
Photo credit: Samuel Mason 13

Save the Date!

Jan. 13 Meeting: Covered Dish Dinner and Photos

Jan. 23, Thursday FILM

7:30 PM. *Climbing Redwood Giants.*

Feb. 10, Monday MEETING

7:00 PM. *Birds of Uganda*, by John Greer. Arranged by Ruth Barton.

Mar. 9, Monday MEETING

7:00 PM. *Conserving Land in Central Pennsylvania* by Central PA Conservancy.

President's Notes – Debby Hook

Youth Birding Contests Have Begun

It's been a thrill this year to have worked with so many young people in field trips, at camps, and even on the Christmas Bird Count! So, I'm excited to announce that youth have another chance to compete for cash prizes in our second year of Best Bird Photo and Longest Bird List youth contests.

These contests, open to those ages 5 through 18, involve a love of nature and keen observation skills. The competition began Dec. 1, and both contests will end at our general meeting Oct. 12, 2020.

For the **Longest Bird List of the Year**, entrants are asked to record and enter a detailed list of each bird species seen throughout the year. The **Best Bird Photo of the Year** contest allows to youth to enter the best three photos they have taken of birds in the wild. Parental signatures are required to affirm that entries comply with the rules.

Prizes for both contests are identical: the top three winners in each age group (ages 5-15 and ages 16-18) will earn: \$50 for first place; \$35, second place; and \$25, third place.

Full contest details are on view on the *Bird Contests* page of our website, conococheagueaudubon.org. If you want a printed copy mailed to you, call Debby Hook at 717-372-0228.

On the Trail of Bluebirds

For a year, I'd been singing the blues about our Bluebird Trail near Upper Strasburg. Without a trail committee chair, with over-abundant swallows' nests and with overgrown fields infested with disease-laden ticks, I was ready to call it a day.

Then came the nationwide news that our songbird numbers are falling drastically, and the future of many avian species looks bleak. How dare I yank homes out from under the trusting birds who return each year to raise families – whether they be swallows, wrens or bluebirds?

After talking with the landowners who allow us to maintain nest boxes along their farm lanes and fence rows, I believe we can rejuvenate the Bluebird Trail, but it will take dedicated volunteer monitors. Are you willing to count birds' eggs once, twice or possibly three times next spring and summer?

Monitors work in pairs, one pair counting each week (or, once eggs are laid, every two or three weeks) and reporting results to the trail overseer.

But wait – **we still need a trail overseer**, a devoted individual who could visit the trail each February to close boxes, maintain a schedule of monitors and a record of fledged birds, and clean out the boxes in late fall. If you can help or would like more information, please call Debby Hook at 717-372-0228 or email debbyk@pa.net.

Conservation — Debby Hook

Delaware River Habitat Project Kicks Off

Last year, the Delaware River Watershed became one of Audubon's top national water projects, a move that gives greater exposure to the recently created Delaware River Basin Restoration Program.

The Delaware River Watershed joins Audubon's four other **priority** water initiatives:

- ◆ Western Water (various salt-water lakes and the Colorado River Basin)
- ◆ Great Lakes
- ◆ Upper Mississippi
- ◆ Everglades

Some 400 miles of the Delaware River watershed are designated National Wild and Scenic Rivers. The watershed supports 700,000 acres of wetlands. It is home to the largest population of spawning horseshoe crabs in the world, endangered aquatic species, numerous bird species, and other wildlife. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, it is an annual stopover site for the second largest population of migrating songbirds and raptors in North America, supporting thousands of birds. This fall, Audubon began work to improve bird habitat for the Louisiana Waterthrush and other species.

In February 2019, the restoration program received \$6 million in federal appropriations, \$1 million more than it received last year. This funding will support projects that fight habitat degradation and invasive species.

As the watershed supplies more than 13.3 million people with clean, reliable drinking water, Audubon in January launched a craft brewers coalition to promote its clean water initiative. So far, at least 12 regional craft brewers have signed petitions to their legislators for the health of the watershed.

Methane detector to launch in 2022

It will be three years before a methane gas-detecting satellite will send back to Earth high-resolution displays of methane emissions from oil and gas facilities across the globe.

Expected to launch in 2022, the satellite is being built by MethaneSAT, a subsidiary of the U.S.-based environmental advocacy non-profit, Environmental Defense Fund.

Methane is a greenhouse gas that exudes during production and transport of coal, natural gas, and oil, reports the Environmental Protection Agency. It is also emitted from organic waste in solid waste landfills and from livestock and the agriculture industry.

Environmental Defense's website edf.org reports that

the satellite's view path will allow it to uncover previously unknown global sources of methane emissions as it monitors about 50 major regions where some 80% of oil and gas is produced. It will have the capacity to detect lower emission sources and attribute the sources of those emissions. Surface-level methane emissions from other major sources of human-caused methane emissions will be detected, as well.

One of the goals of MethaneSAT is to measure how well the oil and gas industry's voluntary methane reduction programs are succeeding, according to an Oct. 28 article by Suzanne Edwards in the online news service of Natural Gas Intelligence (naturalgasintel.com).

Data collected by the satellite will further accountability by eventually being made public, said Edwards.

Bird-Friendly New York City

On December 10, New York City Council approved a policy requiring that new buildings' materials meet bird-friendly standards that greatly reduce collision risks to birds.

The policy applies to construction across the city's five boroughs as well as major renovations that include modifying existing glass.

"New York's world-famous skyline lies right in the middle of an incredibly important migratory pathway, and this critical legislation will now make that journey a little safer for millions of migratory birds," said Dr. Jill Deppe, senior director of Audubon's Migratory Bird Initiative.

To achieve the policy, the New York City Council worked with New York City Audubon, American Bird Conservancy, the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the Bird-safe Buildings Alliance, and architects representing FXCollaborative and Ennead Architects.

The bill (Proposed Initiative 1482B) passed by a vote of 43-3. It will take effect one year after it becomes law. Such laws are already in effect in several California cities, including San Francisco and Oakland.

"This bill is a compromise forged by . . . competing interests of many sorts — design, light, height, use, location, cost, bird mortality. It's a huge leap forward for long-term conservation," said Kathryn Heintz, New York City Audubon executive director.

When was coal first used as fuel?

There is no written record, but coal from the Fushun mine in northeastern China was likely used to smelt copper as early as 1000 BCE. Marco Polo, the Italian traveler to China in the 13th century, described coal as black stones that burn like logs, and said coal was so plentiful, people could take three hot baths a week. (Source: www.britannica.com; submitted by former conservation chair Russ Martz)

Seven Simple Actions to Help Birds - Adapted from material by Cornell Lab of Ornithology



Kenneth V Rosenberg from Cornell Lab of Ornithology led a team of scientists and analysts that recently published a peer-reviewed paper that reported nearly 3 billion birds have disappeared since 1970.¹ They found staggering across-the-board declines. Forests alone have lost 1 billion birds.

Grassland bird populations collectively have declined.

Common birds—the species that many people see every day—have suffered the greatest losses, according to the study. More than 90% of the losses (more than 2.5 billion birds) come from just 12 families including the sparrows, blackbirds, warblers, and finches.

In conjunction with that work, Cornell developed Seven Simple Actions to Help Birds.²

- ◆ Make windows safer. On the outside of the window, install screens or break up reflections—using film, paint, or Acopian BirdSavers or other string spaced no more than two inches high or four inches wide.
- ◆ Keep cats indoors. Save birds and keep cats healthy by keeping cats indoors or creating an outdoor “catio.” You can also train your cat to walk on a leash.
- ◆ Use native plants. Native plants add interest and

beauty to your yard and neighborhood and provide shelter and nesting areas for birds. The nectar, seeds, berries, and insects will sustain birds and diverse wildlife.

- ◆ Avoid pesticides. Consider purchasing organic food. Nearly 70% of produce sold in the U.S. contains pesticides. Reduce pesticides around your home and garden.
- ◆ Drink bird-friendly coffee (coffee grown under shade trees). It’s a win-win-win: it’s delicious, economically beneficial to coffee farmers, and helps more than 42 species of North American migratory songbirds that winter in coffee plantations, including orioles, warblers, and thrushes. [Bird Friendly® certified coffees](#)
- ◆ Use less plastic. Avoid single-use plastics including bags, bottles, wraps, and disposable utensils. It’s far better to choose reusable items, but if you do have disposable plastic, be sure to recycle it.
- ◆ Watch birds; share what you see. Join a project such as [eBird](#), [Project FeederWatch](#), a [Christmas Bird Count](#), or a [Breeding Bird Survey](#) to record your bird observations. Your contributions will provide valuable information to show where birds are thriving—and where they need our help.

If we all pitch in, we can make a difference!



¹<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/366/6461/120> Kenneth V. Rosenberg, Adrian M. Dokter, Peter J. Blancher, John R. Sauer, Adam C. Smith, Paul A. Smith, Jessica C. Stanton, Arvind Panjabi, Laura Helft, Michael

Parr, Peter P. Marra. “Decline of the North American Avifauna”, *Science*, Vol. 366, Issue 6461, pp. 120-124, 04 October, 2019.

²<https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/bring-birds-back>

Contest Winners Announced



Winners of the 2019 Biggest (Longest) Bird List Contest. From left: Cash Monn (2nd), Isaiah Long (1st), and Samuel Mason (3rd)
Photo credit: Terri Kochert



Winners of the 2019 Best Bird Photo Contest. From left: Gabe Putt (2nd), Nick Putt (3rd), and Samuel Mason (1st).
Photo credit: Terri Kochert

Climbing Redwood Giants —Terri Kochert

Conococheague Audubon’s free nature film on January 23 shows us the mighty redwoods along the California coast. The number of redwoods is declining. Environmentalists staged “sit-ins” to save the redwoods in the 1990’s. Since then, scientists have been making some astonishing discoveries about the remaining redwoods.

Get a close-up view of these majestic American icons. Not only do they offer both spectacular views, but phenomenal information. During the production of this film, Steve Sillet climbed hundreds of these redwoods. Find out what he learned.

We will begin the evening of Jan. 23, 2020 with special music at 7 PM by pianist Rebekah Duvall, with the film beginning at 7:30 PM.

Make the Switch — Val Barnes

We all get the phone calls and solicitations in the mail: “Switch from your traditional energy supplier to <company XYZ>.” Yes, it is easy to switch energy suppliers. Depending on the choice you make, you may pay less or more. How do you decide which energy company is “best”? And what happens when you switch?

According to the official Pennsylvania site where you can investigate your options (<https://www.papowerswitch.com/>), thanks to deregulation, you can choose your electric supplier/generation company. Power comes to your home through three parts of service: **generation** (the company that makes the electricity and supplies it to consumers), **transmission** (movement of electricity from the generator to the point of distribution), and **distribution** (delivery of electricity to your home). Some suppliers use renewable resources (e.g., wind or the sun) to generate electricity; others use fossil fuel resources (e.g., oil, gas, coal); some use a mix.



Westford (MA) Solar Park
Photo credit: Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

Using renewable energy sources instead of fossil fuel energy sources reduces our carbon footprint. Releasing less carbon into the atmosphere slows down climate change. As recent studies from National Audubon Society¹ and a team headed by scientists at Cornell Lab of Ornithology² report, birds are already in serious trouble from climate change, and it will only get worse unless we humans make drastic changes in our behavior.

However, there are some risks to birds associated with some renewable energy generation. “Wind power facilities can harm birds through direct collisions with turbines and other structures, including power lines. Wind power facilities can also degrade or destroy habitat, cause disturbance and displacement, and disrupt important ecological links.”³

“Audubon strongly supports properly sited wind power as a renewable energy source that helps reduce the threats posed to birds and people by climate

change. However, we also advocate that wind power facilities should be planned, sited, and operated in ways that minimize harm to birds and other wildlife, and we advocate that wildlife agencies should ensure strong enforcement of the laws that protect birds and other wildlife.”⁴

Large-scale solar power facilities may disrupt the environment, attract water birds thinking that the blue light reflected from the panels is water, and may generate extremely high heat that can kill any wildlife that comes near (only at thermal or concentrating solar plants). Roof-top solar does not pose a significant risk to birds.

As a card-carrying Audubon member interested in helping the planet, I’ve been debating making the switch to one of the companies that generate a significant amount of energy from renewable sources. So, on Pennsylvania’s power-switching website, I filtered results in the Special Programs area on “Renewable Energy,” “PA Wind,” and then “Renewable PA.”

The Renewable Energy filter gave me 37 choices. The percentage of power coming from renewable sources ranged from 0% to 100% for the companies in the list. (Side comment: One wonders why the companies that advertised 0% renewable energy were on the list to begin with.) Caveat emptor – buyer beware and read the fine print. 16 different companies on the list claimed more than 50% “Renewable Energy.”

The PA Wind filter identified 6 different companies; all were also on the Renewable Energy filter list and showed the same percentage of renewable energy on both lists. The Renewable PA list identified six different companies; one of them was not on either the Renewable Energy or the PA Wind filter lists.

Prices, contract terms, and contract durations were different across the options, with estimated cost per month ranging from \$36.26 to \$83.93. By way of comparison, my current supplier’s estimated monthly cost is \$40.32. So, I can spend less or I can spend more if I make the switch.

Back up a minute... What does it mean to switch energy suppliers? Do the electrons coming into your house come exclusively from your new supplier? In a word, no. Here’s the fine print from the Product Information section of a flyer I received from CleanChoice Energy:

100% of your electricity usage will be produced by wind and solar generation facilities. Electricity is the product of a mix of energy sources that is delivered over a system of wires. You will not have electricity from a specific generation facility delivered directly to your service address, but CleanChoice Energy ensures that your electricity usage is offset by the generation

of energy from renewable energy sources on an annual basis. The energy your home uses will be paired with renewable energy sources through the purchase of Renewable Energy Certificates.⁵

So, if I designate a renewable energy company as my supplier, I am supporting an existing company to put more energy into the power grid and indirectly encouraging the development of renewable energy technology.

Laura Jackson, a leader in Juniata Valley Audubon, has been actively involved in learning about and assessing potential and existing wind power sites in Pennsylvania. According to Jackson, the closer one lives to a wind farm, the more likely it is that some of the power to your house will actually come from that farm.

She says that after many visits to existing sites and reading about proposed sites, PA companies have often not made good choices about sites. A preferred site would be on land that is already degraded, not prime forest land, and not along a heavily-used migration flyway. The turbine’s blades would be as short as economically feasible so that they don’t reach heights where birds typically fly during migration.

So, should I switch to one of the renewable source companies? Any damage to the environment caused by the siting of the wind or solar panel farm has already occurred. Operating wind turbines situated where migration is heavy poses a risk to bats and birds.

As long as the solar energy comes from panels that don’t look like a lake and doesn’t come from a thermal facility, the generation of solar power should not harm the environment further. If I didn’t live in the woods, I would consider installing solar panels on my house. But, I do live in the woods. So, I plan to make the switch. I’ll try to find a company that generates power from solar panels that don’t look like a lake. It is good to encourage responsible companies.

¹<https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees> National Audubon Society, “Survival By Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink”, October 2019.

²<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/366/6461/120> Kenneth V Rosenberg et al, “Decline of the North American avifauna”, October 2019.

³<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/audubons-position-wind-power>

⁴Ibid

⁵Mailing from CleanChoice Energy, Authorization Form to switch. See mycleanchoiceenergy.com

Christmas Bird Count of December 14, 2019 — Valerie B. Barnes

We conducted the 60th Chambersburg Christmas Bird Count on December 14, 2019, another dreary, rainy day. The total count was fewer than the average in terms of total species and significantly fewer than the average number of individual birds observed.

Each count takes place in an established 15-mile diameter circle, and is organized by a count compiler and zone captains. Count volunteers cover specified areas in the circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day. It's not just a species tally—all individual birds are counted all day, giving a snapshot of the total number of birds in the circle that day.

Participants in the field: 58 (average is 57)

Participants at home watching feeders: 28 (average for past 9 years is 30)

Field counters spent: 50.17 hours on foot, walking 54.25 miles; 73.67 hours in cars, driving 497 miles; 4 hours listening for owls, covering 28 miles.

Feeder counters spent 49.5 hours watching at home (average for past 9 years is 78)

Total species counted: 61 (average is 71)

Feeder species counted: 35 (average for past 9 years is 35)

Total individual birds counted: 15,143 (average corrected for unusually high blackbird counts in 1984 is 21,995)

1,213 of birds counted were seen at feeders (average for past 9 years is 1,459)

Weather conditions: 32-40 degrees; ranged from overcast, fog, drizzle, to rain

Species and number:	Merlin 1	Common Raven 1	Northern Mockingbird 61
Canada Goose 563	Peregrine Falcon 1	Horned Lark 86	European Starling 7337
Tundra Swan 2	Rock Pigeon 786	Carolina/Black-Capped	Cedar Waxwing 24
Mallard 752	Mourning Dove 881	Chickadee 144	Eastern Towhee 1
Northern Pintail 1	Eastern Screech-Owl 2	Tufted Titmouse 94	Field Sparrow 7
Wild Turkey 6	Great Horned Owl 3	White-breasted Nuthatch 70	Song Sparrow 110
Great Blue Heron 30	Barred Owl 2	Brown Creeper 6	White-throated Sparrow 511
Black Vulture 2	Belted Kingfisher 5	Carolina Wren 134	White-crowned Sparrow 24
Turkey Vulture 17	Red-bellied Woodpecker 101	Winter Wren 3	Dark-eyed Junco 607
Bald Eagle 3	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 10	Golden-crowned Kinglet 27	Northern Cardinal 546
Northern Harrier 1	Downy Woodpecker 135	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 5	Common Grackle 1
Sharp-shinned Hawk 3	Hairy Woodpecker 20	Eastern Bluebird 58	Brown-headed Cowbird 28
Cooper's Hawk 12	Northern Flicker 23	Swainson's Thrush 1	House Finch 376
Red-shouldered Hawk 1 CW	Pileated Woodpecker 12	Hermit Thrush 5	Pine Siskin 5
Red-tailed Hawk 52	Blue Jay 245	American Robin 27	American Goldfinch 358
American Kestrel 23	American Crow 81	Gray Catbird 6	House Sparrow 705

CW=Count Week

Comments:

The total number of species seen was 10 below our average. The total number of individual birds observed was ~68% of the average adjusted for large blackbird flocks that were seen in 1984. The count of individual birds seen at feeders this year was approximately 250 below the average for the last 9 years. One more birder was out in the field than average. Two fewer feeder watchers participated.

New species to the list this year: None. There were no new high numbers of birds seen for any species recorded.



Red-bellied Woodpecker
Photo credit: Bob Keener

Continued, next page

Christmas Bird Count, continued from p. 6

For birds seen in more than 30 counts:

- ◆ Teams reported unusually low (<25% of average) numbers of American Crow, Horned Lark, Yellow-rumped Warbler*, Fox Sparrow*, Swamp Sparrow*, Red-winged Blackbird*, Eastern Meadowlark*, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, and Evening Grosbeak*. Note: species marked with * were not seen in this count.
- ◆ Teams reported more than the usual numbers (>125% of average) of Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, and American Goldfinch.

Of birds seen in at least 41 prior counts, we missed American Black Duck, Ring-necked Pheasant, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Red-headed Woodpecker, Fish Crow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, American Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, and Purple Finch.

Next year's Christmas Bird Count will be scheduled for Saturday, December 19, 2020. We hope you join us!



Second prize went to Gabe Putt's photo of a Great Blue Heron
Photo credit: Gabe Putt



Nine-year-old Nick Putt submitted this photo of a female Mallard Duck to win third prize.

Photo credit: Nick Putt

Join Us for January 13 Potluck - Debby Hook

A hearty feast will be spread on January 13 for Conococheague Audubon members and friends when the general meeting of January 2020 opens with the annual potluck dinner at **6 P.M.** in Norlo-Park Community Building, 3050 Lincoln Way East, in Fayetteville.

Enjoy food and fun with friends!

We ask you and your guests to bring your own place settings and drinks (*some* bottled water will be available), as well as a hot or cold covered dish or two to share. The buffet tables will be spread down the center aisle. Decaffeinated coffee and hot tea will be available, as will creamer and sweeteners.

Birdwatching: Following the 6 P.M. meal, we will do some birdwatching via the big screen. Those who have photos of birds (and other interesting critters) that were taken in the past year are invited to share them. Simply bring your flash drive to be loaded onto the laptop and be prepared to narrate your scenes.

If you have just a few photos, you may send them ahead of time to Debby Hook at debbyk@pa.net.

This homespun movie night is always an enjoyable way to spend time with friends. If you have any questions, please call Debby Hook at 717-372-0228. Hope to see you there!

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

Jan. 23, Thursday **FILM**
7:30 PM. *Climbing Redwood Giants*. A suspended HD camera rig captures a breathtaking 350-foot climb. (National Geographic) Special music starts at 7:00 PM, door prizes.

Feb. 10, Monday **MEETING**
7:00 PM. *Birds of Uganda*, by John Greer. Arranged by Ruth Barton.

Feb. 21, 22, 23, Fri.-Sun. **FIELD TRIP**
Blackwater NWR, Maryland, auto tour for WATER-FOWL. Leave from Martins' home at 6:00 PM Friday. Bring scopes, binoculars, CBs and lunch. Make your own motel arrangements. **Eric and Rhetta Martin**, 717-597-8675.

March 7, Saturday **FIELD TRIP**
6:30 AM. Middle Creek WMA, Lancaster County auto tour for WATERFOWL. Meet at the Park & Ride, Scotland, Exit 20, I-81 northbound. Bring scopes, binoculars, CBs, and lunch. **Eric and Rhetta Martin**, 717-597-8675.

March 9, Monday **MEETING**
7:00 PM. *Conserving Land in Central Pennsylvania* by Central PA Conservancy.

CAS WEBSITE: www.conococheagueaudubon.org

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