



Published: September, November, January, March, May Vol. 45, No. 2

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Save the Date!

Nov. 9 Mtg: *Chesapeake Bay: Saving a National Treasure*, Contest awards

Dec. 14: Last date to sign up for Possible Winter Field Trip

Dec. 19: Chambersburg Christmas Bird Count
(Dec. 30, York Springs CBC and Jan 2, Newville CBC)

Jan. 11: Covered Dish and Photo Show — COVID tentative

Nature Film Schedule

January 21, 2021: *Last Stand of the Great Bear*

March 25, 2021: *Saving Songbirds*

April 8, 2021: *Return of the Clouded Leopards*

President's Corner by Terri Kochert



A chill is in the air. The leaves are passing through their glorious reds, oranges, and yellows. Fall is one of my favorite seasons.

Fall is when we get to meet with you all again at our general meetings, learning what we can do to preserve our natural world from many culprits — humans, insects, predators, etc. We also get to see our speakers' magnificent photos inviting us into nature's beauty. We hope you came to and enjoyed our October meeting. Our young people also were to have turned in their Best Bird Photos and Longest Bird Lists for 2019-2020. The winners and awards will be made at our November 9 general meeting.

Speaking of birds, there have been some amazing sightings recently. As of Oct. 2, straggler Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were still being seen at Elsie Blouch's home, and again on Oct. 5 at Ron George's home. Elsie indicated that she also had a Black-billed Cuckoo in her Canadian cherry tree on Oct. 2. Joan Duffield reported waves of flocks of Common Nighthawks around Labor Day and waves of Purple Martins and swallows flying together Oct. 3 and 4. On Sept. 27, Joan and her great-nephew Cash got to see a Black-and-white Warbler, Pine Warblers, a Bay-breasted Warbler, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and juvenile Scarlet Tanagers at Cowans Gap State Park. On that date they also saw a yellowlegs at the Antrim Commons Ponds and three species of sandpipers.

Fall is the time of the year to plant perennials — bulbs, bushes and trees that protect and feed birds and pollinators. If you need a list of native plants found in our area, please check out the National Audubon Society website www.audubon.org and plug in "Native Plants Database." Supply your zip code, and a lengthy list of native plants pops up. Read through the list and choose to your heart's content!

In the area of conservation:

- As your president, I signed a petition to encourage the use of synthetically engineered Horseshoe Crab DNA for medical purposes. This is to preserve Horseshoe Crabs for the Red Knots' feasting on their eggs as they migrate through the Maryland shore area in the spring.
- I also signed a petition to prevent oil drilling in a strategic area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which provides nesting areas for countless birds in the Alaska spring.

Though we typically show our first nature film in November, due to COVID-19 restrictions we plan to show our first film of the season on January 21, 2021 at CAMS South at 7:30 PM. We will present the National Geographic film *Last Stand of the Great Bear*.

We are in need of a Vice President. Please contact me if you are willing to serve. I hope to see you again in November!

Conservation Conversation

by Jim Hardy

Hello to all bird watchers and conservationists. Jim Hardy here. Welcome to *Conservation Conversation*. As the new Chair of the Conservation Committee, I will share news and thoughts concerning conservation with you and attempt to stimulate conversation about our conservation activities. I think I will start with the basics.

Conservation ... What?

Wow! Conservation, that's a big word, 12 letters. When asked to fill this chair, I thought conservation should be easy because we all practice it. Right? Then I thought maybe I should look up the definition of conservation. My old 1975 Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedia Dictionary defines conservation: 1) The act of keeping or protecting from loss or injury. 2) The preservation of natural resources, as forests, fisheries, etc. for economic or recreational use. Basically, conservation is the preservation of natural resources. We all knew that.



What are the natural resources worth conserving? Water, soil, air, wildlife, birds, trees, minerals, energy, food and even beauty just to mention a few. Do we think these resources will eventually exhaust themselves if we don't take steps to conserve them? Do we just have an innate desire to conserve resources for ourselves and others? I think the bottom line is we conserve things because we like them. We want them to last for our enjoyment. We think of conservation as being a good thing. We feel good about sustaining our resources, supporting them and keeping them going. And hey, just about everything in the natural environment is fun and cool.



So what acts of conservation are you currently practicing? Do you separate your trash for recycling? Did you install an insulated blanket on the hot water heater? Installed a new bird house or feeder? Planted a tree or shrub? Have you done an erosion control project?

Does your conservation directly impact our common interest in birds? I want to know! Here's my email: alwaysseeingmore@gmail.com. Tell me two things that

you do that you consider important acts of conservation and tell me why you do them. Type CAS Conservation in the subject line of your reply. I won't use names, but I welcome pictures.

I'll go first. 1) I recycle metal, all kinds of metal including brass, copper, aluminum and steel. Almost all metal can be reused. I collect it and sell it to a metal recycling facility and I deposit the cash from the recycling into a travel savings account. 2) I separate recyclable trash and dispose of it in the proper recycling bin at our township facility. It's free to township residents. A trash free environment is important to me. Birds look better in a trash free environment.

See you next issue when we will discuss our individual acts of conservation.

News from Franklin County Conservation District

What Does The Conservation District Do? Implements soil and water conservation programs with various funding sources and partnerships. Duties include: Erosion and Sedimentation Controls, Nutrient Management/Act 38, Chesapeake Bay, Watershed, and Environmental Education. The Conservation District also conducts annual events such as the Envirothon (state and county), Eco-Days, tree seedling sales, school presentations, and many other activities.

District Directors Meetings

Nov 9 at 8:30 am

Dec 14 at 8:30 am

Jan 11 at 8:30 am

The Franklin County Conservation District Directors Meetings are held at 8:30 am. on the second Monday of each month at the Franklin County Conservation District office located at 185 Franklin Farm Lane, Chambersburg, PA 17202. <https://franklinccd.org/>



Barred Owl

Photo credit: Terri Kochert

BIRD BEHAVIOR: I Want To Know ...

Do hummingbirds really “talk” to humans?
by Debby Hook

Can you imagine the courage it takes for a creature the size of your finger to hold firm and look you in the eye?

Most birders have probably experienced or heard of hummingbirds willfully entering a human’s personal space. Frequently, these audacious one-on-ones include a gust of chittering, squeaking chirps from the tiny birds. Anecdotal evidence in books, blogs, and by word of mouth suggests they are trying to tell us their needs.

Relaxing outdoors this summer, I became conscious of the high-pitched music being made when hummingbirds were around the feeders. I noticed them calmly feeding in my presence.

At the screen door one August morning, I encountered an avalanche of loud chippery tones from a hummer



Immature male Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Photo credit: Terri Kochert

winging ferociously at eye level and “speaking” long phrases to me. I’ve heard they aren’t shy about voicing a need for fresh feed, and I felt chastised for letting my homemade nectar hang an extra day in the summer’s hot, humid weather. Mere minutes after supplying fresh feed, I heard the bird’s soft, contented squeaking as it drank.

There was a distinct difference in the bird’s volume and tone. I wondered, “Could it have been communicating with me?”

To discover what such encounters suggest, we must understand how a hummingbird lives its entire life. Everything about hummingbirds takes place in fast-forward. An active hummer’s heart beats about 1,200 times a minute. When hovering, its wings beat about 80 times a second. And its split tongue whips out to dredge nectar so fast it appears to be sipping through a straw.

With their ultra-high metabolism, hummers must feed every 10 to 15 minutes, eating about half their body



Female Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Photo credit: Terri Kochert

weight daily in bugs and nectar. Is it any wonder they viciously defend floral territories, and why they get so fired up about having fresh food at the ready? One immature male hummer that fed frequently at my front porch would chirp and sing and squeal in apparent delight, all the while talking with its mouth full!

Hummers’ lightning-quick reflexes emerge from a comparatively larger and more complex brain than all other birds possess, making up 4.2 percent of its body weight (our brains, for example, are about 2 percent of our body weight). This larger size translates into more complex thought processes.

The hippocampus – the brain’s center for learning and memory – is larger in hummingbirds than in other bird



Female adult Rufous Hummingbird feeding at the home of Kathy Lauver October 11.
Photo credit: Dale Gearhart

brains. Researchers say hummingbirds can recall when and in what order some past events have taken place. They remember up to eight specific flowers they have visited and they know how frequently each flower has

Hummingbirds Talk? *Continued, top of page 4.*



Male Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Photo credit: Terri Kochert

produced more nectar. Time and energy are saved by their ability to visit each flower at the perfect time, in perfect order.

Their memory helps hummers learn to recognize humans, too, differentiating even between those who feed them and those who do not. They seem willing to communicate with those who do!

Hummers also have enhanced perception of visual stimuli. Where most other birds have a “back-to-front” perception, hummers have greater “global visual motion,” allowing them to hover, to respond well to fast motions and to navigate quickly in any direction. For their own safety, they must be aware of each minor detail of their surroundings and must know instantly when something has changed. It is a heightened sense of curiosity that causes them to hover near us and look us “in the eye.”

On a fine September morning, amid a rambunctious southbound warbler fallout, a resting female hummingbird zoomed over to within a foot of my chair. Chirping nervously (to my ears, anyway), she did a little dance and flew off. As the flurry eased up and the migrants moved on, she returned to feed in the quiet. She repeated this behavior as another batch of warblers flew in, feasted, then left.

Clearly, she was aware of my presence and was choosing to communicate her need.

SOURCES:

<https://www.adirondackcouncil.org/page/blog-139/news/10-facts-about-hummingbirds--and-other-interesting-tidbits-1101.html>

<https://www.hummingbirdsplus.org>

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Ruby-throated_Hummingbird

<https://www.wnpr.org/post/listen-closely-theres->

[something-hidden-hummingbirds-chirp](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3391440/)
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3391440/> (National Center for Biotechnology Information, National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health)

Unlocking the Secrets Behind the Hummingbird's Frenzy, National Geographic, July 2017, by Mesa Schumacher (sources: Alejandro Rico-Guevara, Kristiina Hurme, and Robert Dudley at UC Berkeley; Christopher Clark at UC Riverside; and Doug Altshuler at University of British Columbia)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0003347211001114> (research paper by Paulina L. González-Gómez, Francisco Bozinovic, Rodrigo A. Vásquez at Institute of Ecology and Biodiversity, Department of Ecological Science at University of Chile.

On the Record by Donna Hocker

Three field trips were held in September:

Bill Oyler led 10 birders to **Heisey Orchard and Michaux State Forest** on September 5 for fall migrants. They saw 53 species adding 3 new birds: the Olive-sided Flycatcher, Tree Swallow and Eastern Bluebird. The list now totals 103 species.

The trip on the **Chambersburg section of the Cumberland Valley Rail Trail** was led by Bob and Terri Kochert on September 19. The 9 participants saw 22 species including one new bird, the Brown Thrasher. This list now totals 35 species.

The Hawk Watch was the final destination in September to count hawks. Not one hawk was sighted by the 15 observers. Led by Marion and Bob Carmack the group did see 10 other species. The American Robin, Northern Flicker and Hairy Woodpecker were new birds for the list that now totals 30.



Eastern Wood Peewee
Photo credit: Terri Kochert

Christmas Bird Count December 19, 2020 by Valerie B. Barnes

We've scheduled this year's Christmas Bird Count for **Saturday, December 19, 2020**. This long-running citizen science project helps Audubon to assess the health of bird populations and guide conservation action. You can start counting just after midnight on the 19th; owls sometimes sound off in the wee hours of the morning. We need volunteers to count every bird in this 61st count in our designated 15-mile diameter circle. Our count area center is at a point just off Spring Road near the headwaters of the Falling Spring. Zone captains organize volunteers in different sections of the circle.

But, in this year of COVID-19, things will be a little different. To be safe, participants should travel only with family and should wear masks. If the number of COVID-19 cases spikes dramatically in the weeks leading up to the count, we may cancel it, so please check our [website](#), with your zone captain, or with the compiler (Valerie Barnes) for the final plans.

If you don't feel comfortable going out, please let your zone captain know well in advance. If you live inside our circle, you may want to switch to counting at your feeders this year. See the map below for a detailed view of our circle. If you can't tell whether you are inside the circle or not, please contact Valerie Barnes, our compiler. **To count at your feeders, please sign up well in advance with Joan Bowen (717-261-4019).**



Zone 1 Bill Oyler 717-360-5191

Zone 2 Bob Keener 717-658-8765

Zone 3 Bill Franz 717-776-4463

Zone 4 Eric and Rhetta Martin 717-597-8675

Zone 5 Dale Gearhart 717-597-3979 and Jim Hardy 717-328-9817

If you participated before, your zone captain should contact you, but if he/she doesn't call you, please contact him/her to sign up again. If you are new to the count this year, have a new phone number or email address, or don't remember who your captain is, please contact Valerie Barnes (717-352-4397). If watching your feeders is your style and you live inside the circle, call Joan Bowen (717-261-4019) so she can send you a recording form and instructions and assign you an observer number. New this year: forms used by observers will be available for download from our website. The forms are on the December 19th calendar page for the [CBC event](#).

Please help! The length of time you count is up to you. The Christmas Bird Count is fun and you never know what you might see. Make it a family affair! Note that if the weather forecast calls for really bad

weather, we may try to reschedule the count; your zone captain will contact you if that happens.

There will be no tally dinner this year, due to COVID-19. Zone captains will still collect results and provide them to the compiler.

National Audubon asks for donations to support the CBC. If you would like to donate toward the expense of the count, donations may be given to any zone captain or the treasurer. Please make your check out to CAS and note it is a donation for the CBC; mail to CAS, PO Box 20, Fayetteville, PA 17222. Audubon appreciates your support.

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! by Terri Kochert



The regular attendees, minus a very few missing from our September general meeting, were rewarded with not only a phenomenal program, but also were able to hear every word distinctly. That is due to CAS having purchased a new German-made Behringer public address system, including a speaker and a hand-held microphone. CAS also purchased a wireless mic to allow the presenter to walk around freely, being heard well by the audience.

In the past, CAS officers had been frustrated with the inferior and frequently non-functioning sound system provided at Norlo Community Center. When we learned that their system would be removed, we promptly purchased our own.

"What a difference this new sound system makes in the echo-y community room at Norlo," said Immediate Past President Debby Hook. "No one had to shout to be heard or repeat what they said. We can finally enjoy a program in the darkened room, assured that we can hear every word spoken."



MEETINGS – Free, held in the Community Center at Norlo Park,

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 p.m. in Chambersburg Area Middle School South, 1151 E. McKinley St., Chambersburg, PA. Pre-show musical entertainment begins at 7 p.m.

Nov. 9, Monday **MEETING**
7:00 PM *Chesapeake Bay: Saving a National Treasure* by Harry Campbell. Also available via Zoom. Arranged by Terri Kochert. **Youth Contest Winners announced tonight.**

Dec. 14, Monday MEETING
7:00 PM *Invasive Issues of the Everglades* by Dave Graff, Floridian naturalist. Arranged by Bob Kochert.

Winter **FIELD TRIP**
Dec. 14, last day to sign up for possible visit to Gettysburg Battlefield for SHORT-EARED OWLS (name, contact information). **Bob Kochert**, 717-263-3692, will advise as to sightings. Meet at Norlo Park Community Center.

Dec. 19, Saturday **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**
All day, Chambersburg area. No tally dinner. **Valerie Barnes**, 717-352-4397.

Dec. 30, Wednesday **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**
All day, York Springs area. For information, **Vern Gauthier**, 717-385-9526 or vern_gauthier14@gmail.com

Jan. 2, 2021, Sat. **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**
All day, Newville area. **Vern Gauthier**, 717-385-9526 or vern_gauthier14@gmail.com

Jan. 11, Monday **MEETING**
6:00 PM Covered dish dinner and members' photo show. All are welcome, but stay tuned for likely COVID cancellation.

Note: Activities are still tentative due to COVID-19.
Check our website for updates:
www.ConococheagueAudubon.org

CAS WEBSITE: <https://conococheagueaudubon.org/>
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Send all newsletter articles and photos to the editor.
Send all mailing changes to conaudubon@outlook.com.

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Corresponding Secretary	Valerie Barnes
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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