Birding Out West  by Terri Kochert

Over the past few years the birding quartet, Larry and Helen Lehman and Bob and Terri Kochert, have taken a few trips out West with the intention of seeing a variety of birds not seen here in the East. You will have the opportunity of hearing about our experiences in our Birding Out West presentation at our Feb. 13, 2017 meeting (7 p.m.). We’ll share about four distinct areas: Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and California. On our trip to Utah we visited several amazing canyons: Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park, and the Capital Reef area. The geological features were phenomenal. At the Capital Reef area we saw several petroglyphs, images drawn centuries ago by Native Americans. Our adventures took us to southwestern Arizona where we birded in search of underappreciated desert birds. There, we encountered Curved Bill and Bendire’s Thrashers, Montezuma Quail, and Spotted Owl. In addition, we saw a number of other birds, including many different species of hummingbirds. On a different trip in January we traveled to Sandia Crest, New Mexico, in search of the Rosy Finches and visited Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and the Apache National Wildlife Refuge, winter home to the Sandhill Cranes. Outside of Albuquerque we got good looks at a Crissall’s Thrasher. Our trip to California included our first pelagic trip together through Debi “Shearwater Journeys.” We left from Monterey Bay and saw 26 different species of sea birds. We also saw several Hump Back Whales and Pacific White-sided Dolphins at sea. From Monterey, we traveled south to the Big Sur taking in a Redwood forest at Redwood State Park. We also visited Yosemite National Park, citing such geological wonders as El Capitan and Half Dome. We walked among giant Sequoia trees. We have so many beautiful memories of outstanding natural sights, as well as a vast array of birds. Come join us!
**Nature Film: Thursday, January 19**

**Big Sur: Wild California**

We urge you all to come and to bring friends to our next Film Night Jan. 19 at CAMS South, 1151 E McKinley St., Chambersburg. We will begin the evening at 7 p.m. with music provided by the Cumberland Valley School of Music, followed at 7:30 p.m. by the film, narrated by Hector Elizondo. Immediately you will marvel at the scenery—both under the Pacific Ocean waves and on land. This film takes us along the west coast of California south of San Francisco. You’ll enjoy seeing both sea creatures and land creatures inhabiting this wild part of California. You will see sea otters, harbor seals, sea lions and gray whales along with stunning under water “forest” photography. Also, you’ll be enchanted with the flight of the California Condor, as you learn about the restoration project to bring back the condor in full force. See great footage of the solitary cougar and young cubs, as well as other land animals. There will also be great looks at some mammoth Redwood trees along the coast of California. There’s much to see and learn with this film. Come and savor the flavor of Wild California! -- Terri Kochert

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**Annual Dinner January 9**

Our annual covered dish dinner will soon be here! Jan. 9, 2017 is just around the corner. It’s always fun to get together to share our love of the birds and outdoors. If coming to our dinner, please remember to bring your own place setting as well as one main (hot) dish and one side dish to share with others (if there is a group of two or more). We want to be sure to have enough for all. If you are only one person, please bring at least one item to share. Drinks will be provided. In addition, bring your photos of birds or lovely outdoor scenes (on a flash drive or actual photos) to share with the rest of us. If you have any questions, please call “Terri” at 717-263-3692. We hope to see you at 6 p.m. at Norlo Park that evening! -- Terri Kochert

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**The Conococheague Audubon Bluebird Trail in 2016**

by Earl Nollenberger  
Bluebird Trail Coordinator

The Conococheague Audubon Bluebird Trail is found in Greene and Letterkenny Townships in Franklin County. The first five nest boxes on the Bluebird Trail start at Druckenbrod Lane off Nyesville Road. The second five nest boxes are found at Bender’s Pond with four nest boxes on Burkholder’s Lane both off Sandy Mount Road. The fourth group of six nest boxes is located off the north side of Wye Road just east of the power line that crosses the Cumberland Valley. The final group of seven nest boxes is located off the south side of Wye Road just west of the power line.

In early spring 26 nest boxes were closed to allow Bluebirds to start nesting in April; it took three weeks before I discovered a 27th box on the south side of Wye Road. The nest boxes are cleaned out and are left open during the winter to prevent mice and other creatures from becoming accustomed to using the nest boxes. I repaired several nest boxes and replaced one broken box.

Eight volunteers checked the nest boxes weekly from mid-April to mid-October. Of the 27 nest boxes, 10 had Bluebirds fledge and 19 had Tree Swallows fledge; however, seven nest boxes were used successfully by both Bluebirds and Tree Swallows. In three nest boxes, there were two successful attempts to fledge Bluebirds or Tree Swallows after a failed first attempt. Due to location, competition or predation, a total of five nest boxes had zero success in fledging any birds.

Data collected included the species building nests in each box, the number and color of eggs laid, the number of hatchlings, and the number of fledglings. Occasionally a female Bluebird or female Tree Swallow would stay on the nest when opening the nest box, thus, making it a challenge to guess the number of eggs or hatchlings or fledglings. For 2016, the ten nest boxes used by Bluebirds for thirteen nests produced 55 eggs of which 42 hatched and 31 successfully fledged. The 19 nest boxes used by Tree Swallows for 21 nests produced 119 eggs, of which 81 hatched and 53 successfully fledged. House wrens successfully nested in one Druckenbrod Lane nest box producing 2 fledglings. Continued next page...

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For 2016, the ten nest boxes used by Bluebirds for thirteen nests produced 55 eggs of which 42 hatched and 31 successfully fledged.
On the Record by Donna Hocker

Eric and Rhetta Martin and Bobbie Stewart traveled to Blackwater NWR on Dec. 3. They saw 49 species including the Lesser Scaup and the Long-tailed Duck. The Scaup had not been seen since 2012 and the Long-tailed Duck since 2009. The tally list remains at 128 species.

It is interesting to collectively view fledglings success at each of the five sites. At Druckenbrod Lane only three of the five nest boxes produced fledglings, resulting in three Bluebirds from eight eggs laid in one nest. The first four Bluebird eggs were destroyed by a House Sparrow and its nest was built upon the Bluebird nest. The broken Bluebird eggs under the House Sparrow nest attracted ants. I removed the House Sparrow nest and within four days the female Bluebird had started a new nest which fledged the three Bluebirds from four eggs laid. House Wrens nested in one box, used successfully by Tree Swallows, producing two fledglings from four eggs laid. Bender's Pond has five nest boxes and Bluebirds were limited to nesting in one box resulting in three fledglings from five eggs laid. The presence of large numbers of Tree Swallows at the pond meant that all five nest boxes were used for five nests which produced fifteen fledglings from 31 eggs laid. At Burkholder Lane Bluebirds used two nest boxes for two nests that fledged 6 from 11 eggs laid. Tree Swallows used all four nest boxes for four nests that fledged 13 from 23 eggs laid. On the north side of Wye Road, Bluebirds used three nest boxes for four nests; however, one nest was taken over by Tree Swallows and four eggs were lost. The three successful Bluebird nests fledged ten from 18 eggs laid. Tree Swallows had six nests in five nest boxes, however, two nests were lost probably due to a raccoon. From the four successful Tree Swallow nests 11 fledged from 29 eggs laid. On the south side of Wye Road, Bluebirds nested in three nest boxes producing five nests of which three produced nine fledglings from 13 eggs laid. The loss of Bluebird nests was due to White-Footed Deer Mice destroying the nest. Of five Tree Swallow nests, one nest was destroyed by White-Footed Deer Mice, the remaining four nests fledged ten from 28 eggs laid.

Comments about predators were noted when nests were destroyed or were taken over by another species. I had found one dead Tree Swallow that probably was trying to take control of a nest box quite possibly from another Tree Swallow. One female Bluebird died defending her hatchlings in a nest box, her death resulted in the loss of four hatchlings. In my review of the data collected, I could see the effects of competition for nest boxes between Bluebirds and Tree Swallows and between Bluebirds and House Sparrows where an entire clutch of eggs could be lost when the female House Sparrow would destroy the Bluebird eggs and build her nest on top of the Bluebird nest. The effects of competition between White-footed Deer Mice and Bluebirds and/or Tree Swallows meant that the nest and eggs, hatchlings and fledglings would be lost. At least one box was knocked off its post suggesting the impact of a raccoon attempting to consume eggs or hatchlings. The damage done to one box which was smashed into small pieces probably to get to White-Footed Deer Mice inside, at least I would like to think so, suggested the activity of a hungry Black Bear.

I was surprised that twenty percent (one in five) of all nests that were started in the nest boxes failed to produce a single fledgling. The rate of fledging in successful Bluebird nests was 56%, while in successful Tree Swallow nests it was 45%.

A report was filed with the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania using the Annual Bluebird Nest Box Report Form in mid-October. In the March 2017 Naturally I am planning to put a list of birds seen on the Bluebird Trail in 2016.
Christmas Bird Count
2016 Preliminary Report
by Valerie B. Barnes

57th count in this circle!

Circle name: Pennsylvania – Chambersburg

Date: December 17, 2016
(24 hours, midnight to midnight)

Participants in the field: 40
Participants at home watching feeders: 33

Field counters spent: 63 hours on foot, walking 46 miles; 49.5 hours in cars, driving 394 miles; and 1.5 hours listening for owls, covering 8 miles.

Feeder counters spent: 95 hours watching at home.

Total species counted: 70
Total individual birds counted: 23,919

Weather conditions: ~23-35 degrees, overcast, freezing rain

Species and number:
Canada Goose 555; Gadwall 3; American Black Duck 8; Mallard 883; Northern Shoveler 1; Green-winged Teal 2; Wild Turkey 20; Great Blue Heron 13; Bald Eagle 1; Sharp-shinned Hawk 9; Cooper’s Hawk 20; Red-shouldered Hawk 2; Red-tailed Hawk 66; American Kestrel 16; Peregrine Falcon 1; Killdeer 2; Ring-billed Gull 15; Rock Pigeon 891; Mourning Dove 965; Eastern Screech-Owl 5; Great Horned Owl 6; Barred Owl 2; Belted Kingfisher 17; Red-bellied Woodpecker 129; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 6; Downy Woodpecker 142; Hairy Woodpecker 32; Northern Flicker 21; Pileated Woodpecker 15; Blue Jay 283; American Crow 203; Common Raven 1; Horned Lark 203; Carolina/Black-Capped Chickadee 296; Tufted Titmouse 194; Red-breasted Nuthatch 18; White-breasted Nuthatch 152; Brown Creeper 16; Carolina Wren 124; Winter Wren 14; Golden-crowned Kinglet 18; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 10; Eastern Bluebird 80; Hermit Thrush 3; American Robin 138; Gray Catbird 1; Northern Mockingbird 81; European Starling 14033;

Cedar Waxwing 10; Eastern Towhee 3; American Tree Sparrow 3; Chipping Sparrow 2; Field Sparrow 3; Vesper Sparrow 2; Fox Sparrow 3; Song Sparrow 93; Swamp Sparrow 1; White-throated Sparrow 416; White-crowned Sparrow 53; Dark-eyed Junco 1167; Northern Cardinal 472; Red-winged Blackbird 4; Common Grackle 13; Brown-headed Cowbird 174; Purple Finch 2; House Finch 444; Pine Siskin 1; American Goldfinch 401; House Sparrow 935; Common Merganser 1.

Comments:
The total number of species seen was average; the total number of individual birds observed was lower than average. Fewer birders were out in the field due to the icy conditions.

New to the list this year: Common Merganser. We recorded a new high for Cooper’s Hawk (20). Teams reported unusually low numbers of American Kestrel, Killdeer, American Crow, Horned Lark, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, American Tree Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Purple Finch, and House Sparrow. We saw more than the usual numbers of Ring-billed Gull, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, and European Starling. We missed Ring-necked Pheasant, Wilson’s Snipe, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Fish Crow, each seen on at least 41 prior counts.

The Christmas Bird Count is the longest-running wildlife census in the world. Each individual count takes place in a 15-mile-wide circle and is led by a compiler responsible for organizing volunteers and submitting observations to Audubon. Within each circle, participants tally all birds seen or heard that day—not just the species but total . . . Last year, the 116th Christmas Bird Count included a record-setting 2,505 count circles, with 1,902 counts in the United States, 471 in Canada and 132 in Latin America, the Caribbean, Bermuda and the Pacific Islands.

(information from Audubon news release)
Harsh winter weather sure takes its toll on wild birds, but those species that don’t migrate south have evolved a wonderful central heating system to get them through the worst of it.

Being warm-blooded like humans, birds must maintain a constant internal body temperature, often around 106 degrees Fahrenheit, according to Audubon.org. Adding winter weight such as fat would create major aerodynamic issues, so smaller birds have developed other ways to stave off cold, such as shivering, fluffing their feathers and lowering their body temperatures.

Some species are experts in shivering, reports physiologist David Swanson at the University of South Dakota. Birds shiver by contracting opposing muscle groups in their chests and legs, creating internal tremors that raise body temperatures for the short term. It requires lots of calories, though, so birds must also rely on insulation and waterproofing.

Down feathers often grow in thicker in birds’ fall molt, Swanson says. It’s why tiny birds such as golden-crowned kinglets look fatter in winter. With a system of interlocking, air-trapping downy feathers, this tiniest of species can regulate its internal body temperature by keeping itself “fluffed.”

But what about those cold, rainy days? Wet down is useless as insulation. That’s where wing feathers come in handy, says Bernd Heinrich in his book, “Winter World.” In addition to being well-oiled by a bird’s constant preening, the tight, flat pattern of wing feathers allow water to roll off a bird’s roosting body, much like a thatched roof does for a cottage. Heinrich illustrates how birds caught in the rain hold their wings like a dome over their bodies, heads and feet tucked warmly underneath.

During long winter nights, some birds can lower their body temperatures by as much as 50 percent in a torpor called “regulated hypothermia,” according to Audubon.org. While in this temporary state, the birds do not respond to most things going on around them until their body temperatures rise again with the morning sun, as noted in “The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior.”

Birds can even reduce up to 90 percent of the heat loss in their legs and feet by restricting the flow of blood to their extremities, Sibley says. That’s why gulls can stand on ice without losing too much body heat.

Although birds have become adept at keeping warm in winter, their presence at bird feeding stations indicates that they still appreciate a helping hand in this stressful season!
Conococheague Audubon Plan Summary by Valerie B. Barnes

In 2006, Conococheague Audubon’s officers and Board of Directors developed a “plan” to help guide the organization’s efforts over the next several years. Recently the current chapter leaders reviewed and updated that plan. The document will be posted on our website. It includes these goals:

- Make a difference in our local community by being good stewards of the earth in our daily lives.
- Share our passion for conservation, birding, and the natural world through programs; opportunities for observation of birds, other wildlife, and plants; projects in our local community; and other activities.
- Educate the public about climate change, science-based decision-making, and promote the conservation of wildlife and natural environment.
- Contribute to research in the fields of conservation and ornithology by monetary support and/or active participation.
- Encourage the engagement of more citizens in the development of policies that support conservation.

The plan acknowledges “challenges” in three key areas: membership and participation, finances, and conservation issues. To address those challenges and meet the goals, the plan identifies several actions we are already taking:

1. Hold monthly meetings that emphasize the conservation of birds and other wildlife.
2. Schedule field trips to observe birds and educate chapter members and the public about birds, other wildlife, and their relationships to each other and to their environment.
3. Participate in the Christmas Bird Count, Migratory Count, Cornell’s Great Backyard Bird Count, Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas project, our chapter Bluebird Trail and Field Trip counts as well as other bird counting research programs.
4. Sponsor Audubon Adventure series programs in elementary schools. This program continues to grow and may outreach our ability to support it financially.
5. Annually, conduct a Beginning Birders’ Workshop.
6. Organize and present displays at venues throughout the community.
7. Provide speakers to schools and other organizations.
8. Offer a scholarship to support attendance at an environmentally-oriented camp, workshop, or conference, or to support local environmental research.
9. Present high-quality nature films free to the public.
10. Publish an annual chapter schedule of educational programs and field trips planned for the year.
11. Publish a chapter newsletter five times a year of chapter activities and conservation news.
12. Publish chapter meeting dates, program information and film series dates in local news media and invite the public to participate.
13. Apply for grants for special projects or purchases.
15. Coordinate with other conservation-minded organizations (e.g., Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology, South Mountain Partnership).
16. Maintain a presence at Norlo Park through our office in the farmhouse and habitat improvement projects.
   - Work proactively with local government to protect the natural environment;
   - Continue to maintain good habitat using native plants;
   - Attract birds by maintaining bird houses and a water feature;
   - Maintain a kiosk/bulletin board to display conservation information, describe the native plants garden, list birds seen at Norlo, etc.
17. Maintain resources for programs, outreach, and office use.
   - Laptop computer and software;
   - Projector;
   - Bulletin board and display materials
The plan also identifies additional steps for the future:

1. Coordinate with additional organizations to encourage participation in our activities.
2. Expand educational outreach to young people and new birders.
   - Provide materials specially directed toward children and young adults;
   - Schedule one or more field trips geared towards families, young birders, and new birders;
   - Coordinate with local schools to support their needs. The goal is to encourage and guide students in environmental studies and enroll new members. Investigate recycling in local schools to determine whether additional effort would help.
   - Sponsor a contest related to how Audubon Adventures are used in the classroom.
3. Expand our efforts to educate and work with local governments, planning commissions, landowners, developers, our membership, school classes, senior citizens, and other local organizations about the importance of conservation along the Kittatinny Ridge, South Mountain, and throughout the Cumberland Valley
   - Collaborate with PA Audubon to develop a clear message about conservation of land, ecology, habitat, and other natural resources in our area;
   - Regularly monitor plans and projects related to conservation and report to the membership;
   - Participate in conservation projects;
   - Volunteer for clean-up days;
   - Give presentations;
   - Arrange an energy expo at Norlo Park;
   - Explore options for widespread habitat improvement (e.g., native prairie)
   - Prepare brochures.
4. Use additional techniques to advertise our organization and activities
   - Directly invite one outside organization to participate in each activity;
   - Prepare a presentation and brochure describing the Conococheague Audubon Society;
   - Reach out to teachers and students about the scholarship we offer;
   - Publish a “wish list” of support, equipment, and materials;
   - Establish a presence on social media;
   - Post signs at Norlo Park explaining how to volunteer to help in the garden;
   - Attend PA Audubon chapter assembly;
   - Participate in National Audubon telecons and web conferences;
   - Sponsor one or more contests

Please visit the website to read the full plan.
If you have suggestions, please contact an officer or Board member.
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 the 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.

**January / February / March 2017**

**Jan. 9, 2017, Monday**  
6:00 PM. Covered dish dinner and members’ photo show. All are welcome. Arranged by Terri Kochert

**Jan. 19, Thursday**  
7:30 PM. *Big Sur: Wild California.* Learn how condors, sea otters and mountain lions all contribute to this seaside ecosystem. (50 min.)

**January/February**  
If interested in visiting Gettysburg Battlefield for SHORT-EARED OWLS, sign up by Dec. 15, 2016 (name, contact information). **Bob Kochert**, 263-3692, will advise upon report of sightings. Meet at Norlo Park Community Center.

**Feb. 13, Monday**  
7:00 PM. *Birding in the West,* by Bob and Terri Kochert.

**March 7, Tuesday**  
6:00 PM. Tentative outing for WOODCOCKS. If at Heisey Road orchard, meet at Chambersburg Mall, 3055 Black Gap Rd., Chambersburg (north side near Bon Ton wall). Bring CBs and flashlights. For update, **Bob Kochert**, 263-3692.

**March 11, Saturday**  
6:30 AM. Middle Creek WMA, Lancaster County auto tour for WATERFOWL. Meet in parking lot at Scotch exit, I-81 northbound. **Eric and Rhetta Martin**, 597-8675.

**March 13, Monday**  
7:00 PM. *Mosquito-borne Illness Control in Pennsylvania,* Master Gardener Donna Scherer. Arranged by Janet Tice.

**March 18, Saturday**  
7:30 AM. York County WATERFOWL auto tour; return by 3 PM. Leave from parking lot, northeast corner, Pa. 233 and U.S. 30. **Conway Bushey**, 262-5659; **Bill Franz**, 776-4463.

**March 23, Thursday**  
7:30 PM. *Hummingbirds: Magic in the air.*

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

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**Copy Deadline February 15 for March 2017 Newsletter.**

Conococheague Audubon Officers:

- **President**: Valerie B. Barnes
- **Vice President**: Debby Hook
- **Recording Secretary**: Rhetta Martin
- **Corresponding Secretary**: Bobbie Stewart
- **Treasurer**: Doug Powless
- **Immediate Past President**: Conway Bushey

**Directors:**  
Bob Kochert, Terri Kochert, Janet Tice,  
Earl Nollenberger, Eric Martin, Linda Kaiser