A Message from the President — Valerie B. Barnes

It’s cold! Winter visitors are coming to our feeders. In my yard, a chipmunk emerged from hibernation the last week of January – very unusual. A few Pine Siskins appeared on February 5th. I’ve been watching intently for them since October, so I’m glad they finally arrived!

Conococheague Audubon has a few changes to report and several opportunities to be active.

Changes:

Elections are coming up at our annual business meeting on April 9th. Please come to vote or email me your proxy. We plan to elect all officers and two new directors. The slate includes: President – Debby Hook; Vice President – Terri Kochert; Recording Secretary – Rhetta Martin; Corresponding Secretary – Bobbie Stewart; Treasurer – Donna Hocker; Directors – Larry and Sharon Williams.

Joyce Schaff has stepped down after more than 20 years as Membership Chair.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act Action

— Valerie B. Barnes

At the request of National Audubon Society and with concurrence from our Board of Directors and Officers, I signed a letter on behalf of Conococheague Audubon Society urging members of Congress to “oppose any effort that undermines the ability to address the incidental take of birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA).” The letter has been signed by more than 250 Audubon chapters.

After reading Audubon’s fact sheet and pages about the MBTA, available at http://www.audubon.org/news/migratory-bird-treaty-act, here are some answers to questions you may have:

What is the MBTA? It is a law that protects birds from people. The Act was originally passed in 1918 and has been updated several times to implement bilateral treaties with Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Russia to protect migratory bird populations we share with those countries.

MBTA Action, continued on page 4, column 1.

The Conococheague Audubon Bluebird Trail in 2017

— Earl Nollenberger

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.

On March 27th, the nest boxes were closed to allow Eastern Bluebirds to start nesting in April. 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.

Bluebird Trail report, continued on page 5, column 1.
“Super Pride”

7:30 PM March 15, 2018
Chambersburg Middle School South
Pre-show entertainment at 7 PM with
Marie Hershey on accordion

Though the Serengeti, a Masai term for land of Eternal Plains, spans the nations of Tanzania and Kenya, most of its acreage is found in Tanzania. The Serengeti spans 12,000 square miles and is known for the Serengeti National Park (5,700 sq. mi.), for its great lion population and for its infamous annual terrestrial migration. These plains hold about 3,500 lions divided up into 300 prides, averaging about 12 lions per pride.

Our film will explore the adventures of a “Super Pride” of 22 lions, consisting of 8 lionesses, 2 male lions and their progeny of 12 adolescents and cubs. We will see how this lion pride supports its members in every aspect. We’ll also observe their necessary and sometimes untimely sacrifices when called upon to maintain the health of the pride. We’ll see how the youngsters learn hunting skills from their elders through their childish rough-housing. Hopefully, someday they, too, will take their place as proud providers for the pride.

Once again, through the tireless effort of stealth camera people, we follow the footsteps of this unusually large Super Pride, experiencing daily life from an African lion’s point of view.

— Terri Kochert

CONSERVATION NEWS

Our neighbors, the Juniata Valley Audubon Society, announced that NextEra withdrew their application to build wind turbines on State Game Land #300. The Pennsylvania Game Commission Board is working to prohibit wind turbines on all state game lands, showing that when we band together, we can produce positive outcomes for not only our fine feathered friends, but also all wildlife and their habitats!

The above information came from the Juniata Audubon Society's website; the author is unknown to me.

The 2018 tree seedling sale is underway. Orders can be taken in person at the Franklin County Conservation District office at 185 Franklin Farm Lane, Chambersburg, PA, 17202 or use the order form found at http://franklinccd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018-Tree-Sale.pdf no later than March 16, 2018.

Get planting more green in your neighborhood!

BIRD BEHAVIOR: I Want To Know...

How do young Snowy Owls know when to leave the tundra in winter, and how do they know where to go?

Conococheague Audubon Society’s January film about Snowy Owls answered a lot of questions many of us had about the lives of these hardiest of owls, but it left us with more questions, as well.

It seems cruel that once the Snowy Owl fledglings can feed themselves, they must leave their parents to find their own way south. But how do they know when it is time to leave?

As we know from the habits of other animal species, young Snowy Owls – under a year old – are not all that anxious to cut the apron strings. It’s the parents that make the decision by forcing their offspring to get moving. Their mothers neglect them, their dads become more aggressive toward them. Instinctively, the “kids” understand it’s time to go.

The reality of this behavior is that food is harder to find on the tundra in winter, and adults are more prepared than their inexperienced offspring to withstand the upcoming sub-zero temperatures.

Not surprisingly, these juveniles are indeed capable of making it on their own; the parents have done their job. Yet, how do they know where to go in winter?

For some years, scientists have understood that migratory birds’ brains contain neurons responsive to the earth’s magnetic fields. While it is not understood exactly why and how birds “know” where to head in winter, there are many examples of unexplained migratory behavior, including that of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. According to Wild Birds Unlimited in Lansing, Mich., young birds are often found at feeders and late-blooming flowers weeks after their parents have headed south, and thus have no guidance in their journey. Not only birds, but butterflies possess this skill. All those Monarch butterflies that head to Mexico each fall have parents, grandparents and great-grandparents that have never made the journey; yet these intrepid insects congregate successfully in great numbers year after year.

Bird Behavior, continued on P 3, column 1.
As we learned by watching the film, juvenile Snowy Owls migrate to places that look familiar to them: they seek out large tracts of open meadow, field and swamp that they recognize could offer an abundance of food all winter long.

If we could imagine all of nature as curious as we are, maybe – just maybe – we could picture birds and butterflies looking at the human species and shaking their heads in disbelief.

“Twenty years!” they exclaim. “It takes that species 20 years to leave the nest! How do those poor parents ever survive?”

**Message from the President, continued from page 1, top.**

Thanks, Joyce! Conway Bushey has agreed to step up as our new Membership Chair. Thanks, Conway!

Conway Bushey has asked to be relieved as Migratory Bird Count chair. For the moment, Valerie Barnes will step into that role. If you are interested in helping or taking over the role, please contact Val.

Ruth Barton is willing to continue as Publicity Chair, but asks that someone else step up to help or take over. She’s been doing it for many years. If you are interested, please contact Ruth (717-352-7349), Val (717-352-4397), or Debby Hook (717-372-0228).

**Opportunities for Action:**

1. Take action about the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. See the MBTA Action article later in this issue.

2. Protect sea birds by encouraging the Bureau of Ocean Management not to open new ocean areas to offshore drilling. See the Audubon Action Center online. [http://www.audubon.org/takeaction](http://www.audubon.org/takeaction)

3. Volunteer to serve our local chapter. We need help with our 10th annual Beginning Birders’ Workshop on June 2nd, caring for the Norlo Park Native Plants Garden, Publicity, the Migratory Bird Count on May 12th, and other activities.

4. Remember that if you order something through Conococheague Audubon’s 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 this site instead of the generic one: [https://smile.amazon.com/ch/25-1485719](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/25-1485719).

**Our Field Trip to the Community Cloud Forest Conservation Center (CCFCC), Guatemala**

- **Terri Kochert**

Seven from CAS made this journey: James and Cheryl Long, Earl Nollenberger, Doug Powless, Bob and Terri Kochert and Bob Keener and his younger brother, Dan, plus two naturalists working for Arlington, VA area parks, David Farner and Jennifer Soles.

We expected to learn more of Rob and Tara Cahill’s agroecology work at the CCFCC in Alta Verapaz, GT. We expected to plant a few trees to replenish the stripped forest areas. We expected to see a few birds. Our expectations were met to the fullest!

We saw Rob and Tara serving the community youngsters (5th and 6th graders) and teachers. These two flow easily from Kekchi to Spanish and to English! We planted 30-40 seedlings alongside the young women leaders of the WALC program (Women in Agroecology Leadership Conservation) and took 15 youngsters birding around the CCFCC extensive property and on a field trip to San Cristobal Lake, eight miles away.

These young trainees served us throughout the week, for which they receive a stipend and promise of a scholarship to continue their studies in private secondary schools, as there are no public secondary schools. Hopefully, these young ladies will not only graduate from high school, but will also actively pursue a career, serving as a mentor and example to the rest of the female population. Some trainees want to become teachers, health care workers, nurses, and maybe even doctors.

Rob was gracious to take us to various birding habitats on both the Atlantic slope and Pacific slopes of the highlands. All in all, the group saw 198 species of birds. Granted, some were our northern “wintering visitors”: Wilson’s Warblers, Black-throated Warblers, Wood Thrushes, etc. Many were brand new to most of

**Guatemala Field Trip, continued page 4, column 4**
**MBTA Action, continued from page 1, column 2 at bottom**

**What does it do?** The Act makes it unlawful to hunt, sell, or possess most native species of birds in the U.S., along with their nests, eggs, and feathers, without a permit. It covers migratory species listed in the treaties. That means it includes many species that are not protected under other conservation laws like the Endangered Species Act. The Fish and Wildlife Service in the U.S. Department of the Interior specifies migratory bird hunting regulations that are compatible with the Act.

**What has the MBTA accomplished?** The Act is generally credited with saving millions of birds and several species from extinction—of note: the Wood Duck, Sandhill Crane, and Snowy Egret.

According to NAS’s fact sheet about the MBTA, “The law’s protections helped end the widespread slaughter of birds in the early 20th century. In the modern era, millions of birds are also killed ‘incidentally’ each year from otherwise lawful industrial activities such as oil waste pits, power lines, communications towers, and gas flares. Many of these deaths are avoidable with inexpensive solutions, such as covering oil pits or marking transmission lines. Under the Act’s authority, the FWS and many industries have come to agreement on simple measures that protect birds.”

Ducks Unlimited states this about the Act: “As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty in North America, we can be proud of our shared conservation heritage and of the international agreements that are in place to protect migratory birds far into the future. Whether we appreciate birds for hunting, bird-watching, or subsistence, they provide us with great enjoyment, knowledge, and understanding of the natural world that surrounds us. The legacy of the Migratory Bird Treaty is the recognition that these magnificent birds are held in public trust and shared by all citizens. Our responsibility is to make sure that this legacy endures by conserving and managing migratory birds and their habitats for future generations to enjoy.”

The Fish and Wildlife Service has worked with industries to use simple measures to protect birds. FWS only takes action against industry in egregious cases when their activities result directly in the deaths of birds and are foreseeable. For instance, the Act was used to recover natural resource damages from environmental disasters like the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

**What is happening now?** Recent actions by Congress and the current administration threaten to roll back the MBTA protections. Part of H.R. 4239 would remove the authority of FWS to address incidental take. S. 935 would remove protection for certain species. A new legal memorandum from the Department of the Interior (M-37050) reinterprets the MBTA and concludes that the killing of migratory birds violates the Act only when “the actor engaged in an activity the object of which was to render an animal subject to human control.” In January 2018, 17 former high-level government officials (including Deputy Secretaries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Directors and others, under both Republican and Democratic Presidents) sent a letter to Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke asking him to suspend the new interpretation of the MBTA.

**What can you do?** Audubon asks members and chapters to speak out on behalf of birds and urge Congress and the Department of the Interior to stop actions which undermine the ability to address the incidental take of birds under the MBTA. One simple way for you to add your voice is to go to Audubon’s Action center and choose the “Stop Industries from Getting a Free Pass to Kill Birds” topic. You might also write a letter to the editor of whatever newspaper you read. Talk to your friends and family. Please help the birds!

1. [https://works.audubon.org/resources/mbta-audubon-fact-sheet](https://works.audubon.org/resources/mbta-audubon-fact-sheet)
5. [https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/toJop1BDMEOAC4CpEd4SKQ27ms=policy-adv-web-website_nas-topmenubar-20180112_mbta_alert](https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/toJop1BDMEOAC4CpEd4SKQ27ms=policy-adv-web-website_nas-topmenubar-20180112_mbta_alert)

---

**Short-eared Owls — Janet Tice**

These beautiful Short-eared Owls (Asio Flammeus) were busy hunting over a crystal-like, ice-coated field in Gettysburg on Feb 8, 2018.

*credit: Janet Tice*

---

**Guatemala Field Trip, continued from page 2, column 2.**

us. We Kocherts saw 50 new species this time and have been to GT three times before! I know that others in the group had just as many “lifers.”

Though CCFCC has been in existence only nine years, we were gratified and humbled to be a part of this forward-thinking program, improving the lives of many families, helping them escape poverty and pursue a career.

[To sponsor a young woman in the WALC program for a year, tuition costs $225. Contact Terri Kochert if interested in becoming a sponsor.]
Bluebird Trail report, continued from page 1, col. 3.

Eight volunteers checked the nest boxes weekly from mid-April to mid-October. Of the 27 nest boxes, 14 had Bluebirds fledge and 20 had Tree Swallows fledge, however, seven nest boxes were used successfully by both Bluebirds and Tree Swallows. In eight nest boxes, there were two successful attempts to fledge Bluebirds or Tree Swallows after a failed first attempt. In four nest boxes, three groups of Bluebirds and/or Tree Swallows successfully fledged. One nest box had four successful attempts to fledge Bluebirds and/or Tree Swallows. Overall, Bluebirds were almost twice as successful in 2017 as in 2016, perhaps due to fewer Tree Swallows, my observation, and to a wetter summer.

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, hatchlings or fledglings.

For 2017, the 14 nest boxes used by Bluebirds for 21 nests produced 94 eggs, of which 65 hatched and 54 successfully fledged. The 20 nest boxes used by Tree Swallows for 23 nests produced 116 eggs, of which 83 hatched and 66 successfully fledged. House wrens successfully nested in one Bender's pond and two Druckenbrod Lane nest boxes, producing six fledglings.

I am still surprised that 20 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 57%, while in successful Tree Swallow nests it was 59%. From 2016, this rate was almost identical for Bluebirds while it increased by 14% perhaps due to a smaller overall number of Tree Swallows observed in 2017.

In mid-October, a report was filed with the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania using the Annual Bluebird Nest Box Report Form. Respectfully submitted by Earl Nollenberger, Bluebird Trail Coordinator.

Beginning Birder Workshop
- Dave Cooney

We’ve scheduled the tenth annual 2018 Beginning Birder Workshop for 8 AM on Saturday, June 2, at Caledonia State Park. Participation at last year’s workshop was fantastic; we thank our volunteers for the help and expertise they bring to our organization. It’s not too early to start planning our tenth annual event, and again this year we need your help. Dave Cooney will chair this function with help from Conway Bushey. We hope that, if you have helped in the past, you would consider volunteering again this year. And of course, we welcome all volunteers. Some of the activities include: Bird Walks, Kid’s Corner, Nature Walk, Scavenger Hunt, refreshments, parking visitors, registering participants and assisting with setting up the Visitor Center for the day’s events.

If you have any questions or want to volunteer, please contact Dave Cooney at 264-2116 or email at slant1cm@yahoo.com or Conway Bushey at 262-5659 or email at wcbushey@embarqmail.com.
**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.

---

**March 2-4, Fri.-Sun.**  
**FIELD TRIP**  
6:00 AM. Blackwater NWR, Maryland, auto tour for WATERFOWL. Leave from Martins’ home at TBD Friday, return Sunday. Bring scopes, binoculars, CBs. Make own motel arrangements. **Eric and Rhetta Martin, 717-597-8675.**

**March 6, Tuesday**  
**FIELD TRIP**  
6:00 PM. Tentative outing for WOODCOCKS. If trip takes place at Heisey Road orchard, meet at Chambersburg Mall, Black Gap Rd., (north side near Bon Ton wall). Bring CBs and flashlights. For update, **Bob Kochert, 717-263-3692.**

**March 10, 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 12, Monday**  
**MEETING**  
7:00 PM. **Creating Native Landscaping and Pollinator Habitat**, by Ryan Davis, Forests Program Coordinator, Alliance For The Chesapeake Bay. Arranged by Linda Kaiser

**March 15, Thursday**  
**FILM**  
7 PM music; 7:30 PM **Superpride.** Explore the Serengeti wildlife refuge through the eyes of the largest pride of lions that rules the plains. (50 min.)

---

**March 17, Saturday**  
**FIELD TRIP**  
7:30 AM. York County WATERFOWL auto tour; return by 3:00 PM. Leave from parking lot at northeast corner of Pa. 233 and U.S. 30. Bring scopes, binoculars, CBs and lunch. **Conway Bushey, 717-262-5659; or Bill Franz, 717-776-4463.**

**April 9, Monday**  
**MEETING**  
7:00 PM. Annual business meeting and elections. All chapter members welcome.

**April 14, Saturday**  
**FIELD TRIP**  
7:00 AM. Boundaries of Letterkenny Army Depot for SPRING MIGRANTS. Leave from North Pointe Center, U.S. 11 north of Chambersburg. Bring scopes, binoculars, and snack. **David Cooney, 717-264-2116.**

**CAS WEBSITE: [www.conococheagueaudubon.org](http://www.conococheagueaudubon.org)**  
**Newsletter Editor – Jane Bussard (401-3210) janenbussard47@gmail.com**

Send all newsletter articles and photos to the editor, Send all mailing changes to conaudubon@outlook.com

**COPY DEADLINE APRIL 15 FOR MAY 2018 NEWSLETTER.**

**CONOCOCHEAGUE AUDUBON OFFICERS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Valerie B. Barnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Debby Hook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording Secretary</td>
<td>Rhetta Martin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corresponding Secretary</td>
<td>Bobbie Stewart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Emmie White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Past President</td>
<td>Conway Bushey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DIRECTORS:**  
Jim Hook, Janet Tice,  
Earl Nollenberger, Eric Martin, Linda Kaiser