A Message from the President
By Conway Bushey

As I end my first year as President of the Conococheague Audubon Society, I must wonder how I ever got in this position. Just a short five years ago, I saw that a workshop for new birders was being offered at Caledonia by Conococheague. Since it was free, I decided to attend. Despite the rain, thunder and lighting, I heard and observed birds that only the experienced birders could identify. Needless to say, I was hooked and don’t regret one minute since then.

I want to thank all of the members that have helped me during the past year and certainly made my job easier. The time and energy offered by the individuals leading field trips has been invaluable and made those trips not only fun but educational. The presentations at the general meetings have touched on a wide variety of topics and Scott Weidensaul’s discussion of Saw-whet Owls was unforgettable. Thanks to the committee chairs and officers and a special thanks to those who are leaving office: Kathy Lauver, Deb Barnes, Shirley Fenstermacher, Mary Craig, Larry Shillock, Doris Burdick and Val Barnes.

I look forward to the next year and the unforeseen challenges but know with your time and help, we will continue to make the Conococheague Audubon Society an invaluable and worthwhile venture.

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Beginning Birder Workshop
By Dave Cooney

The 2013 Beginning Birder Workshop is scheduled for Saturday 1 June 2013 at 8:00 A.M. at Caledonia State Park. This will be our fifth year. Participation at last year’s workshop was fantastic and again our volunteers made this event a great success. We can’t thank them enough for their help and the expertise they bring to our organization.
That being said, it’s not too early to start planning this year’s event and again we need your help. Dave Cooney will chair this function with some help from Conway Bushey, and they hope that if you have helped in the past that you would consider volunteering again this year. 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, volunteers are needed to help with all of these activities. Also, individuals who are willing to lend binoculars for the day are needed.

A Beginning Birder Workshop planning meeting will be held on Monday 13 May 2013 at 6:15 P.M. at Norlo Park (prior to the general meeting that date).

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

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Marcellus Shale Activities
Compiled by Valerie Barnes

Recently Paul Zeph of PA Audubon circulated a message asking chapters to endorse a letter asking the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to conduct a statewide public comment period on the far-reaching decisions that the DCNR is poised to make concerning natural gas development in the Loyalsock State Forest. The Board of Conococheague Audubon Society (CAS) agreed to endorse the letter.

According to Zeph’s letter and published news reports, DCNR has been in discussions about drilling agreements with Anadarko Petroleum. The Loyalsock State Forest is an Important Birding Area (IBA) called Wyoming State Forest & Worlds End State Park. The IBA program is a conservation initiative to help combat threats to bird populations and their habitats.

According to the Audubon letter to DCNR, under Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, the DCNR has a legal duty to conserve, maintain, and enhance State Forest lands for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians, including future generations. And under the Conservation and Natural Resources Act, the DCNR may not grant a right-of-way over State Forest lands unless the DCNR determines that granting a right-of-way would be in the public interest. Hence, the letter stated, DCNR should solicit public input before making a decision about drilling rights in the state forest.

This issue sparked different reactions from members of CAS.

Valerie Barnes drafted a letter to DCNR that expressed concern about Marcellus Shale drilling activities in Important Bird Areas in Pennsylvania. It stated that we oppose natural gas development activities in the Wyoming State Forest and Worlds End State Park IBA or any other IBA because we are concerned about the impact on birds and other species. Forest fragmentation and habitat loss are detrimental to birds. Please protect the state forests of Pennsylvania from the adverse impacts of drilling activities.

Mary Craig provided these comments: I want the United States energy independent. It is very important for many reasons. Natural gas will contribute to it. I value the lives of American military personnel. Energy independence should help diminish conflicts in the Middle East. I care very much about our land and want to protect it. I also want gas exploration to continue everywhere, and I want it done responsibly.
On another point, if property owners are going to be denied the right to sell their gas, they should be compensated for the loss of their gas income. Those people who do not want the drilling should be the ones to compensate the land owners.

Joan Duffield also responded: I always hesitate to add my two cents to these kinds of comments from Audubon members as in the past I have been shut down pretty hard when I have expressed my opinions. I do agree with Mary. I favor responsible drilling and feel it is so important for us to be energy independent not only in the distant future but as soon as possible. These kinds of ventures offer us the better chance for more immediate energy relief. I like natural gas as a fuel and feel it has a lot of promise as a clean energy source. I have a deep love for the land and want us to be responsible with it.

Land ownership has always been one of those precious rights in this country. I feel that those who own the land should not have their rights abridged because of the opinions of those who do not own it. The property owners have paid for the land are paying the taxes on it. Strong-arming property owners is a dangerous path for our country’s freedoms. People who want to make decisions about a piece of land need to purchase it. If the property owners do not want to sell, we need to realize that that is a part of life and respect their rights of ownership. Property owners opinions are valid and deserve respect even when we do not agree with them. This is a critical part of a free and tolerant society.

I do not wish to offend anyone. My feelings run very deeply about this, very much like the feelings of those with opposite views. Thanks for the venue to make a comment.

This issue is far from over. The Board encourages every member to consider the pros and cons, risks and rewards, of Marcellus drilling whether on public lands designated as Important Bird Areas or on private property, and to discuss the issue, take a stand, and voice an opinion.

To contact your state legislator, visit http://www.legis.state.pa.us/ for information.

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On the Record
By Donna Hocker

The Woodcocks did their mating display for seven observers this season. Thanks to Joan Bowen for leading this outing in March.

Conway Bushey led 10 birders on the York County field trip for waterfowl. The Winter Wren was added to the list that now totals 121.

It was snowy and cold for the Middle Creek field trip but Val Barnes and Ruth Ann Smith braved the weather and saw 51 species. Most of the Snow Geese had left the area, but Val and Ruth Ann added the Cackling Goose and the Golden Eagle to the list that now totals 106 species.

Doug Powless and Heather Sahli led the Franklin/Fulton trip with 15 birders. A Red-breasted Nuthatch was added to the list that now totals 121 species. The trip included a visit to Meadow Grounds Lake which is being drained due to a leak in the dam. Of the 56 species seen on the trip, 10 water birds were seen at the Meadow Grounds: Tundra Swan, Gadwall Mallard, Redhead, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, and Horned Grebe.

Again this year not many people participated in the Lilypons field trip led by Mike O’Brien. The three birders added six new birds to the list:
American Black Duck, Green-winged Teal, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Lesser Yellowlegs, Common Raven, and Horned Lark. The list now totals 93 species.

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Migration Bird Count
By Donna Hocker

The 2013 Pennsylvania Migration Count (PAMC) will be held Saturday May 11. If you are interested in counting and have not received a count list please contact Donna Hocker at 717-352-8713 or email dlhocker@yahoo.com

This is the 20th year for the Franklin County PAMC. You can count anywhere in Franklin County, even in your own backyard.

*** DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES FOR SEPTEMBER 2013 NATURALLY NEWSLETTER IS 15 AUGUST***

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All Good Things Must Come to an End
By Doris Burdick

With this issue of the Naturally I am ending my tenure as newsletter editor.

I turn this position over to the very capable hands of Jennifer Wright.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed words, few or many, to the Naturally and did a wonderful job of keeping the members of Conococheague Audubon Society informed - your help made my job easier.

On that note it is time for me to put the old “press” aka HP Windows XP system to rest.

Enjoy summer and happy bird watching.

Conococheague Audubon Website

The URL for our website is:
http://www.conococheagueaudubon.org

Or google - Conococheague + Audubon

Visit often to keep up to date on all activities.

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