Grassland Raptor Conservation at Milton Hershey School

Barn Owls and American Kestrels have long been a valuable presence in the rich and rolling agricultural lands of the Hershey area. Starting in 2008, a concerted effort was made to install and monitor Barn Owl and Kestrel nest boxes in appropriate habitat on Milton Hershey School’s campus and surrounding farmland. The project has since grown into a professional collaboration with ZooAmerica, PA Game Commission, and other conservation partners. Learn about these regional conservation efforts, unique educational opportunities that benefit MHS and other local schools, and how you can support Barn Owl and Kestrel conservation in the region from project coordinator Nate McKelvie and ZooAmerica partners Tim Becker and Ann Holzman.

Registration link: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJIqc-CqqzkvGdVJKZPkWtbCrXEzVTaPbcp

Join us at 6:30pm for virtual socializing. The meeting starts at 7:00pm, followed by the program.

Photos courtesy Nick Wertzel

Discover the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy

The Central Pennsylvania Conservancy (CPC) is a local non-profit conservation organization that conserves natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations through land acquisition, conservation easements, education, and outreach. Headquartered in Carlisle, CPC is a nationally-accredited land trust. Join Ben Mummert, Director of Land Protection and Stewardship for CPC, as he takes us on a tour of the Conservancy’s preserves and highlights the conservation work being done. Ben will outline projects being done right here in the Harrisburg area and discuss their partnership with Appalachian Audubon Society. You might even discover a few new places to go birding!

Registration link: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUkd-ChqiwpGNTEN51umb7LVsiHPe-xlm9Q

Join us at 6:30pm for virtual socializing. The meeting starts at 7:00pm, followed by the program.
2020 Initial Report on Annual Birdseed Fundraiser

By John Latsha, Chair, Birdseed Fundraising Committee

The initial 2020 Appalachian Audubon Society Annual Birdseed Fundraiser returns are in, and despite many, many problems with delivery of seed to the Agway stores, we realized an increase over 2019 sales of roughly 20%. A big THANK YOU goes out to all the AAS members and friends who took the time during the height of the pandemic to go to the Agway stores and purchase birdseed for their feathered friends.

The year 2020 was one of many challenges. Here are some of the problems that our friends at the Agway stores had to deal with and reported to us:

“We were out of 40lb sunflower hearts for a good portion of the sale, as well as the beef and peanut butter suet cakes. Many of the other items were out of stock for a bit until we could get another load in and restock.

Most people were very understanding of the situation when we explained it. This kind of shortage has never happened before in Agway history.

First, there was almost a complete crop failure for white millet which is in many mixes so most of that had to be imported, leading to higher prices and longer lead times. Second, the price of commodities like soybeans soared causing the oil mills to seek cheaper sources such as sunflower seed, which increased the price and demand for black oil. Third, there was an unprecedented demand for birdseed since many more people were home due to [COVID-19] so that created longer delays and higher prices.

The seed manufacturers were trying to get as much of the popular seed to the market as fast as possible (black oil, Favorite, Birdsnack, etc.) so they were not bagging the less popular mixes such as sunflower blend and Finch Delight. To give you an idea of the demand, our warehouse had 3,200,000 pounds of birdseed waiting to be unloaded off of rail cars and onto trucks at any given time in November and December. Almost all of this seed was unloaded directly onto trucks and delivered to Agway stores and there was still a two-month backlog on some seed varieties.

The great thing is that since we preordered most of that seed, everyone that ordered on the Audubon fundraiser received a great price on birdseed as the prices have crept up since October. We held our price of black oil 40lb at $19.99 for the fundraiser but most Tractor Supply stores were charging $24.99 and many were not able to get product in. I hope people continue to enjoy feeding the birds and hopefully the Appalachian Audubon has seen some new interest in people becoming members. I know we have seen many new first time birders at the store.”

One of the Agway store owners also reported that an Agway birdseed production plant shut down because of a mechanical failure with one of its processing machines, which further complicated birdseed delivery problems.

However, despite all the above problems, not the least of which was the global pandemic, we still realized a 20% increase over 2019 birdseed sales!

Continued on next page
President’s Perch

I believe many of us were cautiously optimistic about the new year. The events of the first week probably challenged that optimism for many of us. But I find that looking ahead and working toward a goal, even if the work toward that goal is slow and incremental, is key for me not to get lost in negativity.

For Appalachian Audubon Society it’s no different. The board is looking forward to a very productive and fun 2021. We’re delighting in the prospects of meeting again in person this Fall and allowing field trips to proceed without restricting the number of people who can attend. But we’re also thinking bigger than that. Each year for our annual report to The National Audubon Society, we need to lay out three goals that we want to work on for the year ahead. This year, the three goals that we hope to move forward are:

1. Increase membership and volunteer participation in chapter activities.
2. Continue restoration efforts at Trout Run Preserve, and increase knowledge and visitor use of the preserve.
3. Increase youth-oriented activities while reaching out to a more diverse audience.

We’re confident that we can move toward these goals. We may not achieve them by the end of the year. But it’s the forward progress, partnerships developed, and connections made that will bolster us through difficult times. Looking beyond 2021 these goals will help to ensure that Appalachian Audubon Society continues to grow, engages our local community, and further achieves the conservation goals of protecting birds and their habitats. I hope you all have optimism for the year ahead, and that if you set out goals for yourself, one of them is to engage with Appalachian Audubon Society and enjoy a great year of birding.

Happy New Year and Happy Birding!

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2020 Initial Report on Annual Birdseed Fundraiser continued

This year’s sale will provide much of the funding for the following on-going projects:

- Scholarships for high school age students to attend camps held at Hog Island, Maine this coming summer of 2021.
- Projects to maintain and improve Trout Run, our wetland preserve located in Upper Allen Township.

A very large THANK YOU goes out to the owners of both Agway Stores for the generous discounted prices they offered to AAS for all the items sold during the fundraiser. As a result, we could offer the items at discounted rates that still allowed AAS to make a profit that goes toward funding the above projects. This year, we attempted to match the sale prices the Agway stores offered in October so that our members might wait until November or December to purchase their seed for the 2020–2021 winter. It appears that this strategy worked quite well this year! We look forward to 2021 and working with our members who support our cause and our friends who own the Agway stores.

Another very big THANK YOU goes out to you, our members and friends, who participated in this year’s fundraiser and contributed to the funds that were realized by this year’s event.

Another very large THANK YOU goes out to Dale Rupert, Chair of the Membership Committee and caretaker of the AAS website, for taking it upon himself to answer the emails of fellow members who were asking questions about the birdseed fundraiser. Thank you, my friend!

Last, but certainly not least, a big THANK YOU goes out to the helpful AAS volunteers on Saturdays in November, who had blank copies of the order form available and who were always willing to help answer your questions or hold the door open for you at either the Davis Country Living Agway or the Hanoverdale Agway. All of your volunteer efforts are greatly appreciated.

In the next month or so, the members of the Birdseed Fundraising Committee will be meeting with the owners of the two Agway stores to review the results of the 2020 fundraising event and to develop improved fundraising efforts for 2021.

If you, as a member of Appalachian Audubon Society, have any ideas you wish to share with the committee, please send them to me at jlat1965@gmail.com or call me at 717-982-1141.

Or, even better, if you wish to become a member of the Birdseed Fundraising committee, please don’t hesitate to send me an email or call me on my cellphone!
Appalachian Audubon Society welcomes people at all levels of experience. Birding with a group is a good way to improve your skills and confidence in birding.

Reminder: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic Appalachian Audubon Society will continue to limit field trip registration to a maximum of 10 people. Participants will be required to wear a mask; scopes, binoculars, and other equipment will not be shared; and we will not be organizing carpooling to and from field trips nor will we be carpooling during field trips. All questions may be directed to AAS President Chris Kemmerer at president@appalachianaudubon.org or 717 571-7958.

FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP

Saturday, February 20, 2021

Scoping the River from West Fairview

Depending on the weather, February can be a good time to scope the Susquehanna River at the West Fairview Boat Launch. If conditions are right, many birds can be seen including Greater and Lesser Scaup, American Goldeneye, Redhead, Canvasback, Horned Grebe, Bonaparte’s Gull, Bald Eagle, and late winter songbirds. Bring your own scope if you have one. Meet at the PA Fish and Boat Commission Launch site at 8:00am. For registration and information, contact Rick Price at rprice210@comcast.net or 717-657-1950.

MARCH FIELD TRIP

Saturday, March 6, 2021

Middle Creek Waterfowl Management Area

Last year’s early March trip to Middle Creek was very successful as we saw a good variety of birds including Eastern Meadowlark, Northern Harrier, Ring-necked Pheasant, Tundra Swan, Ring-necked Duck, and lots of Snow Geese. We also witnessed the natural phenomenon of “sun dogs” in the sky. This coming year, we’re also hoping to see a cruising Short-eared Owl on the driving tour for those who want to stay until dusk. For registration and information, contact Rick Price at rprice210@comcast.net or 717-657-1950.
Native Plant Sale

Appalachian Audubon Society and Diakon Wilderness Greenhouse will once again be hosting a Spring Native Plant sale in April. Be on the lookout for sale date(s), format, and additional details in April’s newsletter, Facebook posts, eBlasts, and the AAS website.

Alliance for the Chesapeake Seedling Saver Program

By Wendy Smith

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay plants a LOT of trees. They are again asking for your help to plant more. Rather than pull and dispose of seedlings (like redbuds, sycamores, maples, and tulip-poplars) that come up in unwanted areas in your yard/garden, consider saving them instead. The Alliance can provide a flat of 25 pots to plant your rescued seedlings in and then care for over the summer. Or you can pot the seedlings up in your own containers and contact The Alliance to arrange for a contactless pick-up or delivery if you can’t care for them over the summer.

The Alliance also needs tree fosters! Caring for already potted tree seedlings over the summer will help stretch funds even further. They can arrange for a contactless pick-up or drop-off of a flat or flats of seedlings. The seedlings will be picked up or dropped off in the fall for distribution to planting sites.

Despite the limitations to the 2020 program caused by COVID-19, a number of Appalachian Audubon members “made it work” and donated seeds and rescued approximately 200 seedlings which are now in permanent homes along Central Pennsylvania waterways. The Alliance is truly grateful for your efforts especially in this difficult year.

Ryan Davis, Forests Program Manager for the Alliance, will do a short presentation on the Seedling Saver and Foster programs at the March 18th AAS membership meeting.

For more information or questions, contact program coordinator Wendy Smith at wendyk320@yahoo.com.
Native Plant Spotlight

By Zach Richard

Take a walk through the woods in March and April and you will likely see the delicate greenish-yellow haze of Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) in bloom. A common understory shrub of bottomlands, rich alluvial forests, shaded wetlands, streambanks, and on slopes typically underlain by alkaline rocks, Spicebush is an adaptable plant that is quite easy to grow in most garden settings.

Built landscapes typically overuse the exotic and occasionally escaped Forsythias (*Forsythia x intermedia*, *F. suspensa*, and *F. viridissima*) for a brief burst of yellow in the spring. They provide little else aesthetically (personal opinion, though I’d think many would agree) and ecologically. Spicebush, on the other hand, is an excellent native alternative with significantly greater wildlife value.

In addition to its ecological significance, Spicebush has many other characteristics that warrant its use in the landscape. It has fragrant blossoms and very aromatic fruit and foliage when crushed. Tea can be made from the leaves and twigs, and it was traditionally used medicinally. Dried and powdered fruit, with or without the seed, is a passable allspice substitute. Spicebush has, arguably, more seasonal interest than Forsythia. In sunnier sites, the red fruits are complemented with golden fall foliage. In full shade, the form will be more open and fall foliage color less intense. Although one shrub can be a stately specimen, the spring blooming effect and fruit production is best appreciated when they are planted en masse. As with most plants that are dioecious, the male-flowered (staminate) shrubs are showier, but only female shrubs produce fruit. There are a couple cultivated varieties, but they are rare in the trade and do not have many wildlife-friendly traits, so stick with the straight species.

Go ahead, take a look at your Forsythia and compare its attributes with Spicebush. I think the choice is clear.

If you have any questions or comments please contact me at zachrichard021@gmail.com.

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**Spicebush • *Lindera benzoin*  
Laurel Family (Lauraceae)**

* Size: 5–15 feet  
* Light: Shade to Sun (preference is dappled shade)  
* Soil: Circumneutral pH, not fussy  
* Water: Medium to wet (appreciates more moisture if grown in full sun)

From bird dropping to tree snake, the larval instars of the Spicebush swallowtail are champions of mimicry.

Photos by Missouri Department of Conservation Staff
West Shore Rehabilitation Center

On a sunny spring day in Central Pennsylvania, you find a baby bird with no nest or parent in sight; now what? The first step is to contact a local wildlife rehabilitation center, the best option for that baby to have a chance to live in the wild! The rehabilitator can advise you on how to help injured or orphaned wildlife. They will help you determine if the animal will be fine and should be left where it is or if it needs the care of a professional.

Wildlife rehabilitation centers provide a true service to our communities by helping sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife. The newest wildlife rehabilitation center for Central Pennsylvania is West Shore Wildlife Center. Founded in 2019 by Emily Garrigan, a young woman motivated by the mission to “inspire coexistence between humans and wildlife.” This wildlife rehabilitation center is a welcome addition to the central Pennsylvania area as wildlife faces many obstacles such as urban development, habitat destruction and many other human-caused environmental issues. The future of this center is not only to help the wildlife brought in for care, but to provide education and one-on-one counseling to prevent wildlife from needing hands-on assistance. This service can provide an alternative to traditional pest control companies, offering a more environmentally friendly approach. As a non-profit, West Shore Wildlife Center depends on donors and grants to help provide these services to the community.

The need has never been higher, as many centers have seen a boom in their patient numbers. For example, the Wildlife Rehab Center of Minnesota took in 17,600 (+) patients in 2020. West Shore Wildlife Center could see that kind of expansion as the awareness and need continues to grow. In only the first full year, West Shore Wildlife Center took in 1,028 patients. Appalachian Audubon Society encourages all our members to check out West Shore Wildlife Center via https://westshorewildlife.org/, Facebook, or Instagram in order to support their continued efforts to help wildlife in our local communities.

Two Options for Ordering Bird-Friendly Coffee Through AAS

By Lorrie Preston, Chair, Hospitality/Coffee Sale Committee

The next deadline for ordering organic, environmentally-friendly coffee through the chapter is Monday, March 8 at noon. Price is $10 for each one-pound bag, which is payable at delivery the week of March 15. Specify organic Smithsonian Certified Bird-Friendly Regular Guatemalan or organic Rainforest Alliance Certified Swiss Decaf Guatemalan coffees, and also specify either ground or whole bean, along with the quantity (two-pound minimum). Email your order to Lorrie at lpreston5156@gmail.com with “AAS Coffee” in the subject line anytime between now and March 8. We’ll work out a mutually agreeable time and place in the community for safe delivery.

Or, if you prefer, you can order directly through Ragged Edge Roasting Company’s “EightyTwo Cafe” at your convenience. Go to https://www.raggededgerc.com/bird-friendly/ and you will be led through the ordering process. The direct-link ordering method offers you three grind options — Automatic Drip, French Press, or Pour-over. Orders placed by Wednesdays at 9:00pm are prepared for you and shipped out by priority mail on Friday.

AAS has amassed quite a loyal following of coffee customers who not only love the taste of our coffee, but they also love knowing that these shade-grown organic coffees provide clean, healthy habitat for birds and wildlife. Organic coffee is better for their own health, too. Give our coffee a try and see if you agree!
Board Nominations Open

Do you have ideas to improve the work of Appalachian Audubon Society?

Would you like to be more involved in AAS conservation actions?

Or, perhaps you have ideas on how we could reach more people?

Consider joining the AAS Board for 2021/2022. Officer positions of president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary along with three (3) board director positions will be open. Officers serve one-year terms, with the exception of president. The president serves a two-year term. Board directors also serve two-year terms.

If you would like to learn more about serving on the AAS board, please reach out to the 2021 board nominating committee Chris Kemmerer, Ali Bowling, and Rick Price or any of the current board members.

Waterfowl Deliver at Wildwood Lake — November 22, 2020
AAS Field Trip

By Rick Price

On a chilly overcast November morning, nine dedicated birders began their trek down the familiar Towpath Trail in search of ducks, raptors, and cold weather passerines. After a short lull, the action picked up as we approached the Middle Parking lot. We were soon greeted by several Brown Creepers, including a pair that kept us busy for several minutes. Across the lake we could see a young Red-tailed Hawk surveying the shoreline for rodents from his lofty perch. As we headed south along the trail, more and more waterfowl became visible. As we picked our way through the scores of Mallards and Canada Geese, we were rewarded with Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Black Ducks, and the more elusive Northern Shovelers and Pintails. However, the most memorable bird was a Winter Wren we found hopping and skulking in the shoreline brush. All of a sudden, the little secretive wren uncharacteristically appeared and perched in the open. Then it proceeded to scold us for the next few minutes until a passing dog and its owner scared it away. Although we had seen other wrens scold openly, this is the first time most of us had seen this behavior in this stubby-tailed little dark-colored wren. On the return back up the trail, some of us were saddened to see a female Blue-winged Teal swimming about in the canal. It appeared to have an injured wing and had apparently been left behind in fall migration. By the time we headed home to make a hot breakfast, we had totaled a list of 30 species and had much to be thankful for. And a special thanks to all who participated!