PAAC Regional Meetings 2024 Notes
Western PA Meeting at Beechwood Nature Preserve, ASWP, October 5
Central PA Meeting at Fort Henry Barn, October 18
Eastern PA Meeting at Muhlenberg College, November 2

At all the meetings, Leigh gave this presentation
Goal of the meeting:
A forum and opportunity to address items of mutual benefit focusing on strengthening the chapters and functioning effectively as a network!

Attendees for Western PA meeting at Beechwood Nature Preserve on Oct. 5, 2024
Leigh Altadonna, PA Audubon Council President, Liberty Bird Alliance (formerly Wyncote Audubon) Past President
Jim Bonner, Executive Director for Audubon Society of Western PA
Sue Murawski Presque Isle Audubon, President
Paul Borroughs, Presque Isle Audubon, Vice President
Jaimie Miller, Presque Isle Audubon, Board member
Alice Thuran, Seneca Rock Audubon, President
Nancy Cochocki, Seneca Rock Audubon, member
Brian Wango, Allegheny Plateau Audubon, President
Heidi Shiver, Bird Town Pennsylvania, President

Attendees for Central PA meeting at Fort Henry, Oct. 16, 2024
Leigh Altadonna, PA Audubon Council President, Liberty Bird Alliance (formerly Wyncote Audubon) Past President
Jill Zdunczyk, Appalachian Audubon (AAS) Board member
JD Conroy, AAS Board member
Zach Richard, AAS President
Marla Miller, AAS Treasurer
Tess Wilson, Audubon MidAtlantic; Policy Office and Network Engagement Officer
Ted Loy, Lycoming Audubon, Past President
Bruce Buckle, Lycoming Audubon, President
Valerie Barns, Conococheague Audubon, President
Laura Jackson, Juniata Audubon, Conservation and Programs and Partners in Neotropical Bird Conservation Chair
Sally Jeffords, former National Audubon Society Board Member
Sam Radcliffe
Dan Ardia, Franklin and Marshall University, Professor of Biology
Heidi Shiver, Bird Town Pennsylvania President

Attendees for Eastern PA Chapter Gathering at Muhlenberg College, November 2, 2024
Leigh Altadonna, PA Audubon Council President, Liberty Bird Alliance (formerly Wyncote Audubon) Past President
Jason Porter, Liberty Bird Alliance, Secretary and Education and Outreach Committee Liaison

Nilesh Shah, Liberty Bird Alliance, President
Karen Campbell, Lehigh Valley Audubon, conservation chair
Carla Derck, Lehigh Valley Audubon, newsletter editor
Sofia Dubrovskaya, Lehigh Valley Audubon, high school volunteer for education committee
Diane Rudolph, (Deedee), Lehigh Valley Audubon, member
Dawn, Lehigh Valley Audubon, member and updating website
Peter Saenger, Lehigh Valley Audubon, President
Jeff Stratford, Greater Wyoming Valley, Director
Phil Witmer, Valley Forge Audubon, Advocacy Committee, Bird Town PA, Vice President
Karen Clayton, Valley Forge Audubon, Outreach Committee
Mayra Kaye, Valle Forge Audubon, Outreach Committee
Jim Mansfield, Bucks Audubon, Vice President
Steve Cottrell, Delaware Audubon, President
Heidi Shiver, Bird Town Pennsylvania, President

I. For all 3 meetings, Leigh gave this short presentation about the Council's History:
Leigh shared that the Pennsylvania Audubon Council is an independently incorporated IRS 501 (c)3 organization. We serve as a coalition of the Pennsylvania Audubon chapters, who are each independently incorporated in Pennsylvania. Our leadership is comprised of chapter representatives elected each year by the chapter network.

There are other Audubon Councils including Colorado Audubon Council, Kentucky Audubon Council, Illinois Audubon Council, Arkansas Audubon Society, Audubon Council of New York State, Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters and others.

Leigh shared the following brief history:

- Two Council Meetings a Year Supported by the Audubon MidAtlantic Regional Office.
- Incorporated as the Audubon Council of Pennsylvania in 1987.
- Established an Independent State Office
- Advocated for NAS to Identify Pennsylvania as one of the First State Offices; Marcy Mallory was ED for half time and with Walt Pomeroy helping. Worked to raise money to pay her a salary. John Flicker wanted to create Audubon centers – network across the country like MA. Was not sustainable and wanted to start state offices. 10 were created. Gave pitch to Frank Gill, who helped create eBird and with John Flicker were successful and Cindy Dunn was hired as Executive Director. Raised $50-80,000 a year to pay for Marcy. Council was asked to stop raising funds.
- PA Song Curriculum (K-12) was created with a grant and Mallory was the key author, Amy Weidensaul was looking to update before leaving for MA. It is still being offered at local parks. Was a collaboration with US Fish and Game, PA Game and on Audubon. Available still for $18 on Amazon. ACT 48 hours are offered for the workshops.
- Audubon Council of Pennsylvania sunsetted in 1997 and PA was the first state office in the US
- Cindy Dunn Maintained Council Meetings and put a Board together, but eventually stopped.

- Ron Freed served as a Legislative Liaison to the state office and state board and would give updates of the issues.
- Held some chapter meetings a few years ago at Muhlenberg, Oliney, and Succop center and were successful
- NAS MidAtlantic Office closed and ended 'due share' of $5.50 per member in 1987. At that point Chapters were encouraged to become incorporated at that point.
- Regional offices are now more or less the Flyways
- Subsequent Executive Directors Discontinued Regularly Scheduled Gatherings
- Very Rare for Chapters or Groups of Chapters to Meet

Then our new PA Audubon Council was reestablished:

- Audubon Pennsylvania merged with Maryland to form Audubon MidAtlantic
- Sally represented the chapters as Outreach Director for NAS and communicated to the chapters that the merger was happening.
- A Committee of Chapter Leaders Come Together to Assess Need for a Council and invited other council leaders from other states to participate and created a new name
- Several Zoom Chapter Webinars Are Convened in 2020
- Council Leaders from Other States Promote the Value of Councils
- PA Chapter Leaders Endorse the Formation of the Pennsylvania Audubon Council

The new Council focuses on supporting chapters, having an active FB page, a website (currently being updated), addressing sustaining and organizational challenges, promoting virtual and in-person chapter gatherings and encouragement to share what each chapter is doing.

The Council and Advocacy

- Priority Issues Identified through/by the Chapters
- Position Statements
- Council Issue Teams
  - Renewable Energy Committee
  - Bird Friendly Communities Committee
- Conservation Alerts
- Sign-On Letters
- Webinars on Key Issues
- Support of WeConservePA
- Bird Town Pennsylvania
- Walt Pomeroy Conservation Award – Was reinstated and first award was given to Cindy Dunn at her office

The Council and Chapter Support

- Council Focus on Support of Chapters and the Chapter Network of 20 in PA
- Addressing Sustainability and Organizational Challenges
- Chapter Gatherings both Virtual and In Person
- Webinars – NEPA Served as Focus
- Council Facebook

- PAAC Redesigned and Updated Website

The Fall 2024 Chapter Gatherings
A forum and an opportunity to address items of mutual benefit focused on strengthening the chapters and functioning effectively as a network!

Notes from the Western PA Regional Event:

I. Maintaining Histories for Council and Chapters
a. Brian notes that histories are so important and need to be maintained for the council and chapters.
b. Jim suggested having a section on the PAAC website for the history
c. Leigh shared that Wyncote worked with local historical society and archived, inventoried, and eventually digitized the documents. This has also been done for NAS' Hog Island Camp.
d. Alice sees a need to interview older chapter members to capture the history as well.
e. Heidi mentioned that birding data has been preserved at Bucks Audubon through their publication, *Birds of Bucks County* and their 2nd edition is about to be published.
f. Leigh shared that birding data is also preserved on eBird.
g. Name changes will complicate birding data and comments were made about the population declines in Canada Goose, Carolina Wren, warblers, etc. Also, how exciting it was to see the first Cardinals in PA.
h. Sue shared that one of their members created a video on the 1990s of the history of their organization. Was converted to a thumb drive and on YouTube.
i. Alice shared that their documents are in a box at her house.
j. All noted that hard copies are important, need backups.
k. Jim shared that they have archives in the basement
l. Leigh shared how important it is to remember individuals that had high impacts such as John Kreister.

RECOMMENDATION: Create a toolkit for chapters of how best to preserve their important documents and history. Perhaps the Council could serve as a depository.

II. Membership and more
Jim posed: What is membership? Active members who participate in events and volunteer to help.
1. Sue shared that they had new and younger volunteers interested in helping with their Birding Festival.
2. Leigh shared that Wyncote's members are NAS' members (4000) and promote NAS membership. They conduct an annual drive/appeal 2x/year. They've engaged younger people/college students through Bird Safe Philly especially for transporting injured birds. They also offer afterschool programs, nature clubs, school yard bird walks, youth scholarships. Leigh sited one individual who received a scholarship, became a teacher and then a board member, who came up with their new name: Liberty Bird Alliance and chairs their Bird Safe Committee. They also offer birding backpacks but need more data to learn how often they're used.

3. Jim shared that they engage over 26,000 students/year. They have contracts with local school districts and build their programming around their curriculum. They have summer camps including survival, orienteering. They are working with 7 universities and encourage birding and clubs. Paid by a local foundation, they provide field guides, Cornell courses, binoculars, and scopes for each club. Provide international trips. For their clubs, they offer a point system to motivate the members – gamification!
4. Brian shared that they offer birds walks at local colleges and provide a bin of binocs. It's not Audubon on Campus as it's not Advocacy focused.
5. Alice shared that they are rural and have just one local college, Clarion. They were able to get binoculars at 50% off from Vortex.
6. It was suggested to order binoculars in bulk to reduce price. Wyncote has 30 and uses them for their Birdathon and work with LaSalle University.

III. Boards and Leadership

What makes a good leader?

Brings joy to the work, enthusiasm, shows up for meetings, mentors, consults, takes calls, can bounce ideas off and asks insightful questions, respectful of others, challenges and makes sound decisions. It's important that there is a good Board culture and consensus comes easily.

- Jim (Executive Director for 21 years) shared that they have term limits of 3 years with a 2-term limit. They have 12-13 Board members and when leaving they need to help identify their replacement. Also, not all Board members need to be birders.
  He uses a Board metric to make sure he has different demographics including 3 cohorts for age, gender, geographic, expertise such as attorney, finance, marketing, educators. Personal interaction is important. Look at other Boards and donors, too, for ideas. Jim suggests having lunch first, then with other Board members to vet them. Be sure to reference check and let them know the work that they'll be doing.
  Executive Boards should have limited decision making, well defined parameters, pre-authorization for certain decisions and no new initiatives.
- Leigh (was President for 10 years) shared that they have 18 Board members and just recently added term limits. They added an attorney to their Board. A good question is: Do you want to be a stream or a pond? referring to always the same ideas from the same folks or having an influx of new ideas and perspectives from new members. Many felt the Board was the 'in crowd' and not accessible. They have a nominating committee. They recruit from local watershed associations and other community groups. Board members should have a commitment to supporting birds. They hold meetings every month.
- Brian (President for 10 years) suggested visiting the site Non-profit Talent (https://nonprofittalent.com/) to post for board positions. Community Foundations, Graduate Schools for students. They hold their Board meetings every month.
- Sue (President for 6 years) shared that they recruit through their newsletter and have fun, like-minded members on their Board. They hold Board meetings every other month and have 15 Board members.
- Alice (President 2.5 years) shared that they have 4 Board meetings with executive board meetings in-between.

New Board Orientation (Jim)

Strategic plan, Bylaws, Insurance, Conflict of Interest Letter, Responsibilities of the Board members, Board self-assessment form (did they attend meetings, etc.)

ACTION: Jim, please share your full item list for new Board Orientation.

IV. Chapter Share

Audubon Society of Western PA (Jim)

They've added a new website: Buffalo Creek Coalition (https://buffalocreekcoalition.org/) and currently reworking the main website. The Buffalo Creek Watershed is 170 sq miles, includes 22 municipalities, 3 school districts and have received substantial funding for riparian buffer plantings, for easements, etc. They monitor water quality and collect data.
They're Certified Habitat Program has over 1000 homes enrolled with +200 added per year (waiting list already with 100 for 2025), 1200 acres certified, 10x the size of the Beechwood property. Participants must take educational programming with the cost of $60 for members and $90 for non-members and they each have at least 1 site visit, sometimes 2x and then receive a sign. They're mailed information ahead of time and must report what they've done. There is a tiered system with Champion, Guardian and Hero and rewarded with a point system and they meet to share and connect, creating a supportive community. A native plant tour is being considered. They've received funding for anther 100+ homes in the Mon Valley (environmental justice area) which includes 5 municipalities.
They've also added Bird Town as an additional incentive and means to acknowledge the work being done in the local municipalities, adding 10 already just since Spring 2024.

Allegheny Plateau (Brian)

Using his website, which he regularly updates (https://www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org/), Brian shared about their work including their hawk watch which also includes lodging, a junior hawk watch program, Dunning Creek Wetlands, 500 acres and great for migrants with trails and 10 ponds. They also do Saw-whet owl banding in the fall with Dave Dorney (for 30 years). At their Monarch station, they do banding and have added monitors. They send out 350 printed newsletters to members and have newsletters on their website dating back to 1984 and also have an active Facebook page.

Presque Isle Audubon (Jaimie)

They hold their Festival of Birds each May for 3 days and have extended Friday hours and will be adding more hours next year. They have a max of 150 for registration with a total of 200 including all the volunteers.

Seneca Rocks (Alice)

They hold a native plant sale in June, in their 3rd year, which has given life to their chapter. They grow all the plants (in Alice's home and she has a growing license for $45 from USDA), do programming including winter sowing, create and maintain community gardens at Janice Horn Memorial Park and all plants are labeled. For 25 years they host the Common Nighthawk migration count for 3 weeks from Mid August to Sept. 6. Also, have a Chimney Swift tower.

V. Bird Walks and Master Birder Program
Jim shared that they have been offering this for over 6 years. They have 16 participants at a time, who have some birding experience and it's structured similarly to the Master Gardener Program where they having to give a certain amount of volunteer hours back each year. They learn to bird by ear and do ID training and do numerous field trips/bird walks for training.

Bird Walks and Programming in General:
Promote programming such as Feeder Watch at Senior Centers, YMCAS and Libraries
Offer Specialty Walks such as Owl Prowls, Birdability, Fall Warbler Walk, Singles, LGBTQ, In Color Birding Clubs/Walks

VI. Bird Habitat Recognition Program:

- Leigh shared that AMA is no longer running the program. PAAC is considering adopting the program and checking for interest. There will be start-up fees for signs, etc. Complaints included not receiving info for applicants in chapter territories which meant loss of potential members and volunteers. Leigh showed the IBA sign of how multiple logos could be included.
- Allegheny Front, Seneca Rocks and Presque Isle all agreed that they have interest in using the program.
- Suggestions included: could have self-certifying option with video (but who would view it), QR Code, will provide general public engagement, needs a centralized database, their logos added was important, signs could be created on demand.
- Steering Committee: Alice said she might be interested.

VII. Advocacy:
Leigh shared about WeConservePA with Brad as the legislative lead to give consultations, quarterly calls via zoom. We will need to review priorities and see if there are changes.
Addressing Bird Window Collision – there's a PPP and there's new NAS info and brochure.

Notes from the Central PA Regional Event:

I. Susquehanna Riverlands Bird Conservation Summit, Dan Arida
Dan Arida, Franklin and Marshall College Professor, Ornithologist, focuses on the ecostudy of climate change on birds, bird adaptability, and landscape fragmentation, works with Lancaster Land Conservancy, looking at mammal communities and acoustic monitoring for birds and bats.

DCNR provides mini-grants for municipalities and Dan applied for funding for monitoring equipment. DCNR liked the idea and but provided funding instead to support a Susquehanna Riverlands Bird Conservation Summit. All the chapters signed on to support it. Dan was the main writer, and it was successfully funded. The summit will be held in 2025 focusing on Bird Conservation.
The goals for the summit are to bring better understanding of conservation for birds in Lancaster Co. including migratory challenges, urban issues, create awareness of key conservation, private and public partnerships. He's narrowed the focus for the summit to

five topics: 1. forest habitat – breeding birds, 2. grassland birds and improving habitat, 3. migratory stopovers and 4. human impacts – lights out and collision and 5. community outreach and science.
Partners to be likely involved: PAAC Council, Franklin and Marshall College, Millersville University, Kutztown University, PA Game Commission, State scientists to be included, US Fish and Wildlife, Riverkeeper (Lycoming Riverkeeper very active with acoustic monitoring), Lancaster and York Land Trusts, Lancaster Conservancy (silent partner as Dan is on the Board), the Bureau of Forestry of DCNR with Roy Brubaker, a District Forester who is doing a study to monitor in the Michaux Forest to reestablish good habitat, and the conservation and forestry team of Audubon Mid-Atlantic Alliance.

Dan solicited other suggestions for partnering and these were mentioned:

- Dwanye Estes – SE Grassland Institute recommended by Jill.
- Dept. of Agriculture suggested by Laura and practices of how to benefit wildlife;
- TROGS Brewery – great with conservation – good for field trip or sponsor;
- PA Native Plant Society - Linda B.
- Lancaster Native Plant Alliance – good at organizing, Jill on Board of PA Native Plant Society; Lancaster Bird Club with Ted
- Bird Towns to help with municipal leaders and homeowner engagement;
- State of knowledge and determine what is being done first is Dan's first priority.
- Consider Bird Safe Philly and Harrisburg Lights Out and work with AAS for human impacts
- Participants are the same as partners
- Funds will be used for food, vans for trips,
- Intended and funded for: Lower Susquehanna - Dauphin County and below

Date suggestions:

- have a weekday event and more likely to have professionals,
- have Friday and field trips on Saturday.
- For field trips, visit 2 farms and transformed to no mowing and dedicated to wildlife – Marla suggested this – Tom Keller, Shippensburg, Dickinson might also be welcomed.
- Bryan Burn – staff and President of PSO and part of IBA project – he may be of helpful and worked with farmers in Middle Creek with Snow Geese.

Format:

- short presentations
- break-out rooms

Dan shared reflections from the American Ornithological Society Conference:

- 1000 Ornithologist at Estes Park
- Focus on bird collisions: want to make campuses better, bring existing knowledge about and stop collecting carcases; ;
- Acoustic monitoring devices – what to do with the data and how to handle the data; give resources ;
- Breeding Bird Atlas, Climate Change and effects on birds, environmental variation;

- Climate Watch – Audubon collecting this data – forecast of how ranges are changing.

II. Brad Barkdoll (Advocacy), WeConservePA

Brad is a consultant for the Council and is

- providing education about our work
- support for Council's High Priority Conservation Issues
- assist members and beyond
- access to conservation easements library
- provide technical assistance
- has 75 organizations under their wing – 100,000 staff and volunteers at your hand to help;
- new hire Justine – attorney and revamping docs
- GIS support
- manages growing greener coalition including land trusts, clean energy groups such Penn Future (friends with Ezra Thrush and from same community) , conservation voters of PA, etc. to boost funding;
- sets up an event to see about need for funding with legislators;
- closely works with many agencies;

Bills that they focused on this year:

1. Volunteer Liability – Pennyback Friends group sued and had to fold; Bill to provide protection for volunteers – stalled due to trial attorneys; punted to later.
2. Community Gardens for cities – have been maintaining the space for now just 10 years can claim title to the property.
3. Ag Preservation bill – through county – 58 have active conservation districts; funds returned to be used to preserve land. Did not get put on the schedule – 6-7 years working on this and still not passed;
4. Growing Greener Coalition: – New Clean Stream Fund – tech and best practices for ag property $120,000 funding; looking take from gaming fund – not game commission.

Matt Bradford reached out a larger investment for Environment and package – healthier environment for all – larger package for next 1.2 billion – will be on ballot referendum to support this funding – to borrow $ and how to pay it back. Watershed and stream restoration; land conservation, ag preservation; outdoor recreation for state parks; community and school projects, etc. searching bipartisan support

5. Community Solar – make it to Senate and lots of bipartisan support; held up by an ED outside of legislators
6. Solar for Schools did pass
7. Light Pollution – Bill 1805 – held up
8. Bird Safe Glass – Klem Act – no cosponsor – bird walk and talk – languishing at the federal level as well. Napolean /Ben Sanchez try to reintroduce bill – for only state buildings, new or refurbished building and including schools. At least glass be addressed for where education takes place;

Advice about Action Alerts:

- don't send letters when in committee

- Chapters are critical for advocacy because we're local and may be on your mailing list
- members can go to the district office.
- Bird Walk and Talk – let Brad know and feedback loop – have a topic to share and build a relationship; info sheets are available

<u>When reaching out to legislator: Order of effectiveness</u>

- In person meeting
- Phone call
- Email - catchy subject line
- Snail mail

III. Chapter Share

Appalachian Audubon Society: Zach Richard (President)

- There are excited to be working with Bird Town and have 4 Birds Towns now in their territory just starting this year.
- Own Trout Run Nature Preserve which was gifted in 2022 since it couldn't be developed
  - first controlled burn to control canary grass from 80% to 20%
  - two parcels of land and would like to expand it with possible local farms properties that come available
  - They have a master naturalist and board member that does monthly education there to bring awareness.
  - Messiah College did a bioblitze on the property using iNaturalist.
  - Birdability – a viewing deck and want to redo a step so it's more assessable.
  - Their 30 year anniversary coming up!
  - They give 1-2 scholarships per year with the Tom Johnson Memorial Scholarship for 14-17 ages to Hog Island Audubon Camp. Considering doing a field trip there for Board.
  - Support the Camps at Wildwood Park and Ned Smith Center
- Fundraisers from member donations; bird friendly coffee with Bantam; hold an Annual Online Silent Auction hold in the spring (use Bidding Owl which is seamless); Bonfire store that sell s merch, fall and spring native plant sales, sell bird seed sale every Nov. and Dec. with Agway in Mechanicsburg.
- Community engagement: Kingfisher Courier – bimonthly, PA Young Birders Club – Hog Island graduate and she created a club – 10-12 kids for 7-teens; Birds and Coffee tabling event and hang out, partnered with WildOnes to create a native plant brochure for HOAs and municipalities, local school becoming an ecovillage with largest chimney swift colony and working with the Bridge on this and youth education for underserved communities; summer camp event and partner with the local schools to do this all year. Redoing Birdy Dozen Rack Cards 2025.
- Involvement: WildOnes, Project Owlnet – 2 banding events, PA Bird Atlas, Falcon watch and rescue; Lights out for 3 years with Harrisburg – need to engage more with legislators and do a collision monitoring pilot. Have a rehabber ready to go and working with PA Game Commission and salvage permits. Have tried with radio and TV to get more on board – they dim the dome. PA Game Commission to make a priority and show on their map for whole state. Lancaster Birding Club has shown interest. Rachel Carson Bldg an important focus.

Conococheague – Val (President)

A new Board member is an attorney and he suggested that they need a waiver form, directors and officers' liability insurance, children protect clearance forms, conflict interest forms – have samples and created a toolkit which can be made available for all chapters.

Tess suggested that there's a chapter orientation kit. Here's the link: https://nationalaudubon.app.box.com/s/l7fpgxyqosjrylcez3zcir06uha0ln67

Lycoming Audubon – Bruce (President)

- Addressing local lands and how their developed including a 200-acre natural area adjacent to Williamsport which is a productive wetlands and managed by municipal authority. The chapter is working with them to create a management plan to address invasive species with a $800,000 grant; 2nd property is 900-acre Rider Park and working with Audubon MidAtlantic for a $10,000 grant for developing a management plan to improve the property.
- Holding a number of events including tabling events, working with 2 school areas for an environthon, working with other organization including college, PA Game Commission, conservation district stations
- Provide two $500 scholarships for students
- Developed a strategic plan with focus on conservation, education, chapter viability and engagement and building infrastructure of the chapter and need to support committee chairs.
- Have good financial viability.
- Have 300 NAS members assigned by zipcode with about 100 regular participants; Dan Braun– active member in their chapter;
- Have an active FB page with O Birds – Bobby, a birding expert, provides a biweekly bird quiz with a 280 Listserv

Juniata Audubon (Laura)

- Have 600 members with NAS and core of 30-40.
- Sending final paper copy of newsletters this month as was too expensive.
- Work with 4 different libraries including a Trick or Tweat event making bird feeders;
- Held a fundraiser – Earth week Classic and partner with Penn State Altoona and for the week teams do birding for 24 hrs and hold a festival at the end. $ divided to sustainable council at Altoona and then local grants.
- Do Birdy Dozen;
- Active with Keystone's million tree project
- Tagged, sorted 5000 trees and shrubs
- Started Shade grown coffee work in 2014 when Laura found a Golden winged warbler on their own property and looked to support the whole life cycle of the warbler. After a PSO mtg, Laura saw a sign at local coffee shop and contacted a Honduras farmer living in Chambersburg over 10 years ago. He finally received Smithsonian certification (required to donate 25% of profits for this designation) and has sold $20-30,000 coffee. Laura visited his farm in 2016 and saw the Golden winged warblers there on his property. Don't make much profit but all funds go to Honduras. Funded a Bird Festival there and University students taught the elementary school students and formed a birding club.

They also help scarlet macaw and sent $1000 to help rebuild a rehab center damaged by a hurricane.

- "Birds in my Garden" – popular program that Laura has given over 12x especially to Garden clubs about native plants.

IV. Challenges:

1. Recruiting diversity and younger members:

a. Bruce from Lycoming, shared that they have a Strategic Plan which has helped focus their work. For every 10 people they talk with they might get 1 Board member. It takes time and effort in building relationships. It's important to plant a seed - may take a year or more. Person to person and persistence is a key to success.

b. Make it more horizontal – any board member can lead a meeting or do administrative tasks and lead an event.

c. Engage with churches and after-school groups and local colleges.

d. Val shared that they had to change their bylaws to accommodate need for officers and also allow for previous presidents to serve. They are also doing horizontal leadership and encourage board members to move to serve on committees/

e. Zach shared that they've been successful with officers and set up a nominating committee in winter before elections in May – have 2 year terms.

2. Owning sanctuary and issues

a. DCNR maintenance staff/management managers – Joshua Butz – may be a good source for helping with land managements ; AAS uses Eli.

b. Valley Forge and Wyncote Audubon jettison some properties because of upkeep; AAS had more before.

3. Diversity on Boards

a. Zach said that they do and work with "The Bridge" which works with lower income areas, and they provide bird walks in Harrisburg to reach out to them.

b. Wyncote has a youth position and when they become 18 some stay on Board.

V. Bird Habitat Recognition Program:

a. Support for program: Juniata, Lycoming and Sally from Lancaster all agreed that they would support the program. Conococheague said probably.

b. Suggestions

- Would like to see it Online using a QR Code
- Jill suggested obtaining a Solicitor permit and make a door hanger rack card.
- Annual Local membership – you will receive a membership to your local chapter. Laura also liked the idea of membership. Reach out to chapter if a homeowner couldn't meet the requirements
- Instead of preprinting – stickers could be added – Val suggested – leave a space for sticker for Chapter logos

c. Steering committee member interest? Laura and Jill
d. Advantages: add to Listserv for each chapter; education and engagement strategy
e. Tess confirmed it would be no issue for Council to take on this. Tess and Erin to help.

VI. Website Feedback
Function and Flower redesigned the website.
Just review on your own – had some tech difficulties
State reps are included? Don't need governor, etc.

VII. History for Chapters

- Juniata hired college intern to download all their newsletters

Notes from the Eastern PA Chapter Gathering at Muhlenberg College, November 2, 2024

I. Council History Additions and Comments
a. Tiadaughton was first chapter in the state, Valley Forge was 3, NAS expected chapters to run field trips, do 6 newsletters/yr (Peter asked for consideration to do 4), do conservation projects and funds were given to chapter to do this. Prior to 1987, $5.85 per member for due share was given. At Canoe state park, Audubon Council of PA was incorporated and also where concerns were raised regarding the loss of due share and closing regional offices. Proxy campaign was created to offer a ballot of alternate Board members. A NAS Resolution was passed with 9 chapter members nominated to serve on the NAS Board.

b. Funding for PAAC is thus far from personal donations and from some Chapters

c. Regarding Chapter's relationship with the current council, Nilesh shared that it provides an opportunity to learn what each chapter is doing and what are the best practices. Heidi mentioned that now that there's a regional office, the council is where the chapters in PA can have a special forum to focus on issues special to PA. Leigh shared that all the chapters voted for the current and past board members and many participate in the webinars. PAAC is looking for ways to collaborate with AMA.

II. Shared Challenges and Solutions
Leigh shared about a possibly still relevant book, *Making Things Happen*, by Scott Berkus, which provides helpful tips for management and leadership.

A. Membership:
Jim from Bucks Audubon (BCAS) noted that other national conservation organizations have better synergy and provide benefits for their local national and chapters than NAS. BCAS receives good donations but not growing membership.

Who has dual membership? BCAS & Lehigh Valley (holding 300 members) (local membership recognized only); Membership asks for a specific amount where annual giving fund is more open ended.

Lehigh Valley Audubon uses Facebook with 4,400 members and Meet-up which have helped with engaging with members. They don't acknowledge the NAS members. They also do grant writing and don't do annual appeals but still receive donations. They have invested in many nesting boxes and had 800 fledgling purple martins from their purple martin condos. Phil Witmer recommends putting extra monies into a rainy-day fund. For over $50,000 just need to file additional tax filing or if lots of extra, could hire a professional accountant to manage additional paperwork.

Liberty Bird Alliance members are only NAS members (2800) and they don't ask for additional funding. They use a printed and mailed annual appeal and they do very well. They conduct a Birdathon for the spring. NAS funds are only 10% of their budget. They're all volunteers and don't have time to manage a membership list. An eNewsletter is sent to all members and they have a 50% open rate. Besides members, they still have participants attending their events who are welcome to participate. It's challenging to find volunteers and attract folks to work. They have a large and active Board which is doing the work of the committees (20-30 members). With Education and Outreach and other committees, they're trying to create an ambassador program and asking for specific asks to help support more programming.

Sophia shared that any approved agency can attract volunteers from local school districts for volunteer hours that they need to meet. There's a list of 140 approved organizations that the students can choose from. High School students in her district in Lehigh Valley need 60 hours for graduation over 4 years. If they have more, they get recognized at graduation. The app is called helperhelper.com.

Nilesh shared that companies also requires their employees to volunteer such as Jefferson. Heidi shared also about Penn Community Bank's employee volunteer day and their generous donation to Bird Town PA.

Phil shared that the DVOC has 2 types of membership – lifetime which can be given over a few years (goes into fund and has grown to pay 50% of the operating fees) and annual membership.

NAS still provides a stipend but no due-share.

Steve from Delaware Audubon has 2000 NAS members and they receive around $5000 yearly still. They hold an annual appeal at the end of year, but don't have separate local members. They use the NAS member list and their own mailing list via email. Paper mailing annual appeal requests were more successful for receiving donations.

B. Leadership and Diversity

1. Liberty Bird Alliance: Leigh shared about youth rep, Ava, on their Board, who helped identified their new name. Their bylaw were changed to ensure turnover and a nominating committee was created to look for potential new board members, especially new people and they've had a complete turnover. Leigh emphasized that you need to really work at it and develop relationships. Consider using your network and local watershed relationships to identify new Board members. Nilesh shared that he knew Jason from scouts and is a member from DVOC. Professionals such as a CPAs and Financial Directors are helpful to have on the Board to review what they're doing. It's important to develop real and active committees of more than 1 person so it's successful. They have a 3-year term limit and must have a succession plan. Culturally, though they had very long serving presidents, in the earlier years, one president served 30 years. Board members must be committee chairs and they meet quarterly.

2. Lehigh Valley Audubon has the requirement for Board members where they must first serve as a volunteer for 2 years. All are invited but to vote must have served 2 years. Peter has been President for 21 years and actively working to update Bylaws but have no term limits. Committee Chairs don't have to be board member. Dawn got involved because she saw a story about their work in the newspaper and noticed that they needed help with their newsletter. Carla also got involved due to their needs shared in their newsletter. DeeDee had frustration figuring out how to join and recommended providing more clear information on their website. She googled birding in area and found Lehigh that way and it was challenging though.

Many don't understand the structure of Audubon: Federal, Regional/State, Local Chapters.

3. Bucks Audubon has a 2 term limits – 6 years total. All Board members must serve on a committee. Many start as a committee member so the Board and Executive Director can get to know them and then invite them to be a Board member if they would be a good fit.

4. DVOC: Phil share that they have a training track which included 2 years as secretary, 2 years as VP and 2 years as President and 2 years of Past President.

5. How do you hold on to old board members and preserve the institution memory?
It was suggested creating a Trustee or Advisory Committee and shown as emeritus and pulled in as needed and invited to important meetings and events. Diane shared at her company they use experienced members as subject matter expert.

6. Delaware Ornithology Society (DOS) offers bird walks and Steve shared that it's better to collaborat with them than compete. Delaware focuses on their ongoing projects.

7. Greater Wyoming Valley, Jeff was a local member and the Board reached out. They're very small and he thinks committee members should be on the Board. They have good turnout at bird walks and work with local state parks.

C. Collaboration on Conservational Issues of Highest Priority

1. Bird Window Collision: Dr. Klem was nominated by Presque Isle and Lehigh Valley Audubon Chapters for the Walter Pomeroy Award. Bird Collison is the one of highest priorities for supporting and educating about bird mortality for the Council. Klem was not taken seriously initially or found relevant. Most recent research shows that 1-3 billion/year birds are identified as being killed by reflective surfaces in the US alone; 3.5 million per day in the US. Birds killed by cats is 2.5 billion which competes with that number now. Klem was Peter's professor in 1980s and now his boss. Klem professorship and Peter, as museum manager, are fully endowed by Acopian. Sarkis Acopian also paid for the renovation of the center and also was a major benefactor for many universities including Lafayette and Hawk Mountain. They've published 3 books.

Leigh shared that with a $5000 NAS grant, the Bird Collison Working Group was created, which developed a toolkit, through meetings with Dr. Klem and several SE Audubon members. They offer NAS webinars and also for chapters and share how they can get involved with this. A presentation was given with Dr. Klem, DVOC, Wyncote, Audubon PA and held at the Academy of Sciences in Philadelphia with 112 attendees. A survey of the participants found that many were aware of the issue but not taking action. A turnkey kit with PP (72 slides) with full narration was created and available now on the NAS website, including their newest brochure. Also, from the feedback at the event, people don't want to be inundated with dead birds as they find it off putting.

Peter and Leigh are doing a presentation in WV in Nov. 15 and they're happy to do this for any chapters as well via Zoom. NAS link: https://www.audubon.org/our-work/cities-and-towns/lights-out

2. Federal Bird Safe Building Act

Leigh and Peter worked with 2 local legislators as 2nd year to support a Bird Safe Building Act and call it the Klem Act, including most of the wording from the Federal version. It was a House Reps Napoleon Nelson from Philly and Montco, including Ben Sanchez. Leigh first took them for a bird walk and hawk watch. From the PA Act, Lighting language was removed because of Dark Skies International, and it included any new state structures or 50% renovated and also schools in PA. The Act made it as far as a colleague letter, looking for co-sponsors but it never was introduced.

Ben will connect with Leigh and Dan Arida and look to broaden coalition such as with PSO, Bird Safe Philly after the election. Dark Skies bill didn't make any head way either.

Jim from BCAS shared about the LED light shows intended for the New Hope Bridge. BCAS contacted the bridge commission and were just ignored. Leigh recommended contacting NAS, New Jersey Audubon and local Birds Towns including Solebury.

Phil shared that he met with Radnor Planning Commission, and was told that they can't exceed state guidelines. Often Bird Towns and EAC aren't aware of buildings being built to even raise issues regarding lighting and collision.

3. Conservation Priority Issues
Leigh shared that chapters met and identified these issues 2 years ago and they will be reassessed again.

What is the best voice for the chapters to address this?
Nilseh suggested asking for a call for what other issues should be considered that are not hyper local. He also shared that we already have a list, so show the progress and report on what has already been done.
Jim from BCAS would like guidance of what they should be focusing on. Leigh said that we will address early January after the election and holidays. Nilseh points out that issues such as single-use plastics, there has been a lot done and we should share the successes. This issue, for example, could it be removed from the list.

Karen Campbell from Lehigh Valley mentioned that the PA Council Executive Board level of work has been productive but really more working level actions need to be done. Smaller working groups/advocacy committee zoom meetings needed to be coordinated.

Jeff shared that he serves on the Ornithological Technical Committee (20 members) which advice the PA Game Commission, and provides a summary that could be shared with the PSO. They could take their findings and run with it. The OTC has created a Wildlife Action Plan for all the grassland birds and ranked all their needs and it will be coming out soon. Bird Friendly communities' committee can address this too and use this info.

What is the status of IBAS and how do they intersect with these plans so they can be managed properly since these lands are not protected? Bird Life International created this and each country has a contract with BLI. Audubon was the contractor for US and a protocol was created in PA. There are 90 in PA.

RECOMMENDATION: IBA map could be an overlay on the PAAC website.

WeConservePA: Leigh shared that Brad will provide guidance regarding our issues, give us updates of PA legislation, and will be a valuable resource for our council and chapters.

Solar for Schools was successful. Fiedler was the sponsor from Philadelphia. Several alerts were sent out and it finally passed. 4.5 million has been allocated for schools. He recommends that chapters and bird towns should contact their school boards and work to install solar in local schools. Monies have just released and it's time for local action. More money is needed to be addressed in next session. Cost share – schools will have to pay for half of the project. How do we know which districts are doing this? Fielder's office should know. Jason suggested that they could also add other issues such as window collision and lighting.

DeeDee asked about the reflectivity of solar panels regarding collision. Peter sited there was one instance in CA by ducks. Environmental impact study should be made.

Utility scale solar can take up important habitat. Brown fields or roof tops put over parking lots or turnpikes or (Sweden over train tracks) were recommended. Penn Future has been fighting a project in the Poconos on close to 500 acres to be deforested of hillside by a high-quality stream which flows into the Delaware. Some modifications were made, but it went through.

D. Chapter Sharing
Bucks Audubon - Jim
Situated on 110 forested acres in central Bucks County, BCAS has a large environmental center, 6 miles of trails, a pond and steam. They are working to restructure their pond and noted that it's very demanding to take care of a large property. They are working with the local township to consider bringing back weddings and large events to help raise money. Their large solar array provides all their electric and they receive monthly kickbacks. They hold a Summer Camp for 5-12 years. They also held a I Bird/I vote event o 10/10 with Tim Hayes and Ezra Thrush from Penn Environment and coordinated it with Audubon MidAtlantic. They held a pumpkin carving on 10/16 which were used to line the trails for the Haunted trails event on 10/19. They also offer school holiday camps as needed, hold bi-weekly bird walks, and recently completed an environmental study: The Honey Hollow Watershed Inventory 2022 for reviewing the flora and fauna of the property. The study shows tremendous change from climate change.

Delaware Audubon - Steve
Steve has lead there since early the 90s especially focusing on the protecting of the Red knot as listed threatened in 2015 and still declining. Numbers used to be 100,000 and down to 1,000 or less in Delaware. Numbers better in NJ since ban on horseshoe crab but passing a ban has not been successful in DE. The Horseshoe Crab Coalition has been created including pharmaceutical companies, Audubon, and others to promote protection for horseshoe crabs. Legislation in NY in both houses passed full ban in NY state but waiting to sign it and waiting after election. They would be joining SC, CT and NJ for this ban and DE is the only state that hasn't passed one yet. A Eli Lilly researcher is an avid birder and has been working with scientists and created an alternative synthetic form. Just recently, United States Pharmacopeia, a quality standards group that indicates which tests are accepted in manufacturing, has published for early adoption a policy that now allows the use of non-animal derived tests. This change will benefit and protect wildlife as well as improve accuracy within the pharmaceutical testing process. https://www.pcrm.org/news/good-science-digest/historic-policy-change-pharma-now-has-green-light-save-horseshoe-crabs. Farmers are still harvesting and the most in DE.

They offer small grant programs to grad students and public to do independent research for one for $3000 for a short-term project. At their annual dinner, the recipient will give results to their project.

Steve was first started as a plant guy and now a birder and he focuses on invasive plant removal. There as been a tremendous loss of habitat from invasive plants. He noted that he met and worked with Steve Saffier and Doug Tallamy, Professor at University of DE. DE Native Species Commission, Senator Hansen, was prodded to introduce legislation to ban sell of

invasive plants – invasive species council ranked and created a list of 37 which were recommended to be banned. It passed unanimously 3 years ago. Nurseries had 2 years to clear nurseries and now banned from selling these invasives. In New Castle, Steve has been clearing 877 acres of invasives in the Middle Run Natural Area.
(Pre and Post emergent chemical is needed to address stilt grass. Oust was the name of the chemical and works with hops and mile a minute.)

Lehigh Valley Audubon (LVAS) - Peter
Peter shared that they have a great and active group and have provided 2 birding backpacks for a number of local libraries with discounted Kowa binoculars and bilingual birding info. They're applying for another grant again. They've been meeting with Bethlehem Library, and also with Easton and Allentown, to include a journal to share what and when a bird was seen. They support Chimney swift towers using fireproof siding recycled cardboard with colored cement. Peter saw some in bundles and asked for damaged product. They received a tractor trailer of the material – be careful what you asked for. It was used for towers all over the area. Leftovers were purchased by a contractor, and they used the funds to buy purple martin condos. Leaser Lake and Minsi Lake and Northampton Park Service through partnerships have a 5-year color banded project of purple martins. They've had lots of success and banded 800 nestlings last year.

Their Education Committee worked with 900 six-graders at table events and many more throughout the valley. Environment of the Americas has great merch and Wild Delight offers a free kid's booklet. Their Youth coordinator was a student and now a director of their local nature centers, who does a lot of public outreach to schools. LVAS provides funding for busing or they go into the schools, conducts a CBC for kids in January, Breeding Bird Atlas for Kids in the summer and all well attended. Must limit 15 for event because adults are required to attend with children. Working with the *Ideal Program* – university study out of NC University for beta test – inclusive program targeting for involvement in CBC and received $1000 grant to support their work. They also sold 3000 copies each of 1st and 2nd edition of local bird guide and working on their next version.

They recommend to always have meaningful ideas for when someone reaches out to volunteer. Barbara Malt started an Audubon College Program at Lehigh University with already 120 people signed up.

Liberty Bird Alliance - Nilesh
Nilesh shared there has been a lot of change which used to be Wyncote Audubon with leadership change in July and also built a new strategic plan with the help with Phil Witmer facilitating. They changed their name and built a 3-legged plan. Anyone can participate even if not a member. Once a year they publish a printed newsletter called *Naturally*, conduct a lot of Citizen Science programs and spear headed *Bird Safe Philly* along with Valley Forge Audubon. They're working to engage with schools called Bird Safe School and also working with local nature centers to addressing their windows including currently the Schuylkill nature center. The 3 legs – help conserve birds through citizen watch such as Climate watch, Birdathon,

FeederWater GBBC, and then the Education pillar which includes outreach and schools and then Advocacy work.

Greater Wyoming Valley (Wilkes Barre) Jeff
Jeff shared that their outreach includes sponsoring 2-3 campers for the NAS Hog Island Camp, table events, building bird houses, conduct some school outreach and working with libraries too, and have a newsletter. They received a small grant from Audubon to provide a backpack program which includes a bird book and binoculars. Also, they have a speaker per month and bird walk, and have created a pollinator garden at Moonlight State Park.

Valley Forge Audubon - Mayra
In 2023, 144 programs were offered with over 3174 participants, hold 6-8 bird walks a week, Owl Prowls, Kayaking, in person and virtual webinars, including intro to bird song. They also hold native plant sales, and conduct citizen science programs such as the GBBC and the CBC. They hold an annual social meeting with a special guest/speaker in August, with this year over 100 attending. Youth are more involved and they also have an intern. They have a Young Birder Club and also provide a scholarship to send students to NAS Hog Island Camp.

Also, their advocacy committee has been focusing on the Subaru building to address the collisions there but unfortunatley not making much progress there. A founding group member of Bird Safe Philly is their last president, Vincent Smith.

Patty Werth will be giving a power point of how they almost folded and how they came back and recovered. They revamped their website and have a store, using Threadless. The secret to their success is having more volunteers because of passionate leaders, who are not all on their board. Note that an expert birder is not needed to lead a bird walk so can offer more. They use Meet up, have an active and great FB page, Instagram and have a calendar. They've found that it works best to send out notification just the week before since folks don't forget that they signed up.

Side conversation about Mobilize as an app national Audubon is sharing for chapters to use.

National Audubon has a larger list of members than what they share with chapters.

Stipends to individual chapters for the number of members each chapter has.

E. Bird Habitat Recognition Program Feedback
What is the objective? It's to educate, provide engagement, promote PAAC, Chapters and Bird Town, can be used to help find volunteers, create community, access to Bird Beat to provide education and inspiration, add to chapter mailing lists, encourage to become members, it's the only PA focused program, only Bird focused program.
Interested in this program: BCAS, Greater Wyoming, Lehigh Valley, Valley Forge, Liberty Bird (lukewarm), Delaware

Steering Committee: Steve Cottrel, Jason would like to know about meeting.

Comments: If an applicant is not meeting criteria, but could encourage them to move towards the goals of the program. Could be scored online? Using Google forms says Jason.
Maintain quality standard but will be honor system. QR Code on sign to fill out form or provide info or share a workshop about value of native plants. Window decal for urban setting.

F. New PAAC Website Feedback

RECOMMENDATION: Use different colors for chapters and be thoughtful of color-blind folks.