

# **TORCH CLUB OF CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA**

## **9 April 2025 meeting**

President Terry Engelder called the meeting to order at 6:48 pm. There were 24 persons present. Larry Ragan introduced Brian Dempsey, a retired professor of civil engineering, and proposed him for membership. He was accepted unanimously.

Webmaster John Golbeck reported that about eighty percent of the members have updated their biographical information. Members can see the bios by typing in their search engines "Central Pennsylvania Torch," to access our club's website.

Vice President Carolyn Wilhelm will recruit candidates for officer positions in the 2025-26 year and passed around a paper to recruit members to give talks next year, especially those who haven't spoken recently. She may also invite one speaker from outside our club.

Bob Igo introduced Larry Ragan. His topic was "Learning about Nature using AI and other Technology." Larry gave a spirited and well-illustrated talk about the technology of Artificial Intelligence and its applications for the study of nature, especially bird watching. He examined the dual impact of artificial intelligence and related technologies on our engagement with multiple aspects of nature. He explored the educational benefits and novel ways to appreciate the natural world offered by these advancements, providing details of specific AI applications such as PictureThis and Merlin. Simultaneously, Larry critically analyzed the potential drawbacks, including ethical concerns, environmental impact, and the risk of technology becoming an obstacle to genuine nature immersion. He also warned against the possible dangers of overreliance on the applications he described. A lively discussion ensued, especially on birdwatching.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Next program will feature Walt Ebaugh, speaking on the history of Rideau Canal, 14 May.

A member noted the passing of Mary Deutsch, member Frank Deutsch's wife, on 28 March. Memorial service will take place in Good Shepherd Catholic Church on 24 May, 1-2:30 pm., to be followed by a celebration of her life in Tom Tudek Park.

Respectfully submitted,

Art Goldschmidt, secretary