



# THE DRUMMER



[www.senecarocksaudubon.org](http://www.senecarocksaudubon.org)

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June - August 2024

Editor, Cindy Bonner

## *In Remembrance of Janice Horn July 16, 1935 ~ March 9, 2024*



### **From Deb Freed, past SRAS President:**

Janice was our trusted treasurer for 20 years. She was among the most reliable CBC route participants and Birdathon fundraisers. As part of the leadership team Janice contributed to our planning. She was particularly interested in the Nature Book Project and represented the Millcreek Project. Janice also managed the birdseed sale for many years. She delighted in sharing her observations at the feeders she maintained around her home. She also shared many plants from her garden like the Virginia Bluebells she dug for me. Janice will be missed and remembered for her positive and supportive nature.

Janice's influence in the community will continue at the new Second Avenue Park that was a project she initiated. SRAS will have a presence at the park with a possible chimney swift tower and native plant garden. The combination of birds and plants for children and families will be a lasting tribute to Janice.

### **From Jeffrey Hall, President of Bartramian Audubon Society:**

I only spent one day each year with Janice, but it was always a full and interesting day. I was her partner for many years on the Christmas Bird Count, and we would spend our day assiduously traveling the back roads of central Clarion County, tallying every bird we could find. It was not the most productive portion of the CBC region, but Janice was dedicated to covering it thoroughly and carefully. A few times, we were delighted to be the only team to spot a particular species, but most years, we were satisfied to make our contribution to the completeness of the CBC effort.

Although a number of entire days counting birds, along with occasional socializing at SRAS picnics and meetings might not sound like a way to get to know someone, they were sufficient for me to know that Janice Horn was an intelligent, thoughtful, and congenial person who cared deeply about birds and their habitats. Although I knew her as a rather 'low-key' person, her energy and dedication to making things better for people, for wildlife, for the world in general shone through. It was my privilege to be her CBC partner and, in a small way, her friend.

**From Alice Thureau, SRAS President:**

Janice Horn's memorial service on April 6 was uplifting and heartfelt. The remembrances shared by her family, friends, and longtime Lutheran minister captured her life and spirit well. Beautiful quilts, all stitched by Janice herself, hung over the back of almost every church pew. They welcomed all of us who were so privileged to know Janice.



Janice examining water samples during a tour of Mill Creek Coalition acid mine drainage treatment systems, September 29, 2017.

Photo from Tom & Nancy DiStefano

**From Paulette Colantonio, SRAS Education Committee:**

I first met Janice Horn when I joined the Seneca Rocks Audubon in 1995. As a novice, I was thrilled to sit in the car with Janice and her friend, Margaret Buckwalter as we participated in the *Christmas Bird Count*, a new endeavor for me. This particular year, there was quite a bit of snow. My chronologically gifted mentors did not want to trudge through the drifts, so we birded from the car. When we visited the Olsen Farm in Knox, the ladies asked me to get out and run around shrubs and bushes along the route. This would help dislodge birds hiding deep in the hedges and thickets. I called myself their flushing dog! To make the situation more comical, the sole of my right boot gave way. I don't remember from where the tape materialized, but we wrapped the sole to the upper boot so I could continue to chase the birds out for Janice and Margaret to identify. We had a merry time that year. I so appreciated the guidance of these two women.

Janice and I worked for 15 years on **The Book Project**. *Seneca Rocks Audubon* and *The Garden Club of Clarion County* purchased books for public and school libraries in Clarion County and some outside the county. Janice and I would generate a list of 10 books from which librarians chose books for their collections. After I made bookplates and secured them in the books, we would deliver them together. I was the pilot; Janice was the navigator. She knew every backroad in Clarion County! We would usually try to end up in the little town of Foxburg. We both liked the pizza selections at Foxburg Pizza. If time permitted, we would get a coffee and some chocolate goodie at Divani's beside the Foxburg Library. Before we drove home via backroads, we walked around the area and looked for birds. It was such a fun annual experience for us both.



Pete Beskid, Librarian at Clarion Limestone Elementary, Janice Horn & Paulette Colantonio

About five years ago, I was doing some weeding at Janice's at 32 Barber Street as we discussed native plants. Janice was very knowledgeable about plants as she was a Master Gardener. I was lamenting the fact I had no true-blue flowers in my native plot. I reported I had violet flowers, lavender flowers, amethyst flowers, and periwinkle! She simply smiled. Early in the fall, she presented me with seeds from her Virginia Bluebells. It was a brand-new species for me. These ephemerals bloom very early in the spring. The little bells first present with a bit of pink, but soon morph into a true sky blue. They are about 2 feet high and soon create a patch of color before other plants wake up. I watch these little gems each spring and greet them like old friends. This year as they embarked on their spring gala, I thought about Janice and ephemerals. Ephemeral means "plants that grow, flower, and die in a matter of days." I knew Janice for 29 years, a short time in my life. I would describe my friendship with her as ephemeral-like. They were short years filled with vibrant color.

I would try to stop in on cold days to fill Janice's bird feeders positioned on her back deck and the front yard. She usually greeted me at her door with the seeds all measured out, but this particular morning, she and her cat, Jimmy, were sitting in the bleak sunlight in the living room. We talked for a bit, and she remarked her feet were cold. I noticed she had slippers on, but no socks. She asked if I would retrieve a pair from her sock drawer. After directions to her dresser, I opened the drawer and was hypnotized by the array of colorful socks! I picked up different pairs, remarking to myself, "How soft and how beautifully knitted." I then helped her put on a blue pair of socks and her slippers. I inquired, "Who made those gorgeous socks, Janice?" She replied quite simply, "I did." I blurted out, "Of course you did!" We then had a good laugh and I think Jimmy smiled, too.

I always marveled at Janice's many talents and gifts. When I left, I said to her as I often did, "I want to be just like you when I grow up." Now, that is a tall order.

This Langston Hughes poem, from *The Weary Blues*, sums up my feelings about Janice Horn.

I loved my friend.  
He (she) went away from me.  
There's nothing more to say.  
The poem ends,  
Soft as it began,—  
I loved my friend.

### **Nature Programs at the Clarion Library**

Nature programs are presented in the Clarion Free Library on the second Wednesday of the months, September through December, and March through June. Programs begin at 6:30 p.m. after a few announcements. These are some of our past ones in 2024, and the last one before the summer coming up in June.

#### **PA Bird Atlas, March 13**

Alejandra Lewandowski started our spring series of nature talks off well with an overview of the Pennsylvania Bird Atlas, a 5-year bird survey. She introduced us to new terms and concepts such as atlas portal, blocks, breeding codes, and safe dates; and gave her practical advice along the way. She added a touch of humor when she changed to an alter ego, complete with disguise, to illustrate how a birder could get carried away with atlasing.

For more information, visit the official [PA Bird Atlas website](#).

#### **Bird-Window Collisions, April 10**

Paulette Colantonio and Alice Thureau presented "Bird-Window Collisions" to the public using a PowerPoint created by the Bird-Window Collision Working Group (an Audubon Pennsylvania collaborative group). They showed how windows can be fatal to birds due to reflectiveness or transparency. Bird-window collisions with buildings 1-3 stories high, such as our homes, account for

44% of the window fatalities, conservatively estimated at 1 million birds daily in the US! Easy solutions are available, but must be placed on the outside of windows and spaced 2” apart.

Visit American Bird Conservancy ([www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)) and their listing of window treatments, “[Preventing Bird Collisions at Home.](#)”

### **The Allegheny National Forest: Then and Now, May 8**

Presenter Jenna Morgan treated the audience with a fascinating look into the life of Gifford Pinchot. After studying forestry in France, Pinchot promoted the scientific management of forests and eventually founded the US Forest Service. Later he became a two-time governor of Pennsylvania.

Morgan described how the “logging era” and the “oil era” brought an influx of settlers into the area. When those natural resources were depleted, the population moved away and the government purchased the land. The Allegheny National Forest was established Sept. 24, 1923. Today its focus is on forest health, sustainability of resources, and recreation.

### **Bald Eagles in Pennsylvania, June 12**



State Game Warden DiCicco will discuss all aspects of Bald Eagles in Pennsylvania – description, habitat, diet, reproduction, and other information.

Warden DiCicco is a graduate of the 32nd Class at the Pennsylvania Game Commission’s Ross Leffler School of Conservation in Harrisburg. After 44 weeks of training, he was assigned to Clarion County upon graduation beginning service in February of 2021.

DiCicco is from Westmoreland County. Prior to work as a State Game Warden, he was employed in the behavioral health field. In his free time, Warden DiCicco spends as much time as he can in the Pennsylvania outdoors, usually with his German Shorthaired Pointer right beside him.

Warden DiCicco in the field with a Great Horned Owl

### **Annual Meeting and Officer Elections on June 12**

Members will have an opportunity to vote for their officers at the June 12 program. The Nomination Committee presents the following roster of officer candidates for your approval:

President – Alice Thurau

Vice President – Vickie Gotaskie

Treasurer – Cindy Bonner

Membership/Secretary – Kay John

You can also vote by June 7 via email to [senecarocksaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:senecarocksaudubon@gmail.com), or by mail to SRAS, PO Box 148, Clarion, PA 16214.

### **The President’s Post**

*By Alice Thurau*

Seneca Rocks Audubon will soon plant a native pollinator flower garden at the new Second Avenue Park in Clarion. The pollinator garden, along with a chimney swift tower, were the vision of Janice Horn, our longtime member and leader. Janice naturally recruited our chapter as the group to guide them into reality. Our Bird-Friendly Habitat team gladly took on the garden project. SRAS Leadership team member, Michael Leahy agreed to build and install the chimney swift tower along with the help of several other Seneca Rocks members.

Funding for the garden and eventual chimney swift tower was made possible with a National Audubon Collaborative Grant as well as a generous bequest from Janice herself.

Native plants are an essential part of the ecosystem, providing food and shelter to insects and birds. The chimney swift tower will provide a welcome nesting site for a pair of these vulnerable birds which are in drastic decline.

Plants for the garden were grown by the Bird-Friendly Habitat team and the Clarion County Master Gardeners. Both groups will help with the planting. Other volunteers are welcome. Please call Alice Thurau at 814-319-2677.

We'll finish the garden with signage to identify the various species of plants, an introductory garden sign, and other touches to make the garden inviting and educational for all who visit the Second Avenue Park.

### **Forest County Birding Spotlight 2024**

***By Chad Kauffman of PA Society for Ornithology, Submitted by Jim McGuire***

The first spotlight adventure of the year took us to the NW corner of the state into the PA Wilds, the very odd shaped county of Forest, which the 2020 census said the population was 6973 making it the 3rd least populated in the state. It's 427 square miles make it the 53<sup>rd</sup> size in the state. Our 4-day window was March 15-18. The locals lined up 3 days of birding adventures, when we first planned this back at the end of 2023, many asked why the cold north in late winter, but we had hopes for winter finches, expecting some open water with the recent mild winters and we tampered our expectations. What would mother nature offer us on this weekend? In the weeks prior, the extended forecast was all over the place and as we know, weather is more unpredictable than ever now.

I was able to get in early Thursday afternoon and hook up with local Jim McGuire for some scouting of Buzzard Swamp. It had been almost 20 years since I was last at this location so it was nice to be able to visit it again. The walk in didn't offer much but once we got to the water, we saw some waterfowl. Highlights were Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail, which we never officially got during the spotlight. On the way back out, we saw a high-flying raptor that offered us an eagle vibe. After looking at it out discussing what it wasn't, we ended up calling it a Golden Eagle which was also not found during the spotlight. After a nice dinner in Marienville, we took a



side road to a great American Woodcock site and had several zipping around us. I had 95 species in Forest before this trip and hoped I would get up to 100 which is my goal to do in all of the 67 counties. I didn't think I would get to it the first evening of the trek.

The first morning, we headed to Cook Forest to meet our crew. I went with my fellow travelers Jeff Kenney and Angela Romanczuk for the day. Jeff was the madman behind all of the checklists the whole weekend in the group settings, so thank you for that spicy endeavor, Jeff. It was raining when we got there, parking below the building, we met our friend Alie, spoke to a park worker, and no one was showing up. We thought, did we go to the wrong spot, no one was reaching out to us, so I decided to walk around the building and there was the rest of the crew waiting on us on the top side. I was surprised I couldn't hear Tom K telling stories from around the building. The day started off with 14 people.

We decided to slow drive along the river road and pull over a few spots, adding birds to both the Jefferson and Forest counties from that drive. We were heading to Beaver Meadows thinking the rain might bring in some goodies. As soon as we pulled in, we saw some distant waterfowl and noticed

something different was out there with the Common Mergansers. Someone mentioned a gull, then an alcid, but finally got a scope view of a female Long-tailed Duck. A pair of adult Bald Eagles soon made it leave us, but as we started to walk around the lake, Alie was a straggler behind and was able to see a Ruffed Grouse get flushed by the dam. Further on our walk, our group got split into 2 and I thought I would try a screech owl call to see if anything would kick up in the pines. Red-breasted Nuthatch kicked up, then a few birds flew overhead giving us jip jip jip calls. Carole Winslow and I looked at each other and yelled "Red Crossbills". Two or three flew overhead and we were very happy as it was the first ones reported in the county all winter. They went towards the others who were busy looking at vernal ponds and we thought would they see or hear them. Of course, Jeff K not only heard them, he was able to record them and get our proof. This even got a poke from our friend David Yeany II who wasn't able to join us, but we knew he was with us in spirit.



We then did some slow riding, birding, pulling off at various spots to kick up some birds when along Sheffield Junction Rd, eagle eye Carole W saw an American Woodcock along the road that hopped up and froze just a bit off the side of the road. Angela only knocked down about half of the group so she could see her beloved bird. All of us got great naked eye views as well as thru bins. Jeff got some good pics and video as well. As the day lingered on, we lost some people here and there, but a small group of us got to visit Cougar Bobs for a cold one and snacks.

Day 2 started with people meeting at Marienville. Joe Gyekis got up early to do some early birding in Cook Forest State Park but didn't realize that much of his birding was in the adjacent edges of Clarion County and not far from Jefferson County. Still cool habitat in those beautiful old growth forest stands.

Buzzard Swamp was our first destination of the day, and 15 people joined us. We were very fortunate to have the key to the gate and could drive our caravan around the area. This is probably the most famous spot in the county, certainly the hotspot with the most species. We had some nice waterfowl to pick through, some raptors were hitting the sky, Eastern Meadowlarks were providing us some sunshine yellow from the trees and their song. Ducks were flying in and out, a group of ducks came around that everyone was trying to get on and ID, Michael David threw out an ID that later we were able to confirm correct when they landed in another pond, Ring-necked Duck and Lesser Scaup. Another trip back to Beaver Meadows left some new people enjoy that gem of a spot in Forest County. As we were exploring that area, getting some lunch, then hitting various roads enjoying the day, we got a text from Kim Springer who just had a Tundra Swan in Tionesta by the boat launch. This is a good bird for that county, so we all zipped over there and it was right there giving good looks for all. A quick visit to Dawson Run got us excited for our first Great Blue Heron on the weekend.

Our dwindling group enjoyed a dinner at Fox's pizza and all went our separate ways. Tom K was able to snag an Eastern Screech Owl back near his cabin, we were able to get a Barred Owl near Cooks Forest. Joe G brought along his night vision thermal scope, showing many mammals out and about but weren't able to find any feathered friends that night.

Day 3 started off with a big owl for Tom K. he was able to report 2 Barred Owl near his camp in the morning. We all then met Kim and Jim Springer at Tionesta Lighthouse Island for a wonderful walk.

We were able to get many birds on the island walk, including Redhead, American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Bonaparte's Gull, Rusty Blackbird and Purple Finch. There were many Bald Eagles around in various ages and looks.

A repeat visit to the boat launch found the Tundra Swan still occurring, but it actually lifted up while we were there and took off, at first heading downriver, but then curving around and heading north out of sight. Many of us finished our day at Dawson Run which was another wonderful place to get some new birds on the weekend. Scott Stoleson told us some stories of his work there studying Cerulean Warblers and how Don "One Shot" Watts earned his nickname. Getting a Cerulean for banding is pretty tough because they like to stay high up, so their team pioneered a method of raising mist nets very high in the trees using a bow and arrow to pass a line over a high branch before attaching a heavier rope and hoisting the nets. Don's excellent aim helped them get very high hang points quickly and easily, and this was especially important when certain birds were both wary from prior experience being captured and desperately needed to be captured to recover geolocators that would tell which part of South America these birds had been in the prior winter. Once the bird walk commenced, we found many birds around the marshy floodplain, including Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Swamp Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow White-throated Sparrow (which we had not found in the mountain spots) and a very obliging Ruddy Duck were all found here.



On Monday, the last day, Mark Nale and Darla Shank found a Pied-billed Grebe, new for the weekend at Beaver Meadows to add our last bird for the spotlight in number 80. Our crew produced 73 checklists hitting so many wonderful spots in this under visited and under birded county in the state. I am told this is the last county to have zero intersections with red lights, so if you want to get away from it all, this is a good place to consider. We were able to add 21 new year birds for the county. For anyone who wishes to see our complete trip report, check out this link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/194653>

*Photo of Pied-billed Grebe from All About Birds*

We couldn't be successful in these types of birding adventures without locals putting in their time, wisdom and friendship and I have to put in extra thanks again to Scott Stoleson who really helped get this all off the ground, Jim McGuire, Kim & Jim Springer, Carole Winslow and Tom Kuehl.

The next local spotlight will be Warren County from October 11-14th.

### **Conneaut Marsh Outing March 16, 2024**

Following is a list of birds seen on the outing as compiled by Paulette Colantonio:

- |                            |                          |                            |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Canada goose            | 15. Sandhill crane       | 29. Northern pintail       |
| 2. Wild turkey             | 16. Green-winged teal    | 30. Red-bellied woodpecker |
| 3. American robin          | 17. Red-winged blackbird | 31. Northern flicker       |
| 4. Ring-necked duck        | 18. Song sparrow         | 32. Turkey vulture         |
| 5. Mallard                 | 19. Hooded merganser     | 33. American goldfinch     |
| 6. American Wigeon         | 20. Redhead duck         | 34. Dark-eyed junco        |
| 7. Gadwall                 | 21. Eastern bluebird     | 35. Killdeer               |
| 8. Ruddy duck (female)     | 22. House sparrow        | 36. Spotted sandpiper      |
| 9. Mourning dove           | 23. American coot        | 37. Lesser yellowlegs      |
| 10. Northern cardinal      | 24. Rusty blackbird      | 38. Canvasback             |
| 11. Black-capped chickadee | 25. Wood duck            | 39. Northern harrier       |
| 12. Red-tailed hawk        | 26. European starling    | 40. Common grackle         |
| 13. Northern shoveler      | 27. American crow        | 41. Ring-billed gull       |
| 14. Bufflehead             | 28. Tree swallow         |                            |

## Owls of Clarion County



On Saturday, May 11, SRAS members Ron Montgomery and Gary Edwards presented an Owls of Clarion County program at the Lincoln Theater in Foxburg. Approximately 50 people attended and about 10 children helped teach the owl calls.

## 2024 Warbler Walk, May 18, 2024

*By Mal Hays*

It turned out to be a beautiful morning for our field outing. The sun came out and there was no wind, a perfect day for bird watching. We had 13 people participate with 3 new people attending. The walk started at 8:00am and concluded at 10:15am. We ended up with 41 species, which included 10 warblers, Blue-winged, Nashville, Yellow, Magnolia, Black-throated green, Black & White, Blackpoll, Tennessee, Chestnut-sided, and American Redstart. We also had our annual favorites we look for every year at Oil Creek the Warbling Vireo and Swamp Sparrow. Thank you to all the people who attended and a special thanks to Nick Kolodick for tabulating all the data. Looking forward to 2025.

*From Nick Kolodick:* There are duplicate sightings of some species, but I thought it was important to know that species were seen in more than once place.

### **Blood Farm @ Oil Creek**

#### **State Park:**

Warbling vireo  
Canada warbler  
Red-eyed vireo  
Yellow warbler  
Mallard  
American crow  
Baltimore oriole  
Tree swallow  
Belted kingfisher  
Red-bellied woodpecker  
American robin  
Blue-winged warbler  
Common merganser  
Northern flicker  
Song sparrow

Nashville warbler  
Eastern bluebird  
Common grackle  
Blackpoll warbler  
Red-winged blackbird  
Northern cardinal  
Great blue heron  
Swamp sparrow  
Black-throated green warbler  
Great-crested flycatcher  
Black & white warbler  
Turkey vulture  
Gray catbird  
White-breasted nuthatch  
Chestnut-sided warbler  
Black-capped chickadee  
Tufted titmouse

Wood thrush  
American goldfinch  
Blue jay  
American redstart  
Pileated woodpecker  
Bald eagle  
Brown-headed cowbird  
Chipping sparrow  
Wild turkey  
Eastern towhee  
Mourning dove  
Downy woodpecker  
Hooded warbler  
Common yellowthroat  
Winter wren  
European starling  
Dark-eyed junco



**Blood Farm (cont'd.)**

Eastern Phoebe  
 Solitary sandpiper  
 Barn swallow  
 Chimney swift  
 Rock pigeon  
 House sparrow  
 Red-tailed hawk  
 Franklin area:  
 Rock dove

**County Line Rd:**

Killdeer  
 Bobolink

**Kahle Lake:**

Ruddy duck  
 Purple martin  
 Downy woodpecker  
 Hairy woodpecker  
 Red-shouldered hawk

**Meg/Nick's:**

Mourning dove  
 Chimney swift  
 Red-bellied woodpecker  
 Eastern phoebe  
 Yellow warbler  
 Blackpoll warbler  
 Magnolia warbler  
 Swainson's thrush  
 American robin  
 Gray catbird  
 Black-capped chickadee  
 Tufted titmouse  
 White-breasted nuthatch  
 House wren  
 Carolina wren  
 European starling  
 Chipping sparrow  
 Song sparrow

Northern cardinal  
 Rose-breasted grosbeak  
 Common grackle  
 Brown-headed cowbird  
 Pileated woodpecker  
 Turkey vulture  
 American crow  
 Blue jay  
 Baltimore oriole  
 House finch  
 American goldfinch  
 House sparrow

**Pennsylvania: A Keystone for Wildlife**

The Pennsylvania Game Commission just produced the video, "Pennsylvania: A Keystone for Wildlife." The video features The Piney Tract, a reclaimed strip mine south of the Clarion River. Seneca Rocks Audubon along with Bernie Spozio and The Alliance for Wetlands and Wildlife were key local conservation individuals and groups to ensure that Piney Tract was acquired by the PA Game Commission and rehabilitated into grassland habitat.

Piney Tract is now known as State Game Lands #330. But it has another designation, too, thanks to the efforts of Seneca Rocks Audubon conservationists. It is Important Bird Area #21, designated by the National Audubon Society.

Our own Michael Leahy consulted with the videographer, Tracy Graziano for details on the area.

It's well worth watching! The Piney Tract segment starts at about 14 minutes if you're short on time. Here's the link: [Pennsylvania: A Keystone for Wildlife.](#)

**Herb and Fiber Festival, June 1-2, Cook Forest Sawmill Center for the Arts**

Come and see us at the Bird-Friendly Habitat table during the Herb and Fiber Festival on June 1-2. We'll have an informational table and native perennial plants for sale. Our team has a lot of fun educating the festival visitors about the value of native plants to pollinators and birds.

The festival hours are 9 am-4 pm on Saturday, June 1; 10 am-3 pm on Sunday, June 2. Don't miss the annual soup luncheon (\$12) on Saturday, 11:30 am-2 pm or whenever it's sold out. The cost includes a beautiful pottery bowl, soup, bread and butter, cookie, and a drink.

The plants are grown by our members and are offered for sale with a donation to Seneca Rocks Audubon. It's become an important fundraiser for our Bird-Friendly Habitat efforts and for Seneca Rocks Audubon.

We'll likely have Black-eyed Susan, Anise Hyssop, Wild Bergamot, Lance-leaved Coreopsis, Oxeye (early/false) Sunflower, Mistflower, Blue Lobelia, Golden Alexanders, Little Blue Stem, Butterfly Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, Ohio Spiderwort, and a few others.



## **Flo McGuire Memorial Bench Walk**

**June 4, 2024**

There will be a Bird Walk to Flo McGuire's memorial bench along the Sligo Spur of the Redbank Valley Trail, about 2 miles total, out and back. We will start at 9:00 a.m. at the Lawsonham parking lot. From Rimersburg, turn south onto Lawsonham Road (Rt. 2009) to 3511 Lawsonham Road.



## **Mill Creek Bird Walk**

**June 8, 2024**

This walk will be an easy, fairly flat, out-and-back walk along Mill Creek led by SRAS guides Mal Hays and Larry Towse. It will start at 8:00 a.m. and last about 2 hours. Wear good walking shoes and bring your binoculars.

Go to Strattanville via Rt. 322. In Strattanville, turn onto the Fisher Road (SR 1011) toward Fisher. Coming from Clarion, it's a left turn. Continue 2-3 miles on the Fisher Road. After a long downhill, cross the bridge over Mill Creek, and start up the next hill for a short distance. Parking is on the left.

We will walk, light rain or shine. For more information, call Mal at 814-764-5645.

## **SRAS Activity Table**

**June 8, 2024 ~ 1:00-3:00 p.m.**

SRAS will have an activity table at Kid and Family Zone, Sixth Avenue, Clarion, during Clarion Summerfest's Big Outdoors weekend. Come visit us!

If you can help, call Alice at 814-319-2677.

## **Firefly Festival**

**June 28-29, 2024**

Last year Alice Thurau and Jim McGuire staffed an educational table at the Pa. Firefly Festival held in Kelletville, north of Tionesta surrounded by the Allegheny National Forest. Once again Seneca Rocks Audubon has been asked to set up our display. Last year, native plants and bird glass collision information was available plus the bird identification quiz was enjoyed by children and adults alike. This year's festival will be held June 28th and 29th. Jim will set the display up this year and there is the opportunity for two people (one each night) to help Jim and also get to hear the keynote speaker and observe the synchronous fireflies when they emerge around 10pm. Until a few years ago the synchronous fireflies were thought to only exist in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. Jim will also lead two bird walks for the festival. If you are interested in helping with the display contact Jim McGuire, [jrmcguire@verizon.net](mailto:jrmcguire@verizon.net). The festival is once again sold out, but if you want information on where else in the ANF to observe these fireflies contact Jim.



## **SRAS Member Picnic**

**August 14, 2024, 5:00 p.m.**

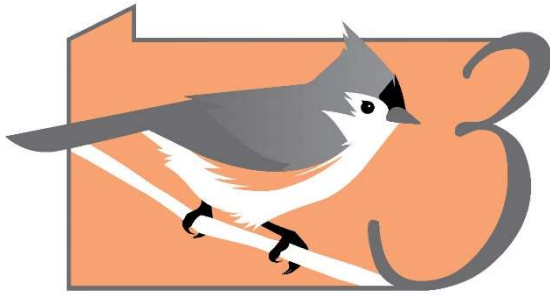
The annual SRAS Membership picnic will be held at Clarion County Park. Bring a covered dish, tableware, and enjoy a relaxed picnic meal in the company of members, family, and friends.

## Nighthawk Watch

The tentative start date is August 17th, ending around September 8th. These dates can fluctuate by a day or two depending on the migration of the Nighthawks. We will gather every night, starting at 6:00 p.m. till sunset, between these dates at the Strattanville boat launch where Mill Creek joins the Clarion River.

The Oil City Nighthawk watch will take place during the same time period at the Oil City Marina. 2024 will be the 25th annual watch!

Bring a lawn chair and binoculars and join one of the watches with us!



## PA BIRD ATLAS

### PA Bird Atlas

From Clarion Coordinator, Carole Winslow: This zoom meeting is open to all volunteers that are interested in the atlas and have any questions regarding it, so especially helpful for first time participants that already have the basic info but are looking for a little more guidance now that things are starting to get more in season. Some of the topics will be how to use breeding codes correctly and when to use the various codes according to the safe date spreadsheets, using the portal and how to keep checklists more specific to habitat areas. Those are some of the topics that I am already seeing more questions about. Thanks and let me know any questions!

**Jun 4, 2024 07:00 PM Eastern Time**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82135397658?pwd=0aLmrS9rUhsV71O8c9MMpf43mzvmSK.1>

### Programs at Cook Forest State Park

- Cook Forest Living History Weekend, May 24-26
- Friday, June 7, 8:00-9:00 p.m. *Nasty Ned the Frontiersman*, teller of tall tales & historical fact.
- 20th Annual Cook Forest French & Indian War Encampment, June 8 & 9

For more details about these programs, go to the Cook Forest State Park website at:

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/stateparks/findapark/cookforeststatepark/Pages/default.aspx>

### How to Make a Birdbath

*By Monica Russo*

Help your feathered friends beat the heat this summer with this easy DIY birdbath.

Birds rely on water for drinking, grooming, and staying cool. But during hot summers and extended droughts, water can be hard to find. By adding a simple birdbath to your yard (you can make one from a cake pan!), you can help birds now and into the future as climate change makes summers in many areas hotter and longer.

#### Materials:

- One shallow pan such as an old cake pan, not more than 2 inches (5 cm) deep. Or, use a flower-pot tray: the flat, shallow tray or pan that's used under a flower pot so it won't drip when watered. This should also be less than 2 inches (5 cm) deep.
- A few large pebbles or a flat rock

#### Steps:

1. Choose a good site to place the bath. The ground should be level. There should be some evergreens or other shrubs nearby. Pick a site where you can easily watch the birds from a window.
2. Set the pan or tray down and fill it with water. Be sure the water is only about an inch (2.5 cm) to an inch-and-a-half (3.8 cm) deep.
3. Toss in a few large pebbles or a flat stone. These will give the birds confidence to enter the water because it will help them judge how deep the water is.

## The Beloved and Charismatic Bluebird

By Dean C. Rust

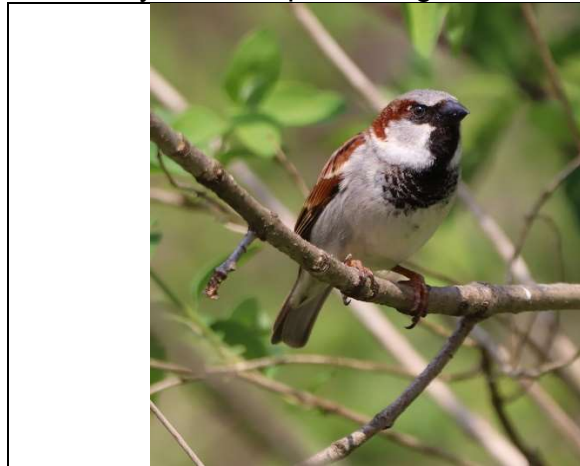
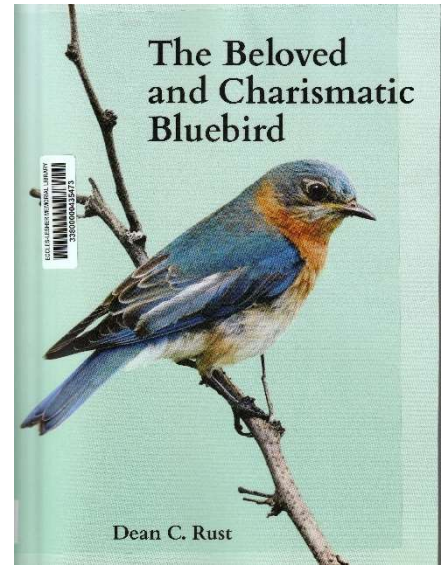
This book is available locally at the Eccles-Lesher Memorial Library in Rimersburg. I was granted permission by the author to include some fascinating information from the book in this newsletter.

The book includes chapters on choosing, building, installing, and monitoring nest boxes, deterring House Sparrows, predator guards, starting a Darkling Beetle Larvae farm, planting for Bluebirds as well as several other chapters and beautiful photos.

The Bluebird's "Miracle of Life": From nest building and egg laying to young Bluebirds ready to fledge or leave the nest is only 36 days. A bluebird egg is sky blue, incubated for 13 days at a constant 99°F and the female Bluebird will hatch out a nest full of naked, helpless baby birds. Then the baby Bluebirds, fed dawn to dusk for 16 days after hatching will become fully feathered. So a baby Bluebird grows and matures in one day, just about as quickly as a human baby does in one year. A baby Bluebird can fly in 16 days just about as well as a 16-year old teenager can operate a car with a driving permit.

Did you know the Bluebirds and Robins are cousins? They are both members of Turdidae, the scientific name for the Thrush family. The Eastern Bluebird is native only to North America.

Installing Bluebird nest boxes: "First of all, trees, 4" x 4" wood posts, utility poles, and wood fences are ALL unacceptable." This is because any animal with claws (cats raccoons, possums, etc. can climb up to the box and make it a virtual "feeding station". Use a piece of 3/4" conduit to attach the box. Many different predator guards are described in the book, including guards that will deter snakes.



House Sparrows are an invasive and nuisance species. They reproduce and grow rapidly and are aggressive competitors for Bluebird boxes. They use their powerful crushing finch-type beak to destroy eggs, nestlings, and parents of songbirds. Several recommendations are made to deter House Sparrows.

Photo by Meg Kolodick

Bluebird Wing waving: "One of the first things Bluebird fledglings learn to do when they leave the nest is to wave their wings." It's a signal to the parents where they are and that they are hungry. This wing waving continues into molting, becoming adults and during courtship.

When I wrote to Mr. Rust to ask his permission to feature his book in this newsletter, he said, "Absolutely fine with me. I wrote the book so that people could be successful with Bluebirds in their own backyard. Feel free to quote any information you like from my book." Thank you, Mr. Rust!

### To Feed or Not to Feed

[https://www.audubon.org/news/when-its-okay-or-not-feed-birds?ms=digital-eng-email-ea-x-engagement\\_feedbirds\\_&utm\\_source=ea&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=engagement\\_feedbirds&utm\\_content=](https://www.audubon.org/news/when-its-okay-or-not-feed-birds?ms=digital-eng-email-ea-x-engagement_feedbirds_&utm_source=ea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=engagement_feedbirds&utm_content=)

## Bewildering Birds

### Is that a Purple Finch or a House Finch?

#### Information from the Delaware Nature Society

<https://www.delawarenaturesociety.org/blog/how-to-tell-house-finches-vs-purple-finches-apart/#:~:text=A%20perched%20House%20Finch%20usually,like%20they%20are%20leaning%20forward.>

Photos of males by Meg Kolodick; female photos from the YouTube video



Purple Finches tend to have a straighter profile with a smoother transition between the back and head. Their beaks are more pointed. Purple Finches are also more barrel-chested and have a front-heavy appearance. This often makes them look like they are leaning forward.

Male Purple Finches (those at least one year old) are always brightly colored across their head, breast and rump. They are noticeably more pinkish than the brick-red male House Finch, and their wings are also colorful, whereas House Finch wings are dull brown.

Purple Finches don't have any streaks and their belly is plain and blizzard white.

Female and young male Purple Finches have a broad white stripe above their eye and a dark brown cheek. They are also more heavily patterned than House Finches and their plumage is darker and more chocolatey-brown.

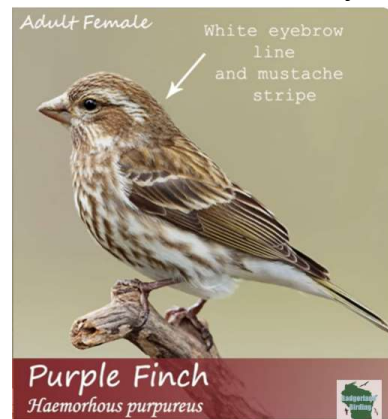


A perched House Finch usually has a distinct, rounded head and has a heavy, rounded beak.

Male House Finches present an extra identification challenge because their color can be very variable. Some males are bright red all over their head, breast, back and rump, while other males have just small patches of dull orange in these areas.

Male House Finches have bold streaking on their sides and belly.

Female House Finches have a plain brown face. The female House Finch also appears to have a smaller, 'beady' eye.



This is an excellent video for more information: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HeZTYewqyg>

*Seasonal Sightings (June-August)*



Ovenbird, 08/20/19, Photo by Meg Kolodick



Robin, 08/17/17, Photo by Meg Kolodick



As you can imagine, the 2 photos above are quite old, taken in the 1980s. You don't see huge amounts of either of these birds at feeders now, at least I don't. Photos by Cindy Bonner



Shorebird, 07/15/22, Photo by Meg Kolodick



Juvenile Heron, 07/03/19, Photo by Meg Kolodick

*"No bird soars too high if he soars with his own wings."  
~ William Blake ~*

## The Poetry Corner

### Another Equinox

By Patricia Thrushart

The red-shouldered hawks screech,  
aloft on wet winds  
their song the heartbeat of spring,  
their flight the dance of seduction.

It's the equinox,  
when we all can be seduced,  
when all can be reconciled.



Photo by Meg Kolodick

### Egret

By Wayne Swanger

White egret silhouetted  
Against the river bank,  
Unnoticed until now.



Photo by Meg Kolodick

### Overhead

By Wayne Swanger

Geese overhead  
Come from the North,  
Earlier today  
Did they also give you pause?



Photo from internet

### Wren

By Wayne Swanger

Jenny wren scolds  
As I approach  
The clothespin bag  
Hanging on the line  
Since last autumn.  
Her loved ones  
Ever so snug  
In a muslin nest  
I was too lazy  
To put away.

*(Published in Fields of His Heart, 2020)*

*“Poets and their audiences perform as birds and birds perform as poets: singing songs, playing with words, posing riddles, and impersonating other creatures. Poetic speech can mimic and be mimicked by birdsong and sometimes birdsong like that of the phoenix surpasses the most sublime human poetry, song, and music.” ~ From: Thinking with Birds: Avian Song and Psychology in Old English Poetry, by James Paz. <https://academic.oup.com/isle/article/29/3/555/6570638>*

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Members are encouraged to contribute announcements, articles, photos, etc. to Editor, Cindy Bonner, 1000 Lincoln St., Sligo, PA 16255 or email [bonners74@comcast.net](mailto:bonners74@comcast.net).

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<https://www.facebook.com/SenecaRocksAudubon>

*"Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die,  
life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly."  
~ Langston Hughes*

*"A heart without dreams is like a bird without feathers."  
~ Suzy Kassem*