



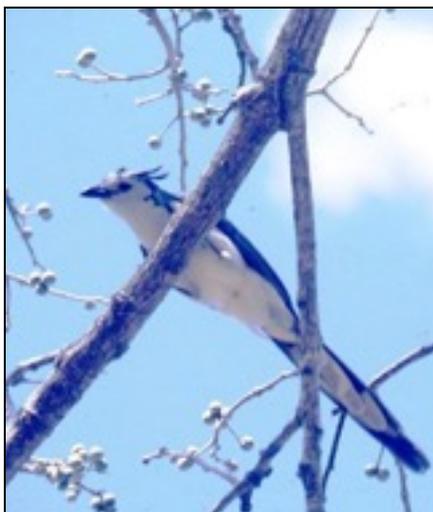
# THE DRUMMER



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

November/December 2015

Volume 32, No. 2



*The White-faced Magpie-Jay is one of the birds Scott encountered in his travels*

## Confessions of a Bird Bum

Scott Stoleson

*November 11 Program*

Scott Stoleson will present "Confessions of a Bird Bum", which will highlight some of the places he researched and watched birds (mostly as an excuse to see new and exotic species while avoiding a real job) before settling down to graduate school. Join him to relive adventures with Galápagos finches, boobies and sharks; trogons and curassows in Costa Rican jungles; and Magellanic Penguins and albatrosses in Patagonian Chile and Argentina.

Scott is the Research Wildlife Biologist with the Forest Service's Northern Research Station in

Warren, PA, and a Research Associate of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Jamestown, NY. He received a B.A. in Biological Sciences from Dartmouth College and his M.S. and Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology from Yale University. He has published over 65 scientific papers and book chapters on avian biology and conservation based on research in Pennsylvania, the western U.S., Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela, and Ecuador. In addition he has led natural history tours to the Caribbean and Latin America.

## Members' Night & CBC Planning

*December 9 Program*

We all look forward to getting together on Member's Night. Members share something about their birding experiences from the past year. Do you have a new squirrel guard that works? Have you found a new piece of birding gear that you'd like to share? Have you used a new birding field guide that you really like or maybe one that you bought that didn't meet your expectations? Do you have a book or birding spot you'd like to recommend? If you have pictures to share, put them on a thumb

*Our meetings are held at the Clarion Free Library, lower level.  
Come early to socialize -  
programs begin at 6:30 pm.*

drive or bring the prints. You might want to share your favorite nature website or webcam. December, January, February and March are great months to watch nature from your warm home!

In addition to our “Show and Tell” we will get ready for the December 19 Christmas Bird Count. Let’s set a species goal to motivate us to find the birds. Join a field team or sign up to count at your feeder. We will have the Count Circle on display so that you know our assigned territory. Field teams will tally at Cozumel at 5:30 to see how the day went. Our feeder watchers are welcome to join us too. Be part of this annual Audubon tradition, now in its 115<sup>th</sup> year! It’s always fun.



## Audubon Calendars for sale at November Program

~ Deb Freed

There are seven different 2016 Audubon calendars. Five are wall calendars (12’ x 12”) with themes of National Parks; Nature; Trees, Wildflowers and Songbirds. There is a spiral engagement calendar (6” x 9”) and a Birds daily tear off calendar (6” x 7”) All calendars sell for \$10 except for the Birds daily tear off calendar, which sells for \$12.

This is a small fundraiser for Seneca Rocks. The retail price on these calendars is \$14 to \$17. We can sell them for less and still make a small profit. They make wonderful gifts.

Orders will be taken at the November 11 program or e-mail Deb Freed at [dfreed208@comcast.net](mailto:dfreed208@comcast.net). The calendars will be available at the December 9 program.



Eastern Bluebird photo by Jeff Hall

## Eastern Bluebird - October Program Recap

~ Jeff Hall

One of the most beloved of birds is the Bluebird—it’s even known as the “Bluebird of Happiness!” One group that is dedicated to helping bluebirds is the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania. At the October meeting of Seneca Rocks Audubon Society, we got to hear from representatives of this group and met their Clarion County coordinator, Amy Wolbert. If you have bluebird nest boxes or are interested in having them, or would like more information about helping bluebirds, contact Amy at [ashoupdwolbert@gmail.com](mailto:ashoupdwolbert@gmail.com). You can learn more about the bluebird society at [www.bsp.org](http://www.bsp.org) or about bluebirds in general at [www.sialis.org](http://www.sialis.org).

The *Drummer* is the newsletter of Seneca Rocks Audubon Society (SRAS), PO Box 148, Clarion, PA 16214. SRAS is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. The *Drummer* is published 4 times per year— September, November, February, and April.

The *Drummer* is available on our website in Adobe pdf and may be read or downloaded from the site –

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

Members are encouraged to contribute announcements, articles, photos, etc., to Editor Flo McGuire, 609 Ponderosa Lane, Tionesta, PA 16353 (814 755-3672) or email at

[fm McGuire1@verizon.net](mailto:fm McGuire1@verizon.net).



Townsend's Solitaire photo,  
courtesy of Jacob S. Spendelow

## The Name Game

~ Gary Edwards

Last issue we learned that MacGillivray's Warbler was first described by John Kirk Townsend, who named it Tolmie's Warbler (*Sylvia tolmiei*) for his friend, William Fraser Tolmie. We also discovered that Audubon ignored Townsend's precedence and changed the name to MacGillivray's Warbler (*Sylvia macgillivrayi*) to honor his friend, William MacGillivray. Townsend's scientific name was published earlier and has priority, but Audubon's common name persists.

The life of John Kirk Townsend (1809-1851), was tragically short. Born in Philadelphia, he died, at age 41, in Washington, D.C. At age 23, his birding career got off to an auspicious start when he collected a strange bunting in New Garden, Chester County, PA. Townsend gave the specimen to Audubon who described it and named it Townsend's Bunting. It was to be the only example of the species ever collected. While it may be a hybrid or, more probably, an aberrant Dickcissel, it also may be a last remnant of an extinct species. The mystery remains unresolved.

In 1833, Townsend joined Nathaniel Weyth's second Pacific expedition. During the trip he collected a number of new birds including one he named Townsend's Warbler. In 1834, with winter

approaching, he and botanist Thomas Nuttall volunteered to join the crew of a vessel sailing to Hawaii to obtain supplies. The voyage was successful and both returned to the west coast with significant additions to their collections.

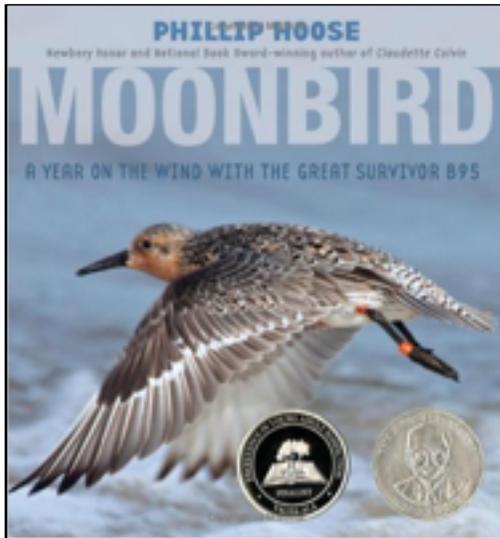
Later, Nuttall decided to return to Philadelphia. Townsend, who was remaining on the west coast, sent his specimens with Nuttall, who delivered them to the Academy of Natural Science. Audubon soon received exaggerated reports of the number of new species in the collection and became determined to acquire them for inclusion in his *Ornithological Biography*. Through persistence, and with the help of his friends, he eventually purchased 93 skins. Nearly 15% of the birds in Audubon's classic "*The Birds of America*" were drawn from Townsend's collection. The final total of new species collected by Townsend and Nuttall was nineteen. Included were Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, and Hermit Warblers, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Bushtit, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Lark Bunting, Sage Thrasher, and Mountain Plover.

In late 1837, Townsend returned to Philadelphia to find that Audubon had described and named most of his discoveries, thus depriving him of assigning his own names to his birds.

Townsend published a narrative of his journeys but never received the recognition he deserved. His early death was attributed to arsenic poisoning resulting from years of preserving his skins with an arsenic powder of his own formulation. His legacy suffers from unfortunate timing, poor financial backing, inadequate salaried ornithology positions, and, in the end, poor judgement. In addition to the warbler, Townsend's Solitaire, a ground squirrel, chipmunk, pocket gopher, mole and vole all bear his name.

(Sources: *Audubon to Xanthus*, Barbara and Richard Mearns, 1992; . <http://blog.aba.org/2014/09/open-mic-the-townsend-bunting-story.html>)

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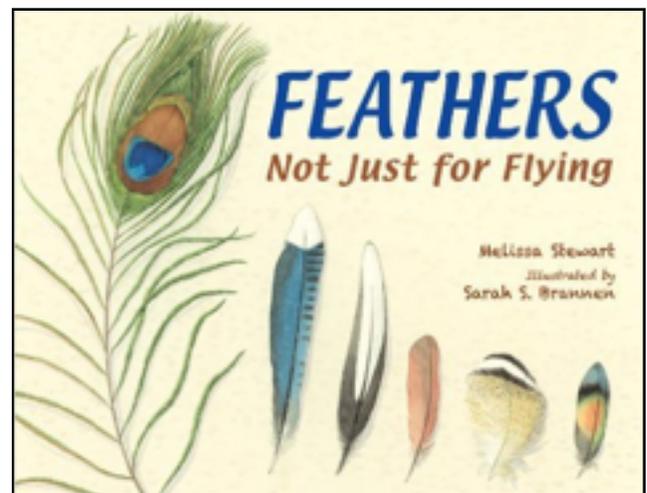
## Nature Books for Local Libraries

~ Paulette Colantonio

*(This is Part 2 of the article published in our September/October issue, describing the remainder of the books chosen for the local libraries).*

*Moonbird: A Year on the Wind with the Great Survivor B95* is a somewhat advanced book written for middle school children to adults. Richly researched, Phillip Hoose presents a fascinating account of a male rufa red knot's migratory journey of 18,000 miles in one year! The gorgeous photographs lure the reader visually, but the beautiful prose, full of facts and some conjecture, ultimately snare him. Each of the eight chapters has a story to relate about a segment of the shorebird's incredible migration. Blue boxes of text convey supporting information about something mentioned in the general text. Some of the blue box headings are "Snapping the Whip" which gives insight on evasive maneuvers employed by red knots to confuse predators, or "Molt" which defines this phenomenon and describes how the feathers are replaced and in what sequence. Maps weave the long progression for the reader starting in Tierra del Fuego and ending in northern Hudson Bay. Profiles of

people involved in the peril of red knots are included in six of the eight chapters. There is an Appendix entitled "What You Can Do" loaded with projects and sites for young people to get involved with conservation of shorebirds and their habitats. Extensive Source Notes are listed along with a Bibliography and Picture Credits. In his last chapter, "Extinction is Forever," Hoose uses the following caption under a beautiful picture of red knots and ruddy turnstones: "Each species with which we share the earth is a remarkable success story. Our job is to understand those forms of life, and keep them from slipping away." I could not put this book down!



Melissa Stewart discusses 16 species of birds and types of feathers in *Feathers: Not Just for Flying*, the seventh nonfiction offering. The author uses similes to impart information about feathers by comparing them to everyday objects. "Feathers are warm like a blanket or cushion like a pillow." "Feathers can make high-pitched sounds like a whistle or attract like fancy jewelry." Higher reading level details are posted in text boxes or captions under illustrations. The selection's fun layout resembles a birders' scrapbook. Sarah S. Brannen's watercolor illustrations support the text and format harmoniously. (Pictures are placed securely in the scrapbook with pins, tape, and staples)! There is an Author's Note relating

how this gem was created for young readers over a three year span.

The two fiction books offered to libraries this year are *The Lion and the Bird* and *Lucky Ducklings*. In the former, the tender story of the friendship between a lion and a bird creates a magical spell for younger children in a world that seems to move so quickly. Lion is preparing his garden for winter when an injured Bird falls from the sky. The flock continues on its way south as Lion tends to the avian visitor. A strong friendship grows between the two over the winter. "It snows and snows. But winter doesn't feel all that cold with a friend." But with the return of spring, announced simply on a white double-page spread adorned with three buds peeking through the snow, Bird travels north with the returning flock. How will Lion spend the summer without his companion? Will Bird return in the autumn? Author-illustrator Marianne Dubuc uses minimal words and pastel colors young children will enjoy. They will relate to the subtle humor, too. "It's a remarkably moving and, considering it features two animals, deeply human story." (Publisher's Weekly, 2014)

Last, move over Robert McClosky, make way for *Lucky Ducklings* by Eva Moore. This fictional story is based on an incident that actually took place in Montauk, New York in 2000. A mother mallard and her five ducklings leave the "pretty pond in a green, green park in a sunlit little town at the end of a long, long island" and go for a stroll in town. Pippin, Bippin, Tippin, Dippin, and Little Joe soon fall through the grate on a storm drain. "Oh, dear! That could have been the end of the story. But it wasn't, because..." The rest of the story relates how people in the town, including three firemen rescue the ducklings. Children will chime in on the first reading with the repetitious and rhythmical text. Carpenter's illustrations done in charcoal and digital media with warm colors create an old-fashioned feel for the book, reminiscent of *Make Way for the*

*Ducklings*. She uses a variety of perspective that add charm to the pages. This is a wonderful addition for the primary collection.

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Cape May Warbler by Jeff Hall

## NW Passages

~ Jeff Hall

NW Passages is a free e-magazine about the nature, heritage, and outdoor recreation of Northwestern Pennsylvania. Subscribers receive each month's issue via e-mail. The October issue can be seen online at <http://bit.ly/NWPA1015>. It includes an article about birds, featuring photos from familiar Seneca Rocks field trip locations such as Piney Tract, Conneaut/Geneva Marsh, and Oil Creek State Park (three of the photos are from the 2014 warbler walk!) To subscribe to and enjoy NW Passages every month, send an e-mail to [beth@westpamag.com](mailto:beth@westpamag.com).

*(Editor's note: the October 2015 issue of NWPassages features Jeff Hall and his photography).*

Don't forget to pick up your bird seed at your local J&J Feeds, from Saturday, October 31 through Saturday, November 7.



Pine Warblers were confirmed breeding near Cook Forest this summer — photo by Meg Kolodick

## Clarion County Summer 2015 Report for PABirds

~ Carole Winslow

Locations: Curlsville (CV), Mount Airy (MA), Mt. Zion/Piney Tract/SGL 330 (MZ), Redbank Trail at Redbank (RB), Sarah Furnace (Armstrong Trail) (SF).

One of the best findings for this summer in *Clarion* was certainly that of confirmed breeding for a grassland species that regularly uses the extensive habitat in the southern part of the county from reclaimed strip mining. **Northern Harriers** are not uncommon in the county during nesting season but are not often confirmed to have successfully fledged young. At MZ, a pair had been observed regularly throughout the season (m.ob.), and on 7/17 a pair was observed for the first time with two fledgling birds (GE, RM). A week later on 7/24, still at the main grassland site, the pair remained present along with 3 fledgling birds (MM, CW). The pair was observed watching over the young birds while one adult hunted. The young birds were taking solo flights and starting to practice hunting skills, and a food exchange between adult female and one young fledgling was also observed. The harrier family

continued to be seen at this location through the remainder of the season, an example of the benefits that this wonderful site provides for this and other grassland specialists, that will continue into the future since it has become protected as a state game land. This species was also seen regularly at the CV strips site, with at least a single bird seen there from 6/5 through 7/21 (m.ob.).

**Upland Sandpipers** remained on their usual territory at MA through much of June, with one individual seen 6/6 (CW), and two birds remaining at the site 6/20 (BB, AJ, LS). At a property near CV, **Eastern Screech Owls** continued to utilize a barn for roosting after young fledged, as they have for many years. On 6/12 and 6/18, up to three newly fledged young were found roosting in a stand of pines at the site (CW). In the barn on the property, six total birds were found 7/7, roosting up high in the interior, with one gray adult present and five young birds, a mix of red and gray morph (MM, CW). Through 7/26, the young birds continued to share this roosting area with the adults, with the gray adult of the pair in the barn with two young birds, and the red adult parent roosting nearby in the pines (CW). Another great addition for raptor sightings was that of a **Merlin** seen at MZ during the last week of July (DR). With the extensive pine stands and open areas here, it leads to speculation on the nesting status of this species that is currently undergoing range expansion, since this is an early date for migration.

At a large marsh area outside of Rimersburg on Cherry Run Rd, an **Alder Flycatcher** was found singing 6/19 during a breeding bird survey along this route (CW). This would be well into safe dates for breeding for this species and is possibly a late record for them in the county. The habitat is appropriate, with extensive cattail areas as well as dogwood and alder and many snags.

Several warbler species deserve some mention for the season. **Worm-eating warblers** remain present along the southern edges of the county

on riparian hillsides along the Allegheny River and Redbank Creek. They were reported at SF from 6/4-7/2 ( NA, MM, RN, ST). A pair was seen with one adult carrying food 6/6 (CW) and also 6/7 (KA, SC). Six individuals were seen at RB 6/13 (MM, CW) and one 6/17 (RN). Two birds were also seen on the Armstrong Trail between East Brady and RB 6/28 (TR).

**Louisiana Waterthrush** is found in this same habitat along streams running into the river, with two at SF 6/4 (CW) and one still present 7/2 (MM, ST). Three were found along the trail at RB 6/13 (MM, CW). This part of the county also remains one of the most consistent spots to find **Kentucky Warbler**, with a singing male found along Rider Rd near SF 6/6 (CW) and 6/17 (RN). Two birds were also reported on Sarah Furnace Rd 6/12 (RH, TN, KP).

**Cerulean Warblers** continue to be reported here but in smaller numbers, and often harder to find once into June when singing diminishes. Three singing males were present along the trail at RB 6/13 (MM, CW), and one male still singing in that area 6/17 (RN). For possibly the first time, **Pine Warblers** were confirmed to be breeding successfully in the county. At a Scotch pine plantation along Breezemont Dr. near Cook Forest, five birds were seen 6/29, including an adult male still singing, and feeding at least three fledged young (MM, CW). They were also recorded once again in the pine plantings around the main site at MZ, with a single bird noted 6/7-6/30, but no breeding confirmed (TJ, DH, BB, AJ, LS, et al.). A single **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was reported 7/4

along the Redbank Valley Trail near Climax (JK), another sign of this expanding species utilizing appropriate habitat. This species was also seen at MZ 6/21, with two birds reported (DH). They have been seen in past years during breeding season at this site, with extensive stands of various pines and larch.

**Yellow-breasted Chat** is a species that is becoming much more regular throughout the southern part of *Clarion*, with shrubby fields becoming more prevalent as reclaimed strip mining grasslands are now 30-40 years past their initial reclamation. Single birds were reported at CV strips 6/7-7/2 (KA, SC, RN, KP,

TN, et al.), and also at MA 6/22 (CE), and MZ 6/20-6/22 (DH, BB, AJ, LS).

Grassland sparrows continued to show healthy numbers during the breeding season in southern *Clarion*. **Grasshopper Sparrows** were reported from the three major sites of CV, MA, and MZ throughout the season (m.ob.), with a high of 17 present at MZ 6/10 (AW). **Henslow's Sparrows** also were recorded throughout June and July at all three of the same areas (m.ob.) At CV, a high number of 14 were seen 6/14 (RH, TN, KP). At MZ, excellent numbers were obtained on two separate days, when more thorough surveys were conducted. Forty-three were reported 6/10 (AW) and an incredible 58 individuals were recorded 6/20 (BB, AJ, LS). At the CV strips site, which has been the strong-hold for **Clay-colored Sparrows** in the county for at least the last five years, numbers appear to be declining slowly. Reasons for this are uncertain, but possibly due to habitat changes as the site matures. This year the highest number of individual birds recorded was two, with sightings coming in just from 6/7-7/2 (KA, SC, RN, ST, CW). At MZ, they were present again this year but only reported sporadically from 6/10- 6/30 with just a high of two singing adults (DH, TJ, AW). Rounding out the sparrow report, **Vesper Sparrows** as always are the least reported with three sightings, all from MZ. A single bird was found 6/9 and 6/20 (BB, AJ, LS, AW), and two were found 6/21 (DH).

The only finch record of note was of **Purple Finches** that continue to be present now year-round at a site in Rimersburg. Birds were present throughout the entire breeding season, with a high of 7, including one fledgling bird appearing at feeders 7/27 (MM).

Observers: **Carole Winslow, 159 Moggey Rd, Sligo, PA 16255, (814) 745-3818, [cjnal@windstream.net](mailto:cjnal@windstream.net)**, Nancy Andersen, Ben Barkley, Shawn Collins, Karyn Delaney, Gary Edwards, Carl Engstrom, Rob Hodgson, Deuane Hoffman, Mike Hudson, Andy Johnson, Tom Johnson, Deborah Kalbfleisch, John

Keener, Patrick Lister, Holly Merker, Ron Montgomery, Mark Moore, Peter Morgan, Tomas Nonnenmacher, Richard Nugent, Kenneth Pinnow, Dan Richards, Theo Rickert, Luke Seitz, Shannon Thompson, Daniel Weeks, Mike Weible, Andy Wilson.

## Programs at Cook Forest State Park

~ Dale Luthringer

Tuesday, October 27 at 7:30pm - ***'Owl Prowl'***

Please bring your flashlights and meet at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom for an evening owl prowling. Explore Cook Forest at night for Pennsylvania's owls as we car-pool to owl hotspots in the park. Barred, great horned, screech and saw-whet owls have been known to make an appearance. (3 hrs)

Wednesday, October 28 at 7:30pm - ***'Spotting***

***Pennsylvania's Elusive White-tails'*** Please bring your spotlights and meet at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom for an evening driving tour as we car-pool to Cook Forest's white-tail hotspots. Come learn about the natural history of our Commonwealth's state mammal, as we cruise the park searching for this elusive animal. (3 hrs)

Thursday, October 29 at 7:30pm - ***'Night Fishin' on the Clarion'***

Did you know that fishing at night is often THE best time to fish? The National Wild & Scenic Clarion River contains many different kinds of fish and wildlife that are very active at night. Fish that are often wary during the day come out of their hiding spots at night to feed. Smallmouth bass and brook trout can be readily caught during daylight, but big brownies, catfish, and walleye are often on the prowl at night. Please bring your fishing poles, lanterns, and bait to the Park Office where we'll car-pool to fishing hotspots along the river. Don't forget your chicken livers! (3hrs)

Friday, October 30 at 7:30pm - ***'Cathedral by Candlelight'*** Want to experience something different this year for Halloween instead of the

standard "trick-or-treaters"? Come walk back in time with us into the depths of the Forest Cathedral with an historical character from the past. Come view the ancient forest as we walk beneath the giants by candlelight. Either a French Marine from the 1750's who saw these massive trees 250 years ago, or a lumberman from the 1800's will be there to guide us. Candy and hot chocolate will be served at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom. Bring your flashlights! (2.5 hrs)

Saturday, October 31 at 11:30am - ***'Fall Foliage***

***Fire Tower/Seneca Point Historical Tour'*** Please bring your binoculars and meet at the Fire Tower Parking Lot for a 45 minute historical interpretive tour of the Fire Tower and Seneca Point. Learn about local logging history, observe Indian sign, and take a breathtaking view of the fall foliage from the box at the very top of the Fire Tower which will be open until 230pm. This is the last time the fire tower will be open to the public until next season.

## National Aviary

We are fortunate to live not too far from the National Aviary, America's only independent indoor nonprofit zoo dedicated exclusively to birds. Located in West Park on Pittsburgh's historic North Side, the National Aviary's diverse collection comprises more than 500 birds representing more than 150 species from around the world, many of them threatened or endangered in the wild.

The National Aviary's large walk-through exhibits create an experience unlike any other – an intimate, up-close interaction between visitors and free-flying birds, including opportunities to hand-feed and meet many species rarely found in zoos anywhere else in the world.

An event coming up at the Aviary is the Wings & Wildlife Public Art Show & Marketplace, which will be held November 7 & 8 from 10 am to 5 pm.

For more information about the National Aviary and its exhibits, see [aviary.org](http://aviary.org).

## *Upcoming Dates & Events*

*October 31 thru November 7 - Pick up Bird Seed*

*November 11 - "Confessions of a Bird Bum" -Scott Stoleson*

*December 9- Members' Night and CBC Planning*

*December 19 - Christmas Bird Count*

### **SRAS Leadership Team**

|                     |          |
|---------------------|----------|
| Deb Freed           | 226-4719 |
| Paulette Colantonio | 797-2031 |
| Pete Dalby          | 782-3227 |
| Gary Edwards        | 676-3011 |
| Janice Horn         | 226-7367 |
| Mike Leahy          | 229-1648 |
| Flo McGuire         | 755-3672 |
| Ron Montgomery      | 764-6088 |
| Jim Wilson          | 676-5455 |



Yellow-throated Warbler photo by Meg Kolodick

*E.B. White, on Thoreau:*

*It is probably easier to eat a woodchuck than to construct a sentence that lasts 100 years.*

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 148  
Clarion, PA 16214