



# THE DRUMMER

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



September/October 2020

Volume 37, No.1

## August Membership Meeting

by Deb Freed

The outdoor setting at Beaver Creek was the right place to meet to take care of chapter business. Thirty people attended the early evening gathering where distancing and masks allowed a safe space for the free flow of ideas and sharing of activities.

Two important business matters were on the agenda. The voting members elected the slate of officers for the next two years: Deb Freed, President; Alice Thureau, Vice-President; Kay John, Secretary and Janice Horn, Treasurer. The members also amended the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society by-laws by a unanimous vote of 23 in favor.



Eastern Screech-owl photo by Carole Winslow

The membership also engaged in a thoughtful discussion about the fall indoor programs. It was decided that the indoor schedule for the remainder of 2020 would be cancelled due to safety concerns. Also cancelled is the owl prowl.

On the brighter side, there will be several ways to remain active with SRAS. The nighthawk watches will take place nightly from August 16 until about the first week in September. Bring a chair and binoculars to either the Oil City Marina at Willis Street or the Millcreek launch in Strattanville. For further information contact Gary Edwards (Oil City) or Mal Hays (Millcreek).

Debbie McCanna announced that there will be practice runs of the Christmas Bird Count routes and walking areas. For further information

*Our programs have been cancelled because of the COVID-19 situation.*

*Check your email, our website and Facebook page for current updates. Stay safe!*

contact Debbie McCanna. Mal announced that all territories within the count circle have leaders for the survey on December 19. People are invited to join a team for practice runs and count day.

Alice Thureau is exploring the possibility of a program with Audubon PA that will recognize local gardeners who provide bird and pollinator habitats at their homes or businesses. More about the statewide program will be coming.

Mike Leahy provided a viewing of the information panel that will be erected at Piney Tract. Watch for an event to celebrate our IBA 21 at SGL 330.

Mal Hays and Larry Towse shared information about the relocation of the owl nest boxes. The project began three years ago resulting in one box with an Eastern Screech-owl. The new locations were selected in areas where saw-whet owls or screech-owls have been seen or heard. The owl boxes will be monitored and results shared.

Gary Edwards previewed the cover for his upcoming book, *Birds of Venango County*. It is expected to be published later this fall. The book will feature color photographs by Jeffrey Hall.

The members were happy to share the summer evening together at Beaver Creek and look forward to more opportunities to get together safely.

**State Gamelands #330**  
**“Piney Tract”--Pennsylvania Important Bird Area #21**

This reclaimed strip mine, a unique grassland habitat that is quickly disappearing in Pennsylvania, hosts nesting populations of one of the most threatened groups of birds, grassland breeders. These species include Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, and two species that can be found in few other areas of the Commonwealth, Henslow's Sparrow and Grasshopper Sparrow. Thanks to the efforts of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Alliance for Wetlands and Wildlife, and Seneca Rocks Audubon Society, these and other birds and wildlife have a place here in Clarion County to call home for many years to come.



**Henslow's Sparrow**  
Listen for a hiccupping tsi-lick

**Grasshopper Sparrow**  
Listen for a couple of sharp tik-tik's followed by an insectlike buzz

Informational display provided by Seneca Rocks Audubon Society

The information panel that will soon be erected at Piney Tract, State Gamelands #330. Photos and design by Jeffrey Hall in collaboration with Michael Leahy.



# Join Us In Taking Action for Birds and Habitats!

by Deb Freed

**O**ur chapter mission is to protect birds and habitat primarily through education. We are all about information that leads to inspiration! Luckily for us, we have experienced people to guide our work. You might have a particular interest in native plants or feeding the birds; finding interesting programs or submitting photos for our website; keeping an eye on policies that impact birds and habitat or updating our website. We have several on-going projects that are fun; monitoring owl boxes, selecting and delivering nature books to libraries, planning an annual picnic, putting together a birdseed sale, the great annual Christmas Bird Count and more. No matter what your special interest or expertise, we have a place for you.



The Leadership Team will soon organize our current chapter projects and interests into small working committees. If you let us know where your interests are, we could link you to a committee with knowledgeable people who have a passion for what they do. Contact Deb Freed at [dfreed208@comcast.net](mailto:dfreed208@comcast.net).

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, March and May.

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 [fmcguire1@verizon.net](mailto:fmcguire1@verizon.net).

Like us on Facebook!  
<https://www.facebook.com/SenecaRocksAudubon>

## Cook Forest State Park Programs

~Dale Luthringer

***\* Until further notice - Due to COVID-19 restrictions all park programs are limited to 25 participants (unless otherwise stated), mask must be on person, social distancing in effect. All participants must register at the Park Office at (814)744-8407 or [cookforestsp@pa.gov](mailto:cookforestsp@pa.gov).***

**Friday, August 28 at 8:30 pm - ‘Night Hike’** Please meet at the Fire Tower Parking Lot for an evening hike to the Fire Tower and Seneca Point. Come search for owls, raccoons, porcupines, coyotes, and other critters of the night. Learn some of the adaptive designs of night animals that allow them to be masters of living in the dark. (2 hrs)

**Saturday, August 29 at 9:00 am - ‘Searching for the Giants: Breezemont-Camp Trail’**

Please meet at the Park Office to journey to our study site to search for and document big, old, and tall trees in the Ridge Camp Old Growth Forest Area. Although this difficult hike is almost all off-trail through steep terrain, it may harbor some new big and tall records. Are there more black cherries and hemlock in here over 140 ft? How about another 150 foot-class white pine? Maybe we’ll find another elusive 120-foot-class cucumber tree. This is one of the few remaining old-growth areas in the park that hasn’t been measured yet with a fine tooth comb. Come take a part in helping us discover possible new big tree records. (3 hrs)



**Thursday, September 3 at 8:00 am - ‘B.Y.O.B. (Bring Your Own Boat): Lathrops-Maple Creek Float’**

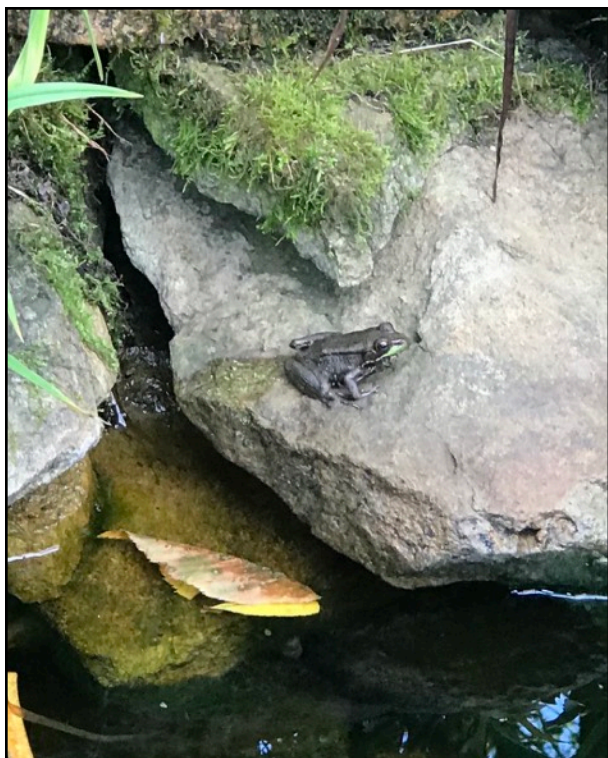
Yes, we’re all under restrictions, but that doesn’t mean we can’t get out and enjoy the river from our favorite canoe or kayak! So, bring your own boat, beverage, and... bananas to the new Park Office for an interpretive guided float down the National Wild & Scenic Clarion River. This is an excellent float to experience buried history along the Clarion River. Ever hear the stories of ‘shooting an anvil’ or running a log raft out of Millstone, or seen evidence of Reynolds Dam? Join us for a float to see where it all happened as we journey past Clear Creek State Park and ending in Cook Forest. Folks must pre-register by contacting the Park Office at (814)744-8407 or cookforestsp@pa.gov. Registration limited to 10 boats. Cost is \$40/boat payable by cash, check or money order made out to the *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*. Prior Cook Forest kayak training participants receive a 50% discount. Register early, available spots go fast. See you on the river! (6 hrs)

**Friday, September 4 at 8:30 pm - ‘Cooners & Cream’** Please bring your spotlights and meet early at the Cooksburg Café to enjoy some tasty ice cream before we take a driving tour to “night bandit” hotspots in the park. One never knows what we’ll see during the drive as we stop at various locations calling for animals of the night. (2 hrs)

**Saturday, September 5 at 12:00 pm - ‘River Critters’** Please bring your river sneakers, swimsuits, and snorkels to the Park Office as we drive to various sections of the Clarion River to search for and identify hard to find underwater creatures. Various species of fish, mussels, snakes and salamanders often make an appearance. Children must be with a participating adult. Low clearance vehicles are not suggested due to access to some of these areas. (2.5 hrs)

**Sunday, September 6 at 12:00 pm - ‘Hike Cook Forest: Troutman Run Old Growth Area’** Please meet at the Park Office to journey to Troutman Run to help us document ancient trees near this often overlooked section of the park. We’ll take various measurements of trees, core samples, and list physical attributes that will help us gather evidence to possibly justify a new old growth forest area. Remember to bring sturdy hiking boots and walking stick to help you traverse this all off-trail, steep, and likely slippery terrain. Three hundred-year-old oaks and birch have been found nearby! (2 hrs)





## Wood Frogs Part II

~Deb Freed

Ever since I wrote in the May/June Drummer about the wood frog eggs back in April I wanted to update the readers of my article. I watched the eggs from mid-April and never noticed any tadpoles. The adults returned to the woods. The eggs seemed to disappear. Over the past months the resident bullfrog and green frog left or were possibly meals for predators.

Then, one day in early August, I noticed four small frogs. Could they be the wood frogs? One source I checked said that the little frogs spend about nine weeks in the water. If they are indeed the wood frogs I expect that they will soon leave the pond and head for the woods. I'll wait to see.

## Nighthawk Watch and More

~Mal Hays

The Millcreek Common Nighthawk watch is off and running—the count as of August 23 is 105.

We will begin checking owl boxes in October. Saw-whets will be returning and as weather gets cooler Screech-owls will start roosting inside cavities again.

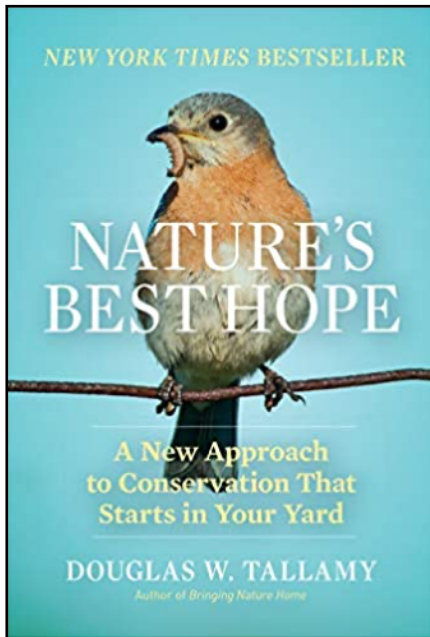
Larry and I are planning to start the Clarion County owl survey in the middle of October. We will take at least one night per township. Some of the things we are interested in—not only counts but how the Screech-owls respond to the call, with the trill or the whinny. How do our Screech and Barred owl counts differ north and south of I-80, since there are more big woods areas north of I-80 compared to the farmlands south of I-80? I think it will be some interesting information.

*Editor's note — SRAS is not planning any large group outings this fall, but feel free to contact Mal if you are interested in joining in any of these activities.*



Pat Conway and Ann Hunt visit—Left to right, Pat, Larry, Mal, and Ann. Photo contributed by Pat Conway

## Book Review: Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard, by Douglas Tallamy, 2020



Douglas Tallamy's latest book Nature's Best Hope (2020) opened my eyes as to how our landscape has changed for the worse for insects and birds and how we can each be stewards to help reverse the trend. Tallamy clearly explains the role that native plants (perennial flowers, shrubs, and trees) play in the food web and how that ultimately affects us human beings. He is very convincing that we should be more mindful and deliberate in what we plant in our outdoor spaces. He contends that each individual action to plant more native species and restore habitat can be increasingly powerful if multiplied by neighbors and others. His hope is that we can create a "Homegrown National Park" in our backyards. He couldn't have anticipated how wonderful a backyard national park would be right now in this time of isolation.

Tallamy is a long-time professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He earned his B.S.

Biology at Allegheny College. Tallamy speaks from personal experience with his own 10-acre farm in Pennsylvania which, when purchased, was overgrown with invasive species. He and his wife removed the invasive plants and replaced them with native species. As an entomologist, his original focus might have been on providing natural habitat for insects (about 90% of plant-eating insects require specific native plants), but he recognizes how critical insects are to the entire food web, birds included. In the book, he shares research that supports his hypothesis that areas with native plants are simply better for the birds. For instance, in a suburban D.C. study, his grad student compared yards dominated by introduced (nonnative) plants and yards with primarily native landscapes. She found that the nonnative landscapes provided 75% less caterpillar biomass (which means less baby bird food) and were 60% less likely to have breeding chickadees. Tallamy also provides numerous inspiring examples of individuals transforming their yards, no matter how small, with native plants and attracting an amazing number of bird species as a result.

The last chapter, "What Each of Us Can Do," provides a helpful blueprint of steps, including a link to a native plant finder by the National Wildlife Federation. The National Audubon Society also encourages native plants for birds. Audubon's website has excellent articles on bird-friendly yards and a Native Plant Database which will provide a list of the best plants for birds for your zip code area. Finally, while I hope you read the book, you can also watch Doug Tallamy speak about his book on YouTube. Look for "Nature's Best Hope by Doug Tallamy: March 3, 2020," or click <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHURaRv78QY>. I promise you will find him both informative and entertaining.

Alice Thureau



# Big Sit 2020

~ Carole Winslow



This is a recounting of the big sit originally planned for SRAS at my farm outside of Curllsville at the end of April. It was actually done on Saturday, May 2, as a solo event due to health concerns. I had been looking forward to hosting a big sit since last year and so it was still feeling so disappointing to me to not be able to share this day with others, but hopefully this account will bring it to life a little and encourage people to come out next spring.

I woke around 5 am and checked BirdCast right away to see what happened in the way of migration overnight. As I feared, some northwest wind had kept movement pretty low, even though the day was starting calm and without wind. Plus it was going to be a cold morning with a starting temp of 36! I dressed as if for winter and made my mug of hot tea,

grabbed a blanket and headed out for the garden deck at 5:50 am. Like so many other early mornings birding, I had felt tired until the minute I got out the door and the fresh air hit my face and I heard the sounds of life starting. Then it was like a feeling of adventure, and something came to life inside me, just like the birdsong. The sky was clear, Venus bright white and hanging in the sky above the mist gathered in our little valley below the farm. It was calm and cold with heavy dew over everything, but no frost. As I walked down the driveway, the first sounds were the call of the eastern phoebe and a northern cardinal, regularly the first songsters of morning. Down in the woods a white-throated sparrow sang, a chipping sparrow was trilling in the pines, and a Carolina wren loud and vocal out by the barn. Then the most beautiful sound yet, a wood thrush fluted out its melody from the woods behind the house. To add to the mix of music was the calling of peepers in the valley marsh, and numerous red squirrels scolding in the Norway spruce. I set up my chair with the blanket and set up my table with a notebook and supplies for the morning. Then sitting quietly, I added to the total of birds on the list, with the soft song of the chickadee, and then field sparrows out in brushy areas along the old pasture across the road. A bluebird gave its soft, bubbling call as it flew over the yard, a mourning dove called out back, and then the purple finch I had been seeing regularly started its rich warbling song from the top of the spruce out by the feeders. Turkeys were gobbling across the valley off and on as the crows started their morning conversation, and white-breasted nuthatch, tufted titmouse, red-bellied woodpecker and red-winged blackbird added their voices to the list.

Sunrise was at 6:14 am and as the light was still just starting to stream through the trees, at 6:20 am the call of a barred owl rang out unmistakably in the woods across the valley! Rarely do I hear them at home, not having the large expanse of forest, so it was a great but happy surprise to add this species. A distinctive soft chip note from the nearby walnut persisted and I recognized one of the most common migrant warblers, a yellow-rumped or myrtle warbler, flitting about and calling. Several loud fluting calls and then scolding chatter told me a Baltimore oriole was back out on the flowering quince tree behind the house, and then the resident Cooper's hawk started its kek kek call down in the pines where it had been present for weeks and hopefully preparing to nest again. It was still early and numbers were adding up quickly, so even though I was cold, it was exciting to feel the count was going well to this point.

As the sky slowly lightened I added a couple cedar waxwings giving their high-pitched calls as they flew over the yard. Another surprise bird, a single wood duck flew over low, headed presumably to the neighbor's pond, a species also not seen very often. Black-throated green warbler is another common migrant with a distinctive song, and I recognized it up in the nearby larch tree, as the local Canada geese called and flew over on their way to the pond. The sun started climbing through the trees and the sky remained clear and gorgeous, as the mist started to lift a little in the valley but the air remained calm. Singing eastern towhee and brown thrasher added their names to the growing list, and then another bird with a pretty distinctive and snappy song, a Nashville warbler up in the spruce.

By 7 am a few light clouds started rolling in from the southwest as the air warmed a little and the wind patterns started to shift a little. A little fog remained in the valley and both the purple finch and bluebird continued their morning song. The Cooper's hawk flew out from the pines and up to a perch in the neighbor's field in a large oak, hunting for its breakfast. Gray catbirds and a house wren added their voices to the chorus, and then as the clock hit 7:35 am the activity started to slow down just a little. This might still be an early hour to some, but a serious birder knows that on a big day in May, it's already getting late by 7:30 and you may well have missed some of the best action. So it wasn't surprising that as time went by it was going to get harder to keep adding new species. Almost to prove me wrong, right after this a blue-headed vireo began its beautifully slow, sweet and deliberate song down in the spruce woods below the garden, and shortly after that, a common raven gave a couple croaking calls as it winged through across the valley. Years ago this would have seemed much more exciting, but ravens have really expanded their range and so are regularly heard now throughout the year.

At 8:10 the skies remained mostly clear and it was still very cold as I paced around the deck and garden area to try to keep warm. Activity was getting slower, but the vireo continued to sing sweetly in the pines, the wood thrush kept up its music as well, and the myrtle warbler was still flitting about the yard, occasionally showing off its yellow rump feathers for which it is named. Eastern meadowlarks were starting to sing and call more often in the fields on the hill and across the road.

By 9 am the clouds were starting to cover part of the sky and a faint breeze was picking up, not a great harbinger for things to come, as most birders would agree that wind is worse than rain for success on a big day. Just as I was starting to think that the best was over, a soft but distinctive song started to come to me from below the deck at the edge of the yard, in a tangle of downed spruce limbs, multiflora rose and grapevines. As I tried to pick it out amongst all the other bird songs, I thought I recognized it but I just could not place it as something that familiar. It sang several times softly and while I still couldn't find it with the binoculars, it finally dawned on me that the song was familiar from my time birding in the Adirondack mountains of New York, where it is a breeding bird in the bogs there—a Lincoln's sparrow! I slowly walked down to where it was singing, and sure enough, there it was fluffed out in the cold, sitting tucked back in the grapevine tangles in a little patch of sunlight, quietly beautiful with its buffy malar stripe and upper chest with fine delicate streaking. As I watched it continued to periodically give its whisper song, and sat quietly looking out on the world as it rested from its long journey. I managed a few pictures though a little hazy as I had left my camera in the car overnight. I retreated and left it to its rest and headed back up to the deck, enjoying that wonderful feeling that comes with finding a great bird for early May, and one I often don't find in spring but more commonly in fall. Over the next half hour I could continue to hear the Lincoln's song off and on, and then both Cooper's hawks calling briefly near the nest. Two ruby-crowned kinglets also showed up giving their little quick calls and then one singing as they flitted around the apple tree and then into the larch.



*Lincoln's Sparrow, photo by Carole Winslow*

At 10 am the breeze was picking up a little more, making hearing that much harder, which is the first sense I most use in birding, even above sight. Clouds were starting to roll in more and I was debating how long to do the count as the day wore on and activity slowed. However as I walked around a little more below the deck several white-throated sparrows were calling and singing periodically in the tangles and as I checked them out with the binoculars, I found the Lincoln's still around and now actively flitting about nearby. I was able to get a few nicer pictures as it moved about feeding and also some of the white-throated sparrows, as a comparison for the different plumage and body structure.

Over the last hour until 11:40 I was able to add to the list a chestnut-sided warbler singing up above the barn in the overgrown orchard where they nest yearly, as well as the squeaky, wheezy calls of the blue-gray gnatcatcher in the



same area. Then as I stood near the Norway spruce bordering the garden a bird appeared in the lower branches moving along slowly as it fed, a gorgeous adult male Cape May warbler, with its bright rusty cheek patches against yellow, with dark cap and white wing patches. With the increasing winds, a turkey vulture soared over along with the resident red-tailed hawk, and ruby-throated hummingbird zipped around the flowering quince. A brown thrasher was singing from the maple top, and the last bird counted was a stunning indigo bunting that was giving its little lispy call as it headed up to the feeders, a great way to close the count. With the increasing wind, it was time to call it a morning and a success for my first big sit at home.

With almost 6 hours in one location out under the open skies, it occurred to me how few places that I had heard that morning, so unusual in this location that is on the normal path of so many cross-country flights. It was just another reminder of how things had changed, and why I was there all alone, instead of in the company of friends doing what we loved. But as the rest of nature carried on around me, and the birds sang, fed and moved on with their migration and breeding activities, the morning was also a reminder of the constants that are there in the world around us, no matter what is happening in our human lives. And with that thought comes a feeling of peace and a reminder of why I love and cherish both birds and the natural world that we live in.

The link for the eBird checklist that covers the morning's count — <https://ebird.org/checklist/S68251655>

I hope this might help inspire more people to learn about eBird and use it to enter your sightings around the county, adding to the knowledge of birds in our local area!

---

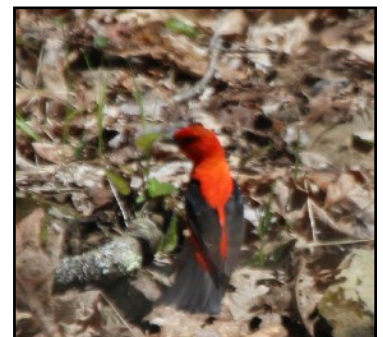
### Janice Horn, our Treasurer who handles the Birdathon, suggested that we publish the following Birdathon letter to our sponsors—

May 20, 2020

Hello to All of our Birdathon Sponsors,

Thank you for your support! We ran our Birdathon on Wednesday, May 13, and had another great day of birding Forest County and seeing how many species we could find.

We started at 6:30 checking the yard and feeders while we ate breakfast and got ready. We found our usual visitors: Northern Cardinal, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Goldfinch, Blue Jay, Rose-breasted Grosbeak (a migrant, but they have been here for a few weeks), Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadees...and Woo-hoo! —a bird that has been conspicuously missing from our yard this spring—White-throated Sparrow! Another migrant that has been feeding on oranges and grape jelly was also there—the flashy Baltimore Oriole. We rounded out our list with a mix of residents and migrants: Dark-eyed Junco, Mourning Dove, Tufted Titmouse, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, American Robin, American Crow, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, and Gray Catbird. As we headed to the car, we spotted a bird flitting in a pine tree—actually, there were two, and they were adorable Ruby-crowned Kinglets, on their way to Canada. A pretty good start, 22 species by 8:15.



This Scarlet Tanager let me get close enough for a photo with my phone!

Heading to Kiser's Corners, we stopped at a field where we often hear Field Sparrow and Voila! —it sang right on cue. At that same spot Jim noticed another bird that has been on our yard wish-list, a White-crowned Sparrow. Two species we were worried about finding at all, and we found them by 8:30! We also added Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Tree Swallow, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Eastern Phoebe, European Starling, Barn Swallows, and House Sparrows. Thirty-three species by 8:45!

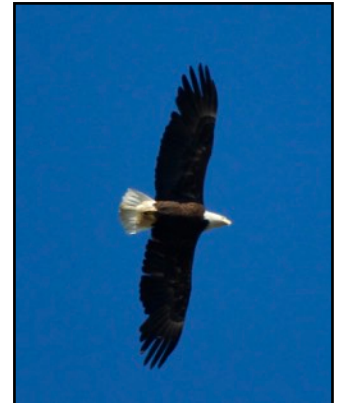


A pair of Common Mergansers resting at  
Nebraska

The next leg of our journey was to Nebraska and up to Sage Road. There we added Red-tailed Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, and Blue-headed Vireo. We heard the delightful song of the Winter Wren, also Red-eyed Vireo, and Wood Thrush. It feels rather lazy to “car-bird”, that is, stay in the car on these back roads, but the car serves as a blind, and it seems we can get closer to some species. We found a real hot-spot, a flush of migrants that must have just arrived—they were busy feeding right along the road and paying no attention to us. These included Swainson’s Thrush, Louisiana Waterthrush (usually heard but not seen!), Magnolia Warbler, Veery, Nashville Warbler, and Black-throated Green

Warbler. We also heard Ovenbird. Backtracking to Nebraska Bridge, we spotted two Common Mergansers relaxing on a mud bar. Luckily Flo had the camera out to photograph these when a large raptor flew overhead—an adult Bald Eagle! Pretty exciting day so far—we had 31 species on this section, including 23 new ones, bringing our total to 51 by 10:15!

On Little Hickory Road we added Carolina Wren, and at West Hickory we added Scarlet Tanager and House Finch.



We saw several  
Blackburnian Warblers

We had decided to do some walking earlier in the day than usual, at Dawson Run Road, where we’ve had some pretty good birds lately. Here we added the striking Northern Parula, Black-and-white Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Great Blue Heron, Pileated Woodpecker, Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Wood Duck, Canada Goose, Warbling Vireo, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and the “fire-throat”, Blackburnian Warbler. We lunched in the car, and by 1:30 had added 18 new species, for a tally of 69.

Of course we’re all concerned about the COVID 19. Birders are also interested in Corvids, that is, the family of birds that includes Blue Jays, American Crows, and Common Ravens. We thought we should note when we saw our 19th Corvid—Number 19 was a Blue Jay at Dawson Run. (He was not wearing a face mask, but he was practicing social distancing!).

The next part of our adventure took us to Yellowhammer and two of our favorite Forest Roads. We had some great sightings here, including Black-throated Blue Warbler and Blackburnian Warbler. We surprised a stately Great Blue Heron that had been feeding in a small stream right along the road. We added Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hermit Thrush, and Eastern Bluebird. On Yellowhammer Road, we had stopped to check out an upward sloping yard when a sizable raptor flew overhead—an Osprey at Yellowhammer? Their habitat includes rivers, ponds, and reservoirs, not rural neighborhoods. Soon we realized that the slope led to what must be an extensive pond—the Osprey dove and probably found a good lunch, because he didn’t come into view again. He brought our tally up to 74 by 4:30. Not bad!



This Hermit Thrush posed  
nicely, showing off his  
reddish tail

At this point we decided to head to Marienville for some field habitat (and take-out at Bettina’s). On the way Jim spotted an Eastern Kingbird in a field, and we saw a Cliff Swallow near the Kellettville Bridge.

The field at Marienville was a disappointment—we added only Killdeer, Rock Pigeon, Common Raven, and Wild Turkey, and a Spotted Sandpiper at a nearby wetlands. We had 81 species by 6:45.



Fortunately it was pleasant enough to picnic—we headed to Beaver Meadows, expecting to add more species—well, we added one bird, Indigo Bunting, and were pleased to see another Osprey. And thoroughly enjoyed our take-out!

We stopped at Guitonville at our usual spot for woodcock, but gave up after half an hour, at 8:40. Then we decided to check out Golinza Mill Road, and bingo! We heard the familiar “Peent” of the American Woodcock, #83! We listened for a while, and also heard the twittering call between “Peents” as the bird moved around the field. (How can a bird that I rarely get to see have such a special place in my heart?... )

So, were we content to go home and relax at 9:00? Noooooo! We checked out three spots for whip-poor-will or owl (or ANYTHING new!) but struck out at all three locations. We got home at 10:15, after driving 141 miles, walking two miles, seeing 553 birds of 83 different species. We were disappointed that this was below our average—over the last 20 years, we’ve averaged 89.5 species, with a low of 76 and a high of 104. This was the first year we missed Purple Finch, and only the second time we missed Chimney Swift. The total species we’ve seen on all of our Birdathons is 168!

So just wait till next year....

The Seneca Rocks Audubon Society really appreciates your sponsorship (as do we!). Visit [www.senecarocksaudubon.org](http://www.senecarocksaudubon.org) to read about our chapter.

Thank you!  
Jim and Flo McGuire

---

## The 2020 Christmas Bird Count

~Debbie McCanna

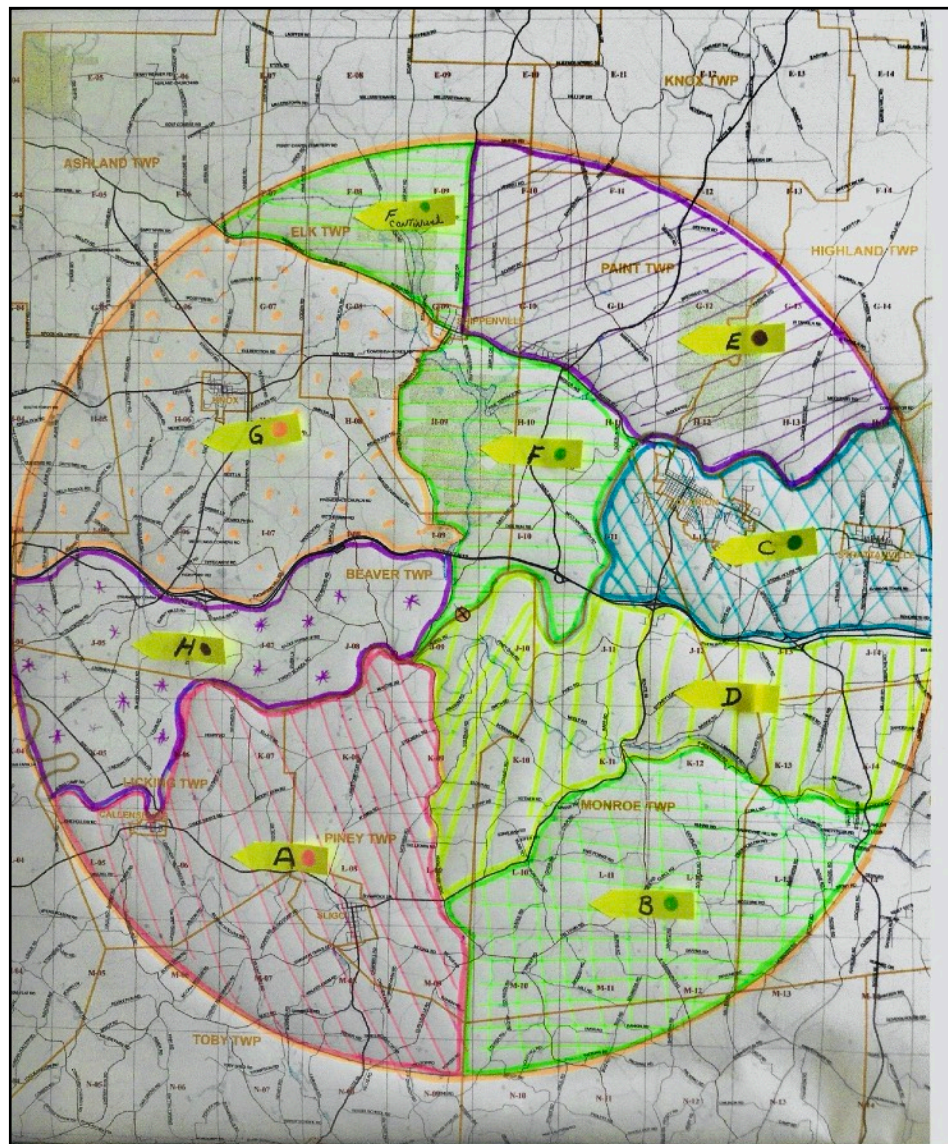
**F**or many birders, the CBC is the most wonderful day of the year—some of our members even show it that way on their calendars! We hope you’ll add it to your calendar as well!

This year, Seneca Rocks has chosen December 19 for our Christmas Bird Count. Since the CBC began on Christmas Day in 1900, it has relied on the dedication and commitment of citizen scientists. The Clarion Christmas Bird Count Circle was established by SRAS in 1987, so this will be our 34th year. We cover a specific 15-mile-diameter circle. There are ways to participate by vehicle, on foot, or at a feeder station. Our CBC Committee has spent a lot of time this summer realigning our circle sections to account for highway changes and make the sections about the same size/time to count. We also have looked at places where hikers or cross-country skiers could help. If you are a beginning birder, you will be able to join a group that includes at least one experienced birder.

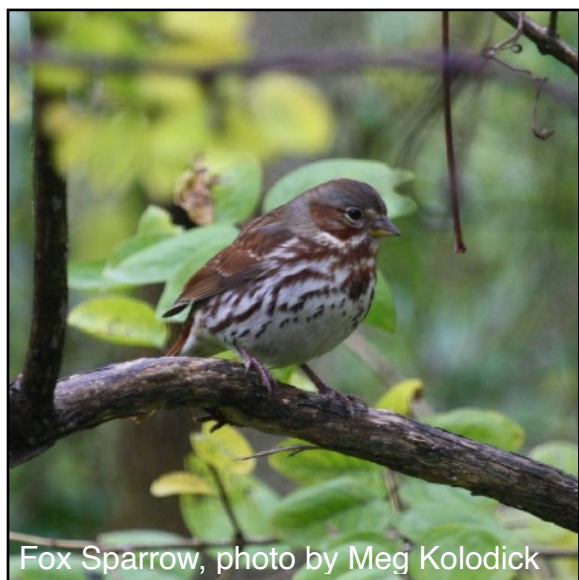
There is a specific methodology to the CBC, and all participants must make arrangements to participate in advance with the circle compiler, but anyone can participate. Our count is organized by the count compiler, Debbie McCanna, [dmcc1018@gmail.com](mailto:dmcc1018@gmail.com). Count volunteers cover their section, counting every bird they see or hear all day, keeping track of their time and miles driving and walking. If you see a noteworthy bird that is not in your section, keep track of the time and its location, in case it was not seen in that section. It’s not just a species tally—all birds are counted all day, giving an indication of the total number of birds in the circle that day.

If your home is within the boundaries of our CBC circle, then you can be a “Feeder Watcher” and report the birds that visit your feeders or property on count day, as long as you have made prior arrangement with the count compiler. Feeder Watchers are coordinated by Danette Karls ([danettemkarls@gmail.com](mailto:danettemkarls@gmail.com)). If you know someone who lives within the circle, you can watch at their feeder and yard.

We have a Team Leader for each section in our Circle, plus a dedicated group of Feeder Watchers. We would like to have more participants, and will be holding some training opportunities in the fall. Mal Hays ([malhays54@gmail.com](mailto:malhays54@gmail.com)) is coordinating these vehicle trial runs. Since we have a number of PA State Game Lands in our circle, there are a number of areas for hiking. Anyone who wishes to walk in a section should talk to the Team Leader for that section.



Our CBC Circle, showing the new section boundaries



Fox Sparrow, photo by Meg Kolodick

The National Audubon Society manages the historic CBC database and makes the data available to researchers as well as the general public. The data collected by CBC participants over the past century and more have become one of only two large pools of information informing ornithologists and conservation biologists how the birds of the Americas are faring over time. For more information, go online to <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>.





# Clarion County Spring 2020 Bird Sightings

~ Carole Winslow

Locations: Clarion (CL), Cook Forest (CF), Curlsville (CV), Kahle Lake (KL), Mt Zion (SGL 330/Piney Tract)(MZ), New Bethlehem (NB), Redbank Valley Trail (RVT), Rimersburg (RI), Sarah Furnace (SF).

Five waterfowl reports merit some mention this season, where variable and unusual weather likely caused some changes in migration. **Blue-winged Teal** were only seen at one location, with a single bird noted at a small pond near Leeper 4/8 (SK). **Northern Pintail** were also only noted once, with four birds at KL 3/5 (DS). **Redhead** were at KL as well, where 30 birds were seen 3/11 (RF), and two **Long-tailed Ducks** were there 3/16 (MB, ES). **Red-breasted Mergansers** were reported in NB, with a single bird 3/29 (J&AK), and one fairly late female at KL 5/17 (ES).

**Ruffed Grouse** had a better showing with one to two birds seen and heard drumming in several areas around Lucinda 4/12-5/7 (ES). **Common Nighthawks** were seen in migration with two birds noted at dusk 5/16 and 5/25 near CV (DD, CW). An unusual species in any season, a **Sandhill Crane** was seen near Callensburg, calling and flying over some marshy fields 5/14 (NH). As they increase their range in Pennsylvania, it would not be surprising to add a breeding record for *Clarion* as there is available habitat. **American Woodcock** were first heard back fairly early this year with two heard calling and displaying near CV 3/2 (DD, CW). At the same location near CV as heard last year, one to two **Wilson's Snipe** were heard winnowing after dusk between 4/5 and 4/23, and one was also heard on nearby Rankin Rd 4/16 (DD, CW). Both sites have small marshy areas surrounded by grassland and some agricultural fields. **Great Egrets** are not reported some years, so it is worth noting one seen at KL 4/19 (TS).

**Osprey** were found in greater numbers this year, with a bird found in CV 4/14 and 4/24, and one also seen near CL 4/18 (CW). At Beaver Creek, where there is good habitat and a nesting platform, one was seen 4/19 (TS), and at KL where there is also great habitat, one was noted 4/19 (ES) and 5/8 (BB). Remarkably, there were three reports of **Golden Eagle**, which is very unusual. These covered a span of six days and sightings were within several miles, so possibly the same bird, however this is peak migration time for the species. One was seen soaring over fields near CV 3/21 and 3/26 (CW), and about five miles away towards Limestone, another bird was seen 3/22 (ES). **Northern Harrier** numbers continued to be good into the spring, with multiple areas reporting. A pair was seen at Rankin Rd near CV 3/13 (CW), and a pair also present at MZ between 5/4 and 5/31 (RP, CR, ES). During May between 5/2 and 5/16, single birds were also reported from RI (DSh), Limestone (JC) and CV area (CW, AM). Three successful **Bald Eagle** nesting efforts are welcome news for this raptor that continues to do well in its population recovery. A longstanding nest along the Clarion River near Sligo had an adult on the nest 4/14 (CW) and another location on the river near Millcreek had two adults at the nest 4/4 through 4/6 (ES). A newer nesting location on the Clarion River near Callensburg had multiple reports from 4/6 to 5/17 with two adults seen present and two young in the nest (NH, ES, CW).

The only location for **Short-eared Owl** was at Rankin Rd near CV, where two birds were noted up through 4/16 (DD, CW). Unfortunately, they did not continue, though this was historically a breeding location, and a large expanse of excellent habitat remains.

**Red-headed Woodpeckers** are always worth noting. One was seen near Lucinda 5/2 (ES), one at CF 5/12 (ES), and one at a feeder near Fisher 5/15 (DK). There are just two falcon reports for the season, the first being a **Merlin** spotted near Leeper 4/13 (BB). A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen outside Clarion at the I-80 overpass taking down a pigeon over the median 3/11 (CW).

**Alder Flycatchers** are not common but generally regular in migration, however it is worth noting an unusual count of five singing at Beaver Creek 5/30 (ES). There is a large area of excellent habitat here, although nesting at this site has not been confirmed in the past. **Purple Martins** have had some newer nesting locations in the county, but are never common. Two were seen near CV 5/18 (CW) and at KL four were seen 4/19 (ES) and 12 also reported 5/22 (MHi, RH, FM). Other than at their regular location at CF, only a single **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was seen, one at CL 4/3 (TS). A rare migrant, a **Marsh Wren** was found at the edge of KL 5/5 (ES). **Purple Finches** continue to be year-round residents at a location with great spruce and pine habitat in RI, with remarkably up to 30 birds seen in migration during April and continuing with four to seven birds by the end of May starting into nesting season (MM).

**Fox Sparrows** had lower than usual numbers, with just one bird at CL 3/21 (TS), and one in RI 4/5 (DSh). Cold, snowy weather hit in early May, possibly leading to the increased numbers and sightings of **White-crowned**

**Sparrows**, who make their way through the state in this time period. Up to six birds were at one location in CL 5/5-10 (TS), and one or two birds at two other locations in CL 5/4-10 (ES). In RI, three were present from 5/3-12 (MM), and three near NB 5/10 (ES). At a location near CV up to six birds were present at feeders from 5/8 through 5/17 (CW). **Henslow's Sparrows** were first heard back with a record early return a week sooner than normal, when several were found at MZ 4/4 (MWe). **Lincoln's Sparrows** are not as common in spring as in fall, so a little unusual to have three sightings at one location near CV. One bird was seen there 5/2, 5/13 and 5/17 (CW). **Rusty Blackbirds** are infrequently reported anymore, and this season only one sighting is noted, with four birds seen at a farm field seep beside a wooded area near RI 3/28 (CW).



**Worm-eating Warblers** are the first of note for these species, and they remain present at their regular locations along wooded riparian slopes along the southern edge of the county, which is actually about the northern edge of their range in western Pennsylvania. They were found in



two areas along the Armstrong Trail near East Brady 5/10-11 (ES), two were seen along the RVT 5/27 (MHi, RH, FM) and one was also seen there 5/28 (CW). The first **Louisiana Waterthrush** was heard singing near SF 4/5 (CW). The RVT is also an excellent location for this species, and up to five birds were found there from 4/15 through the end of the season (MHi, RH, FM, ES, CW). A new, more northern location was found for this species, with a bird found along Licking Creek near Snyderburg 5/27, well into breeding season (ES). **Cerulean Warblers** are a species of concern, but numbers along the RVT where they are most regular appear to be holding steady.



Worm-eating Warbler, photo by Meg Kolodick

They were reported back on territory in their usual time frame, with the first heard 5/1 (CW), and then up to five singing males found between 5/22 and 5/29 (ES, CW). One was also reported



Blackpoll Warbler, photo by Meg Kolodick

at the Foxburg trail along the Allegheny River 5/30 (MW). **Blackpoll Warblers** are normally a common migrant in later May but numbers were down this year. Only two reports are noted, one at SF 5/17 (TR), and one at Foxburg 5/30 (MW). **Pine Warblers** on the other hand were up in reporting, with three locations. One was early in the season at a suet feeder near Strattanville 3/19 (MH), another also at a suet feeder in CL 4/20 (ES), and one near Leeper 4/30 (SK). **Yellow-throated Warblers** are present in a limited range and they were only noted in one regular location on the RVT near RI 5/22 (CW) and 5/27-28 (MHi, RH, FM). **Wilson's Warbler** rounds the list off as it remains just an intermittently reported migrant, and just one was found near CV 5/16 (CW).

**ADDENDUM:** A significant sighting for the winter season of 2019-2020 was missed for the last report. In a sign that **Golden Eagles** may be spending the winter in *Clarion* like other areas of Pennsylvania, one was seen at MZ 2/16 (MWe).

Observers: **Carole Winslow** , [cjwinslow94@gmail.com](mailto:cjwinslow94@gmail.com) , Brendyn Baptiste, Mallory Bearer, Joseph Croskey, Don DeWolf, Rob Fergus, Mal Hays, Margaret Higbee (MHi), Roger Higbee, Nathan Holmes, Janice Horn, Danette Karls, S Kaye, John and Avis Keener, Flo McGuire, Andrew Markel, Ron Montgomery, Mark Moore, Theo Rickert, Eric Schill, Tabassam Shah, Debbie Shirey (DSh), Daria Sockey, Janet Stewart, Mike Weible (MWe), Michael Williams.

## Events

Nighthawk Watches at Oil City Marina and Millcreek Boat Launch every evening till about mid-September.

You may contact Mal about joining him to check Owl Boxes or on an Owl Survey.

Christmas Bird Count December 19



Yellow-throated Warbler, photo by Meg Kolodick

Leadership Team		
Team Member	Role	Phone
Deb Freed	President	814-226-4719
Alice Thureau	Vice-President	814-223-4655
Kay John	Secretary, Membership	724-526-5960
Janice Horn	Treasurer	814-226-7367
Paulette Colantonio	Education	814-797-2031
Pat Conway	History, Facebook	814-752-2036
Gary Edwards	Outreach Programs, Website	814-676-3011
Jeffrey Hall	Facebook	814-518-7050
Mal Hays	Outings Leader	814-764-5645
Danette Karls	CBC Feederwatch	814-764-3251
Mike Leahy	Beaver Creek/IBA 21	814-229-1648
Debbie McCanna	CBC Coordinator	724-526-5693
Flo McGuire	Website, <i>Drummer</i> Editor	814-755-3672
Ron Montgomery	Outreach Programs	814-764-6088
Jim Wilson	Nest Boxes & Feeders	814-676-5455

*Once upon a time, when  
women were birds, there  
was the simple  
understanding that to  
sing at dawn and to sing  
at dusk was to heal the  
world through joy. The  
birds still remember  
what we have forgotten,  
that the world is meant  
to be celebrated.*

*~ Terry Tempest  
Williams*

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