



THE DRUMMER



www.senecarocksaudubon.org

May/June 2020

Volume 36, No.4



An Itch, A Twitch, and a Megatrick: Stalking the Picathartes

MarLa Sink Druzgal

June 10 Program

The presenter of a popular program for us last April, Marla Sink Druzgal, returns with this program: BBC dubbed them “The Birds That Have Lived for 44 Million Years.” Join the adventure as Traveling MarLa recounts her journey to the rainforests of Ghana in search of the White-necked Rockfowl (also known as the Yellow-headed Picathartes). Explore a variety of West African species encountered along the way, and learn about the series of failures that nearly ended the search. This will be a multi-

All of our get-togethers for April and May have been cancelled because of the COVID-19 situation. We are hoping to have our June 10 Program, and of course, our Picnic August 12.

Check your email, our website and Facebook page for current updates.

The Birdathon will go on!

media presentation with time for questions and answers.

MarLa Sink Druzgal, an Indiana County native, is a freelance writer, teacher, photographer, and global explorer. With an undergraduate degree from IUP, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Chatham University, she puts her diplomas to work through her published stories, poems, and travel essays. MarLa is a part-time adjunct professor, and workshop instructor in both the United States, and South Africa. She has recently moved back from Indonesia, and will be traveling again to South Africa later in 2020, where she will teach, chase birds, and participate in designing and implementing a new Travel Writing curriculum with Sol Plaatje University.

Follow her work on her website:

TravelingMarLa.com

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

A CBC Thank You

Debbie McCanna, our CBC compiler, wishes to pass on this thank you from National Audubon

Dear CBC Compilers,

We hope you and your loved ones are well and safe in these unprecedented times, and that spring migration is lifting your spirits. We know you have a lot on your mind, but we want to thank you for checking your count off as completed in record time this year.

So far, we have received more than 95% of the total counts, and this means we will have information to share with you sooner this year. We'd like to especially thank those of you who met the February 29 deadline; you made all the difference.

In appreciation,

Geoff LeBaron and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count Team



A Blue-winged Warbler would be a nice find on the Birdathon.

The Birdathon will go on!

This is one of our major fund-raisers whereby an individual (or two) see how many species they can find in a day of birding. The Birdathon window of time is the peak of spring migration in Pennsylvania, so as you can imagine, it is a FUN project!

You may join the game by donating a certain amount per species tallied, or a flat rate.

LOOKING AHEAD

~ Deb Freed

This global pandemic has touched everyone. We are mindful of how the virus has impacted the health and well-being of individuals, families and businesses. Our small organization exists to educate and inform about birds and habitat through programming and outings. For now, we will rely on our individual encounters with birds to see us through until we can get together again. The leadership team will monitor the Pennsylvania guidelines for social distancing and we will resume programs when it is safe to do so.

April 30/raindate May 2 Big Sit canceled

May 9 Warbler Walk – canceled

May 16 Ceruleans Up Close – canceled

May 9 – 17 Birdathon – by individuals . . . consider supporting these birders with a donation . . . all donations go to SRAS

June 10 – Program with MarLa still on the schedule NOTE: watch Facebook/website for any updates

June – Public Bird Walks along Rail 66 TBD

Election of Officers – June program or August picnic - ballot in Drummer

By-Law adoption – June program or August picnic - see summary of by-law changes or request full side-by-side from Deb at 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, 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.

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.

Summary of By-Law changes to be amended by vote

~ Deb Freed

The by-laws define the organization's primary characteristics. In general, these changes will provide a clear structure with operating flexibility.

GOALS The goals of SRAS are aligned with the National Audubon.

MEMBERSHIP

1. Membership will be consistent with National Audubon.
2. Chapter Membership is established.
3. A Membership Policy will establish chapter contributions, define benefits of membership and guidelines for members to be eligible to vote (Members In Good Standing).

MEETINGS

Meetings of the members will be defined by the Board removing specific months and days.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1. Board members must be members of the Society.
2. There will be at least 3 regular board meetings in a calendar year.
3. A quorum at a board meeting must include 2 elected officers.

OFFICERS

1. President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.
2. President will have oversight for recertification to National Audubon.
3. Treasurer will chair the Finance committee.
4. Secretary will chair the Membership committee.
5. Term limits removed.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Vice-President will appoint the nominating committee.

COMMITTEES

1. Finance committee shall establish a Finance Policy to include 501© (3) reporting and an annual financial report
2. Membership committee shall establish a Membership Policy.
3. Committees are designated by the Board.

AMENDMENTS

1. Members In Good Standing may amend these By-Laws by majority vote.
2. Eliminate Parliamentary authority.

Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee has come up with a roster of candidates for your approval. Nominations for any of these positions will still be accepted from the membership. Please check with your nominee for willingness to serve, and email Mike Leahy at mrl706@gmail.com with your nominee.

All valid members will be eligible to vote. A membership list will be available at the June meeting.

Any nominees will be added to the list and ballots will be presented for a vote at the June meeting.

If there are no further nominees, the roster will be presented for approval at the June meeting.

President - Deb Freed
Vice-President - Alice Thureau
Secretary - Kay John
Treasurer - Janice Horn

In the event we have no meeting in June, the vote will be at the August picnic.

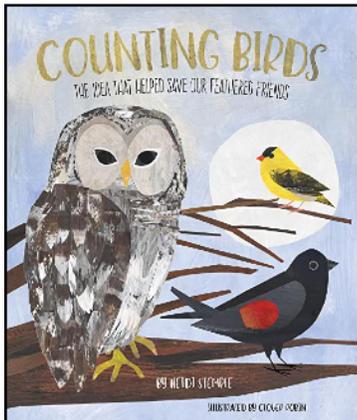
Like us on Facebook!
<https://www.facebook.com/SenecaRocksAudubon>

Children's Nature Books for Local Libraries

~ Paulette Colantonio

This is a continuation of the article in our March/April Drummer. "The Book Project", which was begun in 2009, is a joint effort between the Clarion County Garden Club and Seneca Rocks Audubon Society. School librarians choose from this list of books to enhance their libraries. This year 56 books were donated to 14 school libraries.

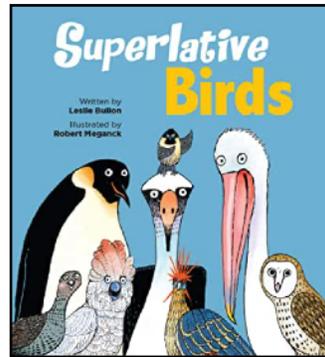
The six nonfiction titles for local libraries are: *Counting Birds: The Idea That Helped Save Our Feathered Friends*, *Superlative Birds*, *Hopping Ahead of Climate Change: Snowshoe Hares, Science, and Survival*, *Fly With Me, Woodpeckers: Drilling Holes and Bagging Bugs*, and *Migration: Incredible Animal Journeys*.



Colorful cut-paper collage depictions of a Barred owl, an American goldfinch, and a Red-winged blackbird entice the reader to open *Counting Birds: The Idea That Helped Save Our Feathered Friends* by Heidi Stemple. The plot relates how hunters

in America gathered on Christmas, formed teams, and shot any and all types of birds throughout the day. The victorious team simply killed the most feathered creatures. Frank Chapman, a self-taught ornithologist "loved birds." He suggested a different birding challenge in his magazine *Bird-Lore*. (*Bird-Lore* morphed into the *Audubon Magazine*, still in print today). Instead of shooting the birds, simply count them, record the numbers and species, and use the data to guide conservation projects. The methodology of the count, including the drawing of the circles, employing feeder watchers, and the

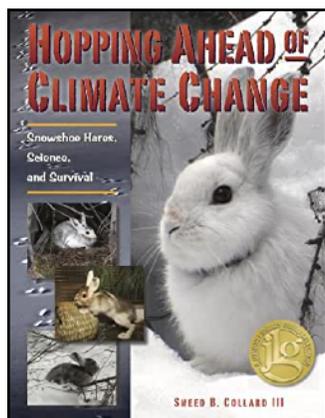
importance of collected numbers and species is examined, accompanied with vivid artwork by Clover Robin. A brief biography of Frank Chapman and the evolution of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count are presented in the back material. (This year's CBC is #120)! The author suggests ways children and adults can become involved in citizen science by participation in the Christmas Bird Count, Great Backyard Count, and Nest Watch. This publication received a plethora of awards in 2019, including the Outstanding Science Trade Book for Students, Green Earth Book Honor Award in the Picture Book category, Best STEM Book for K-12 Students and the Riverby Award given by the John Burroughs Association. This book could be read aloud to younger students and read independently by intermediate children. It is written on a Grade 3.3 Reading Level.



Eighteen contestants strut the runway in *Superlative Birds*, the second nonfiction title, written by Leslie Bulion. This imaginative selection answers questions such as, what bird has the strangest way of storing food? Which avian

creature is the smelliest? What feathered friend lays the most brilliantly colored eggs? Each bird is introduced on its own double-page spread in a specific poetic form, with an accompanying concise "science note," and an amazing digital illustration by Robert Meganack. The bird's superlative quality under investigation is posted vertically on the spread in a gray simple font. A black-capped chickadee serves as the emcee for the pageant, imparting information and challenging the reader to uncover characteristics unique to avian folk. For example, the longest trip belongs to the Arctic tern and is accompanied by a poem in the form of a sea chantey. You can scan a barcode and sing along to the song. The Australian pelican has the longest bill (approximately 20 inches) and is featured in a funny

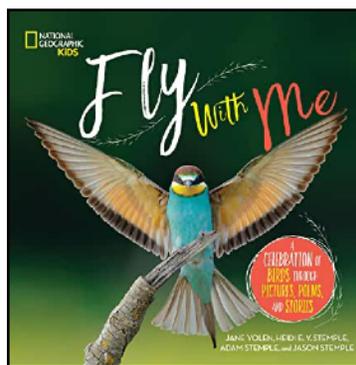
English poetic form called a madson stanza, complete with an Aboriginal word for crayfish – Yabby. Participants in this superlative event hail from all parts of the Earth. Timberdoodles (U.S.), tinamou (Central America and South America), red-bellied queleas (Africa), and the kakapo (New Zealand) are a few representatives. This book could easily be cataloged in the poetry collection or science collection of the library. A glossary, poetry notes describing the structures of all 20 poems incorporated in the book, and a list of resources are included in the backmatter. (The end pages are cleverly drawn to lure the reader into the selection. The front pages show the bird with a brief description of its unique characteristic, but no name. The same drawing of the bird is supplied in the back, now with the bird’s name). Written on a Grade 4.9 Reading Level, the book could easily be read aloud to younger children. The selection could be used in the elementary or junior high for poetry study in language arts settings.



Third, *Hopping Ahead of Climate Change: Snowshoe Hares, Science, and Survival* is a captivating packaging of biologist Scott Mills’ ongoing field study of climate change centered on the seasonal camouflage of snowshoe hares. Mills decided to

study the hare-lynx relationship in 1998 when the Canada lynx was placed on the Threatened Species List in the United States. The main food source for the lynx, hares, change coat color with the shorter days in the year, molting from brown to white in winter. Scientist study “mismatched” hares. A hare can be white sitting on a brown background or vice versa. Mismatched simply means coat color does not blend with the background. Mills has found hares “trust in their camouflage, even if they are not camouflaged.” Our warming planet with later snows and earlier springs have imperiled the hares, and in

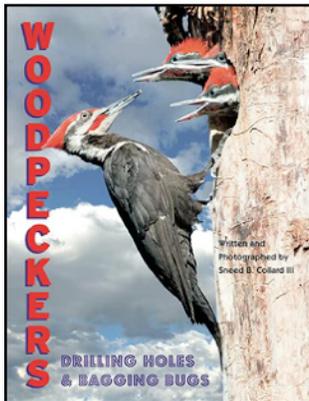
turn the lynx, and other species in this food web. Other topics stemming from Mills’ investigation are also explored by the author, Sneed Collard III. This supporting information is presented in charts, a map with photos of other seasonal coat species, and blue background inserts with a differing font than the main text. Some topics explored succinctly in said inserts are “The Other Greenhouse Gases, Which Mismatch is Deadlier? Why Don’t Hares Just Move? and Evolve or Adapt: What’s the Difference?” Although a sobering topic, Collard fuses humor in the text, along with gorgeous photography, a hallmark of this author. This selection has a table of contents, a glossary (Hare-y Words), and an index. Other backmatter includes websites, videos, and books for further exploration. “Hop Up to the Plate” gives the reader suggestions to reduce their impact on the warming earth. This Junior Library List selection is a 2017 award winner of the NSTA Outstanding Science Trade Book, an AAAS/Subaru Prize Finalist, and the Green Earth Book Award for Middle Grades. With a Grade 6.9 Reading Level, it is appropriate for upper elementary and middle school children. Adults will find it engaging, too.



Next, Jane Yolen and her children were commissioned by the National Geographic Society to create a book to celebrate the Year of the Bird 2018. National Geographic’s purpose for this endeavor was to make the public aware

of birds in our world. The result is *Fly with Me*, an extensive collection of captivating photography and art, scientific information, citizen science, birds in folklore, and poetry. (The front cover hosting a bee-eater landing on a branch with its wings extended captivates)! Yolen et el. want humans to notice birds and be inspired to help feathered creatures by creating bird-friendly areas in backyards, cities, and countries. The author begins the compendium with

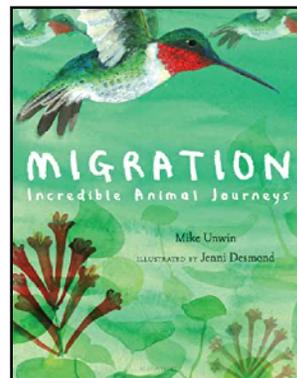
articles and charts featuring such topics as anatomy, eggs, feathers, and nests. They examine paleo-birds, human and bird interactions, such as domestication of geese and falconry. Students will find the “States Birds” section with photography and a double page spread map of each state’s bird very helpful in science or social studies classes. The authors explore migration and citizen science, complete with bird watching tips. Each section of this large book is adorned with poetry, some familiar and some original. There is a Table of Contents to aid with navigation in this 192-page selection. Extensive back matter includes websites, lists of citizen science groups with URLs, a selected bibliography, author notes, a list of scientific names of birds in order of appearance in the text, credits, and an index. While some of the book is written on a Grade 3.0 Reading Level, young students may need assistance in understanding some sections. This beautiful comprehensive selection was created for children and adults.



Another book written by Sneed Collard III is the next offering. Because he realized there were few good children’s books about woodpeckers, the author/photographer created *Woodpeckers: Drilling Holes and Bagging Bugs*. The dust cover photography of a

male pileated woodpecker feeding three young and a downy clinging to a tree riddled with holes entices the reader to open this selection and discover in-depth information about these creatures, often delivered with Collard’s expected humor. (For example, the fifth chapter in the Table of Contents is “Would You Like that Tree Soft, Medium, or Hard?”) Collard begins with the most widely recognized characteristics and behaviors of woodpeckers: Colorful markings on head, Black-and-white body, Beak like a dagger or drill, and Pounding into the side of a tree” as springboards to

investigate skulls, nesting cavities, food acquisition, how woodpeckers help other species, and conservation issues. The book has a bilevel informational system. The main body of the text is presented in a large font on a white background. Additional information supporting this body of text is included as asides, with a differing font and background color. The backmatter begins with “Tapping Deeper” giving readers’ organizations, websites, and titles for further exploration. A glossary is also found in the back of the book, along with brief information: About the Author, Woodpecker Photo Bloopers, and an index. The Blooper section is very funny... “Curse all sticks and bushes!” Although this book was written for intermediate elementary students on a 6.6 Reading Level, younger students will enjoy looking at the fantastic photos.



Using beautifully crafted sentences, author Mike Unwin relates the annual stories of 20 different species in *Migration: Incredible Animal Journeys*, the last nonfiction selection. The cast of characters that appear in this slightly oversized volume include

brown caribou swimming in rivers to winter in the protection of forests far from the tundra; flocks of bar-headed geese trumpeting loudly as they lift over the Himalayas; and whooping cranes dancing in a “feathered ballet” preparing to fly north to raise one chick in a boggy habitat in northern central United States or southern Canada. Although some of the species examined are familiar, the author employs informative and descriptive language to engage the reader. For instance, Monarch migration begins, “High in a mountain forest in Mexico the air is dancing with butterflies.” Discussing the migration of Christmas Island red crabs in Australia, Unwin helps us imagine thousands of these creatures scuttling across the road: “Stop the car, quick!

There's a red river flowing right across the road!" Each animal is presented on a double page spread with amazing illustrations in watercolor, ink, pencil, and acrylic by award winning artist Jenni Desmond. There is a table of contents. In the back, a map depicts the migratory routes of all species in the

text. This selection is written on a 3.0 Reading Level and is suitable for older primary children or independent reading for intermediate students. Primary children would enjoy hearing the book read to them.



Wood Frog egg mass, April 4, about the size of a softball



Eggs with tadpoles developing, April 17

Wood Frogs in My Pond

Article and Photos by Deb Freed

One benefit of staying home these past few weeks is the time spent just listening and observing as spring arrives. We have a very small water feature and pond in our back yard. Over the years, it has drawn many one-time visitors. On March 27 we heard a short cluck from the pond. Yes, a wood frog was calling. Shortly after that, I observed the frogs mating in the water, just below the mossy rock where the resident green frog sits on warm days. On April 4 I took the picture of the egg mass along the edge of the pond. It was a gelatinous blob of hundreds of eggs about the size of a softball.

The weather has been both spring like and wintery between first seeing the wood frogs and now. On April 17 the eggs show elongated tadpoles about 3/8 inch long. If the weather does not interrupt their development, they should hatch in another week, April 24. Our pond is a safe location for the eggs to mature and hatch, much like the vernal ponds where wood frogs typically mate and lay eggs. There are no predators. For nearly 20 years we had goldfish that thrived in the pond and would have eaten any eggs. For now, I continue to watch the egg mass through snow and showers. I'll keep you posted on our Facebook page.

For a fascinating youtube on Wood Frogs, listen to Adam Haritan on Learn Your Land at <https://learnyourland.com>

Enjoy the nature around you.

Conneaut Marsh/Geneva Swamp Field Trip Report

March 21st 2020

By: Michael R Leahy

I'm sure many of you were disappointed when we made the difficult decision to cancel this year's outing to Custards/Geneva Marsh due to the restrictions associated with the Coronavirus. No one was more disappointed than I. This has been a favorite outing for our group, and me, for many years and this year was looking like it would be one of the better years, not only weather wise but also for waterfowl variety and numbers.

In order to continue the Seneca Rocks Audubon tradition, I decided that I would practice the recommended "social distancing" and make the pilgrimage west to the wetlands alone and then write up an article about my exploits for The Drummer. A complete list of species seen will be at the end of this article.

I started the day a little later than we normally would for this field trip arriving at the bridge in Custards at around 9:30 am. The temperature was 29 degrees and, as usual, there were a few snowflakes floating in the air. I was not surprised to find a couple of other vehicles already there with binoculars sticking out of the windows. I greeted them with a wave from a respectable distance. I got the scope out and scanned the area to try to determine the different species bobbing and diving in all corners of the marsh. Some of the waterfowl I identified were Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Redheads, Scaup, American Wigeon, Canada Goose and Northern Shoveler among others. It was nice to see a small group of Tree Swallows dipping and diving in the air looking for insects, my first sighting of the year for this species.

Conspicuous by its absence was Bald Eagle. I saw none at this stop.

I then proceeded on our usual route to the flooded farm fields along Marsh Road. There were a few Wood Duck visible from the bridge over the creek. The old tree snag where we find Bald Eagles nearly every year has finally met its demise and blown down. No eagles seen here either. I did find three common Snipe probing the soft soil next to the flooded area and there were Northern Pintail and two Tundra Swans in the "pond" with few Mallards scattered about.

From Marsh Road I visited the usual stops around Geneva Marsh. Numbers of waterfowl were good but no additional species were added. Next stop – Conneaut Lake.

As I pulled into the newly remodeled Fireman's Park on the shore of Conneaut Lake there was a nice flock of Ring-billed Gulls. Swooping over the parking lot, they provided some entertainment as I scanned them trying without success to turn one or two into Bonaparte's or Herring Gulls.



A female and two male Bufflehead, photo by Mike Leahy

There were several Mallards playing around the empty boat docks but the birds of the lake that day were two breeding plumage Loons, several Horned Grebes and a couple Pied-billed Grebes. There were several rafts of ducks bobbing around the lake (probably Ring-

necked Ducks and Scaup) but they were too far away for a confident identification. On to Miller Farm and Pymatuning.

Arriving at Miller Farm I was greeted by the usual Kestrel on the wires along the road prior to the first parking area. I finally found several Gadwall in the pond at the first parking area. They are one of my favorites. I find them to be a very handsome duck. Also here I finally got my first Eagles of the day. For some unknown reason, I only counted 5 Bald Eagles on the day. Probably a new low count for this outing. I saw no Rough-legged Hawks there this year and didn't really expect to. There were very few reported around the state this year. I did see three Red-tails here. The next couple of stops at the other ponds at Miller Farm produced Hooded Mergansers, Green-winged Teal and Eastern Meadowlark. As I left the area of the ponds a Cooper's Hawk zoomed in front of my truck and landed in a tree only 20 yards away affording me rarely seen nice views. Next stop.... the causeway where the ducks walk on the backs of the fish.

There were a few additional bird species visible at the final stop of the day, the causeway. The usual line-up of gulls on the rail at the causeway parking area consisted mostly of Ring-bills with a couple of Herring Gulls thrown in. Out on the lake I found some Ruddy Ducks, a couple of Long-tailed Ducks and some Double-crested Cormorants.

It was a nice day overall with decent weather with nice numbers of species and individuals. Although I had a good time on the day, I missed the interaction with other birders on the trip. Hopefully we'll all be able to get together again soon.

Forty-three species were tallied for the day: American Robin, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Song Sparrow, House Sparrow, Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, Tree Swallow, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, Common Snipe, Killdeer, Eastern Meadowlark, Ring-

necked Duck, Northern Shoveler, Redhead, Wood Duck, Bufflehead, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Scaup Sp., Canada Goose, Tundra Swan, Long-tailed Duck, Ruddy Duck, Hooded Merganser, Double-crested Cormorant, Northern Pintail, Mallard, Gadwall, Horned Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Bald Eagle, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Coopers Hawk, American Kestrel, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Rock Pigeon.

Haiku Corner

Golden-crowned kinglet
Chipping, frenzied acrobat
a Visitation.

~ Paulette Colantonio



Golden-crowned Kinglet Photo by Jeffrey Hall

White-throated Sparrow

Keenly dressed flutist
traveling to northern bogs
your song lifts my heart

~ Flo McGuire

White-throated Sparrow

Article and Photo by Pat Conway

I've been called to identify and rescue birds for people many times over the years. The first call came when we were stationed in Germany in 1976. I spent half an hour trying to catch a canary in a German doctor's office with a waiting room full of people. It was an escapee and flew into the office through an open window. I ended up keeping the canary. It was a beautiful singer!

Several years ago, here in Pennsylvania, I got a phone call at 9:00 p.m. Someone had a little brown bird flying around in their bedroom. They'd been chasing it around the house and finally decided to call me, since they knew I was a bird lover.

Brandishing my butterfly net, I arrived at their house around 9:30 p.m. The thought occurred to me on the drive there, that I should have had a sign on my car that said, "Bird Buster." After a quick assessment of the situation, I concluded that the bird perched on the stereo speaker, high on a corner of the bedroom wall, was a white-throated sparrow. (There were, by the way, four speakers in the bedroom, one in each corner of the room. Perfect perches for a bird).

So...I went in slowly, closed the bedroom door, and for at least forty-five minutes, proceeded to make a complete fool of myself. Never had I encountered a bird with such determination not to be caught. He was in the net. He was out of the net. He was under the bed. He was in the closet. He flew from speaker to speaker to speaker. I bounced across the bed in my stocking feet several times. I crawled under the bed on my belly, only to have him maneuver himself free. At last, I caught him wedged behind the dresser in the crack of the heating radiator. The bird bit me several times, trying to get it into a shoebox, but I emerged victorious from the bedroom with beads of perspiration on my forehead.



I don't remember white-throated sparrows being in Pennsylvania during my childhood, but I remember hearing them in Canada on fishing trips with my dad. We always wondered what bird was making such an enchanting song, but we could never see it. Dad would say, "I wonder what that bird is that keeps singing, "O! Canada! Canada! Canada?"

I've since learned that white-throated sparrows have not been recorded breeders in Jefferson County, Pennsylvania, but in the last Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, they were confirmed breeders in 25 blocks of the Atlas. Most of these were in the northern counties of the State.

I admired the white-throated sparrow for its beautiful song, much like my "German" canary, even before I knew what it was, and after my experience that fall with that determined little sparrow in the bedroom, the white-throat became one of my favorites, even though it bit me. Hard!

It's spring. The daffodils are blooming, spring peepers are peeping, the bluebirds are checking out the boxes and I saw my first white-throated sparrow at the feeder yesterday. It took me back once again to the memory of the canary in Germany, fishing with dad, and rescuing the white-throated sparrow that made a fool of me. Small price to pay, and I forgave it, because I learned that it sings that enchanting song, "O! Canada! Canada! Canada!"

Mourning Cloak Butterflies

~ Paulette Colantonio

Birding early April in 40° weather with cold wind gusts, the most disciplined naturalist may begin to focus on non-avian subjects while trekking back to a warm car. The sound and movement of old dry leaves dancing across a sun-dappled path may provide an opportunity for discovery. If a leaf moves in a different direction than the others or seems to alight on the path or trunk of a tree, another winged creature may be in the woods today: The Mourning Cloak Butterfly (*Nymphalis antiopa*).

This butterfly is one of the earliest butterflies viewed in the spring. Sometimes referred to as the “Harbinger of Spring,” these beautiful insects emerge on the first warm days, often before all the snow has disappeared. With a wingspan of 2.25 – 4 inches, mourning cloaks are subtle beauties. The wings have a slightly ragged scalloped edge. The back of the wings (dorsum) is dark maroon to chocolate brown, edged with two border colors. The first border is black with blue iridescent spots and is hemmed with a final border of yellow or creamy white. The underside (venter) of the wings is dark brown and gray, with gray freckling. This provides camouflage for the mourning cloak as it resembles the bark on trees and limbs. These understated qualities bring to mind the traditional cloaks worn in time of bereavement or mourning and thus, the creature’s name.

Mourning cloaks are not true migrating butterflies. They hibernate through the winter in some sheltered spot. Crevices between rocks, woodpiles, abandoned buildings, and under bark are suitable places. The insects have a special “antifreeze” chemical which protects them from the cold. This adaptation bestows a 10-month life span to this creature. When they emerge in the still cold weather, the insects fly about in

their wooded habitat, consuming tree sap, particularly oak. Animal droppings may also provide food. They often bask in the sun on warm pavement, rocks, or trees to generate body heat.

Mourning cloaks are found throughout North America from the edges of the tundra to the mountainous areas of Mexico. Other butterflies in our area that emerge incredibly early in spring are question marks, eastern commas, and compton tortoiseshells.



*Mourning Cloak Butterflies,
photos by Gary Edwards*

BLUEBIRD RHAPSODY

He calls to her. She answers back.
I listen with delight.
A flash of blue against the brown
 makes everything seem right.

Long winter past. Warm days ahead.
It's good to see them come.
I'm glad I've got the houses up,
 awaiting their return.

He sits above. She goes inside.
They check the nesting site.
If she approves, they will remain
 and raise their young to flight.

He dazzles her. She favors him.
On azure wings they fly.
I watch them in their quest for love—
 two masters of the sky.

She likes his style. She chooses him.
Their bond is tightly knit.
Five eggs appear within the nest
 and quietly she sits.

He waits above. She's safe inside.
First one, then two, then five,
The nestlings hatch beneath her breast.
 With care they all survive.

He hurries now. She scurries, too.
Five hungry mouths to feed.
From daylight until darkness comes
 they toil to fill the need.

Their naked young grow much too fast.
Soon tiny heads appear.
Before I know it, they have flown
 and to me, grown quite dear.

I watch them play. They watch me back.
And I am thrilled anew,
As from the wires they sing to me
 their rhapsody in blue!

~ Pat Conway



Eastern Bluebird by Pat Conway

Clarion County Winter 2019-2020 Bird Sightings

~ Carole Winslow

Locations: Armstrong Trail-East Brady (AT), Callensburg (CA), Cook Forest (CF), Curllsville (CV), Mount Airy (MA), New Bethlehem (NB), Rimersburg (RI).

Only three species of waterfowl make up the seasonal report this year, and all at the same location in NB. **Northern Pintail** is the first on the list, with two birds seen 2/15-2/16 (J&AK). **Green-winged Teal** are continuing to winter here regularly with up to three birds present from 12/7-2/15 (J&AK, MM). **Hooded Mergansers** also remained here throughout the season in numbers up to eight from 12/7-2/20 (J&AK, ES).

Only a single **Ruffed Grouse** report was noted, with a bird seen near Lucinda 12/13 (ES). Shorebirds are not often reported in



Ruffed Grouse photo by Meg Kolodick

winter, but with mild weather and little snow cover, it was not quite as surprising to find an overwintering **Wilson's Snipe** at a large seep in a farm pasture near NB 1/30 (DD, CW).

Turkey Vultures once again returned during the late winter days with the first group seen over Clarion 2/24 (TS).

Northern Harriers were widespread over southern *Clarion* including on Rankin Rd near CV where up to three birds were found 1/4, 1/24 and 2/3 (DD, MD, TS, CW, DW). Three were found near West Freedom 1/9 (DD, CW), two at MA 1/12 (DD, CW), and one near RI 1/9 (MM). On a WRS done near NB, single birds were found in three locations 2/3 (DD, CW), and single birds were also found in four locations near CV between 1/4-2/3 (J&AK, CW). Near Sligo, a long time nest site for **Bald Eagles** was checked 2/19 and one adult was found on the nest (CW), and a second nest near CA showed two adults at the site 1/30 (PC, GE,

ML). **Rough-legged Hawks** were uncommon, with the first being a dark phase bird seen near CV 12/6 (CW). Single birds were seen near Lake Lucy 2/8 (FM), near Leeper 2/17 (T&JK), and a light bird near Strattanville 2/20 (LT).

Short-eared Owls were more frequently reported this year, though it's uncertain if this was from increased presence or increased birder effort. On Rankin Rd near CV, up to four owls were found on seven different occasions starting 12/5 through 2/14 (DD, MD, TS, CW, DW). Three owls were reported near MA 12/22 (MH), and also three near CA 1/4 (MH, RM, LT) and one at a second location near CA 1/17 (MH). Not far away on other reclaimed strip mine land three birds were found outside of West Freedom 1/9 (DD, CW), and a single bird was found on open pasture land near CV 1/23 (MD).



Red-headed Woodpecker photo by Meg Kolodick

Unusual in any season, but particularly in winter, a **Red-headed Woodpecker** was seen near Lake Lucy 2/8 and 2/15 (FM). In what was the worst winter showing in recent memory for **Northern Shrikes**, only one

bird was reported near Sligo during a WRS 1/12 (DD, CW). **Horned Larks** were also scarcely reported, with just one to two birds noted in areas around CV 12/6, 2/14 and 2/17, and one bird singing in appropriate habitat 2/18 (CW). **Northern Mockingbirds** are not rare in winter, but still in low enough



Northern Mockingbird by Flo McGuire

numbers at this northern end of their range in western PA to be worthy of mention. One was reported near CV 12/26-12/28 and 2/24 (CW), and one near NB 12/28 (CW), 1/14 (J&AK), and 2/3 (CW). Further north, one was also noted near Shippenville during the CBC 1/4 (FM, JM).

It was not a year for finches and northern birds, with purple finches only reported from RI where up to four were seen from 1/21-2/14 (MM). Just a single **Pine Siskin** was reported near CF 12/3 (RS). A **Chipping Sparrow** also showed up at feeders in RI 1/19 and continued there through 2/17 (MM). A lingering **Field Sparrow** was found along the AT 12/21 (MD). **American Tree Sparrows** were reported but numbers have declined over the last six years. At feeders near CV where they had been present in regular numbers for many years, they were recorded from 12/7 through the season but with a high

number of 11, and average numbers of just four or five (CW). The only other reports were also near CV, with five birds found in two locations 1/4 and 1/12 (CW), and six birds found at Beaver Creek 12/21 (MD). At Beaver Creek a **Swamp Sparrow** was also noted on the same date (MD), and another near CV 1/4 (CW), unusual for January.

The remarkably mild winter may have also contributed to a couple of reports for **Eastern Meadowlark**, a species not often noted during this season. One was seen near CA on reclaimed strip fields 1/17 (MH), and two near CV 2/24 (CW). And the last species of note was likely also present due



Chipping Sparrow, very uncommon in winter here, photo by Meg Kolodick

to mild conditions, a large flock of 65 **Red-winged Blackbirds** seen in CV during the CBC 1/4 (CW).

Observers: **Carole Winslow**, cjwinslow94@gmail.com, Paulette Colantonio, Don DeWolf, Michael David, Gary Edwards, Mal Hays, Janice Horn, John and Avis Keener, Tom and Janet Kuehl, Michael Leahy, Flo McGuire, Jim McGuire, Ron Montgomery, Mark Moore, Eric Schill, Tabassam Shah, Ron Smith, Larry Towse, Daniel Weeks.



Butterfly Weed flower and large monarch larva



Note pods are smaller and thinner than milkweed



At least five larvae on a portion of one plant

blessed with numerous milkweeds but very few for-sure monarchs.

Raising Monarchs

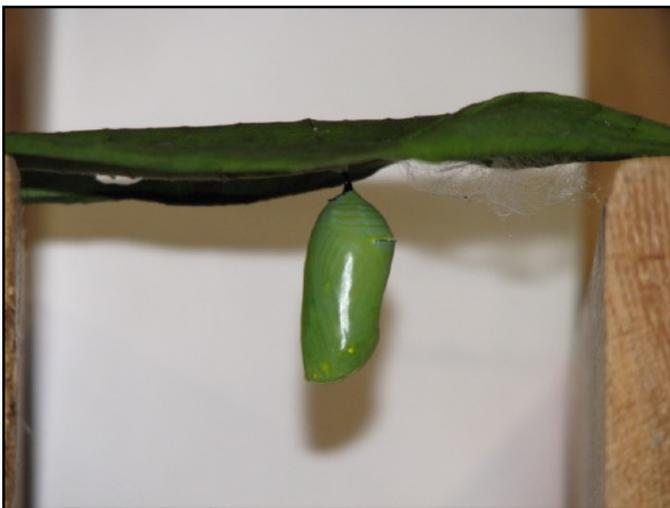
Article and photos by Ron Montgomery

When Judy and I moved to Clarion County more than 20 years ago, the previous property owner had more lawn that I cared to mow. The portion I quit mowing quickly reverted to a meadow, including lots of native milkweed. I babied the milkweed in hopes of attracting monarch butterflies. I had not seen a monarch chrysalis in the wild since I collected milkweed pods as a boy to support the war effort during WWII. Years passed and we were

Then I planted a couple of butterfly-weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) sets. They flowered the second summer and were magnets for monarchs. I had monarchs fighting or canoodling (hard to tell which) over the flowers. Contrary to my previous attempts to examine adult monarchs, this time they stayed on the flowers long enough for me to observe them in detail and to know for sure they were not viceroys. I also had a few larvae growing on the plants. But to my surprise, I got no pupa. The larvae grew normally but then vanished. Since butterfly weed has none of the poisonous cardiac glycosides in the latex that protects monarchs from predators,



Shows fish-hook posture, ready to pupate



Pupated

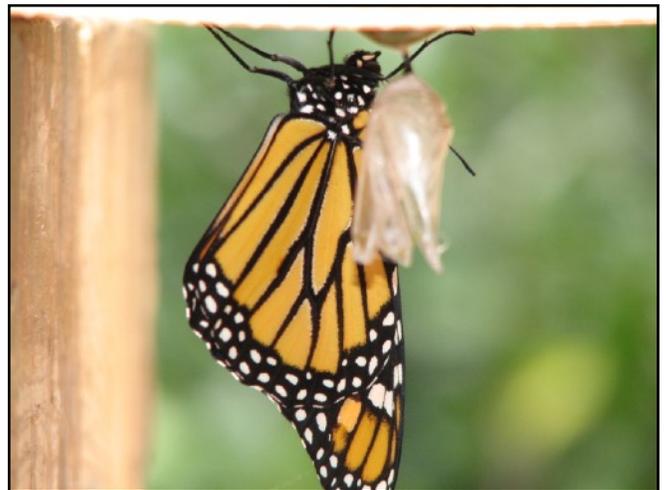
perhaps they were eaten by birds. I found only one chrysalis that summer and it was on a goldenrod perhaps 20 yards from the butterfly weed.

The highpoint of that first year, beyond learning the value of butterfly weed, was that I had a good production of seed pods from which I harvested seeds for future planting. I gave packets of seeds out at a recent Audubon meeting and I'd be interested to know whether anyone has luck growing plants.

The next summer was successful beyond expectation! I had more monarchs that I had ever seen. They still preferred the butterfly weed flowers but they laid their eggs on the milkweed as



Damage to my crop!



Free! He can fly like an angel. Upper side of wing showed black spot indicating a male

hoped, and eventually produced hundreds of larvae. In fact, many milkweed plants hosted several larvae. Some patches of my milkweed plantation were nearly consumed, except for the stalk. I collected a last-instar larva and watched it form a chrysalis in my garage laboratory and eventually metamorphize into a healthy and beautiful male butterfly. Male and female monarchs look very similar but the male has a wide spot on a wing vein and the female does not.

Upcoming Dates & Events

May 9-17 - Birdathon

June 10 - Yellow-Headed Picathartes Program

June - Rail 66 Public Bird Walk

August 12 - Picnic at Beaver Creek



Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)

Leadership Team		
Team Member	Role	Phone
Deb Freed	Team Chair, Media	814-226-4719
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
Janice Horn	Treasurer	814-226-7367
Kay John	Membership	724-526-5960
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

I believe that at least in the present phase of our civilization we have a profound, a fundamental need for areas of wilderness - a need that is not only recreational and spiritual but also educational and scientific, and withal essential to a true understanding of ourselves, our culture, our own natures, and our place in all nature...

By very definition this wilderness is a need. The idea of wilderness as an area without man's influence is man's own concept. Its values are human values. Its preservation is a purpose that arises out of man's own sense of his fundamental needs.

~Howard Zahniser (Western PA native and Author of The Wilderness Act), from "The Need for Wilderness Areas"

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