



# THE DRUMMER



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

September/October 2015

Volume 32, No. 1



*Adult Purple Martin (left) and a young one -  
crop of photo by Bill Wenger.*



*Fledgling Eastern Bluebird - photo by Flo McGuire*

## Purple Martins in Pennsylvania

Bill Wenger

*September 9 Program*

The Purple Martin is an iridescent bluish-purple swallow whose diet is made up entirely of insects caught while flying. It even drinks while in flight, skimming water from a lake or pond into its lower bill. Purple Martins are colonial nesters.

Bill Wenger will present a program about these beneficial birds, how the weather in Pennsylvania has affected their population, and how to attract Purple Martins to our own backyards. Mr. Wenger was one of the founders of the Lakeland Area Purple Martin Association; he serves as their Secretary/Treasurer. See page 3 for an informative article by Mr. Wenger. Be sure to join us for this presentation and learn how to become a successful Purple Martin landlord.

## Eastern Bluebirds

Amy Wolbert

*October 14 Program*

Our October program will be about another bird that we would all like to have in our backyards. The Eastern Bluebird, with its cheery song and insect-eating habits, often nests in man-made houses near humans.

Amy Wolbert, the Clarion County Coordinator for the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania, will present this program. She will discuss how to be a host to Eastern Bluebirds: their predators, their housing, how to monitor their nests. As Amy says, "It is hard not to fall in love with them". Join us for this program and learn how to welcome these delightful birds.

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



## 2015 Birdathon

~ Janice Horn

This year's Birdathon was held at the same general time as we've always done -- the second full week of May. This year's was unusual in that the weather was noticeably warmer than for others. Six people were out scouting bird species -- Ruth Schurr who combined it with the Pennsylvania Annual Migration Count. Jim and Flo McGuire also did the PAMC and Birdathon simultaneously, in Forest County, and found 87 species. Peter Dalby was out on his own and besides the raptors over "his" pond I don't have a count for his day. Paulette Colantonio and I were out; she for a longer day than I. Together we found 62 species and on her own she added 19.

These people received donations/pledges from friends and family and together with their own contributions raised \$1,047 for SRAS programs and activities.

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

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

## Art and the Animal

*An exciting program at RTPI in nearby  
Jamestown, NY*

RTPI presents *Art and the Animal*, the 55th Annual exhibition of the Society of Animal Artists, from August 28-October 25, 2015. The highlight of our gallery programs this year, this promises to be a museum experience like no other and is sure to leave visitors impressed and inspired!

The Society of Animal Artists (SAA) is a world-renowned organization that has become the standard bearer of excellence in the field of animal art and within the greater fine art community. The Society of Animal Artists was founded in 1960 by the late Patricia Allen Bott and Guido Borghi, two visionaries who sought to reposition animal art as an important contemporary art form by creating a community of like-minded artists. Since its inception, the Society has grown by leaps and bounds and has generated tremendous response through its museum and gallery exhibitions. The annual *Art and the Animal* exhibition and tour are eagerly awaited events in the art world and provide artists with the opportunity for greater recognition.

Roger Tory Peterson was a member of the Society of Animal Artists for many decades, and the Roger Tory Peterson Institute is pleased to be the host for the Grand Opening Premier of *Art and the Animal* this year. This is the second time that RTPI has had this distinct honor, the first being in 1992. When RTPI hosted *Art and the Animal* for the first time, an impression was left on our community, and people have been talking about the exhibition ever since.

The exhibition will feature 125 works by the world's foremost wildlife artists and sculptors.

After the exhibit leaves Jamestown, New York, it will travel to the Hiram Blauvelt Art Museum in Oradell, NJ (November 14, 2015 – January 3, 2016), the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson, AZ (January 20 – April 3, 2016), and the Canton Museum of Art, Canton, OH (April 23 – July 17, 2016).



*Purple Martins - photo by Bill Wenger*

## **PURPLE MARTINS IN PENNSYLVANIA**

~ Bill Wenger

What is a Purple Martin you ask? It is the largest member of the Swallow family. One of the reasons that you may not have heard too much about Purple Martins is because in 1972, Hurricane Agnes came through and stalled over Pennsylvania and it rained for 7-10 days depending on where you were located. Since Martins are aerial insectivores, the constant rain and wind kept bugs from flying, thus causing most of the Purple Martins in Pennsylvania to die off. In some larger colonies, landlords may have only had 1 or 2 birds make it through this event. All of the young in that year also perished, so it took decades for some landlords to get martins back at their colonies. There is a whole generation of people that missed out on this bird due to the catastrophic event caused by Hurricane Agnes.

Purple Martins are unique in that East of the Rockies, they are totally dependent on housing supplied by man. Over the centuries they have learned that by living in close proximity to humans, they enjoy the benefit of protection from predators, both on the ground and in the air. As with other cavity

nesters, they are affected by English House Sparrows and European Starlings.

Older Purple Martins return to Pennsylvania from the Amazon Basin in early April after a 5,000 mile journey, and the younger martins continue to return into mid-June. What's unique about this species, they will return to the exact location the following year if they had favorable nesting conditions. It's like your birds are returning home just in time to celebrate Spring with you!

After years of hosting Bluebirds, which I still find very rewarding, I started trying to attract Purple Martins to our summer cottage in northwest PA in 2005. After several years of trying to attract them, I started volunteering in 2008 with the PA Game Commission to manage and monitor two Martin colonies at the Pymatuning Learning Center and the Wildlife Management Building. On average, we would have about 45 pairs at the two locations, fledging approximately 160 to 200 martins each year. As of this year, I am now monitoring 9 purple martin colonies, with 98 nests, 523 eggs were laid, 431 that hatched, and 266 that fledged. Unfortunately, a rainy and cold spell on the last weekend of June caused the loss of 132 young. It would have been a real good year if that had not occurred.

In 2009, I was involved with forming the Lakeland Area Purple Martin Association in the Northwestern PA, the Conneaut Lake and Pymatuning areas. At this time, we have over 90 people on our mailing list, with some members being real active, and others are just occasional members. In 2014, our members fledged over 1,900 martins, so we can make a difference. Those numbers were up by over 150 martins from 2013. More people are finding out about how entertaining these birds are, performing aerial acrobatics as they enter and leave their housing.

Our goal is to introduce more people to Purple Martins and to promote better

management and monitoring techniques. By keeping a close watch over your martin colony, you can increase the number of birds that you fledge by one to two birds per nest, which over several years will really start making a difference in the number of returning martins! This will benefit your colony as well as having a good chance of starting some new colonies in the area!

## Programs at Cook Forest State Park

~ Dale Luthringer

Friday, August 28 at 8:30am - ***‘Clarion River Canoeing & Kayaking Program: Gravel Lick-Mill Creek’*** Cook Forest State Park will be conducting an 8.5 mile interpretive historical canoeing program on the National Wild & Scenic Clarion River from Gravel Lick to Mill Creek for experienced canoeists/kayakers only. This section of river is rich in local history and wildlife, and one of the most picturesque sections of the Clarion, truly a wilderness experience. Porters Landing, Maxwell Run, State Road Ripple, and Blyson Run will be just a few topics of interest along the float. Fishing is excellent here, so don't forget your fishing poles! Eagles and ospreys have been known to make an appearance. We will meet promptly at the Park Office and car-pool to the starting point. Remember to bring protective footwear, raingear, and change of clothes. Cost is \$50/boat with check or money order made out to *‘Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’*. Lunch provided to those who register by 8/26. Prior Cook Forest kayak training participants receive a 50% discount. Space is limited, so please reserve early, pre-registration required. (9 hrs)

Saturday, August 29 at 9:00am - ***‘Hike Cook Forest: Discover the Hidden Secrets of Cook***

***Forest’*** Please meet at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom for a challenging 4 mile interpretive hike through one of the most magnificent old growth forests in entire Eastern United States. We will be passing many of the park's highlighted, but seldom viewed attributes: Longfellow Pine-tallest known tree north of the Smokies, Seneca Pine-largest pine in Pennsylvania, Seneca Hemlock-tallest known hemlock in the Northeast, petroglyphs along the Clarion River, bracket dams along Tom's Run, and the rocks from which a portion of Cecil B. DeMille's, *The Unconquered*, was filmed. Lunch is on the trail, so please pack lunch & water (5 hrs).

### ***Clarion River Canoeing Adventure September 26-27, 2015***

Hosted by Cook Forest State Park in partnership with Clear Creek State Park.

The *Clarion River Canoeing Adventure* is an overnight outdoor interpretive canoeing and camping experience designed for families & friends. Children 12 & up must be with a participating adult. Participants should be in relatively good physical condition. At least one experienced canoeist should be in each boat. Each participant must be able to be comfortable in possibly cold & wet conditions.

This trip will include overnight canoe camping; meals will be provided by Farmers Inn.

#### ***For more information —***

<http://www.cookforest.com/activities/canoeadventure/>

[ClarionRiverCanoeingAdventure.pdf](#)

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MacGillivray's Warbler (*Oporornis tolmiei*) photo courtesy of Mike Danzenbaker, used with permission.

## The Name Game

~ Gary Edwards

I just returned from a visit with family in Idaho, and, although it wasn't a birding trip, we managed to slip in a couple hours here and there. Two of the birds we encountered are the subjects of the next two columns -- MacGillivray's (try saying that three times fast) Warbler and Townsend's Warbler. While MacGillivray and Townsend never met, there is a connection.

Although he never set foot in North America, William MacGillivray was a good friend of, and assistant to, Audubon who named two species in his honor. As luck would have it, his MacGillivray's Shore Finch had already been described and is now known as the Seaside Sparrow. Likewise, his MacGillivray's Warbler also was previously described by none other than John Kirk Townsend, the subject of our next column, who named it *Sylvia tolmiei*, Tolmie's Warbler, after his friend and Hudson Bay Company (HBC) surgeon, Dr. William Fraser Tolmie. Audubon, based on skin obtained from Townsend, ignored Townsend's prior documentation and renamed the bird

*Sylvia macgillivray*, MacGillivray's Warbler. Townsend's scientific name, being the earlier, has precedence, but, to the chagrin of at least some western ornithologists, Audubon's common name has persisted.

From 1830-1839, MacGillivray worked with Audubon in Edinburg, Scotland, as scientific and general editor for "Ornithological Biographies," the text accompanying Audubon's landmark "The Birds of North America." In 1836, MacGillivray published "Descriptions of the Rapacious Birds of Great Britain," which he dedicated to Audubon. He also published books on plants, quadrupeds, mollusks, and natural history of Great Britain.

Tolmie was a true pioneer, in addition to his work as a surgeon for HBC, which included briefly commanding Fort Nisqually on Puget Sound, he led a botany expedition to the previously unexplored Mount Rainier area where he discovered a new plant, Tolmie's Saxifrage. Later in his career he returned to Fort Nisqually for 16 years as Chief Trader. He also served in the legislatures of the Provisional Legislature of Oregon, the Vancouver Island House of Assembly, and the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. Additionally, he wrote "Comparative Vocabulary of the Indian Tribes of British Columbia."

Tolmie Peak near Mount Rushmore, Tolmie State Park in Washington, Mount Tolmie, Tolmie Channel, and Tolmie Point, all in British Columbia are named in his honor.

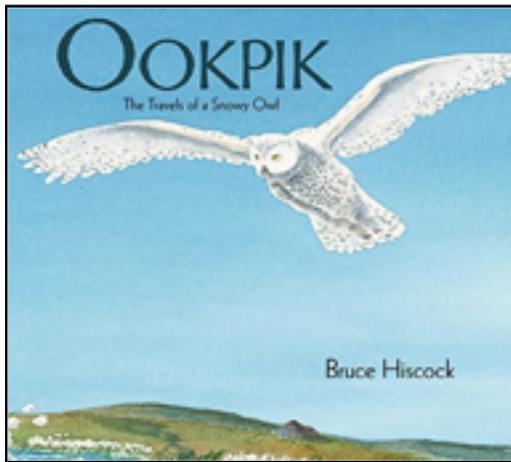
MacGillivray's Warbler, or Tolmie's Warbler, if you prefer, is closely related to, and looks a lot like, our Mourning Warbler.

Sources: Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. XV, 1881-1890; Audubon to Xanthus, Barbara and Richard Mearns, 1992; MacGillivray's Warbler (*Geothlypis tolmiei*), Neotropical Birds Online (T.S. Schulenburg, Editor), Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology

## Nature Books for Local Libraries

~ Paulette Colantonio

Seneca Rocks Audubon and Clarion County Garden Club have teamed up again this year to supply books to eight local libraries. Two public libraries and six elementary schools have chosen four titles from a list of nine selections to add to their collections. Seven of the selections offered were nonfiction.



To begin, *Ookpik: The Travels of a Snowy Owl*, written and illustrated by Bruce Hiscock, is an informative story about one male owl's first year from egg to adult. Detailed, often panoramic, watercolor illustrations support the narrative. (One double-page spread picture even features inuksuk, the man-made stone landmarks used for generations by northern cultures). Ookpik, which means "snowy owl" in Inuktitut, is one of two owls from a nest of four that survives. A shortage of lemming on Baffin Island drives the owl southward, leaving the tundra, flying over the taiga, and finally settling south of the Adirondack Mountains on a dairy farm in New York. With the coming of spring, Ookpik travels north again to his home on the tundra. This intermediate selection has introductory material complete with a map which traces the bird's winter and spring journeys. An extensive Author Note includes information

on the range, size, food, courtship, and nesting habits of this second largest member of the owl family. Adaptation, biomes, migration and irruptions are possible topics assisted by this beautiful picture book for primary or intermediate grades.

Using quirky drawings of many birds conversing with each other and the narrator, Annette LeBlanc Cate encourages children to go outdoors and enjoy birds in the second selection. "You don't have to go anywhere fancy to watch birds," is only one sentence entreats children to spend time with nature in *Look Up! Bird-watching in Your Own Backyard*. This very busy informational picture book features ink and watercolor drawings of birds in many natural habitats. Information is presented in well-written paragraphs and in graphic novel format, complete with speech bubbles. This work is a 2014 recipient of The Robert F. Sibert Award for information, but is peppered with humorous informal conversation and illustrations. Children are instructed to note habitat, color, shape, behavior, feathers, and songs of birds. Cate even suggests keeping a birding journal and provides tips for sketching birds. Field guides are discussed as a tool, but only after the reader learns to sit quietly and observe carefully. For older readers, there is a chapter on classification starting with domain and ending with a specific species, the song sparrow! This 64 page book features a Table of Contents, a Bibliography, and an Index. This book is recommended for grades three to seven, but appeals to older patrons as well. (Some of the humor in the text and illustrations will only be appreciated by seasoned, chronologically gifted birders)!

The third nonfiction option is *About Hummingbirds: A Guide for Children*. It is a first introduction to the variety of hummingbirds for budding ornithologists. The author, Cathryn Sill, uses a double-page format. One or two simple sentences on a white background on the left are supported by gorgeous watercolors painted by the

author's husband, John Sill, on the right. This visual gem contains an Afterward presenting more information on each species of hummingbird, a Glossary, and List of Websites and Books for further reading.

The fourth book, *Monarch and Milkweed* by Helen Frost is a lyrical nonfiction selection about the life cycle and migration of the monarch butterfly with a fresh angle. "Although it touches on both themes... It gives equal billing to the monarch's botanical partner, the milkweed," (Kirkus review, 2008). Frost employs simple prose sprinkled with personification of the insect and the plant throughout the 40 pages of the book. Leonid Gore's jewel-toned illustrations created with pastels and acrylics give the book a dappled ethereal look. Together, words and art conjure a mystical quality to an early introduction to the connectedness of species and a larger view of our world. Students will find the inspiration for the book, the author's own yard which is a certified Monarch Waystation, one example of naturalists supporting struggling species. There is an Author's Note and the end pages are maps of the monarch's migratory paths. This book is recommended for grades three through seven.

Rhythmically fun four-line poems describe the nests of 14 avian species in Jennifer Ward's book, *Mama Built a Little Nest*, the fifth offering. Each short pair of couplets is accompanied by several more sentences in a smaller font and higher reading level imparting more information about the type of nest the bird constructs. Award winning illustrator Steve Jenkins creates double page cut paper collages in bold colors set against white backgrounds showcasing the nests from birds around the world. Two examples are "Mama built a little nest/ a cup so wee and snug/ with walls of moss and roof of sky/ and silky cobweb rug," and "Mama built a little nest/ she used her beak to sew/ a woven nest of silky grass/ the perfect place to grow." This entertaining book for early grades includes an Author's Note

and a List of Websites for further investigation. *Mama Built a Little Nest* is a wonderful selection for reading aloud.

*(The second part of this article will be printed in the next Drummer).*

## Nighthawk Watch

Join Gary Edwards, Jim Wilson, and Meg and Nick Kolodiek any evening at the Oil City Marina on Wyliss Street, Oil City, for camaraderie and help to watch the skies for migrating Common Nighthawks. Gary has been monitoring this count for many years. Bring your binoculars and a folding chair anytime from 6:30 p.m. to dusk and join the fun! This continues from mid-August through mid-September.

## Feeders and Birdhouses for Sale!



This new suet feeder made by Jim Wilson and bought at a recent SRAS meeting is a hit with the woodpeckers!

Here is a male Hairy Woodpecker enjoying a suet cake. Through the summer, we've had Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, all bringing their young to our porch for suet.

Jim Wilson has been making a variety of birdhouses and feeders for years, to benefit Seneca Rocks Audubon. If you are interested in a new item, see Jim at our next meeting. He will be taking orders for Christmas!

## *Upcoming Dates & Events*

*September 9- Purple Martin Program - Bill Wenger*

*October 14 - Eastern Bluebird Program - Amy Wolbert*

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

*December 9- Members' Night and CBC Planning*

*December 19 - Christmas Bird Count*

### **SRAS Leadership Team**

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*May your trails be crooked, winding,  
lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most  
amazing view. May your mountains rise  
into and above the clouds.*

*~ Edward Abbey*

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