



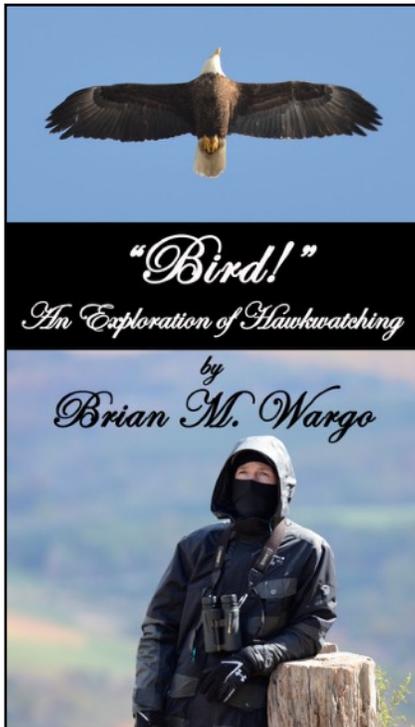
THE DRUMMER



www.senecarocksaudubon.org

September/October 2018

Volume 35, No. 1



Hawkwatching: an Ocean in the Sky

September 12 Program

Dr. Brian M. Wargo, President and Saturday Counter at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch and author of *Bird: An Exploration of Hawkwatching*, will share his photos and stories of many days spent scanning the sky for migrating raptors. Along with providing a feel for hawkwatching by relating his own experiences, he will share identification tips and record keeping methods. Dr. Wargo teaches at the University of Pittsburgh. He will have copies of his book available for purchase.



Fishers, Minks & Martens

Steve Ace

October 10 Program

A program on fishers, minks and martens was suggested on one of our recent membership surveys. The Pennsylvania Game Commission is eager to oblige with a program specially-tailored for us. At our October program, State Game Warden Steve Ace will enlighten us about some of the little-known mammals who share our woods: fishers, minks and martens. We will learn identification

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

information as well as details about their local populations, habits, habitat, and food sources. These mammals are not often seen, so it will be interesting to learn how to identify them as well as their tracks.

State Game Warden Steve Ace has always been interested in wildlife. He graduated from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania and has been with the game commission for 14 years. To become a State Game Warden (formerly Wildlife Conservation Officer) he also completed the intensive 50 week Ross Leffler School of Conservation training.

Join us on October 10 to meet Steve and learn more about the seldom-seen fishers, minks and martens.



Hawkwatch Field Trips

~ Michael Leahy

Pennsylvania Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau Reaches National PBS Audience

“Beyond Your Backyard,” a broadcast public television travel series hosted by [Erik the Travel Guy](#), has been picked up for national distribution for season one. “We are thrilled to learn that the Pennsylvania Great Outdoors episode, part of the first season of ‘Beyond Your Backyard,’ will now reach PBS viewers across the country,” says John Straitiff, executive director of the [Pennsylvania Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau](#). “PAGO’s 30-minute show and the entire season are very well-produced. This September and October, Erik will introduce America to the many things in our part of the world, known as the Pennsylvania Great Outdoors region, has to offer travelers.”

Tune in to “Beyond Your Backyard” on PBS on September 5.

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 & May.

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 fm McGuire1@verizon.net.

Make plans now to join trip leader, Michael Leahy for hawk watching at Allegheny Front Hawk Watch located between Johnstown and Bedford. At 2,860 ft. above sea level, Allegheny Front is the highest hawk watch in Pennsylvania and offers exceptional 180 degree views to the east with many birds passing at eye level.

More information on the hawkwatch can be found here: <http://www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org/hawk-watch.php>. We will be offering two dates in order to try to get a nice variety of raptor species and hit the highlights of the fall raptor migration.

The first trip will be the weekend of September 22nd & 23rd. With a little luck and cooperation of the weather, this trip may coincide with the big push of Broad-winged Hawks down the Allegheny Ridge. It would not be unusual to see thousands of Broad-wings in a day under the right conditions. We may also see Red-tailed Hawks, Coopers & Sharp-shinned, Bald Eagles, Osprey and other species.

The second trip is planned for the weekend of November 17th & 18th. This trip, hopefully, will coincide with the height of the Golden Eagle migration with decent numbers of Red-tails and other species also passing through. This site annually has one of the highest Golden Eagle counts in Pennsylvania for the fall migration.

For those wishing to carpool to the watch, we will meet at the parking lot of the Clarion Mall at 7:00 am on 9/22 & 11/17. Parking at the watch site can sometimes be limited so please consider riding with others. I can accommodate 3 others if you'll be staying over for both days. It is a 3 hour drive to the watch site and we'll make several comfort stops on the way with the final stop at a Sheetz outside of Johnstown where you can get lunch for the day if you like.

If you plan to drive on your own, you can plug this address into your GPS and it will take you to the hawkwatch: **581 Lambert Mountain Road, Schellsburg, PA**. Be aware that some GPS units will show the address as being past the gate. There is a sign and gate on the right at the end of the lane back to the watch so just look for that when you get close.

I plan to be at the watch for both days of each weekend and everyone would be welcome to attend all the dates or any one of them that you choose. There is a quaint motel a short drive from the watch with clean comfortable rooms. Bedford, Somerset & Johnstown are all within a reasonable drive with a variety of accommodations.

The watch is a very easy short walk from the parking area and is handicapped accessible. Dress for the weather and bring more coats, hats and gloves than you think you will need. The weather on the ridge can be very different than the weather in the valley. Bring a lunch, beverages and a comfortable chair. There is a port-a-john on site.

Please let me know if you plan to attend and what your travel plans will be. Please make sure you send me your email address or phone number so that I can contact you should the need arise. If the weather is going to be bad, that day will be canceled. There's no use making the long trip if there won't be any birds to see.

Don't hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have. Phone or text – 814-229-1648 or email – mrl706@gmail.com.

Visit us on Facebook!

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

The First SRAS Big Sit The Tailgate of Birding – October 13

~ Deb Freed



What is a Big Sit? A Big Sit is a social birding activity with a tradition. Big Sits have been taking place both in the U.S. and internationally since at least 1999. Participants gather at a location to count birds seen and heard over a 24 hour period. There are specific guidelines, the primary one being the 17 foot diameter circle where the observations are recorded. Anyone may participate for as long as they want. Participants can work in shifts, leaving and returning to the circle freely.

When and Where? Since this is a 24 hour event, The Big Sit will begin at midnight Friday, October 12 and run until midnight Saturday, October 13. Participants may come and go whenever they like over the 24 hour period. Sunrise will be about 7:30 a.m. and sunset about 6:30 p.m. The Big Sit will take place in Clarion at Deb Freed's home. Part of the circle will actually be inside the house so that weather will not be a problem. Deb will have bird feeders filled. There is a water feature that attracts birds and a wooded area for possible owls. Deb will have chili, bread, donuts, coffee, water, etc. throughout the 24 hours and plenty of chairs for outdoor seating as well as indoor seating along windows and a cozy fireplace. Participants may bring a snack or blanket and, of course, binoculars.

Deb lives at 208 Briar Hill Drive, Clarion in Hemlock Ridge which is below the new Sheetz on 322 north toward the Clarion River. Turn at Sheetz on Emerson Lane which becomes Waterworks Road. Briar Hill Drive is on the right and Deb's house is at the top of the loop. Her home phone is 814-226-4719.

Let's tally the birds and set our sights on our next Big Sit SRAS! We can choose our team name and decide where to have the next Big Sit! We can submit our tally to the Big Sit sponsor, *Bird Watchers Digest*, if we decide to join the teams in a friendly competition. No matter what we decide, it's all fun whenever we get together to watch birds.



Mal Hays (left) and Larry Tows at the new Clarion Nighthawk Watch

Photo by Deb Freed



Veteran Nighthawk Watchers at Oil City: Jim Wilson, Gary Edwards, Nick and Meg Kolodick

Photo by Deb Freed

Nighthawk Watches

~ Gary Edwards with Mal Hays

Year 15 of the Oil City Common Nighthawk Migration Count began August 15 with 3 birds sighted. We're located at the Oil City Marina, the foot of Wyllis Street. The watch begins a 6:15 and ends two hours later. Bring a lawn chair, a pair of binoculars, and your best conversation and help us attempt beating last year's record total of 1,342. The Clarion River watch, run by Mal Hays and Larry Tows, has left us in the dust to date. They're located at the Mill Creek access to the Clarion River off Fisher Road. They'd enjoy visitors also.

As of August 27, the Oil City Watch tallied 401 birds and the Clarion Watch had over 500.

Chronic Wasting Disease in Deer

The DCNR and WOCV are bringing experts to the Jefferson County Fairgrounds on September 22 for a free program with the most up to date information on this issue.

Registration is required. Please go to www.eventbrite.com and enter "chronic wasting disease". If you cannot access Eventbrite, call the Forestry office at 814-226-1901.

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Sudoku Puzzle by Ron Montgomery

Letters used: **ADE IMN OPX**

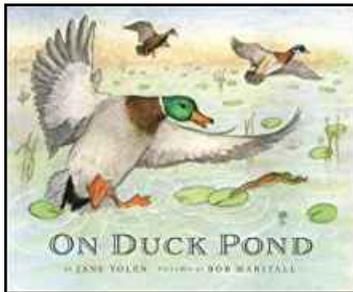
Find a bird genus shared by multiple species in our area. Place the nine letters provided in the empty squares such that each row, each column and each 3x3 square contains each letter only once.

The answer is in column 5. Solution on page 8.

Books for Local Libraries

~ Paulette Colantonio

Seneca Rocks Audubon and the Clarion County Garden Club are providing books for public and elementary libraries in the fall. This year, four fiction titles including two folktales, three nonfiction titles, and three poetry books are offered. Fiction titles are *On Duck Pond*, *The Hawk of the Castle: A Story of Medieval Falconry*, *Rainbow Crow*, and *The Crane Wife*.

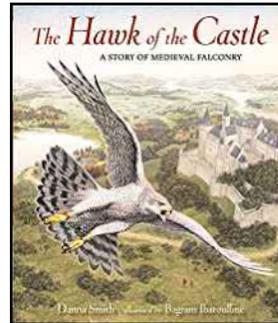


A brief segment of a boy's walk with his dog is captured in Jane Yolen's *On Duck Pond*. Unnoticed, the two approach Duck Pond and quietly observe the wildlife.

However, a raft of

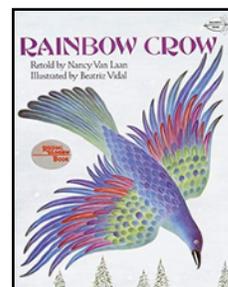
noisy ducks changes the morning landscape unexpectedly. "As I walked by the Old Duck Pond/ Its stillness as the morning dawned/Was shattered by a raucous call:/A quack of ducks both large and small." Ducks plummet into the water! Trout, turtles, frogs, and herons quickly exit or hide. The boy even notices his reflection changes, too. As the fowl "moved on," the pond settles, and wildlife gradually returns. Muted and sometimes whimsical double-spread watercolor illustrations add to the pastoral tone of the story. As the boy and his companion walk home, he ponders on what they witnessed and feels a special bond with creation. This easy to read rhyming book is part of The Cornell Project and an online educational guide is available. In the back of the book, children are encouraged to revisit the illustrations to identify 10 species of birds and eight other animals. Information on wildlife, pond habitat, and tools such as the Merlin Bird ID app and Cornell's AllAboutBirds.org are presented, too. This is a wonderful read aloud addition to create a magical spell and magical appreciation of moving quietly

and observing the natural world. It is written on a 2.6 Reading Level.



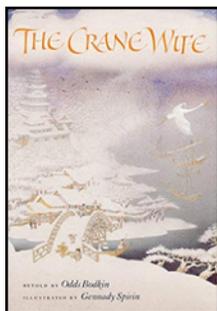
Next, gorgeous double-spread illustrations with varied perspectives support the story of *The Hawk of the Castle: A Story of Medieval Falconry* by Danna Smith. A young girl tells the story of a one-day journey she shares with her father, a falconer, and a young

goshawk he is training. The text is two-tiered. A simple quatrain always ending with "the castle," moves the plot along. Then the author embellishes the action contained in the verse with additional information about falconry. This information may cover terms used in falconry such as "throw the hawk off" or special gear such as the gauntlet, bells, and hood. Elizabeth Parram's complex acrylic gouache pictures captivate and cause the reader to linger before turning the page. Types of raptors used for the sport are discussed along with care of the birds. The back of the book offers an extensive Author's Note as Smith shares her own experiences with her father, a falconer. Embedded in the note is the history of falconry in China and the Middle East and what societal ranks used what birds in the Middle Ages. The safety of raptors and the process in becoming a falconer are also discussed. The back is further enhanced with a list of websites, books, and an index. Although the verse is written on a 2.6 Reading Level, the supporting informational paragraphs are written on an intermediate level. This high-interest book would be a great read aloud in elementary classrooms.



Beatriz Vidal's full-color illustrations rendered in a primitive style enhance the retelling of *Rainbow Crow*, a legend of the Lenape People of eastern Pennsylvania, the third fiction title offered this year. The thought-provoking

explanation myth begins “long, long ago, before the Two-Legged walked the Earth,” when the climate was always temperate. Something happens, however, and the planet turns cold and all animals are being covered with snow. The animals gather to choose a messenger to journey to The Great Sky Spirit and ask him to stop the snow. After much arguing, the beautiful Rainbow Crow sings “in the sweetest voice of all birds... I will go, I will stop the snow.” For three days Crow flies and finally encounters the Great Spirit. Great Spirit gives the gift of fire to the beautiful bird on a short stick. The self-sacrificing bird returns to help his fellow creatures, but at great personal cost. Will the Great Spirit recognize the bird’s courage and empathy? This folktale is written on a 4.3 Reading Level. However, the rhythmic chants and repeated phrases make the story perfect for reading aloud and foster group participation. In the Author’s Note, Van Laan compares this Fire Bearer folktale rendition to others in the Native American genre. She suggests the Lenape’s unique version of a bird with rainbow feathers is somehow connected to the now extinct paroquet which once inhabited the Lenape region of Pennsylvania. Thus, the book would seamlessly fit into a science class on ecology and extinction as well as the language arts setting.

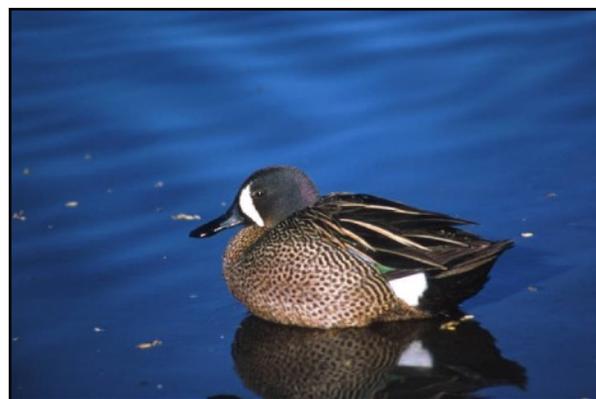


The last fiction offering is *The Crane Wife*, a poignant retelling of a Japanese folktale. Osamu, a poor and lonely sail maker, dwells in a small hilltop house overlooking a salt marsh. As he makes sails, he observes the graceful cranes living there.

“How beautiful the cranes are. Of all the birds, they are most like sails.” One stormy autumn night, Osamu rescues an injured crane and nurses the creature back to life. The bird, with black shining eyes, then flies away. Strangely, on another stormy night, a mysterious woman with black shining eyes, Yokiku, appears at the door. Yokiku and Osamu fall in love. When the poor couple needs money, she offers to “weave a magic sail” for her

husband to sell in the village. However, Osamu must promise never to gaze upon his wife as she works and agree that she will only make one sail. Will the sail maker keep his promise, or will greed and ambition destroy his happiness? This masterful retelling by Odds Bodkin unfolds on watercolor and gouache earth tone artwork replete with medieval Japanese motifs. Although this book is recommended for intermediate grades, adults would find the themes compelling, too. It is written on a 3.2 Reading Level.

(To be continued—the non-fiction titles and poetry book critiques will be included in our next issue).



Blue-winged Teal

Clarion County Spring 2018 Pennsylvania Birds Report

~ Carole Winslow

Locations: Curlsville (CV), Kahle Lake (KL), Mt. Zion/Piney Tract/SGL 330 (MZ), Redbank Valley Trail (RVT), Rimersburg (RI), Sarah Furnace (SF).

A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** was seen at KL 5/1 (CW), a little late in migration but breeding is doubtful at this location with limited habitat. **Long-tailed Ducks** made a good showing at this same spot, with 35 present 3/30 (GE, RN, JS, CW), and also up to three seen from 4/7-4/11 (MC, MD, HM, MM, TR, et al.). Five Long-tailed ducks were also present at CV strips 3/30 (RN), and 10 were seen at Toby on the Clarion River 4/6 (LT) along with five at East Brady (CW). **Red-breasted Mergansers** continued late into migration with three still seen at KL 5/1 (CW). A remarkable number of 18 **Red-throated Loons** was found at KL 3/30 (GE, RN, JS, CW), with two

also seen there 4/28 (MH). At this same location also on 3/30 **Horned Grebes** were noted in large numbers, with at least 100 birds present (GE, RN, JS, CW). Five horned grebes were also seen here late into migration 5/1 in full breeding plumage (CW). A single **Red-necked Grebe** was seen at KL also 3/30 and continued to 3/31 (GE, LG, RN). The last waterfowl of note was an **Eared Grebe** at KL 5/4 (JS).

The long standing **Great Blue Heron** rookery at the confluence of the Allegheny and Clarion River near Foxburg was still active this year with at least 10 active nests noted 4/7 (CW, GW). **Northern Harriers** were less reported this year with just three birds noted. A male was seen near CV 5/1 (CW), another was at MZ 5/5 (RN, CW), and a single bird was noted at CV strips 5/29 (MM). **Bald Eagles** continued in their established areas with active nests noted this season near Callensburg on the Clarion River and also near Sligo on the river. A third nest was active near Climax on Redbank Creek (SG, MH, MM, RN, CW).

American Woodcocks were calling and displaying at Beaver Creek Nature Area with four birds noted there 3/2 (TS). They also continued to be heard displaying at fields near CV with up to six birds active through 5/14 (CW). **Spotted Sandpipers** were reported at several locations with one at KL 5/1 and 5/23 (CW), two at Armstrong Trail at SF 5/5 (RN, CW), and one near RI 5/9 (MM). **Solitary Sandpipers** were also noted at multiple locations with two at KL 5/1 (CW), one along the RVT 5/7 (MH, RH, FM), and 2 near RI and one at Mt Airy 5/9 (MM). Two **Greater Yellowlegs** and four **Lesser Yellowlegs** were seen at KL 5/1 (CW). Neither species is that regularly reported for *Clarion* in migration, so it was good to have both present and together for size and call comparisons.

Two **Bonaparte's Gulls** were noted at KL 4/2 (MM), and a single one partially in breeding plumage 5/1 (CW). An excellent number of nine **Common Terns** was found at the same location 5/4 (JS), and the more usual **Forster's Tern** was also located there with a single bird seen 4/11 (MC, HM, CW).

The only reports of owls were that of a **Short-eared Owl** at a new location in a field near Strattanville 3/6 (MH), and a **Barred Owl** near SF 5/3 (CW).

Another species not reported as often is **Common Nighthawk**, so a report from near New Bethlehem was welcome, that of three birds seen at dusk 5/10 (JH). **Whip-poor-wills** also were noted returning rather early with a bird heard calling softly at dusk near CV 4/22 (CW). One was heard near Fern 5/7 (MW), and a couple were heard calling near East Brady the first week of May (AB). Flycatchers were late in returning to their usual breeding spots this year, with **Willow Flycatchers** not

heard back singing until 5/21 near CV and **Acadian Flycatchers** not found along the RVT until 5/22 (CW).

Purple Martins now have a couple areas in the county where they are nesting again, and one is in the northern part of the county, where 2 were seen at KL 5/1 (CW). The only reported **Gray-cheeked Thrush** was of one giving its distinctive wiry call near CV 5/16 (CW). **Swainson's Thrush** were first seen back at SF 5/5 (RN, CW). One or two birds were seen and/or heard at a location near CV from 5/6 through 5/23, with the bird on 5/23 still singing softly at times (CW).

On a general note for warbler migration this year, a particularly memorable day of activity that is unusual for this writer in many years of spring migration occurred 5/14. Weather patterns in early spring appeared to have held back migration and on the evening of 5/13 the weather promised a break for migrating birds. The radar during the night showed a heavy flight and the morning was rather cool, with calm conditions and fog. General warbler activity was exceptionally heavy through the morning and even later into the day, with 18 species of warbler noted at a small property near CV. This included a high number of **Bay-breasted Warblers** with a minimum count of eight. Many birds went unidentified as hilltop oaks at this location in particular seemed magnets for activity. This was one of very few springs in the last 10 years at least where actual numbers of birds seemed high, as well as variety of species.

For specific species notes, **Worm-eating Warblers** were first reported back rather early 4/26 at a new location along Mill Creek at SGL 74 (MH). At a second visit to this area, a singing male was present along the steep south facing slope across Mill Creek 5/17 (MH, CW). Hopefully this may prove to be a new found breeding location, unique for the county so far as it is north of I-80 (MH, CW). They were also found in their traditional locations at Phillipston and SF 5/3 and 5/7 with at least 2 birds (RN, TR, CW) and also along the RVT in numbers up to four from 5/7 through the end of the season (MH, RH, FM, CW). **Louisiana Waterthrush** continue to hold strong in their breeding areas along Redbank Creek, with three birds first heard back along the RVT 4/13 (CW). At various areas along the trail up to five birds were heard on territory through the season (MH, RH, FM, CW). A single report of **Mourning Warbler** was noted, with a singing male present on the RVT near Redbank 5/17 (CW). **Kentucky Warblers** are usually one of the least reported species of warbler and so three noted birds for the season is an excellent record. Along Lawsonham Rd. outside of RI one was singing in good habitat 5/9 (CW). At Redbank near the junction of the Armstrong Trail and RVT, a singing male was located 5/15 (TB), and continued to be heard singing 5/17 (CW). Further up the trail from Redbank a second singing male was located

also 5/17 (CW). **Cerulean Warblers** were found in greater numbers this year also, with the first heard back 5/4 along the RVT and then up to six singing males heard regularly from Redbank to Climax through the end of season (CW). The last warbler of note is the **Yellow-throated Warbler**, which is another species with very limited in range for *Clarion*. The only reliable area known by this writer is on the southern border along the RVT, where they were once again present this year, first seen back 4/13 (CW). At least one, and at times two singing males were then heard between Redbank and Climax through the end of the season (CW).

Henslow's Sparrows are routinely back early in the second week of April, but this year the first noted back were calling at MZ at dusk 4/23 (CW). This may not have been due to late migration but just from lack of effort. They were in typical numbers at most regular locations into summer. A single report of **Vesper Sparrow** was received, typically the least reported sparrow. It was of an unknown number of birds at MZ in "the bowl" area 5/14 (RW). **Lincoln's Sparrow** is much more typically noted in fall migration but this year one or two birds were seen near CV from 5/3- 5/6 (CW). At MZ, a singing male **Dickcissel** was noted 5/5 (LC). Although habitat was promising and the report was followed up, no further activity was reported at this location.

It has been some time since an invasion of **Common Redpolls**, and this season again there was just a single report of a bird at a feeder in RI 3/21 (MM). **Pine Siskins** were more frequently noted this year, with up to six birds present at the same feeder location in RI 3/23-4/29 (MM). They were also seen at a feeding station near Strattanville through 3/9 and then two returned 3/28 (RM). At a feeder in Clarion five were seen as late as 5/5, although no possible breeding activity was noted in the report (TS).

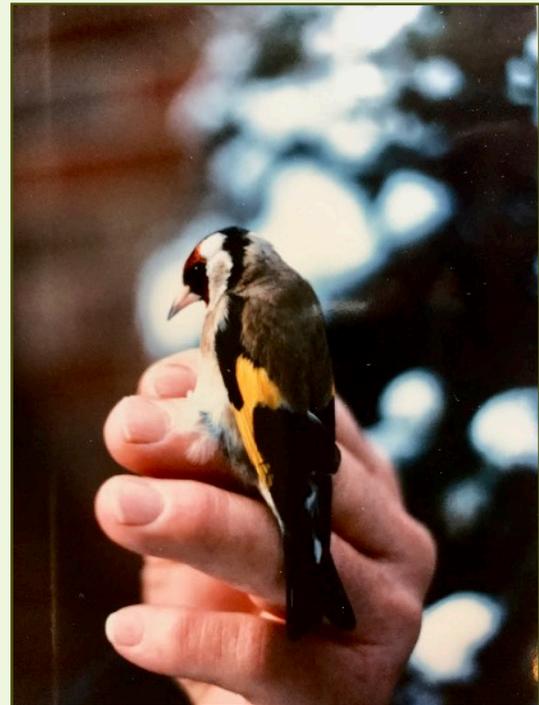
Observers: **Carole Winslow, 159 Moggey Rd, Sligo, PA 16255, (814) 745-3818, cjwinslow94@gmail.com**, Al Bratkovich, Tony Bruno, Martin Carlin, Lewis Crowell, Michael David, Gary Edwards, Laken Ganoe, Steve Gosser, Mal Hays, Justin Heasley, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Flo McGuire, Holly Merker, Ron Montgomery, Mark Moore, Richard Nugent, Theo Rickert, Tabassam Shah, Jerry Stanley, Larry Towse, Ron Wagner, Gloria Walzak, Mike Weible.

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute in Jamestown, NY is presenting a new exhibition by artist Alberto Rey this fall. The Extinct Birds Project will be featured at RTPI from August 17th – December 14th and will include 18 original works by the artist. The Project also includes a new book by Rey, along with programming in partnership with RTPI. See more events at rtpi.org.

Solution to Sudoku...

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From our Archives...



EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH

"A rare but frequent visitor at a feeder near Knox during the winter of 1988"

Editor's Note: Does anyone know exactly where this was or who captured it and took photos? It was probably an escaped cage bird. Nonetheless, it would be an interesting sighting at your feeder! They are now established breeding birds in parts of Illinois and Wisconsin.

Upcoming Dates & Events

Watch your mailbox for our upcoming Fall Bird Seed Sale!

Mid-August thru mid-September - Nighthawk Watches at both Oil City Marina and Fisher Boat Launch

September 12 Program - Brian M. Wargo, "Hawkwatching: an Ocean in the Sky"

September 22-23 & November 17-18 - Allegheny Front Hawkwatch, Leader Michael Leahy

October 10 Program- Steve Ace, "Fishers, Minks & Martens"

October 12-13 - Big Sit at Deb Freed's Home

Owl Prowl - Date to be announced

Christmas Bird Count - Saturday, December 15



SRAS Leadership Team

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Deb Freed | Media & Membership | 226-4719 |
| Paulette Colantonio | Nature Books | 797-2031 |
| Pat Conway | Facebook | 752-2036 |
| Gary Edwards | Outreach Programs/CBC | 676-3011 |
| Jeffrey Hall | Facebook | 732-0258 |
| Janice Horn | Treasurer/Birdseed Sale | 226-7367 |
| Mike Leahy | Beaver Creek | 229-1648 |
| Flo McGuire | Newsletter & Website | 755-3672 |
| Ron Montgomery | Outreach Programs | 764-6088 |
| Jim Wilson | Nest Boxes & Feeders | 676-5455 |

*An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day.
~ Henry David Thoreau*

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
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