



THE DRUMMER

www.senecarocksaudubon.org



November/December 2019

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The Magnificent Seven: A Close Look at Seven Iconic Birds

Jeffrey Hall

November 13 Program

North America's tallest bird was once the rarest...a bird that feeds by 'lurching about as if intoxicated'...a shorebird named after the new moon...a bird that looks 'as though an orchid has spread its lovely wings and flown'...a warbler that is connected to one of the 20th century's most notorious murders...a bird that a national news network called 'the most adorable'...and a bird that is surprisingly one of the most iconic of all—this program provides an in-depth portrayal of each.

Jeffrey Hall, an active member of Seneca Rocks Audubon Society, has presented many

other programs for SRAS, most recently including talks on Tanzania, Patagonia, and the Galapagos.

Members' Night and Christmas Bird Count Planning

December 11 Program

This is always a fun night - Birders Show and Tell! Would you like to tell us about a recent trip or a favorite book? You can bring photos or any birdy or nature item you would like to share.

We will also review our areas for the 33rd Clarion CBC, which will be held on Saturday, January 4. The tally will be January 8.

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



This excellent Yellow-throated Warbler photo was captured by Meg Kolodick in her backyard haven. This is one of our most vulnerable species.

ADVOCACY for BIRDS

The recent report that the North American bird population dropped nearly 30 percent in the last 50 years struck me like a freight train. That happened in my adult lifetime! Grassland species have been hardest hit and that made me think of our Piney Tract grassland. Some of the data researchers used in compiling the report came from the Christmas Bird Count, one of our annual events. Our chapter focuses on informative programs and events that increase our knowledge of birds and the natural world. As members of Seneca Rocks Audubon we are engaged in education, citizen science and conservation. That's all good. By sharing our interest in birds with friends and family we can encourage individual actions to reduce window strikes, keep cats indoors, reduce the use of pesticides and plant native plants. If you choose to become even more active in advocacy here is an invitation.

Leigh Altadonna, President and Education Chair of Wyncote Audubon of Montgomery County PA has invited individuals who are interested to become more active in legislative and policy issues to check out the Wyncote website wyncoteaudubon.org. Click

on “BE AN ADVOCATE” on the home page. There you can add your contact information to receive future editions of the ADVOCATE newsletter. Note that the Congressional Representation referenced will need to be changed for our local area.

Also, check out Audubon.org for interactive maps that show how climate change will affect Pennsylvania's birds. Some of the most vulnerable birds are ones we enjoy here; Henslow's Sparrow, Yellow-throated Warbler and Black-throated Green Warbler. Consider climate policy here in Pennsylvania as another choice for personal advocacy.

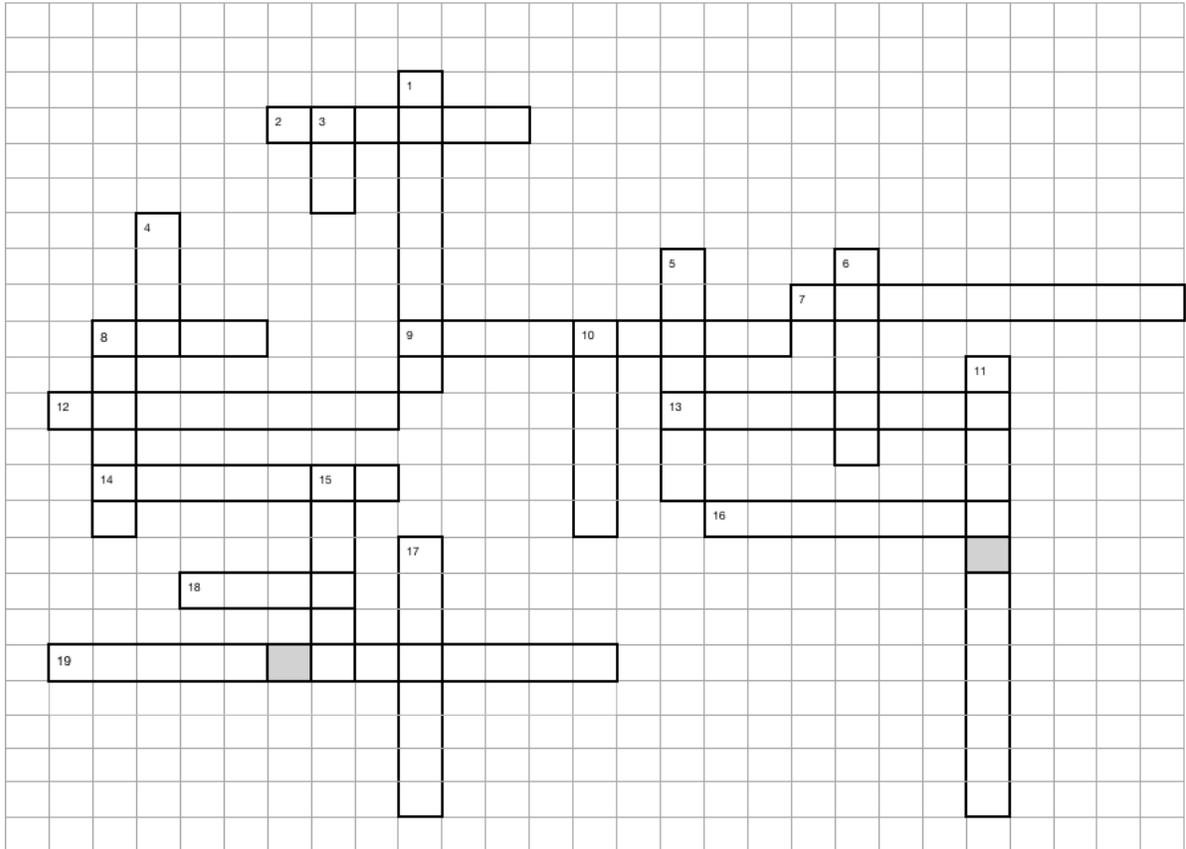
The *Drummer* is the newsletter of Seneca Rocks Audubon Society (SRAS), PO Box 148, Clarion, PA 16214. SRAS is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. The *Drummer* is published 4 times per year – September, November, February, and April.

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.

Birds! Birds!!! Birds!!!!

Crossword Puzzle by Margaret Higbee, reprinted from the Todd Bird Club *Nuthatch*.
Slightly adapted.



Across

2. Ground robin
7. Previously Common Moorhen
8. Tail-wagging warbler
9. Falcon that nests in Armstrong Co.
12. *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
13. Most common PA plover
14. Thunder-pumper
16. His bill can hold more than his belly can
18. Species with long, down-curved bill
19. Bird with longer lower mandible.

Down

1. Male shorebird that does all of the incubating of eggs and care of the young
3. Nocturnal raptor
4. A marsh bird with rectangular tail and short yellow bill
5. Woodpecker with spotted underparts and barred upper parts
6. No longer Gray Jay
8. *Sayornis*
10. Game bird whose populations were greatly reduced by West Nile Virus
11. A bird that works its way up the trunk of a tree, flies downward to base of another tree, then repeats the process.
15. Gull with wedge-shaped tail
17. This gull was a recent accidental at Kahle Lake



Sleepy red-phase Eastern Screech-owl photo by Meg Kolodick

Owl Prowl

**Wednesday, Nov. 6, 6:00 pm
(rain date Nov. 7)**

Mal Hayes will again be leading this annual adventure. Meet at State Game Land 63 parking lot on Roberts Hill Rd off of Rt. 208, 1/2 mile south of Shippenville. GPS coordinates are 41.239, -79.475.

We will caravan to several stops — the prowl will take about two hours. See you on the 6th and don't forget to bring a flashlight!

Owl Nest Box Update

~Gary Edwards & Mal Hays



Mal (left) and Larry have become experts at erecting owl boxes.

Last summer, Mal Hays, Larry Towes, Jim Wilson, and I, along with DCNR forester Ty Ryen, placed eight owl boxes in Oil Creek State Park (OCSP). We were joined by Flo and Jim McGuire to place six in Cornplanter State Forest (CSF). Ron Montgomery joined us to place an additional eight in Cook Forest State Park (CFSP). The remaining three were purchased by a local couple and were erected on their property. Since then, we have checked the boxes for activity about every three months, the last times being September 23 when we checked those in OCSP and CSF and September 25 when Mal check those in CFSP.

Mal uses a small step stool to access each box and proceeds to slowly open it to check for any signs of usage. Both he and I can confirm that several boxes have been used by wasps in summer — several times they sent us scrambling and, on occasion, they caught up to us. Be that as it may, we can report that over the last 15 months the boxes in OCSP were used by a red squirrel and two families of flying squirrels. Mal also discovered a couple of small bird feathers in one of the boxes. The last two checks have lacked any signs of activity. Two boxes in CSF were stolen and will be replaced in the coming months. There has been no activity in the CFSP boxes.



Watchers: Jim, Flo, Shelby, Meg, Gary, Nick, Jim Willson. In front, Deb Freed.

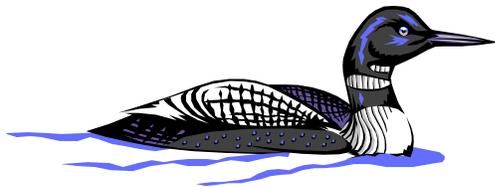
Oil City Common Nighthawk Migration Count

~ Gary Edwards

Year 15 of the Oil City Common Nighthawk Migration Count at the Oil City Marina being manned on a daily basis began August 17 but the first nighthawk wasn't sighted until the 20th. The count ended on September 13th with a total of 995 birds, the 3rd highest total since 2005. As usual, the most productive week was August 25-31 with 736 birds counted. Those who helped with the count included Meg and Nick Kolodick, Jim Wilson, Flo and Jim McGuire and Shelby, Mal Hays, Russ States, and Bob McCool.

Looking for new Webmaster

We are looking for a new volunteer to take care of our website. Please contact Flo at fmcguire1@verizon.net if you are interested!



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



Worm-eating Warbler by Meg Kolodick

Clarion County Summer 2019 Bird Sightings

~ Carole Winslow

Locations: Armstrong Trail (AT), Cook Forest (CF), Cullsville (CV), Mt Airy (MA), Mt Zion (SGL330/ Piney Tract)(MZ), Redbank Valley Trail (RVT), Rimersburg (RI).

The only significant waterbird record this year is a good one to add for *Clarion*, as it's not a common one—that of nesting **Hooded Mergansers** at a wooded pond location near Millcreek. Two adult females were found with a group of seven young and five young 6/7 (MH). Near Strattanville, a pair of **Common Nighthawks** was found from 7/1-7/16 (MH, LT). Despite efforts made, no other definite evidence of breeding was found, though there are several sites with potential nesting habitat.

American Woodcocks are often hard to find once the display period is over, but an adult was found roadside near CV, showing some protective behavior possibly indicating young nearby 6/7 (DD, CW).

Black Vultures are expanding slowly, and one was noted near Clarion eating carrion at roadside 7/11 (MM). Despite available habitat along the different

waterways, there is currently no nesting record of **Osprey**. This year one was seen along the Allegheny River from the Armstrong Trail near East Brady 6/30 (TB), so hopefully that may be a sign that there is some activity as yet undiscovered. No direct evidence of breeding was reported for **Northern Harrier**, but sightings were submitted from several areas. One male bird was at CV strips 6/8 (DB, RH, ML, SM) and again 6/14 (TR). In their stronghold at MZ, a female was present 6/7 (ME, LS). A single bird was seen along Stockdill Rd (CB) and at the main site (JA, LA, ML) 6/8. A pair was found at another past breeding site near CV along Rankin Rd 6/9 (CW). **Cooper's Hawks** are not an uncommon nester but actual reports of nest sites are.

This year a pair was found nesting in a small pine planting near a reclaimed strip field near CV, present all season and with two young first found fledged and calling near the nest 7/11 (CW). **Eastern Screech-Owls** have been found for many years at a barn near CV, but breeding is not confirmed every year.

At this site, two newly fledged young birds were first seen roosting with the adults in the barn 6/29, and then an additional young bird was seen the following day (DD, CW). The adults were a red female and gray male, the young were two red and one gray. These young birds were last seen still roosting with the adults through 7/15, with both adults continuing at the site through the end of the season.

White-eyed Vireo is a species not often reported, and one was found in good habitat at CV strips 6/4 (RN) and 6/10 (SJ). This would be a likely spot to watch for further signs of breeding in the future.

Yellow-throated Vireos have limited habitat but



Yellow-throated Vireo by Meg Kolodick

continue to have a small presence along the bigger waterways. One was reported along the AT near East Brady 6/28 (TB), and a singing male was present along the RVT 6/2-7/19 (CW). **Warbling Vireos** are typically scattered just along the larger waterways as well, so it was nice to get reports from some other habitat with just smaller ponds in the vicinity. A single bird was found at MZ 6/7 (ME, LS), and a singing male was heard in CV 6/13 and 7/20 (CW). Another singing bird was heard near a pond on the RVT near RI 7/5(CW).

Golden-crowned Kinglets have a very limited breeding presence, restricted mostly to the larger pine forests in the north around CF. This year good

numbers were reported from five sites at this area with 11 birds found 6/25 (RT). **Purple Finches** were noted breeding just at two locations. Birds were present throughout the season at a home in RI, with up to 20 birds reported and 12 fledged young seen (MM). At a home near CV they were present in smaller numbers of up to five birds and two fledglings, from 6/7 through the end of the season (CW).

Grasshopper Sparrows were generally reported from their typical strongholds, but in looking

back over the previous five years, it is noted that total numbers seem to be down. Total numbers at MZ were as high as 17 for previous reports, while the maximum number this year was four (m.ob.). Reasons for this are not clear but bears watching for future seasons. It was a better year for sightings of **Clay-colored Sparrows**. One was noted at MA in early June (SG) and one was also seen at MZ from 6/4-6/11 (BG, DK, RN, LS, TS, et al.). One observer reported the bird as carrying food 6/11, a good indication for breeding success. **Vesper Sparrow**, as is usual, was only reported at one location, with two birds seen at MZ 6/24 (TBe).

Henslow's Sparrows reports this year also show possibly some decline in numbers but as with grasshoppers, this data is uncertain as it depends on many factors and information of any substance is only really available for one location. Up to 14 birds were noted on reports from MZ as the main location and birds were present throughout the season (m.ob.).

Yellow-breasted Chat continues to be a feature at the CV strips site, with large areas of overgrown fields providing excellent habitat. They were reported with numbers as high as four birds from 6/8-6/22 (m.ob.). It was

a poor showing for **Worm-eating Warblers** this year but it is very likely that this was simply due to lack of effort and not a population trend. Ample habitat remains along the various southern waterways. A singing bird was reported at AT at Sarah Furnace 6/9 (KD, DF, BG, DK), and also 7/1 (TB). Along the RVT one was also still singing 7/8 (CW).

Blue-winged Warblers are not uncommon in the county, but nesting is not always confirmed. This year a family of five was found rather late in the season with adults still feeding recently fledged young along the RVT in Rimersburg 7/27 (RN, CW). **Kentucky Warbler** is always a desired species to be able to document at this more northern edge of its range. A singing male was found along the RVT between Redbank and Lawsonham 6/2 (CW) and also 6/8 (RH, SM). Another bird was found singing still late in the season along the same trail near Longpoint 7/19(CW). At this same location, **Cerulean Warblers** were heard with one or two singing males from 6/2-6/25 (TR, CW). These numbers are down from last year like worm-eating warblers, but presumed from less effort also. **Northern Parulas**

continue to have a presence at both the northern and southern boundaries. They are almost always restricted to forested areas along rivers and large streams. Three singing males were found at various spots in the CF area 6/25 (RT), and a singing male was present along Redbank Creek at Lawsonham from 6/2-7/8 (SJ, RH, SM, CW). Nearby at Brady's Bend overlook one was seen 6/9 (KD, DF, BG, DK) and at the AT one was noted 6/28 (TB). An exception to the expected places to locate parulas in breeding season was a male heard for just a single day singing persistently in a small patch of Norway spruce near CV 6/7 (CW). As this is late for

a new territory, possibly it was an unsuccessful male from elsewhere that was still trying to attract a mate. There are scattered pockets along the RVT of pine and hemlock, and in one of these areas a singing male **Magnolia Warbler** was heard, near Climax, on 7/8 and again 7/19 (CW). Records for this species are few and scattered west of the mountains and south of the northern tier forests.



Northern Parula by Meg Kolodick

Another species that this can be

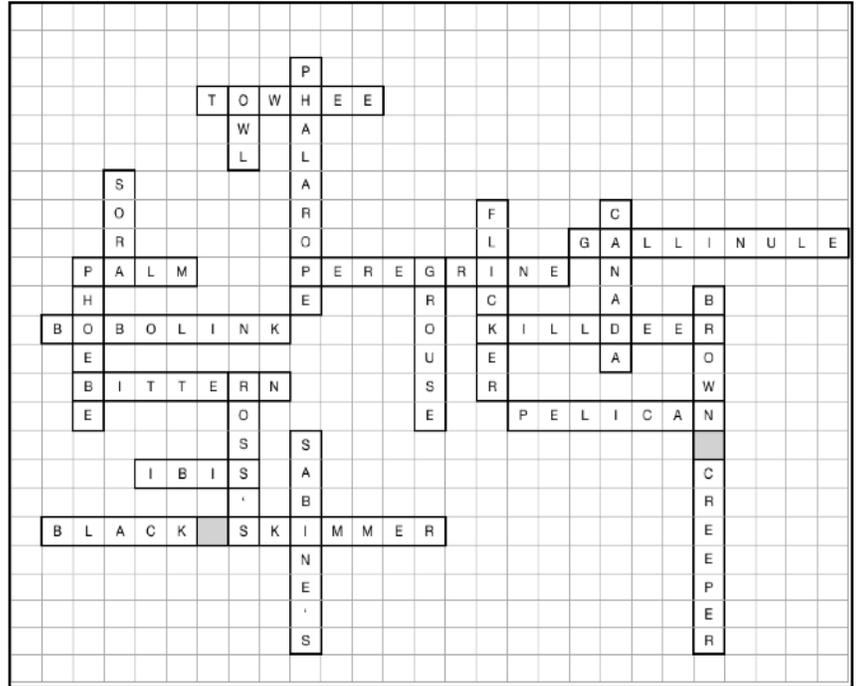
said for is **Blackburnian Warbler**, and so worth noting a report of two birds along Sarah Furnace Road near the AT 6/23 (CA, KA, NA). More birds are very typical of the CF area where they are common, although numbers were down this year with only up to nine birds reported from 6/7-7/1 (SJ, T&JK, RT). **Pine Warblers** have just a scattering of areas where there is appropriate habitat. At MZ, with many pine plantings from strip mine reclamation, there are usually records most years, and one was seen there at the main site 6/8 (JA, LA, ML) and also 6/22 (MHo, JM, SS). A single bird was noted singing in the CF area 6/25 (RT) and 7/1 (T&JK). The last warbler of mention is the **Yellow-throated Warbler**, which like some others is almost exclusive to riparian areas along the larger rivers

and creeks. The only one noted this year is that of a singing male present along the RVT at Lawsonham from the start of the season and continuing to sing through 7/8 (CW). Numbers seem down this year in the eBird dataset, as this sighting is the furthest north this year west of the mountains during the breeding season.

E.B. White said of Henry David Thoreau:
The note he sounded was like the white-throat's - pure, wavering, full of the ecstasy of loneliness.

Observers: **Carole Winslow, 814-745-3818, cjwinslow94@gmail.com**, Jim Ackerman, Linda Ackerman, Casey Andersen, KM Andersen, Nancy Andersen, Timothy Becker (TBe), Corey Bellis, Dave Brooke, Todd Burtner, Karyn Delaney, Don DeWolf, Mary Eyman, Donna Foyle, Steve Gosser, Barbara Griffith, Rebecca Hart, Mal Hays, Mimi Hoffmaster (MHo), Sam Jolly, Deborah Kalbfleisch, Tom and Janet Kuehl, Michael Leahy, Steve Manns, Mark Moore, Jim McConnor, Richard Nugent, Theo Rickert, Steve Sanford, Tabassam Shah, Liz Spence, Ryan Tomazin, Larry Towse.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE



Seneca Rocks Audubon Society Membership Application

Chapter memberships are due in September each year

Name _____ (Please print)

eMail _____

Address _____ Street

_____ City State Zip

Chapter Membership - \$10.00 Please make your checks payable to Seneca Rocks Audubon Society, or SRAS

Mail to:

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
 PO Box 148
 Clarion, PA 16214

Upcoming Dates & Events

November 6 - Owl Prowl, led by Mal Hays

November 13 program— “The Magnificent Seven” by Jeffrey Hall

December 11 program — Members’ Night for sharing and Christmas Bird Count Prep

January 4 — Saturday, Christmas Bird Count

January 8 — Wednesday, CBC Tally, location to be announced



*I go to nature to be
soothed and healed, and
to have my senses put
in order.
~ John Burroughs*

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