



THE DRUMMER



www.senecarocksaudubon.org

Volume 39-2 ~ Spring

March-May 2023

SRAS ~ PO Box 148 ~ Clarion, PA 16214

Editor: Cindy Bonner

Highlights of the 123rd Clarion CBC

By Jim McGuire, Compiler

This was the 36th Christmas Bird Count for the Clarion count circle being established in 1986 and only once in 1989 were there no Canada Geese reported. However, this year we added a Cackling Goose to our list as a new specie being split out from being a sub-specie of Canada Goose to being a standalone specie.

Two other new species were added to our overall list this year bringing it to 103! These were a Wilson's Snipe seen by Carole Winslow and an Eurasian Collared-Dove seen by feeder watcher Ron George at Strattanville.



Wilson's Snipe



Eurasian Collared Dove

Our Count specialty, the Short-Eared Owl, has been seen every year except 2015 with the high count of 19 being in the first year and since then has varied between one and ten.



Stock Photo from Internet

Another unusual statistic is that although Red-bellied Woodpecker has been reported in all 36 counts, there were only three "possible" nesting reports in the 1st Breeding Bird Atlas project from 1984-1989 in the whole county.

Photo by
Cindy
Bonner



Common Raven is another bird virtually missing in the county then with only two possible sightings in the 1st BBA and only four other records until 2005. Since then, it has been seen 10 out of the last 12 years.

Dark-eyed Juncos have dropped from a high of 2618 in 1999 to only 467 this year. However, it should be noted that their numbers have swung drastically over the years.

Ruffed Grouse is another bird that seemed to be reported in good numbers until 1999 and have been missed four out of the last six counts.

Thanks to Mal Hays for coordinating the field observers and Danette Karls for organizing the feeder watchers.

Which Goose?

Cackling Goose



Adult (Aleutian)

Small and compact with a short neck, small bill, and steep forehead. Head and neck are black with a large white cheek patch. Some, including most adult Aleutian birds (subspecies *leucopareia*), have a white collar at the base of the black neck sock.

© Matt Brady | Macaulay Library
California, February 04, 2010

Canada Goose



Adult

Canada Geese are larger with a larger bill and a longer neck than Cackling Geese, but beware of smaller Canada Geese that approach the size of Cackling. Canada Geese also have a rounder head with a sloping forehead as opposed to a steep forehead seen on Cackling.

© Max McCarthy | Macaulay Library
Massachusetts, February 24, 2017

SRAS Hat and T-Shirt Sale

Port & Company hats are 6-panel twill and available in Navy and Silver.
\$19 each



Port & Company t-shirts are 100% cotton and available in Heather Gray and Light Blue.
\$15 each S-XL
\$17 each 2X-4X



Order forms are available on the SRAS website:

https://www.senecarocksaudubon.org/files/ugd/f3fba6_dd509c769e7840939cf9a61e320f7198.pdf

Deadline for orders is March 15, and orders will be available for pickup from 6:00PM-6:30PM on April 12th and May 10th in the basement meeting room of the Clarion Library prior to the SRAS programs.

Winter Bird Seed Sale

Seneca Rocks sells quality bird seed through J&J Feeds as a fundraiser twice a year - in the fall and again in the winter. The recent February bird seed sale was a success! Thank you for your orders and donations. Every dollar is helpful to our education and conservation efforts, and operating expenses.

Mark Your Calendar!

From Alice Thureau, President:

Seneca Rocks Audubon has an exciting line up of events this spring. We have monthly public programs about mushroom foraging, Eastern Bluebirds, and amazing facts about common birds. Our experienced guides lead us on bird walks at Oil Creek State Park and Conneaut Marsh and beyond. If walking doesn't suit you, come to the Big Sit, to see an impressive number of bird species while sitting still.

June brings even more exciting opportunities to connect with nature. More about that in the next Drummer!

It's all possible because of our dedicated Leadership Team and volunteers, our enthusiastic bird guides, our knowledgeable presenters, and our community partners. It also wouldn't be possible without you - our members and friends - who contribute to SRAS through your membership and talents and give us a good reason to get together, appreciate the birds, and have fun. We thank all of you!

Field Trips for Spring 2023

Conneaut Marsh Field Trip, 8am, Saturday, March 18, 2023

Larry Towse and Mal Hays will lead this all-day birding field trip to Conneaut Marsh at Custards, Conneaut Lake, Pymatuning Reservoir, and points in between. You can join the group for just one stop or as many stops as you like. Everyone is welcome, including families with children. Mal and Larry and our other experienced members are always happy to show others the amazing birds along the way. Besides great birding, it's a fun time with other nature lovers. Just be sure to dress for March weather and bring water and snacks.

This field trip is popular for observing numerous songbirds, lots of waterfowl and marsh birds, Bald Eagles, and even Sandhill Cranes. Conneaut Marsh is preserved as State Game Lands 213 and is designated as an Important Bird Area.

The day begins at 8 am at the spillway on Conneaut Marsh at Custards to observe waterfowl, eagles, and other species. At about 9 a.m. the group will caravan to other promising birding spots. There will be a mid-morning snack and bathroom stop. Around noon we will meet in Conneaut Lake at Fireman's Beach Park on North Second Avenue off of route 322 (Water St.) There we'll have a lunch break and observe the waterfowl on the lake. You can bring a packed lunch or purchase lunch in the little town of Conneaut Lake. There are local restaurants for take-out or sit in, Subway, and Sheetz. If it's warm enough, we can picnic at Fireman's Beach Park. After Conneaut Lake, there will likely be 2 more stops. The field trip will be done around 3 pm.

Directions from Clarion to the first stop at the spillway bridge near Custards: Take I-80 west to I-79 north. Continue on I-79 north. Take Exit 141, Rt. 285 east, toward Cochran. Drive about 1 mile on Route 285 east. Turn left onto Mercer Pike (watch for a red barn on the right) and go about 1/2 mile to the parking near the bridge. An alternate route is Rt. 322 west through Franklin. Either way, the drive is about 1 ¼-1 ½ hours from Clarion.



Conneaut Marsh Outing, photo by Deb Freed

Photo from a prior year

Big Sit 2023

by Carole Winslow

Thursday, May 4, 2023 with rain date of Saturday, May 6, 2023

Bring your binoculars and a chair and join us for our annual spring Big Sit, a relaxing day of birding and fellowship! We will be counting all birds heard and/or seen from a central location at Carole Winslow's Maple Glen Farm near Sligo. This will be a day to hopefully see many spring migrants in a beautiful setting, while enjoying the company of other folks who love to watch and learn about birds. Indoor bathrooms, coffee, tea, water and a few light snacks are provided. Feel free to bring something else to share if you like, but that is not required. Just bring your eyes, ears and enthusiasm to share! The birding starts as early as sunrise and guests are welcome to stay as long as they like into the afternoon.

To reach the farm, follow Rt 68 west (towards Sligo) from Clarion at I-80 approx. 3 miles to Reidsburg and turn L at the Zion Baptist Church onto S. Reidsburg Rd. Follow approx. 2.5 miles to Tin Town and turn R at the sign for Curlsville. After approx. 1.5 miles turn left onto Moggey Rd, follow for one mile and the farm is on the right, marked at the end of the driveway with a carved squirrel and sign.

Oil Creek State Park Warbler Walk, 8AM, Saturday, May 13, 2023

Join us for this walk led by Mal Hays and Larry Towse to see wonderful warblers. At this time of year, warblers will be returning to our area to breed while others will be migrating through the area. All are welcome to this family-friendly walk. Expect to be birding for about 2-2½ hours, but you can leave earlier.

Meet at 8 am at the Blood Farm area at Oil Creek State Park. After turning into Oil Creek State Park from Route 8, follow the park road just 1/2 mile and turn right at the entrance to the Blood Farm area. Watch for an Audubon Event sign marking the turn as it's easily missed. There is a restroom at this area.

We'll observe birds in this area from 8-8:30AM before starting a leisurely loop walk on trails. Be prepared for damp or soggy areas if it's been a wet spring. As of now, the bridge near the ranger's station is closed. This eliminates a drive into the park for further birding which has been enjoyed in previous years.

Spring Public Programs

Our free nature programs are held on the second Wednesday of the month, at 6:30 p.m. They're held at the Clarion Free Library, except for Katie Fallon's presentation on June 14. Watch for future details of its location. For more details, see "Programs" on the website:

<https://www.senecarocksaudubon.org/>



March 8 - "**Beginner's Guide to Mushroom Foraging**" with Esperanzo (Espo) Wilcox, founder of PA Mushroom Company, a gourmet and medicinal mushroom cultivation operation based in Clarion. Espo will share information about when, where, and how to forage for wild mushrooms. This program is an essential building block for beginners and experienced foragers alike.



April 12 - "**The Beloved and Charismatic Bluebird**" with (Charmaine) Charlie Borza and Steve Szuch, landowners in Clarion County. They monitor 50 bluebird houses and will share their personal experiences, both good and bad. They'll also show several models of bluebird houses and predator guards, and bring copies of the quarterly newsletter "Bluebird Trails & Tales" for the audience. Photo credit: Claudine Lamothe



May 10 - “Amazing Facts about Common Birds” with Dave and Lori Kwasnick, owners of The Birdwatcher Store in Slippery Rock. <https://thebirdwatchersstore.com/>

Looking Ahead to the Summer!

Bird Walks

June 3 - Grassland Birds at Piney Tract (State Game Lands 330)

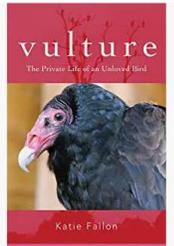
June 10 - Mill Creek Bird Walk

June 25 - Cook Forest Bird Walk

Public Program



June 14 - A special program by author Katie Fallon on her book Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird. Her essays have been published widely. She’s a regular columnist in the Bird Watchers Digest. Katie is a popular speaker, co-founder and executive director of the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, and also the author of Cerulean Blues.



Native Plant Workshop

June 24. Saturday morning - “Gardening for Birds and Pollinators,” a workshop with expert speakers who will inspire and educate about the importance and use of native plants. It will be held at the Cook Forest Sawmill Center for the Arts. Watch for more information to come.

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail on native Anise Hyssop. Photo by Alice Thureau.

“A bird sitting on a tree is never afraid of the branch breaking, because her trust is not on the branch but on her own wings.” ~ Anonymous

Photo by Meg Kolodick



Need an excuse to go outside and bird? Try Birdathon!

By Alice Thureau

Do you ever need an excuse to go out wandering with your binoculars and track how many different species of birds you can see in one day? If so, Birdathon is the perfect excuse for wandering about. Plus, it’s a great excuse for donating money to a good cause - Seneca Rocks Audubon!

Participating is easy. Choose a day from May 6-13. Put on your shoes and grab your binoculars. Start keeping track of bird species wherever you are - town, backyard, park, countryside. Keep a tally through the course of an hour, a few hours, or the entire day - whatever you have available. Finally, celebrate your bird list by making a donation to Seneca Rocks Audubon. You could donate a set amount

for each bird species seen or just a random amount. It doesn't have to be huge and it's that simple! You'll have the satisfaction of having time spent well and of having donated to a worthy cause.

Make it even more fun (if you like company!) by arranging to bird with others for Birdathon. Think of your friends and family, even if they're not "birders." The challenge of identifying birds and being outdoors together can be a lot of fun.

If you want to take your fund-raising a step higher, ask your friends, family, or co-workers if they would donate a small amount for each bird species you spot or a small lump sum. Do this ahead of time and give them a simple report after.

Donating is easy, too. Send a check to Seneca Rocks Audubon, PO Box 148, Clarion, PA 16214; or donate online at [Seneca Rocks Audubon](#). Look for the heading Support.

Now that you know about Birdathon, mark your calendar and get outside!

Bird-Friendly Habitat Team Out and About

By Alice Thurau

Seneca Rock Audubon's Bird-Friendly Habitat team has been invited again to have an informational table at C&A Tree's potting event on Saturday, March 4. On the weekend of June 3-4, we'll be at the Herb and Fiber Festival at the Cook Forest Sawmill Center for the Arts. We'll have our colorful table display, handouts about native plants, and hopefully a variety of native perennials (for donation). Don't be surprised if you see us at the Clarion Farmer's Market sometime this summer, too! We're always looking for opportunities to spread the word about the importance of native plants to insects and the birds, and other features of a bird-friendly habitat.



Deb Freed and Kelly Culbertson with the Bird-Friendly Habitat display at C&A Trees in 2022



Paulette Colantonio and Tabby Shah with the Bird-Friendly Habitat display at the 2022 C&A Trees potting event.

Cook Forest Events

Saturday, February 25 at 7:30am - 'Otter Watch' Please bring your binoculars and spotting scopes to the Park Office for a driving tour to otter hotspots along the National Wild & Scenic Clarion River. This is the prime time of the year to witness otter activity. Chances are good to observe otter sign such as slides, tracks, and latrines along the banks of the river. Hot chocolate and coffee will be available at the Park Office to warm us up. Maybe we'll even get a chance to see a river otter romp in action! (3 hours)

Saturday, March 18 at 9:00am - 'Polar Bear Float' Cook Forest State Park will be conducting an interpretive cold weather kayaking trip on the National Wild & Scenic Clarion River. Join the flotilla and celebrate the last days of winter on this four-mile float. Bald eagles, river otter, mink, and mergansers have been known to make an appearance. Pack a lunch and a thermos with your favorite hot beverage. Cost is \$25/boat (bring your own or we'll supply you one) with check or money order made out to the

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. All monies raised go towards future programming at Cook Forest State Park. Participants must pre-register by 3/15/23 by contacting the Park Office at (814)744-8470. Prior kayak training participants receive a 50% discount. Safety is of utmost importance. All participants must have the following required safety equipment or will not be permitted to attend: dry suit or dry top/bottom combination, cold weather boots, waterproof gloves, waterproof stow bag, complete change of clothes. Meet at the Park Office where we will conduct a safety check for above items, load gear, and travel to the starting point up-river. (5 hours)

Saturday, March 25 at 8:30am - 'Eagle Watch' Please bring your binoculars and spotting scopes to the Park Office for a driving tour to eagle hotspots along the National Wild & Scenic Clarion River. This is the prime time of the year to view bald eagles on their nests and find new nesting sites. Expect a long car-pool and aggressive hike to some of the better areas, but the rewards will be worth it. Hot chocolate and coffee will be available at the Park Office to warm us up. (4 hours)

"I would like to paint the way a bird sings." – Claude Monet

*Answers to the Question from the Winter Issue:
What is your favorite bird and Why?*

Deb Freed: This small unassuming bird is not colorful and I cannot hear its high-pitched song, but it was a welcome surprise when it visited the hemlock trees at our home in Clarion. I became a patient watcher and was rewarded with its signature dive to the base of the hemlock and its irregular climb up the trunk, stopping to probe in the bark. Its profile is very clean, a continuous arch from its back to the tip of its beak. I wanted to see it more often so I smeared suet into the bark. It worked. The little creeper came regularly to eat along with nuthatches and woodpeckers. The creeper landed low on the trunk and found the suet others left behind. With binoculars I could see the beautiful pattern in the feathers. On CBC's our team always stopped along wooded acres for possible owls, kinglets, woodpeckers and of course, a brown creeper. In my Pittsburgh home, I have a hemlock. Next year I'll try the suet on the bark to see what I get.

Thank you, SRAS, for the beautifully carved brown creeper that now sits on my desk.

Janice Horn: The hummingbird is one of my favorites. It's difficult to pick just one of the little ones that I find captivating besides that one. I enjoy seeing the Carolina wren which has a startling bright color on a winter morning. And then there's the Pine siskin of several years ago that ate out of my hand and the Red-breasted nuthatch that is almost fearless while it waits for food only a few feet away while I fill the feeder. I am unable to decide which is the favorite.

Brown Creeper



Deb's carving from SRAS

Male Ruby-Throated Hummingbird



Photo by Meg Kolodick

Meg Kolodick: Nick and I built a log cabin from a kit in 2001, with a sump in the basement, which we pumped out into the yard. Nick got the idea to contain the water by installing a small, kiddie pool sized pond. 2 years later, I spied a small bird with rusty sides by the water. I'd never heard of warblers, but eventually ID'd it as a Chestnut-sided warbler. It was the start of an exciting education for us.

It has returned every spring since, and other warblers have been spotted here, too, more and more over the ensuing years. Altogether, we have seen 32 species since that first original warbler. It's always exciting to see which show up each spring and fall.

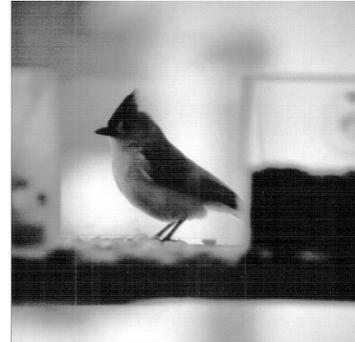
Chestnut-Sided Warbler



Photo by Meg Kolodick

Cindy Bonner: My first experience with feeding birds was a feeder attached with suction cups to my kitchen window back in the 1980s. This little guy was the first to show up that I didn't know what it was and had to look it up in The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds, Eastern Region. The photo was taken through the window with a film camera and has since been scanned, therefore the lack of quality. Ever since then, the Tufted Titmouse has been a favorite bird, and I look forward to seeing them at my feeder every year.

Tufted Titmouse



Alice Thureau: My favorite bird (for now!) is the Red-Shouldered Hawk. I see them near our farm. They're gorgeous.

Keith Hileman: I love the Carolina Wren because they're so friendly. The ones nesting in my barn hop around like little mice.



Red-Shouldered Hawk, February 4, 2023 Photo by Meg Kolodick



Carolina Wren, CBC 2020 Photo by Cindy Bonner

Watch Wildlife From Home! PA Game Commission Runs Live Streams

[Farm Country Eagle Livestream](https://hdontap.com/index.php/video/stream/pa-farm-country-bald-eagle-live-cam): <https://hdontap.com/index.php/video/stream/pa-farm-country-bald-eagle-live-cam> which provides a bird's-eye view into a long-established nest in a giant sycamore overlooking scenic farmland.

[Hanover, PA Eagle Livestream](https://hdontap.com/index.php/video/stream/hanover-bald-eagle-nest-live-cam): <https://hdontap.com/index.php/video/stream/hanover-bald-eagle-nest-live-cam>

[Snow Goose Livestream](https://hdontap.com/index.php/video/stream/pennsylvania-snow-goose-migration-live-cam): <https://hdontap.com/index.php/video/stream/pennsylvania-snow-goose-migration-live-cam> capturing the migratory action at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.

Seasonal Sightings (December ~ February)



Turkeys, January 15, 2023
Photo by Meg Kolodick



Two Bald Eagles near nest on
Canoe Ripple Road, January 13, 2023 ~
Photo by Cindy Bonner



Cooper's Hawk at Carole Winslow's farm, February 2021,
Photo by Don DeWolf, submitted by Carole



Another Cooper's Hawk, February 3, 2023
Photo by Meg Kolodick



Male and female Downy Woodpecker, CBC December 19,
2020, Photo by Cindy Bonner



Dark-Eyed Junco, January 25, 2023
Photo by Meg Kolodick

More Seasonal Sightings



American Tree Sparrow, February 2, (year?)
Photo by Meg Kolodick



Wilson's Snipe at a seep in a cow pasture
on raptor route near New Bethlehem,
January 2020 ~ Photo by Carole Winslow



Roadrunner at Bosque Del Apache NWR, January 2023
Photo by Jim McGuire



Blue Jay, December 4, 2018
Photo by Meg Kolodick



Barred Owl near Fisher, 2023
Photo by Lee Holmes, Barbara Huwar's daughter-in-law



Cedar Waxwing, December 18, 2020
Photo by Meg Kolodick

The Poetry Corner

Gifts

By Patricia Thrushart

I want the crows to bring me gifts.
Their graveled cries,
their ink-dipped wings,
their careening and wheeling,
their roosting, their chattering —
these are not enough reward
for my roasted peanuts and jeweled corn.
No, I want them to drop little bleached skulls of
animals long dead, leave shiny baubles fished
from cold campfires, a river-smoothed pebble,
a hunter's spent shell.
I want them to scold me
when I'm late
or when a drab day makes me
forget them altogether,
pulled away by life's mundanity.
I want them to care
whether I come or not.
And when I'm dead
I want them to mourn me
the way they do their own -circling in a
squawking,
screaming seance
to warn away the spirits.
That's not too much to ask
for some peanuts and corn,
for the daily ritual at the feeding altar, brushing
away old husks as light as papyrus,
looking up for their dark wings,
their lacy fingertips against the skulking sky,
their beaks open, carrying my gifts.



Photo by Meg Kolodick

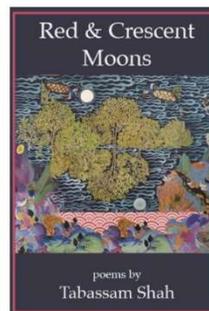
Northern Waterthrush

By Tabassam Shah

I hold in my hand 14 paper clips,
Or the weight of a northern waterthrush.
Not a thrush as its name implies,
but a wood warbler,
One that traveled 150 miles in 5 hours,
An aeronautical engineering phenomenon.
It's inconceivable to me
How your beady eyes
Can read the earth's magnetic field
While you're en route to your
breeding grounds.
Scientists haven't thought of a better descriptor
Of your vision other than quantum
entanglement,
Which sounds like you get stuck
and caught up in a realm
Beyond human scale and comprehension
Maybe that is what you do.



Available now on Amazon



"Shah's expansive voice is reflected in
her ability to shift registers of tone...
in a vivid lyrical sense..."--Philip Terman

Publisher: **the WATERSHED** journal
LITERARY GROUP

For more information on Tabassam and her poetry,
visit: www.tabassamshah.com



More from The Poetry Corner

Unexpected Gift

By Paulette Colantonio

Standing in a parking lot this unusually warm December morning,
The Eastern horizon wears a red, pink, and gold shawl,
Awaiting the ascension.

Suddenly,
A medley erupts from the skeletal trees edging the pavement.
Not a mere call,

But the total compliment of robin-repertoire.
Straining, I spy the familiar silhouette on a high branch.
Not the Shekinah, but close enough!



Photo by Meg Kolodick

Our Top 10 Bird Superstitions

Reprinted with permission from the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania
Winter 2023 Bulletin

1. If a bird accidentally hits your window, someone in your house will soon die. (*Pro tip from Audubon: we carry stickers in our Nature Stores that you can adhere to your windows to decrease window hits by birds - and potentially extend your life if you subscribe to this superstition.*)
2. A hooting owl means impending doom. This belief was started by the Romans after Julius Caesar, Augustus, and Agrippa supposedly had their deaths preceded by an owl's hoot.
3. A wren's feather provides protection from shipwreck and drowning.
4. Tip your hat at every magpie you see, and you'll have good luck.
5. Need even more good luck? Then accept it as a good omen when a bird poops on your head. (*Bonus points if you still have the hat on that you tipped at the magpie.*)
6. A woodpecker tapping on a tree in your neighborhood indicates that you'll soon have a visitor.
7. Bring a peacock feather into the house of an unmarried woman and she'll go on to become an old maid.
8. If a bird travels by you from left to right, trouble is ahead. But if the direction is right to left, you have good times to look forward to.
9. If you see six mynah birds together, you'll be seeing green - you are about to receive surprise money. Unfortunately, mynahs (which are in the same family as starlings) are an Old-World species, so don't count on that windfall if you are sticking around western Pennsylvania.
10. Get out your earplugs on weekends. On Fridays, Blue Jays disappear from the earth and travel to Hell to deliver gossip (and also, sticks). They return on Saturdays and are exceptionally loud, signifying their joy at safely returning from the underworld.



Unfortunately, just as SRAS started in the program, Amazon has terminated the Smile program as of February 20, 2023. We will receive some donation, based on Smile purchases through that date. Thank you to anyone that chose SRAS in the Smile program.

What are Passerines and Corvids?

A **Passerine** is any bird of the order Passeriformes, which includes more than half of all bird species. Sometimes known as perching birds, Passerines are distinguished from other orders of birds by the arrangement of their toes, which are adapted for perching, and includes all songbirds.



Photo by Meg Kolodick

The **Corvid** family of birds is currently comprised of 133 species that includes crows, magpies, jays and ravens. Corvids are known for their high intellect, often thought of as the smartest birds. They can solve problems with brilliant solutions and understand complicated situations. They are medium to large in size, with strong feet and bills, rictal bristles, and a single molt each year (most Passerines molt twice each year).



Stock photo

LEADERSHIP TEAM	
TEAM MEMBER	ROLE
Alice Thureau	President, Webmaster & Bird-Friendly Habitat
Vickie Gotaskie	Vice-President
Cindy Bonner	Treasurer & Editor
Kay John	Secretary & Membership
Paulette Colantonio	Education
Pat Conway	Facebook & History
Gary Edwards	Outreach Programs
Mal Hays	Outings & CBC
Danette Karls	CBC Feeder Watch
Nick Kolodick	CBC
Michael Leahy	IBA 21 Piney Tract
Jim McGuire	CBC Compiler
Ron Montgomery	Outreach Programs
Larry Towse	Outings
Jim Wilson	Nest Boxes/Feeders
Carole Winslow	PSO Clarion Co. Compiler

To contact one of the team members, send an email to their attention to senecarocksaudubon@gmail.com

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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: Winter (December-February) Spring (March-May) Summer (June-August) Fall (September-November) *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, Cindy Bonner, 1000 Lincoln St., Sligo, PA 16255 or email sras@email.com

“Wherever there are birds, there is hope.”
Mehmet Murat Ildan