



THE DRUMMER



www.senecarocksaudubon.org

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September-November 2023

SRAS ~ PO Box 148 ~ Clarion, PA 16214

Editor, Cindy Bonner

Seneca Rocks Audubon has had a busy, fun, and productive spring and summer, with multiple tabling events, presentations, bird walks, the selling of native plants for bird-friendly backyards, and a successful workshop promoting bird-friendly gardening.

This fall, we've got an excellent line up of speakers with interesting topics for our nature programs. All of the programs are at the Clarion Free Library's lower conference room and begin at 6:30 pm. The November program is on the first Wednesday of the month rather than the usual second Wednesday of the month.

- Wednesday, Sept. 13 – Dr. Kurt Regester – “Falconry: An Invisible Cultural Heritage”
- Wednesday, Oct. 11 – Tessa Rhinehart – “Eavesdropping on Birds: Conserving Bird Populations with the Help of Autonomous Sound Recording”
- Wednesday, Nov. 1 – Scott Stoleson – “Jeep-Birdy!”
- Wednesday, Dec. 13 – “Member's Night”

Also, have fun bird watching with others at these friendly outings:

- Aug. 13-early Sept. – Nighthawk Watch at the Oil City Marina, nightly at 6:30-8:30 pm
- Aug. 14-early Sept. – Nighthawk Watch at the Mill Creek Boat Launch, also 6:30-8:30 pm
- Wednesday, November 15 – Owl Prowl, 6 pm (rain/wind date, November 16)
- Saturday, December 23 – 37th annual Christmas Bird Count

Mark your calendars now and join us! All of our events are free and open to the public. Read more about the events at senecarocksaudubon.org.

PA Firefly Festival

By Jim McGuire

Seneca Rocks Audubon was invited to have a display at the 11th annual PA Firefly Festival located at Kellettsville, PA in Forest County surrounded by the Allegheny National Forest. (on the grounds of the former Black Caddis Ranch B&B).



Firefly Viewing / United States / Pennsylvania Firefly Festival ~ www.pafireflyevents.org

This is a link to Sir David Attenborough's film “Life That Glows “ that was partially filmed at Peggy and Ken Butler's property in Kellettsville. <https://youtu.be/XcHFH5Nrh6E>

Alice Thurau and Jim McGuire volunteered to host the display. They set up the display for Friday, June 30 and Saturday, July 1 evenings of the weeklong event. The bird ID portion of the display was popular

with several families and individuals. There was also literature about native plants and gardening for birds and pollinators as well as information about products that can help prevent bird collisions with windows



Jim McGuire and Alice Thureau at the SRAS table.

One of the benefits for having a display table was that Alice and Jim were invited to attend the keynote speaker's program, presented by Don Salvatore of Maine and a former educator at the Boston Museum of Science for thirty-five years. It was a very informative and entertaining program about the sex lives of Fireflies! Another benefit was being able to go with the groups to view different firefly species such as the Chinese Lantern Firefly floating through the air along the Tionesta Creek and the main attraction of the festival, the Synchronous Firefly, which likes grassy areas next to the forest. These Synchronous Fireflies were only thought to exist in the Smokey Mountains of Tennessee until a researcher (Sarah Lewis) of Tufts University was spending time at the former Black Caddis Ranch B&B when she noticed the Synchronous Fireflies and brought her firefly research team back to Forest County to study them and from there the PA Firefly Festival was born. Jim also got to meet a former presenter and exhibitor, the Ambassador for the Arts of Nigeria to the United Nations, Ibiyinka (Ibi) Alao. He had some glow in the dark paintings on display and has also written a children's book about Fireflies which is being made into a Broadway play. Just don't know who you are going to meet next in little Forest County!

Friday night after the Festival, Jim decided to explore a nearby Forest Service road (FR449) for Synchronous fireflies and was delighted to see them all along the edge of the road next to the forest every time he turned off his headlights and was in total darkness. They weren't noticeable until the lights were turned off. The Synchronous fireflies are only active from about 10 PM till 1 or 2 AM for generally the last two weeks of June and first week of July but that is variable with temperature. There are many other species of fireflies that fly around the rest of the summer. There are at least thirteen other firefly species in the Kellettsville area.

If you have questions about the PA Firefly Festival, look for Peggy or Ken Butler at one of our meetings as they are members. Peggy is the driving force behind the PA Firefly Festival and has hosted other researchers (Sir David Attenborough) at their home in Kellettsville.

Jim McGuire with Peggy Butler at the SRAS table.



In addition to having a display, Peggy asked Jim to lead bird walks for two groups of campers at the PaFFF (15 each) one on Sunday morning and the other on Thursday morning. Jim enlisted his expert birder friends Tom and Janet Kuehl (also part of Flo's Memorial Migration Count/Birdathon team) to help lead the Sunday walk with forty-one species seen but mostly heard. Jim was assisted by the keynote speaker Don Salvatore to lead the Thursday group and although not as many species were seen everyone had an enjoyable walk along Tionesta Creek. Unfortunately, Don did not hear or see the Cerulean Warbler seen Sunday. This would have been a LIFE BIRD !! Margaret and Roger Higbee of the Todd Bird Club of Indiana County were supposed to help Thursday but their GPS took them to the wrong address and no cell service, so beware of your GPS! Tom, Janet, Margaret and Roger are all on board for next year's Festival. We have already been invited back.



Herb & Fiber Festival

The Bird-Friendly Habitat team sold and promoted native plants at the Herb and Fiber Festival, June 3-4, Cook Forest Sawmill Arts Center.



From left to right: Tabby Shah, Paulette Colantonio, Vickie Gotaskie, Julia Stewart, and Alice Thureau.

Katie Fallon's Presentation on Turkey Vultures

Seneca Rocks Audubon was honored to host Katie Fallon, author of Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird and Cerulean Blues, on June 14. Expecting a nice size crowd, her presentation was held at PennWest's Science and Technology Center, thanks to Dr. Kurt Regester.

The audience was probably already heavily tilted toward appreciating Turkey Vultures. But if there were any misgivings in the room at the beginning of her presentation, Katie surely dispelled them with her personal fondness for the species, her humor, and the close-up photos and videos of the

ambassador Turkey Vultures at the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia (ACCA). Katie is Executive Director of the ACCA.

The long line after the presentation to purchase Katie's books and have them autographed was also evidence of the crowd's appreciation of Turkey Vultures and Katie's talk.

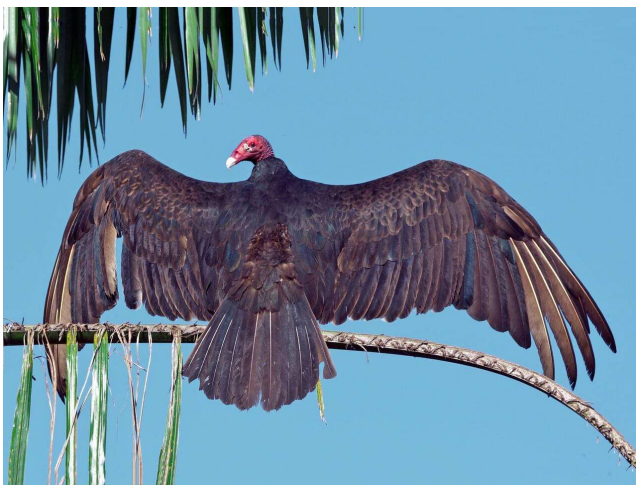
Here are some of the interesting facts about Turkey Vultures (TV) that she shared:

- They nest in caves, abandoned structures, barns, very large hollow trees, and under brush piles. They don't make a nest, but might push some sticks and leaves around.
- They are obligate scavengers. Their remarkable sense of smell and excellent eyesight helps them find carrion (dead animals).
- They have one brood annually. Both parents share incubation and feeding. They feed regurgitated carrion to their young.
- The Eastern TV subspecies is a partial migrant, migrating slowly or not all and not past Florida. They don't like the cold however.
- The Eastern TV has a wingspan of 5-6', similar to a Bald Eagle. They weigh about 4 pounds, less than half the weight of a Bald Eagle. They hold their wings in a shallow V and have light undersides of the wings and tail.
- Their strong stomach acid and gut flora allow them to eat and neutralize dangerous pathogens, such as rabies and anthrax. When TV consume carcasses, they avert mammalian scavengers from closely gathering and potentially spreading rabies amongst themselves.
- Eating the gut pile from a deer kill puts them at risk for lead poisoning from lead ammunition. Blood tests show that many TV, even the young, have evidence of chronic lead exposure.
- TV can tolerate more lead than eagles. Eagles can be harmed by a piece of lead the size of a grain of rice.

In conclusion, Katie said to "Stay Calm and Carrion!"

To hear Katie's full talk, here's a link to her presentation to DuPage Birding Club in 2022:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wioOE7R7ocE>



Photos from https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Turkey_Vulture/photo-gallery/60317261

From Katie's book, Vulture, The Private Life of an Unloved Bird, first chapter:

"A turkey vulture is a perfect creature. It is neither prey nor predator. It exists outside the typical food chain, beyond the kill-or-be-killed law of nature, although without death it would starve. On six-foot wings it floats above our daily lives, waiting for the inevitable moment that will come to each of us, to every living thing. Then the vulture transforms these transformations - these deaths - into life. It wastes nothing. It does not kill. It is not a murderer, and it is not often murdered. The turkey vulture waits. Waits and wanders on its great wing sails."

Gardening for Birds and Pollinators

By Alice Thurau

Fifty-one registrants learned about the importance and use of native plants at the workshop, “Gardening for Birds and Pollinators,” held June 24 at the Cook Forest Sawmill Arts Center. The advance promotions promising “ideas, inspiration, and instruction” held true through each of the excellent presenters. Comments and evaluations after the workshop were very positive, with many indicating that they would share their knowledge with others.

Before the workshop got underway, Michael Leahy led a group of registrants on a nature walk on the Black Bear Trail. By all accounts, the dampness of the day did not dampen his or their enthusiasm. And, he delivered the hikers back to the Sawmill Center in time for the start of the workshop!



The first speaker was Connie Schmotzer, a 20+-year veteran of Penn State Extension and an expert on native plants. She shared her experience and sage advice in describing how she and her husband converted their 1/2-acre suburban yard into a “native paradise.” She referred to using native plants as a “journey” of gaining knowledge, planning, and sometimes revising. One revision for the Schmotzers was moving their mailbox away from their curbside pollinator garden after discovering that the mail carrier was allergic to bees!

Roxanne Swan, the next speaker, also brought decades of experience to the workshop. As Horticulturist with the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, Roxanne propagates native plants at the Native Plant Center at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve for ASWP projects and for sale to the public. Roxanne introduced the audience to the different groups of pollinators and some of their preferred native plants. She recommended grouping the same perennial species together in a 3-foot diameter to make it worthwhile for a pollinator to visit.

The third presenter was Laura Jackson, Vice-President of Juniata Valley Audubon Society (JVAS), in the Altoona area. Laura’s presentation, “Birds in My Backyard,” was filled with beautiful photos of her native landscaping and the numerous bird species that are attracted to her yard.

Besides planting native perennials, shrubs, and trees, Laura also urged the use of window treatments to prevent bird collisions, a leading cause of bird mortality. The Jacksons use Acopian BirdSavers hanging cords in front of their large picture window (visit the Bird-Friendly Habitat page of Seneca Rocks Audubon’s website for other window treatments). JVAS also promotes shade grown coffee from a Honduran farm associated with Lenca Coffee Roasters. It’s a medium roast, smooth coffee which is now my favorite! The trees shading the coffee plants provide valuable habitat for many wintering birds which, in turn, control insect damage. Drinking shade grown coffee is one way that each of us can help warblers and other migratory birds.

Seneca Rocks Audubon and its Bird-Friendly Habitat team were co-organizers of the workshop, along with the Clarion Conservation District, Penn State Extension Clarion County Master Gardeners, and Cook Forest Conservancy. Each group brought its expertise, enthusiasm, and support. Thanks to them for their hard work and also to Cook Forest Sawmill Arts Center for the perfect space for a native plant workshop.



Photo by Deb Freed. From left to right, Hannah Bequeath (CCD); presenters Connie Schmotzer, Laura Jackson, and Roxanne Swan; Alice Thurau (SRAS) Missy Dolecki (PSU Extension)

The Poetry Corner

Sparrow Symphony

by Tabassam Shah

It matters that we take in
The perfume of fallen leaves
The nutmeg of oak
The sweet musk of beech
And the must of maple

The tawny tones of late autumn
Hide the visiting fox and lincoln sparrows from
view

In gaps between branches I catch a glimpse
Of the rich russet in the fox sparrow's cheeks
We hear them kicking up leaf litter
And we follow their tinkle and chinkle calls
The shortened autumnal songs of white-
throateds
Punctuate the background chorus

It matters that we take it all in
So our ears together
Listen in on this transformative moment
Heavy with sounds of rustle and sparrow song
We may fail to meet at other planes
But at least we tune in here together
Into the ease of autumn ending and giving way
To the winter waiting to soften our dawns and
dusks.

What Passes For Dew

By Patricia Thrushart

Come back when the eggplant is
cerise and white,
hiding its carnival stripes beneath
rippled umbrella leaves;
the last of the peas have burst, their
deep-throated flowers a memory;
the bee has had its full of
pollen, and drowns on the fragrant fringe
of a nodding herb.

The insects call to you, high in the oaks,
their thrum a drumming of the sacred
circle— sun and moon, wet and sparse,
cold and now, this time,
drenched in heat and heavy air,
dripping with what passes for dew.

You know you belong here, don't you?
As surely as the vireo
who sings about home incessantly,
knowing how heavenly it is,
knowing how easily
it is lost.



Fox Sparrow and Red-Eyed Vireo photos by Meg Kolodick

Programs at Cook Forest State Park

Friday, August 18 at 8:30am - '**Clarion River Boating Program: Portland Mills-Arroyo**', 6 miles for **experienced canoeists/kayakers only.** (8 hrs.)

Saturday, August 19 at 12:00pm - '**Snorkeling the Clarion**' (2 hrs.)

Friday, August 25 at 7:00pm - '**Leap Into Herpetology: Intro to Reptiles & Amphibians of Pennsylvania**' (1 hr.)

Saturday, August 26 at 9:00am - '**Explore Clarion River Lands: Highland Drive Old Growth Area**' (3 hrs.)

Friday, September 1 at 8:30am - '**Clarion River Boating Program: Arroyo Bridge-Spring Creek**', **5.4 miles.** (8 hrs.)

Saturday, September 2 at 3:00pm - '**A Walk Through the Forest Cathedral**' (2 hrs.)

Saturday, September 2 at 8:00pm - '**A Virtual Tour of Cook Forest**' (1 hr.)

Sunday, September 3 at 11:30am - '**Fire Tower/Seneca Point Historical Tour**' (3 hrs.)

Saturday, September 9 at 10:00am - '**Friends of Cook Forest Series: Forest Therapy Walk**' (2 hrs.)

For more detailed information on any of the programs, please see:

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/CookForestStatePark/Pages/default.aspx>

Top 20 Bird Idioms

<https://www.thespruce.com/bird-idioms-explained-386739>

There are dozens of bird idioms used around the world in many different cultures, languages, and countries. Learning about the birds behind the idioms can help birders know more about not only the birds, but about how all birds are part of cultural expression and common languages.

1. **Like a Duck to Water**

Meaning: natural and easy, not needing instruction

The Birds: Precocial ducks and geese can swim within hours of hatching without extensive instruction or parental guidance. These birds naturally know how to swim with ease and are right at home in the water.

2. **Free as a Bird**

Meaning: easy freedom or escape without entanglements

The Birds: Because birds can fly, they are often symbols of freedom with their ability to quickly and easily escape from troubles, dangers, or complications.

3. **An Albatross Around the Neck**

Meaning: a heavy burden or difficult obstacle

The Birds: Albatrosses are large, formidable birds, can be difficult to identify, and are often nemesis birds for many birders.

4. **Dead as a Dodo**

Meaning: extinct, no longer existing

The Birds: The dodo is extinct and there is not much known about this bird, though it is often referenced as clumsy and idiotic, making its extinction inevitable.

5. **Graceful as a Swan**

Meaning: elegant, beautiful, and sophisticated

The Birds: Swans are often symbols of romance and beauty because of their white plumage and the graceful curves of their long necks.

6. **Proud as a Peacock**
Meaning: arrogant, vain, or prideful
The Birds: The peacock's stunning tail (actually its upper tail coverts) is seen as a symbol of pride or showing off, just as the bird uses its tail to court a prospective mate.
7. **As Scarce as Hen's Teeth**
Meaning: limited or nonexistent
The Birds: Hens, like all birds, don't have teeth, so this idiom describes scarcity or low supplies. Birds don't need teeth, however, as their bill shapes are adapted to different foods and foraging styles.
8. **As the Crow Flies**
Meaning: a straight-line path, the most direct route
The Birds: Birds do not rely on roads, tracks, or established routes, and instead can fly direct to their destination, easily soaring above obstacles.
9. **Birds of a Feather Flock Together**
Meaning: a common group of similar members
The Birds: Many birds are gregarious and congregate in flocks, though the flocks are not always just a single type of bird and mixed flocks are common, especially in winter.
10. **Eagle Eye**
Meaning: watchful, having keen eyesight
The Birds: Birds have superior senses, especially vision, and top predators such as raptors have exceptional eyesight, spotting prey from incredible distances, even in low light or conditions with poor visibility.
11. **The Early Bird Catches the Worm**
Meaning: the benefits of avoiding procrastination and getting rewards for being first
The Birds: Many birds forage early in the day and are more likely to successfully find food before other birds or animals are feeding.
12. **Eat Like a Bird**
Meaning: to eat lightly or be a picky eater
The Birds: While birds don't eat lightly and can spend much of each day foraging, they are often picky, sorting through mixed birdseed to find just the morsels they want.
13. **Feather Your Nest**
Meaning: to pad financial gain or collect favors from others
The Birds: Birds often feather their actual nests with soft material to cushion their eggs and young chicks.
14. **Night Owl**
Meaning: one who is more active or productive at night
The Birds: There are many nocturnal birds that are highly active after dark, and many other birds are crepuscular, being most active at twilight and dawn.
15. **Ugly Duckling**
Meaning: one who is unattractive or out of place, though who becomes more beautiful or desirable as they mature
The Birds: Many baby birds are unattractive before they develop feathers, but they will eventually grow outstanding plumage.
16. **Take Someone Under Your Wing**
Meaning: to offer protective guidance or mentoring
The Birds: Young birds rely on the protection and guidance of their parents, which often includes sheltering under parent birds' wings to stay hidden, dry, or for temperature control.

17. Like Water Off a Duck's Back

Meaning: to easily shrug off, shed, or disregard

The Birds: Aquatic birds like ducks make heavy use of their uropygial gland as they preen, coating their feathers with waterproofing oil that keeps their plumage protected even underwater.

18. Skinny as a Rail

Meaning: very slender or thin

The Birds: Many rails have flexible bodies and can slip between closely packed reeds or grasses without disturbing the foliage. This is ideal camouflage, and gives the impression that the birds are very thin.

19. Happy as a Lark

Meaning: cheerful, optimistic, and joyful

The Birds: Larks have very melodious songs with cheerful notes and happy tunes, and they are often cultural symbols of joy, good fortune, or cheerfulness.

20. Crazy as a Loon

Meaning: insane or nutty

The Birds: Many loons have strange, haunting calls that can resemble crazy or disturbed laughter, distinctive vocalizations that can help identify loons easily.

Bird Myths

<https://wingspanoptics.com/blogs/field-journal/crazy-myths-about-birds>

MYTH #1: Birds Sing Because They're Happy

Males sing as a form of aggression to warn competing males to stay away and also to signal their personal qualities to attract females to mate with them. Females tend to prefer males who sing more often or have more complex songs.

MYTH #2: Birds Pair for Life

Divorce is actually a regular part of life for almost all birds; most live with one partner for only a few months or years, depending on the species. Annual divorce rates range from 99 percent with the greater flamingo to 0 percent in the wandering albatross.

MYTH #3: Mom Will Abandon Her Baby If You Touch It

First of all, a mother is a mother and that is her baby. Second, with a few exceptions, birds have a lousy sense of smell so this probably doesn't even enter into the picture. So if the baby is featherless and obviously too young to even move around much, put the baby back into the nest. If it has feathers and appears to be a small but fully feathered bird, leave it alone. It is a fledgling and needs to learn to fly. The watchful parents are nearby and being on the ground for a day or two is part of the process of learning to reach the sky.

MYTH #4: Swallows Survive Winter by Burrowing in The Mud

Not sure how this myth got started, but the real truth is... Purple martins and barn swallows fly about 10,000 miles round trip to Brazil to escape the northern winters.

MYTH #5: Feeding Hummingbirds in The Fall Stops Them from Migrating

Actually, many birds enjoy having plentiful food in the early fall, especially those that feed on flowers and fruit, but that doesn't stop them from leaving when it's time for migration. And they know when it's time to go!

MYTH #6: Birds Are Monogamous

Most songbirds in North America are not monogamous; DNA paternity testing shows that in many bird species, 40 percent of the young are the result of extra-marital matings.

MYTH #7: Birds Are Stupid

We've all heard the term "Bird Brains" which implies they're dumber than mammals, but don't let this fool you. Birds can recognize relatives they haven't seen in years, tell a neighbor from a stranger just by its voice, remember the location of food they hid away months earlier, and even use things as tools.

MYTH #8: Two Parents Are Needed to Raise the Young

In many birds like hummingbirds and woodcock, the female raises the young all by herself. In other birds like crows and blue jays, parents recruit nannies, usually former offspring, to help protect and feed the young.

MYTH #9: Since Birds Can Fly So Well, They Can Easily Adapt to Climate Change

Yes, many bird species can deal with climate change and will move north as temperatures rise, but unfortunately there are cases when they lay their eggs early and their food supply doesn't peak when they need it the most--and their young will suffer.

MYTH #10: Parsley Is Toxic to Birds

Nope. Not even remotely true. Birds have been eating parsley for eons. Parsley is actually excellent for a bird. It has all kinds of good stuff in it: iron, beta carotene, vitamins B1, B2 and Vitamin C. Parsley is also very rich in minerals: potassium, calcium, manganese, iron and magnesium. So throw a little parsley in their food the next time you make it.

*“A bird does not sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.”
Maya Angelou*

Seasonal Sightings (June-August)



This tenacious Robin built a nest on the top of my husband's truck tire three times before finally getting the message that it was not a good place! Luckily, she had no eggs in the nests that he had to remove.

Photo by Cindy Bonner



June 3, 2023 at Canoe Ripple bridge
Photo by Cindy Bonner

Swamp Milkweed is a member of the milkweed family. Its flowers are beloved by bees and butterflies. Like other milkweed species, it serves as a critical host for monarch butterflies. The blooms of swamp milkweed come in shades of soft mauve to pink to reddish-violet or occasionally white. Five nectar cups form a crown on five small petals, ideal for intricate pollination. By autumn, narrow pods reveal flat brown seeds attached to the white tufts characteristic of all milkweeds.



Photos by Deb Freed

All of the following beautiful photos were submitted by Meg Kolodick



Belted Kingfisher



Cooper's Hawk



Song Sparrow with 2 juveniles



Adult and juvenile Rose-Breasted Grosbeak



Juvenile Blue Jays



Red-Winged Blackbird



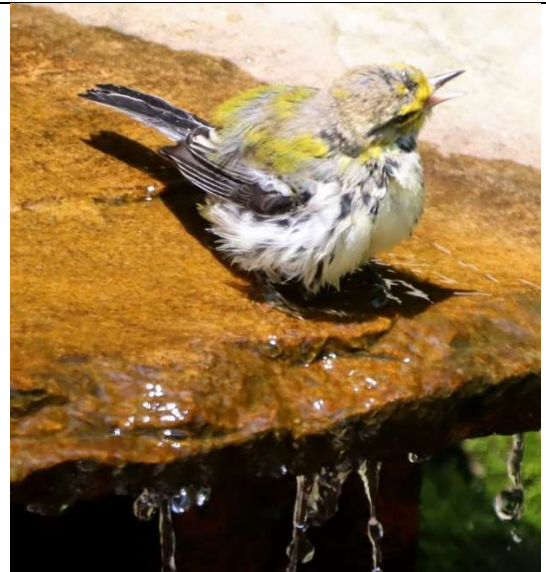
Eastern Kingbird



Juvenile Baltimore Orioles



Common Yellowthroat



Juvenile Black-Throated Green Warbler

“The bird who dares to fall is the bird who learns to fly.”

Thanks to Danette

The SRAS Leadership Team would like to thank Danette Karls for her years of service on the Leadership Team as well as coordinating the Christmas Bird Count Feeder Watch. She was an outspoken member with fresh ideas. She will be missed in those roles!

If anyone would like to volunteer to be the CBC Feeder Watch coordinator or wants more information about what it involves, please let Alice know at althurau@gmail.com. It happens once a year in December and can be coordinated from home via mail, email, and phone.



A CBC feeder watch photo by Cindy Bonner

BECOME A MEMBER OF SRAS !

https://www.senecarocksaudubon.org/files/ugd/f3fba6_88f0a2d3ffe14e8ea7c297bc846f78b4.pdf



LEADERSHIP TEAM

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|--|--|
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| Vickie Gotaskie | Vice-President |
| Cindy Bonner | Treasurer & Editor |
| Kay John | Secretary & Membership |
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| 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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Members are encouraged to contribute announcements, articles, photos, etc. to Editor, Cindy Bonner, 1000 Lincoln St., Sligo, PA 16255 or email bonners74@comcast.net.

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

*The dead leaves fall like noiseless rain,
 The air is calm and warm and sweet;
 Upon the woodland and the plain
 The ghost of summer rests her feet.
 –Clinton Scollard, American poet (1860–1932)*

Photo by Cindy Bonner

