



THE DRUMMER

www.senecarocksaudubon.org



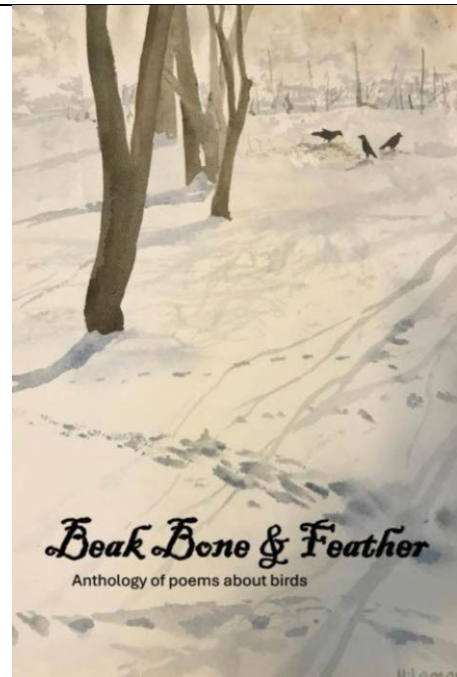
Volume 41-2 ~ Spring

SRAS ~ PO Box 148 ~ Clarion, PA 16214

March-May 2025

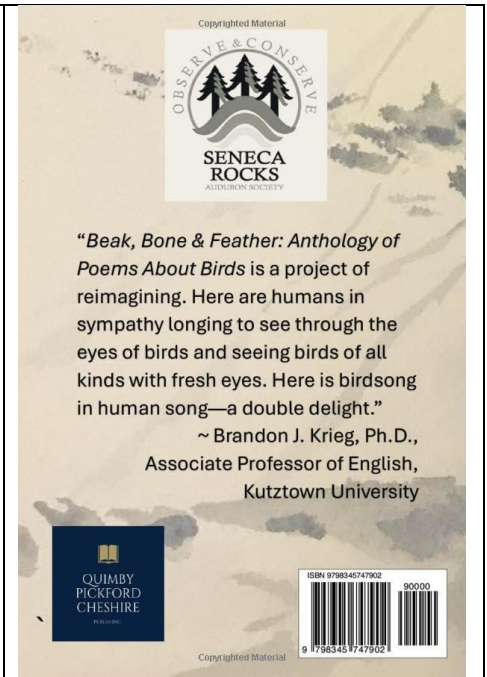
Editor, Cindy Bonner

Beak Bone & Feather



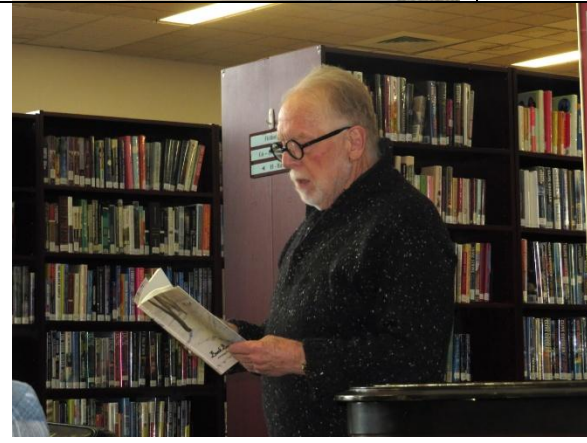
On Saturday, February 15, 2025, SRAS celebrated the recently published Beak Bone & Feather, an anthology of bird poetry. The event was co-hosted by Seneca Rocks Audubon and QPC Publishing, with book proceeds benefiting Seneca Rocks.

The books are available on [Amazon](#), at Sparrow Books in Clarion, and at any of our SRAS events.



“Beak, Bone & Feather: Anthology of Poems About Birds is a project of reimagining. Here are humans in sympathy longing to see through the eyes of birds and seeing birds of all kinds with fresh eyes. Here is birdsong in human song—a double delight.”

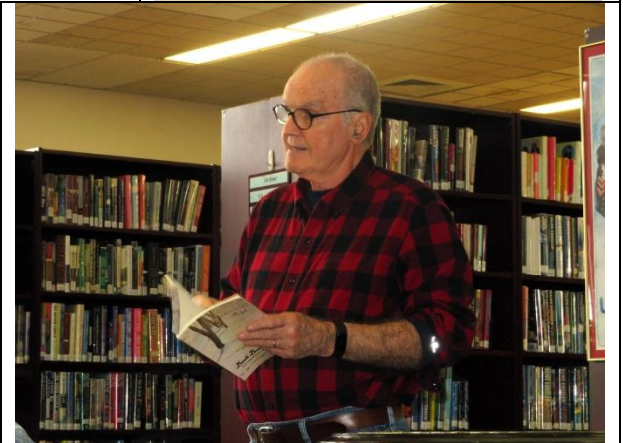
~ Brandon J. Krieg, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor of English,
Kutztown University



Two of the regional poets were present to read their work.

Greg Clary (left)

Wayne Swanger (right)



Despite the wintery weather, there were 16 people in attendance. Additional readings of poems from the book were by Pam McNaughton Cyphert, Susan Prezzano, and Alice Thureau.

SRAS Spring Programs

Programs are held in the Clarion Library basement meeting room and begin at 6:30 p.m. after a few announcements. The programs are free and open to the public.

"Celebrity Shorebirds: Piping Plovers and Common Terns at Presque Isle"

with Mary Birdsong
6:30 p.m., March 12, 2025
(via live Zoom at the Clarion Free Library)



Piping Plover at Presque Isle by Mary Birdsong

"Jambo Tanzania!"
with Dr. Scott Stoleson (in person)
6:30 p.m., April 9, 2025
Clarion Free Library



Scott Stoleson, his 90-year-old mother, and a group of Maasai tribesman in the Ngorongoro Crater

"Costa Rica, a Birder's Paradise"

With Margaret and Roger Higbee
(in person)
6:30 p.m. May 14, 2025
Clarion Free Library



Yellow-throated Toucan, courtesy of Roger Higbee

"Why Are Tree Swallows Stressed?"

with Dr. Jennifer Houtz (in person)

6:30 p.m., June 11, 2025

Clarion Free Library



Dr. Jennifer Houtz

Birdathon!

By Paulette Colantonio

The Seneca Rocks Audubon will once again participate in the annual Birdathon the week of May 10-17, 2025. This is an outdoor activity to raise money for our Chapter. Participants request either a lump sum or a per species donation from individuals or business sponsors. Or participants may simply want to pledge a lump sum for their endeavor and skip finding sponsors. The birders record the number of species they identify by sight and/or song in a self-selected 24-hour period within the dates chosen by SRA. Trees, shrubs, grasslands, water habitats, backyards and feeders are all scrutinized. Then, birders share their species list with their sponsors, along with conversation about the birds and habitats. It is an educational experience for everyone involved. Monies collected in the Seneca Rocks bird watching friendly competition are used for conservation and various educational programs in our surrounding area.

The Seneca Rocks Audubon chapter first participated in this national event in April 1985. The term "Birdathon" was coined in Canada in 1976 by Bird Studies Canada. The Point Reyes Bird Observatory in the Point Reyes National Seashore in California conducted the first Birdathon in the United States in 1977.

Anyone can join the fun, novice birders and experts alike. If you would like to learn more about the event, contact a member of the Seneca Rocks Audubon.

More Spring Events with SRAS

More information about these events is on our website, www.senecarocksaudubon.org

- March 29, 8 a.m. - Conneaut Marsh Outing
- May 10 - Big Sit at Carole Winslow's farm
- May 10-17 - Birdathon
- May 17 - Warbler Walk at Oil Creek State Park
- May 31-June 1 - SRAS native plant sale at Herb and Fiber Festival, Cook Forest Sawmill

Christmas Bird Count

By Carole Winslow

The Clarion Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 14 for the 38th year. It was a gorgeous clear and sunny day though very cold, starting out at 14, up to 38 in the afternoon and no snow on the ground. It was mostly calm through the day with periods of breeziness, and then calm again for owling at dusk. This made for much easier birding with no trouble driving, and easier walking for those folks that headed off road.

There was a great count of 59 species this year, the third highest total since the count began in 1987, and 6,995 individual birds seen. 20 field observers and 10 feeder watchers helped get the count completed, totaling 63 driving hours and 37.25 feeder hours. Some of the hardy folks spent 2.75 hours walking and the early birds completed 6.75 hours in nocturnal owling. Mileage was impressive as well, with 516.5 miles covered by car, 2.25 miles on foot, and a remarkable 58.5 miles driven while owling! Many thanks go out to Mal Hays for coordinating the routes, and Cindy Bonner for getting the feeder watchers organized.

There are a number of species with highlights this year, the first being a single American Black Duck, only reported on 2 other counts. Raptors had a big day, with Northern Harriers one of the real highlights, the total coming in at 22, the highest ever recorded in the history of the Clarion CBC! Red-tailed Hawks were also a star of the day, with 69 found, also the highest ever in count history for Clarion. Rough-legged Hawks round out the raptor highlights, with 4 seen, the most since 2010.

Shorebirds are pretty unusual for our northern county, so a great find was a single killdeer, only

seen one other time in 2001. Also remarkable were 4 Wilson's snipe, only reported one time previously in 2022. The Eurasian Collared-Dove in Strattanville was a no show for count day but did make the count week for the record. It was another great day for owls, in great part due to Mal and Vickie's willingness to get up early and hit the hotspots! Seventeen eastern screech-owls were found by the pair, and 23 total for the entire group. Six great horned owls were also recorded and 2 barred owls. Short-eared owls were back up to a higher total, with 9 seen over 4 different areas. As Jim noted last year, we are fortunate to have so much great habitat for these graceful birds and are a regular hotspot for the state for this species.

Wilson's Snipe, Photo by Carole Winslow



Yellow-bellied sapsuckers are not seen yearly and only in small numbers, so it was good to have one recorded again this year. It was a banner year for northern flickers with a high of 11 found, the highest total in the history of the count. They are starting to become more regular in winter in the last ten years. Merlin is another species that has expanded and was seen once again this year by Pat Conway's team, outside of Clarion where they are now a nesting species. Northern Shrikes made it onto the list with Eric's single sighting, and golden-crowned kinglets were found in very good numbers with a total of 37. A single ruby-crowned kinglet, quite unusual in winter, was found by the Crosbies.

Hermit thrush made it onto the list again with a single bird found by Mike and Paulette, and American tree sparrows had a pretty decent showing of 57, despite the fact that they have diminished in numbers in the past ten years. While tree sparrows are decreasing, white-throated sparrows have been increasing and this year's total of 101 was the second highest in the history of the count. Swamp sparrows also had a good showing of 5 this year, likely helped by the lack of snow and a milder fall and early winter.



Carole, watching for owls



A beautiful moon setting over the CBC, photo by Carole

A few big misses this year, ruffed grouse, whose numbers continue to struggle for various reasons, especially in the last ten years. Kingfishers and horned larks did not make the count either, though they have normally been found in most years. Common and hooded mergansers, great blue herons, northern saw-whet owls, meadowlarks, cowbirds, and grackles were all missed on the count day this year. A few species made the lists but were seen in fairly low numbers for the history of the count, including wild turkeys with only 28 reported. Brown creepers were also a little low historically at 4, pine siskins with only 3 seen at feeders, and just a single red-winged blackbird was found.

All in all, it was quite a successful count day thanks to all our hardy volunteers, and also thanks to the cooperative weather. The amount of data that is collected over so many years really is an invaluable source of information on the bird species in our county and state. If you weren't able to participate this year, please consider joining one of the teams next year to help us cover the circle and count more birds, and enjoy spending a day outdoors with friends, and then sharing stories as we meet to do the tally. It's a great way to make memories and contribute to citizen science at the same time!

A few pictures from my CBC feeder watch, by Cindy Bonner



Birding Clarion County - Rivers, Fields and Forests

Carole Winslow has written a wonderful article about birding in Clarion County. You can read the article here, and there are some beautiful photos accompanying the article.

<https://discoverclarioncounty.com/birding-in-clarion-county-rivers-fields-and-forests/>

Bird of the Year (2025)

The ABA, American Bird Association, has chosen the Common Loon as the bird of the year for 2025. You can read about it here: <https://www.aba.org/2025-aba-bird-of-the-year-common-loon/>

Winter Sowing Class ~ January 11, 2025

Grow native! That's what 20 participants did on a snowy Saturday morning in January at a "winter sowing" class sponsored by the Bird-Friendly Habitat team of Seneca Rocks Audubon and the Master Gardeners of Clarion County. After learning about the value of native plants to pollinators and birds, each participant planted 5 jugs with their choice of native flower seeds and then took them home to overwinter outside, mimicking nature but in a controlled way. After the seeds grow, the participants will transplant the flowers into their gardens in the spring.

The class was so well received that there are plans to hold two public classes next year.



Owl Box Report

By Mal Hays

Gary Edwards and I checked the Clarion Co. owl boxes on Dec. 19th. This was the first time we checked the boxes since April. We have found that the owls do not use the boxes during the hot summer months. Ten of the nineteen boxes had activity in them with three having owl activity. Here is a list of the boxes and what we found.

Box 26 - nothing	Box 25 - Blue Jay feathers
Box 31 - 4 owl pellets	Box 32 - Red squirrel nest
Box 33 - Great Crested Flycatcher nest	Box 22 - nothing
Box 4 - Pine squirrel nest	Box 19 - nothing
Box 18 - nothing	Box 23 - nothing
Box 30 - mouse	Box 20 - squirrel nest
Box 24A - nothing	Box 27 - nothing
Box 24 - nothing	Box 29 - Great Crested Flycatcher nest
Box 7 - White Breasted Nuthatch	Box 21 - Blue jay feathers
Box 28 - nothing	

Winter Bird Seed Sale

By Liz Brocious

Thanks to all who participated in this year's winter bird seed sale. And a special thanks to those who included a donation to Audubon. We had 26 participants and they purchased 2680 lbs. of seed plus 24 suet cakes. We very much appreciate J&J Feeds' willingness to provide us with a generous discount and their prompt service during pickups.

I am sure that the birds would also like to offer their thanks and ask that you look for the notice of the next sale in September. Stay safe out there.

Articles from our SRAS President, Alice Thureau

How Bird-Friendly is Your Backyard?

Our chapter's Bird-Friendly Habitat team announces the re-launch of their Bird-Friendly Habitat recognition program. This program existed briefly a few years ago under the auspices of PA Audubon. When PA Audubon became part of the larger Audubon Mid-Atlantic, the regional administration dropped the program, leaving chapters on their own, at least temporarily.



Under our chapter's recognition program, the premise remains the same as with previous versions. If a homeowner (or business or school) has the key ingredients for a bird-friendly habitat on their property, they can apply for a colorful aluminum yard sign. The key ingredients are food (including native plants), water, shelter, and nesting sites.

The application is easy to complete, has instructions for mailing, and includes links to resources to protect birds from windows and light pollution. Thanks to our BFH team for their good work in revising it! Click [here](#) for the application (at the bottom of the page). It's also on our website (senecarocksaudubon.org) under Projects and then Bird-Friendly Habitat.

Mail the application to SRAS with a \$20 check and you'll soon have your own attractive yard sign.

Please consider applying and spreading the message that each of us, with a bit of effort, can provide bird-friendly habitat in our own backyards.

Avian Influenza

Many of us have questions and legitimate concerns about avian influenza (bird flu) and how it relates to our backyard bird feeding. The Pennsylvania Game Commission has answers to these common questions and more on their [Avian Influenza](#) page:

What is avian influenza or bird flu?

What does a highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak look like in wild birds?

What role do wild birds play in the transmission cycle of avian influenza?

Should I take down my bird feeders?

What should I do if I find a sick or dead wild bird?

The websites for the [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#) and [USDA APHIS](#) (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) are also very informative.

While it seems like common sense, these additional recommendations are worth stating: keep pets (dogs, cats, etc.) away from sick or dead birds; avoid consuming raw milk, raw milk products, raw meat, and uncooked eggs; avoid feeding those items or raw pet food to your pets; wash your hands thoroughly after feeding the birds; and get tested if you have flu-like symptoms.

Shout Out to C&A Trees

C&A Trees has been a key nursery partner in our Bird-Friendly Habitat team's efforts to promote the use of native plants in our area. They've sold native plants (perennials, shrubs, and trees) for many years, but have increasingly expanded their selection over the last couple of years. Plus, they're always willing to special order native plants that they don't have in stock.

For 3 years, they've invited our Bird-Friendly Habitat team to staff an informational table at their annual spring potting event. At last year's event, they included a presentation on landscaping with native plants. We'll be at C&A Trees again for this year's potting event on March 1. If you're registered for the event, please visit our table to say "hi" to our team and get more information about native plants and bird-friendly habitat. Thank you to C&A Trees for being our local nursery source for native plants!

Birth Month Birds

From Seabrook Island Birders ~ <https://seabrookislandbirders.org/>

March: Robin

Fans of warm weather, brightly colored flowers and returning migrating birds adore the American Robin. After all, many view it as the first sign of spring. Their sweet *cheerily, cheer-up, cheerio* song rings out on spring mornings.

Some people believe that the Robin is a promise of new beginnings. Another interpretation is that the bright yellow beak is a symbol of power and impact, reminding you to take care with what you say and how you say it.

There's an Irish superstition that if you make a wish when you see the first Robin of spring that your wish will come true; but you have to make that wish before the Robin flies away.



Photo by Lisa Bonner

April: Canary

Perhaps it's fitting that the bird for the month of Peeps candy is the canary. Some canaries live in the wild, but others, such as the domestic canary, are kept as pets. They're not all yellow, either; some are red, while others are yellow and black. As part of the finch family, they are cheerful birds with a delightful song. To find them in the wild, you'd need to go to the Canary, Madeira, or Azores Islands.



DircinhaSW/Getty Images

May: Nightingale

It can be hard to spot a common nightingale, especially if you live in North America (their range stretches through much of Europe). They're elusive birds that keep to themselves, content to remain out of sight in brush or thickets. Belonging to the same family as the American robin, these May birth month birds give a wide variety of calls and songs.



Mauribo/Getty Images

Seasonal Sightings (Birds, Flora & Fauna ~ March-May)

The following beautiful photos are by Meg Kolodick



Common Yellowthroat, 2-Mile Run Park, 05/03/24



Red-Headed Woodpecker, a rare visitor to our place, 05/06/24



An early Cape May Warbler at our place 04/27/24



Brown Thrasher at our place, 05/06/24



Gray Morph Eastern Screech Owl at Kahle Lake area, 03/02/24



Northern Parula at our place, 05/04/24



Northern Flicker at our place, 03/01/24



Lincoln's Sparrow at our place, 05/05/24

The following "Flora" photos are by Cindy Bonner. They were taken many years ago during May fly-fishing season when my husband fished and I hiked, all in Venango County.



White Trillium



Dying White Trillium



Purple Trillium



Painted Trillium

The following photos were taken by our nephew's wife, Lisa Bonner in Florida, and I thought it would be interesting to show not only the birds found in both Pennsylvania and Florida, but also one from her area.



Osprey, 3/17/16



Red-Bellied Woodpecker
Lisa's yard, 03/01/24



Roseate Spoonbill, 04/10/24,
Stick Marsh, Fellsmere, FL

Bewildering Birds

Is that a Cooper's Hawk or a Sharp-Shinned Hawk?

The following information is from <https://birdertopia.com/coopers-hawk-vs-sharp-shinned-hawk/>
Check the site for even more information.

- **Size:** Cooper's hawks are larger in size, with a length of 15.5-17.5 inches, while sharp-shinned hawks measure 10-14 inches in length.
- **Wingspan:** Cooper's hawks have a wingspan of 28-34 inches, whereas sharp-shinned hawks have a wingspan of 20-27 inches.

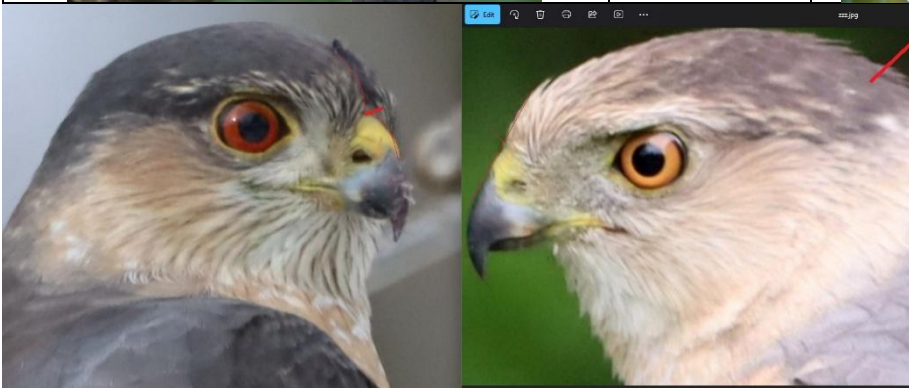
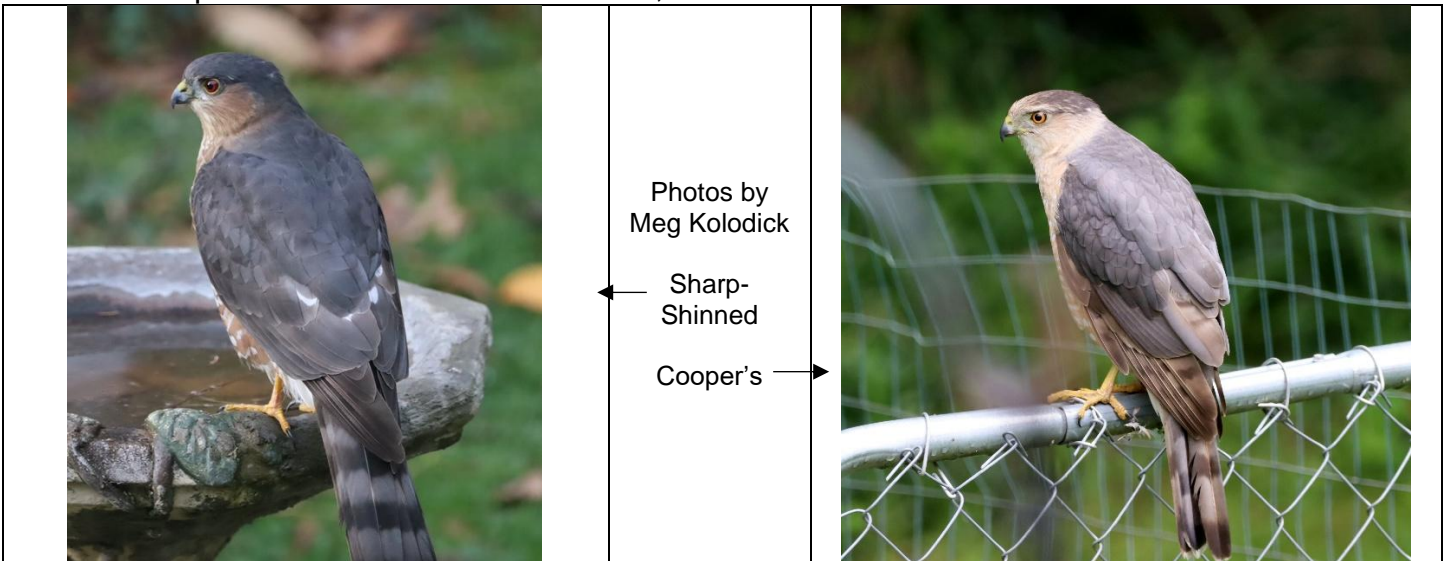


Cooper's Hawk.
Jason Kandume/Audubon Photography Awards



Sharp-Shinned Hawk (immature)
K C Bailey/Audubon Photography Awards

- **Appearance:** Cooper's hawks have more distinct chest markings and larger, squared-off heads, while sharp-shinned hawks have smoother, rounded heads.



From Meg Kolodick: "The woman on the raptor page said the third bird [on the garden gate above] is a Cooper's. She put two of my pics together to show differences. Left is the Sharpie. She said its bill is lower and closer to the eyes, while the Cooper's [on the right] bill is higher and between the eyes."

The Poetry Corner

Winter Cantor

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!



American Robin, Bandera County, Texas
Clyde Dexter/Audubon Photography Awards



A blue-bell springs upon the ledge,
A lark sits singing in the hedge;
Sweet perfumes scent the balmy air,
And life is brimming everywhere.
What lark and breeze
and bluebird sing,
Is Spring, Spring, Spring!
Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906)

Greg Clary read one of his poems at the Poetry Book Launch on February 15. He explained, “These are the eaglets that inspired my poem. They were inseparable. In other years, the eaglets would face away from the river or else not sit together at all.”



Eaglet Dreams

Remember when you and your sibling
used to sit on the porch together
counting Chevys and Fords?

Not quite ready to fly away
but knowing something big
was about to happen.

Watching the world go by
without worry, or hunger, or fear.
Living in the moment

with your best friend in the world.
Your only friend in the world.
Before your heads turned white.



Now, if to be an April-fool
Is to delight in the song of the thrush,
To long for the swallow in air's blue hollow,
And the nightingale's riotous music-gush...
By all the stars in His infinite sky
We are April-fools, my Love and I.
Mortimer Collings (1827-1876)

There will be an Eagle Watch at Cook Forest State Park on Saturday, March 1 at 7:30 a.m. A driving tour to eagle hotspots along the National Wild & Scenic Clarion River. (4 hrs.)

For more details about all their programs, go to the Cook Forest State Park website at:
<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/stateparks/findapark/cookforeststatepark/Pages/default.aspx>



LEADERSHIP TEAM

TEAM MEMBER	ROLE
Alice Thureau	President, Webmaster & Bird-Friendly Habitat
Vickie Gotaskie	Vice-President
Cindy Bonner	Treasurer, Drummer Editor & CBC Feeder Watch
Kay John	Secretary & Membership
Paulette Colantonio	Education
Pat Conway	Facebook & History
Gary Edwards	Outreach Programs
Mal Hays	Outings & CBC
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 available on our website in Adobe pdf
 and may be read or downloaded from the site: www.senecarocksaudubon.org.

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Winter (December-February)	November 15
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Summer (June-August)	May 15
Fall (September-November)	August 15

Members are encouraged to contribute announcements, articles, photos, etc. to Editor, Cindy Bonner, 1000 Lincoln St., Sligo, PA 16255, or email bonners74@comcast.net.

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

*February makes a bridge and March breaks it.
 Weather proverb: This proverb refers to February's variable weather,
 which can act as a bridge
 between the darkest, coldest days of winter and the brighter,
 springlike days of March.*