



THE DRUMMER

www.senecarocksaudubon.org



Volume 42-2 ~ Spring

SRAS ~ PO Box 148 ~ Clarion, PA 16214

March-May 2026

Editor, Cindy Bonner



Member Night ~ December 17, 2025

An enjoyable evening of fellowship and stories from several members, a visit from a senior member, Jack Williams, and PowerPoint presentations from Cindy Bonner (wildflowers, encouraging people to join the wildflower walk in 2026), Alice Thureau (photos from events throughout 2025) and Michael Leahy (the Saw-Whet owl banding and transmitter attachment). Michael also presented beautiful Saw-Whet owl carvings to those who were instrumental in the successful Saw-Whet Owl Box program - Larry Towse (left), Mal Hays (right) with Michael Leahy. The two carvings on the table will be presented to Gary Edwards and Jim Wilson.

SENECA ROCKS AUDUBON
PRESENTS:

BIRD ART COMPETITION FOR KIDS



“Wild Birds of
Pennsylvania:
Through The
Eyes Of
Youth”



GRADES
PRE-K TO 3RD,
4TH TO 6TH
AND
7TH TO 12TH

ANY WILD BIRD SPECIES, ANY MEDIA, SIZE RESTRICTIONS,
MUST INCLUDE 5 INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE BIRD

**SUBMIT ENTRIES BY MARCH 21, 2026 TO YOUR LOCAL
FOREST OR CLARION COUNTY LIBRARY**

BIRD BOOK PRIZES FOR LOCAL
LIBRARY WINNERS OF EACH
AGE/GRADE GROUP

**GRAND PRIZES FOR WINNERS
OF EACH AGE GROUP OVERALL**

Vortex
Binoculars and
National Aviary
Passes

For complete rules, see your
Librarian, go to
senecarocksaudubon.org or scan
this code



PAINTING DRAWING COLLAGE SCULPTURE



**The artwork will be on display at the local libraries
and Michelle's Café in Clarion in April.
Take a few minutes to stop and see all the submissions!**

Owl Box Report



Mal Hays and Nick Kolodick checked the owl boxes in early January. Nick took this photo of a Screech Owl. It looks like the owl has caught a substantial meal.

Box #1	nothing
Box #2	nothing
Box #3	nothing
Box #5	nothing
Box #6	nothing
Box #8	Junco feathers in Box
Box #13	nothing
Box #14	gray squirrel nest made of leaves
Box #17	cardinal feathers in Box
Box #35	lots of acorns stored in Box
Box #36	nothing
Box #37	nothing
Box #38	gray squirrel in box jumped out and ran
Box #39	nothing
Box #41	gray phase screech owl in box eating its prey (See photo)
Box #42	nothing
Box #43	dead flying squirrel in Box stored by an owl to eat later
Box #44	nothing
Box #45	gray squirrel nest in Box made of leaves
Box #46	nothing

Christmas Bird Count ~ Clarion County

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society established the Clarion CBC in the 1987 count year, and it has been held annually ever since. The CBC 2025 was held on December 20, 2025. There were 23 in the field for a total of 69.75 hours and 9 at feeders for a total of 25 hours; 53 species were reported with a total of 4,887 individual birds. Click [here](#) and scroll down to see the results for the 2025 CBC.

60th Pleasantville CBC, Dec. 28, 2025

On December 28, 2025, SRAS members, Larry Towse and Alice Thureau joined up with Jim McGuire to help with the Pleasantville Christmas bird count. This was the 60th annual count. The count circle was originally centered in Pleasantville but was moved 4 miles south southeast in the 80s to include Oil Creek State Park and the circle now is centered near Pithole. The total species count for this year was only 37, 2,221 individuals, which was low for the last few years, however, it was more in line with the first 20 years of the count. Two notable species were the Ruffed Grouse (now becoming very scarce) and a Cedar Waxwing. Seven species have been seen all 60 years (we missed Am. Tree Sparrow this year for the 1st time), 8 species have been seen 59 of 60 years, and 19 species have only been seen on one count. Compiler was Russ States, who thanks everyone who participated and hopes to see you all next year.

Increase your bird knowledge through Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Bird Academy

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has many creative and engaging ways to increase your knowledge of birds. Some have a cost, others are free. Check out their **Course Catalog** at academy.allaboutbirds.org. You'll find high quality bird courses which are self-paced, and available to the purchaser at any time. It's possible to get one for free each year through the Take Flight Program (at the bottom of the page). There is also **BirdWise ID** (bird ID quizzes), **Learning Games** (interactive tutorials and quiz games), and many free **Webinars**.

Backyard Birds Revealed Video Series

There is a very interesting series of videos called [Backyard Birds Revealed](#) on the Cornell Lab All About Birds. The photographers are Tim and Russell Laman. This series focuses on birds at their feeder in Massachusetts. There are 5 parts to the series:

- [Watch Chickadees and Titmice Make Epic Slow-Motion Landings: Backyard Birds Revealed](#)
- [How Birds Stay Warm in the Winter Snow: Backyard Birds Revealed](#)
- [Understand Bird Behavior at the Feeder: Backyard Birds Revealed](#)
- [Explore Woodpecker Holes and Why They are in High Demand: Backyard Birds Revealed](#)
- [Two Ways to Climb a Tree: Backyard Birds Revealed](#)

Each video is about 5 minutes and well worth the time!

Winter Sowing Classes on January 10

Two hundred jugs were planted with native flower seeds by 40 conservation minded people during 2 winter sowing classes recently. Participants learned about the ecological value of native plants and then followed instructions for planting their choice of seeds. After the classes, the jugs were taken home and placed outdoors for germination in the spring. Our Bird-Friendly Habitat team and the Master Gardeners of Clarion County enjoyed providing the classes. Thanks to Kelly Culbertson for her photographs.



Many of the participants were first time winter sowers.



Participants of all ages enjoyed the winter sowing classes.

Forest County Winter Raptor Survey (WRS)

On February 2nd, SRAS members Nick Kolodick, Michael Leahy and Jim McGuire completed the 23rd WRS of Forest County. This is one of many routes run over the state during January and February to record what raptors are in Pennsylvania during the winter months and is coordinated by Greg Grove of Penn State University in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. The following results of our survey were a pleasant surprise considering the snow pack. The highlight of the survey was an adult Golden Eagle flying over where Tionesta Creek joins the Allegheny River at Tionesta.

Report: Time: 10 a.m.-3 p.m., 30-minute lunch, 4.5 hrs. birding. Snow: 10+ inches, Wind: 0-5mph, Cloud Cover: Bright Overcast till 11:30, then sunny. Miles: 70 miles.

- Sharp-shinned Hawk; 1
- Coopers Hawk: 1
- Red-tail Hawk: 6
- Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 Adult
- Bald Eagle: 2, one adult and one juvenile
- Golden Eagle: 1 Adult with white in wings and rump

Seeking Candidates for Members-at-Large for the SRAS Leadership Team

In June, the membership will select two members-at-large to serve on the SRAS Board (aka Leadership Team) for a 2-year term. The Leadership Team meets quarterly at the Clarion Free Library. A Zoom option is available. We'd appreciate having additional ideas and points of view in deciding our priorities and activities. If you're interested, please email your interest to senecarocksaudubon@gmail.com. Thank you!

Netflix Series ~ Worth watching for bird lovers (for mature audiences)

In the 8-part Netflix series, *The Residence*, Cordelia Cupp (played by Uzo Aduba) is an eccentric detective who arrives at the White House to solve a murder, but also takes spontaneous breaks to bird. Take a peek at the [Trailer](#) to get a sense of this fun comedy drama.

Bird-Watchers vs. Birding

Bird-watchers tend to take a more relaxed approach, finding joy in watching and being present with birds. It's more about the experience and less about the numbers. Birders may approach the activity from an angle of obsession and excitement, constantly on the lookout for rare species, often traveling to see new and different birds.

Bird Watchers Store

The Bird Watchers Store in Slippery Rock, PA has a new owner, Jody Roberts. Since Dave and Lori Kwasnick moved to Colorado two years ago, Jody has been managing the store. If you are in the area, stop in - it's a very interesting store, or visit their website [here](#).

How Long Do Birds Live?

Most of what we know about life spans of wild birds comes from [banding studies](#). A numbered band placed on a bird's leg makes it possible to identify the bird. Currently, the oldest known wild bird is Wisdom, a banded Laysan albatross that returns every year to her nest on Midway Atoll in the North Pacific. Even though she's more than 70 years old, she has continued to raise young in recent years.

Banding records tell us of other birds with long life spans in the wild. Sandhill cranes and bald eagles can live more than 35 years. Canada geese, Atlantic puffins and some large gulls might reach more than 30 years old. Mallards, great horned owls and mourning doves can live longer than 25 years. For most small songbirds, the maximum known life spans are between eight and 15 years. But the average life spans for all these birds are shorter than the all-time records.

March-June Programs

NOTE: ALL 2026 PROGRAMS BEGIN AT 6:00 P.M.

For more information about each of these programs, click [here](#).

"Leave No Trace for Birding"
with Peggy Butler, founder of PA Firefly Festival
6:00 pm, March 11; Clarion Free Library
Basement meeting room



Joe Gyekis in a selfie with curious cows.

"Nocturnal Flight Calls"
with Dr. Joe Gyekis
6:00 pm, April 8, Clarion Free Library
Basement meeting room

"Alaska Birding"
with Tom Kuehl
6:00 pm, May 13, Clarion Free Library
Basement meeting room



The rugged Alaskan coastline, one of the many photographs to be shared by Tom Kuehl.



"Butterflies of Pennsylvania"
with Dr. Brian Wargo
6:00 pm, June 10, Clarion Free Library
Basement meeting room

More Upcoming Events

Click on the link to learn more about the events and walks.

[Great Backyard Bird Count](#)

Feb. 13-16, 2026

[C&A Trees seminar/workshop,](#)

Table, March 7, 2026 8 a.m.-2 p.m. (BFH team)

[Waterfowl Migration Field Trip](#)

March 28, 2026

[Big Sit](#)

May 2, 2026 with host, Carole Winslow

[Birdathon](#)

May 9-16, 2026

[Warbler Walk](#)

Oil Creek State Park

May 16, 2026

Programs at Cook Forest State Park

Saturday, February 21 at 11:00 a.m. - **Snowman in the Forest Day** Chili cook-off, carriage rides, sledding, snowman building, ice skating (ice skates available), snowshoe interpretive hike, and happy dog contest. (3 hrs.)

Saturday, February 28 at 7:00 a.m. - **Otter Watch** (3 hrs.)

Saturday, March 14 at 9:00 a.m. - **Polar Bear Float** (5 hrs.)

Saturday, March 28 at 8:30 a.m. - **Eagle Watch** (4 hrs.)

Hog Island Scholarship

Seneca Rocks is offering a scholarship for one area educator to attend a weeklong nature course at Audubon's Hog Island, Bremen, Maine. The course, "Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week," is August 9-14, 2026.

The scholarship is open to elementary and secondary teachers and other adult environmental educators in Clarion, Forest, and Jefferson Counties. It pays 100% of the cost of the course, room, and board. The chosen applicant is responsible for travel expenses.

Click here for the [Hog Island Scholarship application](#). It includes a link to a detailed program description. The deadline to apply is February 22.



Educators exploring the tidal pools at Hog Island, Maine. Photo courtesy of Jean Hall.

ABA Bird of the Year

Every year, the American Birding Association (ABA) chooses a Bird of the Year to highlight, educate readers about, and further conservation efforts to help. For 2026, the ABA has chosen the Horned Lark.

ABA staff highlighted the horned lark's wide territory (its range extends to five continents!) as well as its toughness and adaptability as reasons this bird was selected for appreciation in 2026. The post points out that some horned lark populations have come under threat as a result of vanishing habitats.



Horned Lark, Palouse Falls State Park, Washington
J. D. Gantz/Audubon Photography Awards

Keith Hileman has been busy working on the Chimney Swift tower for the Second Avenue Park.



March
The lovely dance of seasons,
when winter takes a bow
and spring spins to life,
gilding the world
in the bright colors of hope.

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



Turkey Gobbler in our backyard, 05/10/25
Both photos by Cindy Bonner



I call this one "Disappointed" because this was the gobbler after none of the hens paid any attention to him.



Blue-Winged Teal pair, 03/02/21, Photo by Meg Kolodick



Wood Thrush, 05/05/21, Photo by Meg Kolodick



Dame's Rocket, Photo by Cindy Bonner
05/30/16

When my husband fly-fished, this was supposedly an indication that it would be good fishing.

This one, however, was taken in our back yard.

The Poetry Corner



Deer at My Feeder *Haiku by Cindy Bonner*

The deer are hungry.
They empty the bird feeder.
Birds are hungry, too.

Both of the following poems are from Beak Bone & Feather.

You can purchase the book at any of our events or programs or on [Amazon](#).

Lovely Little Bird

A song lyric by Rebecca Titchner

Lovely little bird
Sing me a song
Tell me a secret
Before you fly along
Your wings shine in the sunlight
Your heart beats so fast
Nothing is forever
Nothing ever lasts
Lovely little bird
High in the oak
Its wide green cathedral
Gives you a home
How many prayers were murmured
To the gods who once lived there?
They are all gone now
Its soul is bare
Lovely little bird
What do you see
When you look down upon us
From your perch in the tree?
I am so weary
Of seeking the truth
Fly, fly away now
I wish I could fly away with you.



Trochilidae

By Tess Wilson

A quick trip home for hellos
and goodbyes before summer.
Earlier than usual, April
after the last frost clicked through town.
While our coffee cooled, my mother
stood at the window. Patient as a mountain,
her eyes flicked branch to branch,
narrow with doubt. Then
a startle; a quick breath snapped
from her mouth. As if suddenly
she recalled a long-forgotten name.
the arrow of her gaze led straight
to Trochilidae, the hummingbird,
a quiver of a creature. Buzzing
through its bones
with the beating of its heart.
Whisper feathers. Needle beak.
Barely the weight of a gasp.
I've waited all winter
For that.



Photos by Cindy Bonner

Bewildering Birds

Two phases of a Screech Owl?

<https://www.soarinhawk.org/content/eastern-screech-owl>

Genetic variation

The presence of red and gray phases in the Eastern Screech Owl is due to genetic variation. The red phase is characterized by a rufous coloration, while the gray phase features a more muted gray of gray-brown coloration. These color phases are the result of the red allele being recessive and the gray allele being dominant. This genetic trait is permanent throughout the owl's life, and it does not change through the owl's life cycle. The coloration of the Eastern Screech Owl is an adaptation to its environment, providing camouflage in its natural habitat.

Length: 7-10 inches

Wingspan: 18-24 inches

Weight: male: 140-210 g, female: 150-235 g.

Sexes are alike. Both gray and red phase owls have prominent ear tufts when raised (when flattened, their heads appear roundish); in both phases their eyes are yellow and bills are pale. The facial disks in both phases are outlined in black, and both show two rows of white wing spotting and lightly banded tails.

Gray phase: Ash-gray or gray-brown above with heavy dark streaks and crossbars. Underparts lighter, also with darker vertical and horizontal patterning. Grayish facial disks.

Red phase: Plain rufous above without the heavy markings found in the gray phase. Underparts are creamish with rufous crossbars and dark vertical streaking. Rufous facial disks.

Immature in both phases initially covered with white down. Gray or red coloring follows with darker horizontal barring without streaks.

From [All About Birds](#): Red and gray individuals occur across the range of the Eastern Screech-Owl, with about one-third of all individuals being red. Red owls are more common in the East, with fewer than 15% red at the western edge of the range. No red owls are known from southern Texas, although they occur further north in Texas and further south in Mexico. Intermediate brownish individuals also occur in most populations.



Taken 12/3/2020, the one and only time Nick and I had any owl in the nest box in our yard.



This was taken on Sharrar Rd.

Both photos by Meg Kolodick.

NOTE: The photo in the Owl Box Reporting is the gray phase.



LEADERSHIP TEAM

TEAM MEMBER	ROLE
Alice Thureau	President, Webmaster & Bird-Friendly Habitat (BFH)
Vickie Gotaskie	Vice-President, BFH
Cindy Bonner	Treasurer, Drummer Editor & CBC Feeder Watch
Kay John	Secretary, Membership & Conservation/Advocacy
Peggy Butler	Education
Nancy Cichocki	BFH, Interim Member at Large
Pat Conway	Facebook & History
Gary Edwards	Outreach Programs
Mal Hays	Outings & CBC
Nick Kolodick	Outings & CBC
Michael Leahy	IBA 21 Piney Tract
Jim McGuire	Education
Ron Montgomery	Outreach Programs
Larry Towse	Outings
Carole Winslow	CBC Compiler, PA Bird Atlas

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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	<u>Submission Deadlines</u>
Vol. 1 Winter (December-February)	November 15
Vol. 2 Spring (March-May)	February 15
Vol. 3 Summer (June-August)	May 15
Vol. 4 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 attention Editor: SRAS.

Become a Volunteer for SRAS: <https://www.senecarocksaudubon.org/volunteer>

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

The Drummer Editor ~ Cindy Bonner

After 4 years of being the Drummer Editor, I feel it is time for a new editor and new ideas. It has been an honor and a privilege to be your editor, and I would like to thank those that have contributed to the newsletter and especially to Meg Kolodick who has provided me with many beautiful photographs. I am pleased to announce that Jerry Cichocki will be taking over in the summer issue. Please extend a warm welcome to Jerry!