

Wissahickon Nature Club

SPEAKER

March 14, Thursday, 7:30 pm. **Bonnie Isaac** will present **Herbarium Happenings**. Bonnie Isaac, a Pennsylvania native, is the Collection Manager of Botany at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh. She has been employed by the museum since 1989. Bonnie received her Bachelors & Masters degrees in Biological Sciences with emphasis in Plant Sciences from Youngstown State University in Youngstown, Ohio and an International Diploma in Herbarium Techniques, from the Kew Royal Botanical Garden in Kew, England. Bonnie serves on the Pennsylvania Botany Symposium Committee, the Pennsylvania Vascular Plant Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey, and as President of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania. When not botanizing, Bonnie enjoys hunting, traveling, gardening and snorkeling.



Don't miss our next meeting. Thursday April 11, 7:30 pm. Title and Speaker, TBA.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TREASURER'S REPORT

ACCORDING TO TREASURER **DIANNE MACHESNEY**:

PREVIOUS BALANCE	\$1358.43
DEPOSITS DUES	25.00
EXPENSES	- 0 -
CURRENT BALANCE	\$1383.43

FOR CURRENT AND PAST NEWSLETTERS AND MUCH MORE, VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: WWW.WISSAHICKONNATURECLUB.COM

THANK YOU

TO **KATHY SAUNDERS**, FOR BECOMING OUR NEW PROGRAM CHAIRPERSON. PLEASE CONTACT HER IF YOU CAN PRESENT A PROGRAM YOURSELF, OR IF YOU CAN RECOMMEND A SPEAKER. HER CONTACT INFO IS IN OUR MEMBERSHIP BOOKLET.

WORTH REPEATING

AND INTO THE FOREST I GO, TO LOSE MY MIND AND FIND MY SOUL.
JOHN MUIR

Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania
Loree Speedy 724.518.6022 loreespeedy@gmail.com
<http://www.botsocwpa.org/>

Fern Hollow Nature Center
Sam McClain-Capezzuto, Director
412.741.6136
<http://www.fhnc.org/>

Outside My Window Outings Kate St. John 412.421.1566
www.birdsoutsidemywindow.org/events/

Three Rivers Birding Club
Bob VanNewkirk, President 412.366.1694
www.3rbc.org

Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club
wpamushroomclub.org
Cecily Franklin 412.781.6581 <cs4wpmc@gmail.com>

Bald Eagle webcam WATCH LIVE ANYTIME: <https://cbsloc.al/2MXuxfo>



Adventures of a Wheelchair Birder
Road Trip
From the Nature Observer News

Susanne Varley

April showers have truly returned, breathing life into our world. Once flat-lined into a deep sleep, the forest is now beginning to wake from its coma. It is coming back to life.

April 19 was a great day to take a road trip. Chuck Tague needed to drive to the Pennsylvania Wildlife Center in Verona. He also needed to scout Moraine State Park to plan a home school nature class. I needed to get out of McKees Rocks. I woke up very early on the chilly morning, packed some snacks and drove to Chuck's house. Chuck packed field guides and spotting scopes plus a window mount for a scope. From Mount Washington, the gauntlet of detour signs and grimy orange cones didn't scare us. We bravely took the scenic route to Verona, and what a scenic route it turned out to be! The hillsides were alive with color. Brick red shades from the budding Red Maples drooped into the dark auburn of the bare trees. Tiny white bubbles of Serviceberry and Sweet Cherry blossoms were bursting out at not-so strategically planned locations. Red Bud peppered the hillsides. Their magenta shades created an astonishing display of

color. Emerald greens merged into yellow-greens of the White Ash. I flash-backed to the beauty of fall. Spring, this year, is just as spectacular as autumn ever was.

On the way, we created a detour of our own and stopped under the Highland Park Bridge. Herring Gulls were in full courtship display. They soared with reckless abandon, showing off their physical agility. They landed on the safety signs in the river and dethroned the previous gulls.

They reminded me of a bad reality television program. Breasts heaving in deep breaths, males tossed back their heads and bellowed to impress the lovely females. Obviously, this behavior functions quite well for them. Herring Gulls have been nesting below the Highland Park Bridge for the last several springs. They are the only gulls that nest in the Pittsburgh area. We stopped at Porters Cove, our first stop at Moraine State Park. Chuck set a scope onto the window mount next to me. I didn't even have to leave the car to get an exceptional look at a Common Loon and Red-necked Grebe. Chipping, Field, Song and Swamp Sparrows all vocalized. The Field Sparrow's song sounded like a ping-pong ball bouncing faster and faster into a trill. I asked Chuck to describe the difference between the Field Sparrow's and the Prairie Warbler's songs. Little did I know that today we would get the opportunity to compare the two.

Portersville was a great place for swallows. Northern Rough-winged Swallows as well as a few Barn Swallows enjoyed plucking insects right out of the air. Scores of Tree Swallows fluttered against the sky. Their blue backs were spangling like a sequence of sequins ever so much bluer than the sky. Chuck spotted a Spotted Sandpiper skipping over the water.

Windows open, and listening carefully. we moved on to the North

Shore. Chuck heard a Yellow-rumped Warbler and pulled over to investigate. The male showed himself immediately. He hopped on his branch with mechanically jerky movements, profiling from side to side, then stopped to face us before he flitted off. This was my first warbler of the year. We drove on, listening even more intently. Chuck heard a song and stopped the car. Chuck described this song as "ascending chromatically" -- the song of a Prairie Warbler. The warbler sang again. I got out of the car to watch for it. Chuck drove on, parked the car and sprinted back. We scanned the treetops for movement, then spot-scanned with our binoculars. The Prairie Warbler repeated his song for us several more times. Chuck walked into the woods while I stayed by the roadside. The backup singer, an Eastern Towhee sang drink-your-TEA incessantly as if he was trying to upstage the Prairie Warbler. Unlike the Yellow-rumped Warbler, finding this Prairie Warbler was like trying to find a sock in the dryer. He teased and tormented us. Again the towhee drowned out the Prairie Warbler's thin dainty song. The towhee's was beginning to annoy me like a commercial jingle that you can't shake out of your head. Chuck continued to watch and listen patiently until he finally saw the scrappy little warbler. He called out some instructions to me. The warbler flew out of the shrubs, landed on a branch across the road and froze in place. He was right at my eye-level. I got a great look at the tiny yellow bird with the olive-washed back.

The same great clock of migration that sent the warblers away from us last fall is bringing them back now. I'm ready for them.

