Birders, Burroughs, Birdwatchers, and Ornithologists

By David Spector

When I mention that I am interested in birds in literature, people often suggest items I ought to read. One frequently mentioned piece, especially given that I am married to a fan of John Burroughs’s contemporary Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909), is Jewett’s 1886 story “A White Heron.” In this story a young girl, who has moved from a factory town and is experiencing the salutary effects of rural life, meets an urbane young man, and a conversation ensues.

“I am making a collection of birds myself. I have been at it ever since I was a boy. . . . they’re stuffed and preserved, dozens and dozens of them,” said the ornithologist, “and I have shot or snared every one myself.”

As I read, the word “ornithologist” caught my attention. Jewett’s use of the term to describe someone building a personal collection of specimens did not match my sense either of myself as an ornithologist or of the current use of the word.

My reading of Jewett’s story set me on a journey of exploration of the ways in which the words “ornithologist,” “bird watcher,” and “birder” have been used to describe people who study birds. This essay, based on talks I gave at the Sharp Eyes conference last summer and at Slabsides Day last fall, touches briefly on the first two of those terms and then focuses on “ornithology” and its meanings to Burroughs and his contemporaries.

“Birder,” according to the citations in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), entered the English language by 1481, eventually replacing “fowler,” just as “bird” replaced “fowl” as the generic term for a feathered animal. “Birder” meant someone who hunted birds, and it kept that meaning even as it passed out of common usage by Burroughs’s time. More recently, especially since the mid-twentieth century, “birder” has acquired a new life as a descriptor of people who...
Meeting of the Minds

Several years ago Tom Alworth and Julianne Warren of Woodchuck Lodge and Lisa Breslof and Joan Burroughs of the JBA met at the American Museum to discuss collaborative possibilities that would promote both organizations and together preserve the historic sites associated with John Burroughs. Since then, Tom and Julianne have left the active management of Woodchuck Lodge, but with the extensive exterior restorations of both Slabsides and Woodchuck Lodge now complete, both organizations are poised to move forward with possible collaborations and partnerships.

To get the ball rolling, members of the two organizations met in the Portrait Room at the American Museum of Natural History on Saturday, January 24. The occasion provided an opportunity for the two groups to explain their key activities, as well as to interact informally during a lunch and a visit to the Museum’s “Climate Change” exhibition. The relationship and resources of the two organizations should bring a growing number of visitors to each historic site. For directions to Woodchuck Lodge and a calendar of upcoming events there, see page 11; more information is also available at the JBA Web site at http://research.amnh.org/burroughs/.

John Burroughs Association

The John Burroughs Association was formed in 1921 shortly after the naturalist-writer died. Among the Association’s aims are fostering a love of nature as exemplified by Burroughs’s life and work and preserving the places associated with his life. The Association publicly recognizes well written and illustrated nature essay publications with literary awards that are given after the annual meeting on the first Monday of April.

The Association owns and maintains Slabsides and the adjoining John Burroughs Sanctuary near West Park, New York. Open house at Slabsides is held the third Saturday in May and the first Saturday in October. A permanent exhibit about John Burroughs is in the American Museum of Natural History.

The membership year begins in April. Contact Secretary, John Burroughs Association, Inc., 15 West 77th Street, New York, NY 10024-5192, or e-mail: breslof@amnh.org. Telephone 212-769-5169. Web site: http://research.amnh.org/burroughs/


Slab by Slab

JBA Update on the Restoration of Slabsides

First, a clarification on the materials used in rebuilding the stairs on the north side of the porch (reported on in the Winter issue). Local eastern white pine was used for the stringers. They were faced on the exterior with an old stock of larch that was milled some time ago and had aged, but had not been previously used. The boards we used were rough sawn. Larch was also used for the steps. There are no risers. And, eastern red cedar, not stripped of its bark, was used for the hand rails on both the north steps where two rails were replaced and the south steps where a single handrail was added.

In mid-February we inspected the stone foundation with Woodside & Young. In addition to the approximately seven-foot long section to the right of the chimney that is unstable, there is also some bulging in the foundation on the north side of Slabsides. This second spot is not weight-bearing. We are waiting for an estimate to do the work.

We are pleased to report that we are close to raising the $34,375 needed to complete the required match for the grants for the exterior restoration. We are now $2,255 short and $7,880 below our goal of raising $40,000. The additional funds above the match are needed to carry out the restoration work that goes beyond the grant funding. The JBA does recognize that this is a particularly financially challenging environment and appreciates any gift, large or small. Thank you again for your continued support for this important icon, Slabsides.

Come test the new stairs and witness the emerging spring that John Burroughs saw right there at Slabsides! He continues to bring spring to us in his essays.

The Slabsides Restoration Fund “Chimney”

Goal .............$40,000

Needed for Matching Grants ........ $34,375

Achieved ...... $32,120

Contributions may be sent to the John Burroughs Association, Inc., at the American Museum of Natural History, 15 West 77 Street, New York, NY 10024. The John Burroughs Association is a 501 C(3) organization and as such your gifts are tax deductible. Thank you.
Birders continued from page 1

watch birds, especially those who take listing of species and/or identification particularly seriously. The term, then, was largely in eclipse during Burroughs’s career.

“Bird watching” and “bird watcher” seem to have entered the language in titles of books by the British naturalist Edmund Selous in 1901 and 1905 respectively, according to the OED. These terms began to take hold at the end of John Burroughs’s career. Thus, neither “birder” nor “bird watcher” were of much importance to Burroughs or his contemporaries.

“Ornithology” and “ornithologist” were very much relevant words in the late-nineteenth-century. The OED first records “ornithology” being used in 1655 to refer to the study of bird song and then in 1675 to refer to the more general study of birds. “Ornithologist” was used by 1676. For definitions of these words, I turn not to the British OED, but to the lexicographical monument of late-nineteenth-century United States, the Century Dictionary.

The Century Dictionary defines ornithology as “that branch of zoölogy that relates to birds; the scientific study or knowledge of birds,” and an ornithologist as “one who is versed in ornithology or who makes a special study of birds.” The definition of ornithologist provides this additional information:

Field ornithology is the study of living birds, as distinguished from closet ornithology, or the technical study of the dead bodies of birds for purposes of classification and nomenclature.

I have several reasons for choosing the Century Dictionary for these definitions. It was published at the height of Burroughs’s career; thus its definitions presumably reflect usage with which he would have been familiar. More personally, my copy of the Century Dictionary was my grandfather’s, a massive 7,046-page (not counting the supplement!) volume with which I’ve lived much of my life. The ornithological connections of its contributors are valuable for understanding late-nineteenth-century use of bird-related words. The editor in chief of the dictionary, lexicographer and Sanskrit scholar William Dwight Whitney (1827-1894), like the ornithologist in Jewett’s “A White Heron,” was an amateur collector of bird specimens, now housed in the Yale collection. Many of the dictionary’s illustrations of birds and mammals were drawn by Ernest Thompson Seton (1860-1946), a writer and artist attacked by Burroughs in his “Nature Fakers” essay who later became a friend of Burroughs’s. Most important, about 40,000 of the zoölogical definitions in the Century Dictionary were written by Elliott Coues (1842-1899), arguably the leading U.S. ornithologist of the late nineteenth century. The bird-related definitions thus have an authority coming from within the field. Indeed, the Century Dictionary, because of these connections, had the unusual distinction for a general dictionary of being reviewed in The Auk, the leading North American journal of ornithology, by Joel Asaph Allen, founder of the bird department at the American Museum of Natural History, who called it “practically an encyclopedia of ornithology.”

How did John Burroughs relate to ornithology, to the image of the ornithologist as portrayed by Jewett, and to the “field” and “closet” ornithologists as defined by Coues in the Century Dictionary? I have culled a few quotes that might give some sense of Burroughs’s attitude toward ornithology. First I cite a comment from “The Invitation” in Wake Robin (1868) in which Burroughs uses the language of conquest to identify himself with those who study birds along the barrels of a shotgun: “First find your bird; observe its ways, its song, its calls, its flights, its haunts; then shoot it (not ogle it with a glass), and compare with Audubon. In this way the feathered kingdom will soon be conquered.”

A couple of decades later, in “Bird Enemies” in Signs and Seasons (1886, the year that Jewett’s “A White Heron” was published), Burroughs still identifies with ornithologists and shooting birds at least for initial identification, but suggests that collecting should be limited: “. . . once having mastered the birds, the true ornithologist leaves his gun at home. . . . . I can pardon a man who wishes to make a collection of eggs and birds for his own private use, if he will content himself with one or two specimens of a kind. . . .” Burroughs here still values collecting as part of bird study, but suggests limits. He would not necessarily object to the activities of amateur ornithologists, such as Jewett’s character or his many contemporary real-life models, building their own collections.

Although Burroughs might have once identified with amateur ornithologists, in his comments re-
corded later in his life by Clara Barrus he distinguishes himself from professionals, whom he identified with cats:

My natural-history knowledge is more like that of a hunter or trapper than like that of the real scientist. I know our birds well, but not as the professional ornithologist knows them. I know them through my heart more than through my head.” [Life and Letters, vol. I, p. 16]

... ornithology is a first rate pursuit for men, but a bad one for cats. I suspect that she [his cat] studies the birds with greater care than I do; for now I can get all I want of a bird and let him remain in the bush, but Silly Sally is a thorough-going ornithologist; she must engage in all the feather splittings that ornithologists do, and she isn’t satisfied until she has thoroughly dissected and digested her material, and has all the dry bones of the subject laid bare.” [Our Friend John Burroughs, p. 34 (emphasis added)]

Burroughs repeatedly used “feather-splitting” to distance himself from professional ornithologists, especially those whom Coues in the Century Dictionary characterized as closet rather than field ornithologists. In “Bird Enemies,” Burroughs complained that “the closet naturalist is a person with whom I have very little sympathy. He is about the most wearisome and profitless creature in existence. With his piles of skins, his cases of eggs, his laborious feather splitting, and his outlandish nomenclature, he is not only the enemy of the birds, but the enemy of all those who would know them rightly.” Not surprisingly, the first version of that essay, published in the Century magazine, earned Burroughs an editorial attack in the pages of The Auk, the journal of the American Ornithologists’ Union.

At about the same time Burroughs complained of those who split bird species into subspecies with formal scientific names. In a letter to Eugene P. Bicknell he singled out Elliott Coues, using the language of religious prejudice to attack the more elaborate Latin names:

... that feather-splitter, Dr. Coues. I see that the wood thrush is no longer Turdus melodus but had a new layer of the barbarous Romish jargon put upon him. I do not sympathize at all with this practice. It is worse than useless. ... The aim of science should be to simplify things, to show us unity under diversity, but ornithology of late years seems bent on making the surface confusion worse confounded. ... banish to the rubbish hole, where they belong, all the Romish names of our pretty and innocent songsters.” [Life and Letters, vol. I, pp. 274-275]

Here Burroughs seems to look for a unified, philosophical view of nature without the detailed data gathering and examination that a professional scientist expects to precede such a view. He appears to ask for synthesis without analysis.

John Burroughs’s attitudes toward collecting birds and toward scientific ornithology were hardly consistent. The quotes above do not allow Burroughs to be put neatly into either a “pro-” or an “anti-” ornithology pigeonhole. Inconsistency is something at which we humans excel, and it is hardly surprising that someone who wrote extensively and thought seriously over a long career expressed somewhat different perspectives in his writing. I’ll return to this point after briefly considering a thinker who greatly influenced Burroughs.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was one of the most influential U.S. writers of the nineteenth century. Burroughs referred repeatedly to Emerson’s influence, especially early in his life. For example, in “An Egotistical Essay,” in Indoor Studies, Burroughs calls Emerson “the master-enchanter of this [early] period of my life and of many following years.” What did Emerson have to say about ornithology and ornithologists? I have found these words rarely in his writings, but his usages are instructive for the influence they may have had on Burroughs, Jewett, and others.

In his 1860 The Conduct of Life, Emerson discusses the ways in which intellectual pursuits may improve his impression of a person who earns a living in more practical professions:

A man known to us only as a celebrity in politics or in trade, gains largely in our esteem if we discover that he has some intellectual taste or skill; as ... of a banker, his success in poetry; or
Thus, Emerson seems to view ornithology, like poetry, as a potentially ennobling avocation. Perhaps if the “ornithologist” or his father in Jewett’s story had made his living as a banker or journalist, Emerson would have seen such a man as gaining in stature by a move into ornithology. I don’t know if Burroughs ever referred explicitly to this passage, but one could imagine it inspiring him to move from mundane activities such as farming, teaching, or government service to the more elevated realm of ornithology. This positive view of ornithology was repeated by Emerson in Letters and Social Aims (1876), where he comments that it is gratifying to him that each aspect of nature is supplemented by people who were adapted to its study, including those adapted to ornithology.

On the other hand, in the same Conduct of Life where he refers to the redeeming value of ornithology, Emerson addresses the professional ornithologist with less sympathy:

We should go to the ornithologist with a new feeling, if he could teach us what the social birds say, when they sit in the autumn council, talking together in the trees. The want of sympathy makes his record a dull dictionary. His result is a dead bird.

In this passage, Emerson suggests that those who collect and analyze birds, like Jewett’s bird-shooting ornithologist, the “feather-splitters” for whom Burroughs expressed contempt, or even Burroughs himself collecting birds to identify them, undermine a more spontaneous appreciation of bird life.

What is a reader to make of Emerson’s two views of ornithologists? Near the end of his life, John Burroughs returned to Emerson and wrote two long essays that remained unpublished until Clara Barrus printed them in the posthumous Last Harvest. Here, on page 75, Burroughs has a comment about Emerson that could summarize the opinions of both of them regarding ornithology and science more generally. Burroughs writes that “philosophers contradict themselves like other mortals.”

It is now illegal for an amateur to collect bird skins or eggs, and the ornithologist in Jewett’s “A White Heron” would have to be portrayed differently were the story to be reset today. Nevertheless, many of the same tensions between amateur and professional and among different views of appropriate ways to study birds that concerned Jewett, Burroughs, and Emerson retain their salience. Dialogue continues regarding the extent to which more detailed understanding might interfere with appreciation of nature, ownership of nature, and knowledge about nature, and the extent to which interference is appropriate in the pursuit of knowledge. Like Burroughs and like Emerson, many today take sometimes contradictory positions as we persist in the ongoing discussion of human understanding of nature.

David Spector teaches in the Biology Department at Central Connecticut State University and is the former president of the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst, Massachusetts. He thanks Magda Bechar, Steve Mercier, and Jeff Walker for comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

A Child’s Eye View of Slabsides

Photo by Board Member Francis Timothy (Tim) Walsh, who e-mailed the following note to Lisa Breslof, the JBA Secretary, on Thursday, August 21, 2008:

Dear Lisa,

I hope you’re having a nice summer. Ruth and I visited the Sanctuary on Tuesday. It looks amazingly lush, after all of the summer rain. With Jason, we spotted an immature bald eagle flying overhead.

I’ve attached a piece of children’s imagery and text from one of the Sanctuary logbooks.
Tree Puzzle

The “Notes” section in the March-April 1922 issue of *Natural History* describes the dedication on April 3—by the John Burroughs Memorial Association—of Burroughs’s grave. Less well known is another ceremony reported in those same notes:

On the same day . . . two pin oaks were planted in front of the American Museum, the one to commemorate Burroughs, Lover of Nature, the other to honor Muir, the Friend of the Forest. After a few introductory words by President Henry Fairfield Osborn, of the American Museum, the trees were formally presented by Orlando Rouland, and the gift in turn gratefully accepted on behalf of the Museum by President Osborn. Several children from Public School 188, Manhattan, officially known as the John Burroughs’ School, were then introduced by Mrs. Ruth Crosby Noble, of the department of education of the Museum: Celia Grindell, who recited Burroughs’ “Waiting”; Sylvia Schwartz, who had memorized the poem on Burroughs written by Helen Gray Cone in answer to “Waiting”, and Sylvia Rosenberg, whose recitation was a passage selected by Mrs. Osborn, from John Muir’s *Mountains of California*. The tree planting then followed, Mrs. Osborn casting the first spadeful of earth for the tree dedicated to Burroughs and Mrs. Rouland doing the like for the tree commemorating Muir.

The exercises were concluded with the singing, by the members of the Glee Club of Public School 188, of the John Burroughs’ song, set to Rubenstein’s “Melody in F.” Temporarily there have been placed in memorial hall of the American Museum, in positions corresponding with those of the two trees, a portrait of Burroughs and a portrait of Muir, painted by Mr. Orlando Rouland—lifelike representations of two men who did so much to kindle in others the love of nature which they both felt fervently.

Historical sleuths might find it interesting to look into the lives of the three schoolchildren who participated in the ceremony. But perhaps some naturalist sleuth could circle the American Museum grounds and see if one or two pin oaks survive there that could be about eighty years old.

—Vittorio Maestro

Standing Committees of the JBA (Amended March 2009)

**Awards Committees—Lisa Breslof, Chairperson**
- Luncheon: Lisa Breslof, Ann Zwinger, Joan Burroughs, Marcia Dworak, Dave Liddell
- John Burroughs Medal Award: Ann Zwinger, Chairperson, with Jury of Award winners
- John Burroughs List of Nature Books for Young Readers: Marcia Dworak, Chairperson, with Jury of Award winners
- John Burroughs Natural History Essay Award: Joan Burroughs, Chairperson, with Jury of Award winners
- Service Awards and Award Certificates: Robert Abrams

**Constitution and By-Laws Committee—Robert Abrams, Chairperson**

**Exhibition and Education Committee—Lisa Breslof and Francis Walsh, Co-Chairs**
- Outreach Talks: Selden Spencer, Jeff Walker, Lisa Breslof
- Curriculum Development: Lisa Breslof
- Programming: Lisa Breslof, Jeff Walker, Jason Dempsey
Farida Wiley Library Committee—Lisa Breslof, Chairperson

Finance Committee—Joan Burroughs, Chairperson
• Fund Raising: David R. Lane
• Grants: David Liddell, Joan Burroughs, Lisa Breslof

Membership Committee—Chairperson (TBD)
• Regular and Upgrade: Regina Kelly, Jay Holmes
• Student Memberships: H.R. Stoneback, Jeff Walker
• Endowments and Planned Giving: David Liddell, Joan Burroughs

Nomination Committee—Chairperson (TBD)
• Search: Lisa Breslof, Joan Burroughs

Publications Committee—Lisa Breslof, Chairperson
• Wake-Robin: Vittorio Maestro, Richard Milner, Steve Thurston, Editors
• Website: Jay Holmes, Webmaster; Lisa Breslof, Content Specialist
• Index: Bill Perkins, Editor

Sanctuary Committee—Selden Spencer, Chairperson
• Slabsides Restoration: Selden Spencer, Evelyn and Bob Rifenburg, Lisa Breslof, Dave Liddell, Joan Burroughs
• Slabsides Maintenance: Evelyn and Bob Rifenburg
• Slabsides Day: Jeff Walker, Evelyn Rifenburg

Trails Committee—Jackie Beckett, Chairperson
• Trail Guide Development: Joan Burroughs, Lisa Breslof, Tim Walsh
• Trail Maintenance: Jason Dempsey

Town of Esopus Library
Quadricentennial Event ’09

John Burroughs: His Life and Works—A Rededication of the Library’s Collection, July 3 through 30

• Featuring a month-long exhibit of Burroughs photographs, refurbished display panels, and other memorabilia in the Duck Pond Galley.

• Display of artwork on the Hudson River by students of the Robert Graves Elementary School in Port Ewen, New York.

• Saturday, July 11
  8:30 A.M. Birding walk to the Hudson River waterfront, led by the John Burroughs Natural History Society—from the Library
  11:00 A.M. Rededication of the John Burroughs’ Collection; Speaker: Jeff Walker, John Burroughs Association
  Refreshments

• Sunday, July 12
  2:00 P.M. Canal Street Author Series Presents Charlotte Zoe Walker on “John Burroughs and the Art of Seeing Things”; Walker reviews the life and the works of the great naturalist, John Burroughs, with emphases on his relevance for readers today. Walker is the editor of two books on Burroughs works, Sharp Eyes and The Art of Seeing Things.

The Duck Pond Gallery is open during Library open hours.

For more information call the Library at 845-338-5580.
The John Burroughs Association, Inc., is a not-for-profit organization which was established in 1921 following the death of the naturalist and poet. It was established to promote the spirit and teachings of John Burroughs; to foster the American nature essay genre he created by honoring outstanding natural history writings; and to cherish and preserve tokens of his life, especially the cabin Slabsides and the surrounding lands of the John Burroughs Sanctuary.

Please assist in supporting the objectives of the John Burroughs Association by becoming a member. Becoming a Patron or Benefactor will reflect an even greater interest and help in the purposes of the organization. Stewardship of the John Burroughs Sanctuary can happen with your contribution.

Tax-deductible dues for the membership year April 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010

- _____ Student $15
- _____ Senior $15
- _____ Annual $25
- _____ Family $35
- _____ Gift Membership of $_____ for (name and address):
- _____ Patron $50
- _____ Benefactor $100
- _____ Life $500
- _____ Additional Gifts for John Burroughs Sanctuary

Annual Luncheon, April 6, 2009
Reserve _____ place(s) at the annual luncheon Monday, April 6, Noon:
- Member $85
- Nonmember $110

Make checks payable to the John Burroughs Association, Inc., American Museum of Natural History, 15 West 77 Street, New York, NY 10024-5192.

Proxy

KNOW ALL PEOPLE BY THESE PRESENTS, that I ____________________________, residing at _____________________________________________________________________, being a member of the John Burroughs Association, Inc., do hereby constitute and appoint Lisa Breslof as my proxy to attend the Annual Meeting of the members of said corporation to be held at the American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York, New York at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, April 6, 2009, or any continuation or adjournment thereof, with full power to vote and act for me and in my name, place and stead, in the same manner, to the same extent and with the same effect that I might were I personally present there at, giving to said Lisa Breslof full power of substitution and revocation, and I hereby revoke any other proxy heretofore given by me.

Date _____________________________2009

Signature ________________________________________________Member

Print ____________________________________________________Member

Make checks payable to the John Burroughs Association and mail to: John Burroughs Association, Inc., American Museum of Natural History, 15 West 77 Street, New York, NY 10024-5192.

Name _________________________________________
Address ________________________________________
City ___________State ____________Zip _____________

We are a 501 (3)c tax exempt organization
2009 Woodchuck Lodge Calendar
Woodchuck Lodge Tour Weekends

Trained docents offer guided tours of historic Woodchuck Lodge, 11 A.M. to 3 P.M. Directions: Take Hardscrabble Road off NYS Route 30, 1 mile north of the hamlet of Roxbury, Delaware County, N.Y.; turn on Burroughs Memorial Road, follow to Woodchuck Lodge. Admission free, donations welcome.

- May 2-3
- June 6-7
- Saturday, June 13 (1-3 P.M. only)
- July 4-5
- August 1-2
- September 5-6
- October 3-4

Special Events

Saturday, April 4, 2:30 P.M. Cassie’s Café, 53535 Main St., Roxbury: John Burroughs Birthday Bash! A celebration of the naturalist’s 172nd birthday with community members reading from his essays on a Catskill boyhood, farming, war, aging, the hereafter, and more. Hear the words that made Burroughs a celebrity in his day, and sign up for a nature-writing workshop May 16 by Pace University Professor Helane Levine Keating. Enjoy some birthday cake, and become a Friend of Woodchuck Lodge! Info: cybercat@catskill.net

Saturday, May 2, 11:00 A.M. Dedication of new outdoor exhibit at Burroughs Memorial Field, State-owned site of literary naturalist John Burroughs’s Boyhood Rock and burial place a short walk from Woodchuck Lodge. Address by Tom Alworth, Burroughs scholar and Deputy Commissioner for Natural Resources, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation. Info: Brian.Strasovich@oprhp.state.ny.us

Saturday, May 16 (Rain date May 17), 1:00-3:30 P.M. In Burroughs’ Footsteps: A Nature Writing Workshop. Slow down, observe, and focus on the details as you learn the art of nature-based prose and poetry from photographer, poet, and literature professor Helane Levine Keating. Workshop begins with a tour of Woodchuck Lodge and an introduction to the world of literary naturalist John Burroughs. Space is limited. No fee; donations to Woodchuck Lodge welcome. Register by May 10 at helane@catskill.net. Meet at the Lodge, Burroughs Memorial Road, Roxbury.

Saturday, June 13, 3-6 P.M. John Burroughs Community Day: Home Ground—To Know It Is to Love It. Featured speaker Peter Forbes, Executive Director of the Center for Whole Communities, Vermont (www.wholecommunities.org). Original music by Leland Door and Pamela West of Diviner; buffet of local foods; auction of Burroughs books and items. Free; donations benefit restoration of Woodchuck Lodge Inc. Co-sponsored by the Watershed Agricultural Council, local businesses and supporters. Roxbury Arts Group’s Hilt Kelly Hall, Vega Mountain Rd., Roxbury. Directions: www.roxburyartsgroup.org

Archives of the Times

Search for “John Burroughs” on the New York Times Web site (www.nytimes.com)—put his name in quotes, to search for it as a phrase—and 2,100 results are at your fingertips. For old citations, you will get an introductory headline, and then you can click to view a facsimile of the original article. One of them, dated Saturday, April 30, 1921, is headlined as follows:

BURROUGHS’S WILL
NAMES BIOGRAPHER
Dr. Clara Barrus Is Also Made Literary Executor and Is to Receive All Royalties
FORD GETS RUSTIC TABLE
“Let Me Not Be Made to Appear Proud,” He Urged in Instructions on His Burial.

If you read on you will find how his estate, valued at “upward of $50,000,” was apportioned among his heirs, and how arrangements were made to provide for Dr. Clara Barrus, to whom he refers as “his friend.” As for Henry Ford, “to whom I owe the possession of my old homestead farm,” the will says, “I give my rustic writing table at Woodchuck Lodge, Roxbury.” Any enthusiasts out there who want to look up the other 2,099 articles are invited to report interesting tidbits in Wake-Robin. —Vittorio Maestro

Wake-Robin Volume 41, Number 3, Spring 2009
INSIDE

Birders, Burroughs, Birdwatchers, and Ornithologists
*By David Spector* .................................1

Meeting of the Minds..............................2

Slab by Slab.......................................3

Child’s Eye View of Slabsides....................6

Standing Committees of the JBA..................7

Tree Puzzle
*By Vittorio Maestro* ............................7

Town of Esopus Library Events.....................8

Woodchuck Lodge Calendar.......................11

---

**Calendar**

**April 6, 10:30 am - 2:00 pm** — JBA Board Meeting and Awards Luncheon

**May 16** — May Slabsides day

**July 11-12** — Esopus Library Rededication (see page 8)

See page 11 for Woodchuck Lodge Inc. events

The John Burroughs Association informs members through *Wake-Robin* and the Web site http://research.amnh.org/burroughs. Occasionally, we reach out via e-mail with news alerts and reminders. Please send your e-mail address to the Secretary (breslof@amnh.org) so that we can better serve you. Members are encouraged to submit articles or news items for publication. Deadline for submissions to the Summer 2009 issue of *Wake-Robin* is **June 15**, Direct inquiries to the editors.