here was a reader whose mind was a veritable Sahara of geological ignorance.

The full review of *Sand* is by David Carroll, another of our geologically challenged panel. It is long and detailed, because there is no other way to do justice to the richness and variety of its subject. David Carroll is a biologist; his natural habitat tends to be swampy. But his review communicates a sense, which I think all of us who read the book shared, of the entirely unlooked for excitements and astonishments of reading this book.

I will only add a final two cents’ worth. Michael Welland appears to have been a geologist from birth, and his easy command of his whole vast subject has drawn the praise of his disciplinary colleagues, in the remarks printed on the back cover of the book. And it is obvious on every page, even to a geological ignoramus like myself. But he also resembles the great pioneering naturalists of the nineteenth century—writers who commanded not only a knowledge of their special subject, but also a great range of cultural and humanistic knowledge; and who wrote for a general audience whose intelligence they respected. They

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*Sand: The Never-Ending Story*
*University of California Press*

*Excerpt of Luncheon Remarks by Franklin Burroughs, JBA 2009 Medalist for Confluence: Merrymeeting Bay*

When asked to judge a book, of course the first thing you do is look at its cover. The blurbs on the back of Michael Welland’s *Sand: The Never-Ending Story* all appear to be written by geologists, which is no doubt as it should be. But my fellow John Burroughs panelists and I happen not to be geologists; and I, for one, opened the book expecting it to be an effort to jazz up and popularize a subject that was inescapably arid and essentially lifeless. If the book and its author had been able to look back at me, I assumed they would have felt a similar sort of discouragement:
Acknowledgements

Recent Contributions

Slabsides Restoration - David Lane
Annual Awards Luncheon - David Liddell, Michael Rapkiewicz
Education Program - Marist College

Welcome New Members

Don Carragher, Julie O’Conner, Joan D. James

A Special Thank You . . .

. . . To all whose efforts enable the JBA to carry out the Association’s programs, including the many volunteers, members of the Association, the Board of Directors, and many other generous friends of the Association. Among those who contribute their time and energy are the judges and reviewers of nature writing (the fruits of whose work is featured in this issue); the organizers of the awards luncheon; the writers, editors, and volunteers who put together and mail out Wake-Robin; the organizers and speakers at the Slabsides Open House events; the Slabsides docents and Sanctuary naturalist who welcome and instruct visitors; the schoolteachers who organize visits to Slabsides and the Sanctuary; the contributors and the Webmaster who produce our Web site; and staff at the American Museum of Natural History, which hosts our main office. We are honored by your help.

Planning Underway for New Trails at Slabsides

Planning for the new trails at the John Burroughs Nature Sanctuary is nearly completed (for the full background on the Slabsides Trails Restoration Project, see your Spring 2010 issue of Wake-Robin, which is also available online at the JBA Web site, http://research.amnh.org). The Association has hired master trail builder Eddie Walsh of Tahawus Trails LLC to design and construct the new trails and restore two connecting trails. Walsh has been to the site many times to study the land and gauge its best advantages. The goal is to take the hiker past the most appealing geographic features, dramatic lines of sight, and unusual natural elements—with gorgeous vistas and varied paths. An important requirement is to minimize the impact on the environment. We think he has achieved it all.

Three members of the JBA’s Executive Committee walked the proposed trails with Walsh to view the design and consider route options he had developed. Joan Burroughs (who is leading the project), Lisa Breslof, and Jeff Walker met Walsh at Slabsides on June 24. They started on the Highlands Trail, which begins at the end of the Spring Trail in front of Slabsides. Looking south from Slabsides they had the choice of skirting the cliffs on the left or passing through the southern tip of Burroughs’s celery swamp. They chose the latter as more interesting. Little recent rain made the passage easy that day, but, to make this stretch passable during a wet season, Walsh will install seventy feet of bog board. Continuing, they chose a rugged route heading south up the ridge to the highest point below the cliffs on the property. This route offers a view of the dramatic cliffs first to the east and then lower, wooded cliffs to the west.

The trail then heads down to a shallow valley, ranges up, down, and around through woods, and ends at the southern tip of a lush fern valley. With several

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 in 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 77 Street, New York, NY 10024-5192, or e-mail: breslof@amnh.org. Telephone 212-769-5169.


stone steps installed to make the passage easier and prevent erosion, the Highlands Trail is designed to be more rugged than the others within the Nature Sanctuary. Connecting to the Highlands Trail is a short trail on the narrow back of a ridge. This ridge trail links to the new Southern Trail. The route of this Southern trail, which is wider than the others, takes the hiker through beautiful terrain with fewer challenges. It is laid out as the main route to 600 acres owned by Scenic Hudson to our south. It passes around and then ascends the ridges gradually, presenting additional stunning vistas. This trail goes through a dense hemlock grove, passes over an old stone culvert, then leads back to Pond House to the north, where it meets the trailheads of two of our other trails at the southern tip of the Pond.

The Elizabeth Burroughs Kelley Connector Trail, linking Slabsides to Pond House around the south end of the Pond, will gain several stone steps, both to make this heavily traveled trail easier and to prevent erosion. It, too, passes over varied terrain that includes a series of early spring waterfalls. We are also moving the eastern trailhead away from behind the outhouse. The Adams Connector Trail to the north of the Pond requires only some cleanup and trail definition.

Earlier in the spring two representatives from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) came to Slabsides to assess the ecological significance of the three seasonally wet areas that are next to trails. They determined that none were of concern.

We have also hired the archaeologist Dr. Christopher Lindner of Bard College to undertake an archaeological survey of the land near the trails, a requirement under our grant from OPRHP. Eddie Walsh and Joan Burroughs took him out on the trails. From earlier research Lindner had determined that there had likely been a small center of commerce along the Old Woods Road to the west and south of the Nature Sanctuary. An 1875 map indicated a wool factory, and one can still see the remains of a gristmill at the falls along Black Creek to the south on the Scenic Hudson property. On his tour Lindner also identified several natural overhangs of the kind sometimes used by Native Americans. On our property there are two man-made features that need to be dealt with. A derelict covered culvert lies across the trail. It likely dates to the late 1800s, when Amasa Martin lived on the property (Martin worked for John Burroughs in his celery swamp). Walsh will unplug the culvert to divert water from a section of the proposed trail. We will also re-route the trailhead area of the Southern trail to avoid the remnants of a former structure.

The wonders of nature that abound within the Nature Sanctuary were in evidence throughout the survey hikes. The lyrical song of the hermit thrush joined the voices of other birds. The woods held the surprises of red tree fungi on dead hemlocks, Indian pipe plants, many varieties of ferns, and glowing orange efts. One particular tree displayed many of the characteristically oval-shaped holes made by feasting pileated woodpeckers. Walsh called the land “abundantly featured.” The sheer rock outcroppings, cliffs, and overhangs are common deep in the Catskill Mountains, but there you must work to reach them. Here at the 200-acre John Burroughs Nature Sanctuary, they are around nearly every curve in the trail of our southern woods.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO BUILD THE TRAILS

We know you will enjoy walking and hiking the trails and taking in the natural beauty held within our borders. It is a unique enclave that inspired the writings of Burroughs. You can play a part in recreating this wonderful place by volunteering to build the trails. Eddie Walsh has developed specific tasks he needs help with. We expect the work to get underway in late August and continue throughout the fall. If you are interested in helping, please e-mail Joan Burroughs at jjjburroughs@yahoo.com or contact the Association office at breslof@amnh.org. Give us your e-mail address so we can send you the work schedule from which you may choose a part of the project to work on. Also check our Web site for updates.

DONATE TO MAKE THE FUNDING MATCH

The John Burroughs Association is financing most of the work through a $50,000 grant awarded by the New York State OPRHP. Funding for this grant program comes from the Federal Highway Administration and requires an 80/20 match. We will need to raise an additional $12,500. In addition, only $740 is still needed to complete the match required for the Slabsides Restoration Project, described in previous issues. Please see page 17 for information on how to donate by check or credit card. Thank you for helping to open to future visitors these wonderful woods, hills, and fields of John Burroughs!
were able to elucidate arcane matters without being patronizing; and they somehow retained, for all their formidable expertise, something of the ordinary reader’s awe at the inhuman scale and radically unsettling implications of their subject.

I believe that John Burroughs would have been very happy to welcome and honor Michael Welland here today. I know that I am.

Review

by David M. Carroll

Michael Welland details how the birth of a grain of sand, brought about by the weathering of upplings in the Earth’s crust, signifies the death of a mountain. There is always the background of enormous lengths of time, in which is set the constant change that marks Earth’s evolution, and in turn profoundly directs the evolution of life upon it. Sand: The Never-Ending Story presents sweeping, but concise, views of continents crushing and welding together only to separate and drift apart, of oceans shifting, of extremes of climate change. These are all the never-ceasing work of tectonic plates (amazingly enabled by the separation of the Moon from Earth), which has been vital to life—its origins, its fitful evolution marked by great periods of extinction, and its persistence on the planet.

The author’s treatments of such matters as the physics of granular materials, elucidated by analogies and all but visual presentations of the concepts, are set forth with a clarity and patience that made me feel as though he were writing for one as physics-challenged as I am. I cannot say that I grasped all of the forces and laws that play a part in this story of sand, but I understood enough about the “cube of velocity” (the capacity of water or wind to transport sediment—sand here—increases exponentially in proportion to the cube of the amount by which its velocity exceeds that necessary to initiate sediment movement) not to try his pointedly expressed experiment: “Lie down on the desert sand, across the direction of the wind, and sand will gradually drift up against you. In a modest wind, your body weight in sand may well accumulate in an hour; in the gale of sandstorm, . . . you may be buried in a ton of sand.”

But interspersed with the pure physics of what is at play, there are evocations of the aspects of sand that bring to it a quality of being alive, such as the story of the journey of a single grain of sand in an exotic Venezuelan setting, and the migrations of sand dunes. (Arnold Bagnold, a geologist much respected by Welland, whose work with deserts from 1930 into the 1980s has been a bedrock of the science, wrote that “the dunes seemed to behave like living things.”) And, while always looking for the physics behind the phenomena, Welland beautifully evokes the endless dances of sand and wind, the voices of the dunes. “For the moment, dune voices remain among nature’s most elusive and haunting secrets.”

Among the riches within the richness of this book—it encompasses so much—are examples of the importance and roles of sand in human cultures throughout the world, and throughout the species’ history, that so often reveal similar expressions of belief, thought, and art.

Sand has long provided—and continues to provide—the medium for drawing, writing, calculating, teaching, and divining; it is a medium for narrative art and, as we have seen with sand sculptures, art for art’s sake. . . . Although there are examples where it is trapped into solidity, the intrinsic character, value, and spiritual appeal of sand as a medium is its fragility, its impermanence. And what is startling is not simply
the ubiquity of traditions of sand as a medium, but the common threads among the ways in which it is used, the designs and patterns. It seems almost to be part of our collective subconscious.

“Sand and dust are the stuff the universe is made from.” And certainly sand is all around us. Just how ubiquitous? In one of the many ways Welland gets across the all but incomprehensible scales of time, space, and substance (such as “half a billion dump truck loads” of the material of the continents would be “swept away by rivers into the oceans every year”), he points out that the volume of sand and sandstone (sand grains waiting to be born again) in and on the Earth’s crust is enough to build the Great Wall of China around the equator 250 million times. And he goes on, “And if every sand grain has a story to tell, that’s a lot of stories—libraries of ledgers.”

I am not a beachgoer, and I have never been to a desert (a place Welland cannot seem to stay away from, although he reports, “It is a place to which we are drawn but within which we do not belong”). But in reading this book I became all the more aware that as an aspect of my being a swampwalker, I am an arenophile, a “sand lover.” My primary—perhaps primal—connection with sand comes by way of the substrates of the rivers of wood turtles. Long ago I wrote at thaw, “Who has seen a dream more beautiful than clear water running over sand?” Another deep link comes from my circlings, day after day, year after year, of the sandy nesting terrain of the wood turtles—river sandbars, abandoned sandpits—marveling at this mineral (granular) world that holds enough moisture beneath its surface to cradle mineral-coated turtle-egg shells, from which the hatchlings emerge, moist-eyed and filled with vital liquids after two and a half to three months’ interment in what could seem a virtual desert. From my reading of Sand I would venture to say that as a hydromancer, I am part geomancer.

Welland addresses the negative impacts of contemporary human’s relationship with sand, in its beach, desert, and other manifestations, stating that “for many areas of the world where sand is threateningly on the move, it is not nature but humans who are the cause.” This is due in large measure to land practices and population of areas avoided by earlier peoples, who were well aware of (and mindful of) the effects of plate tectonics—earthquakes and tsunamis, hurricanes and shifting sands. There is also the fact that “the consequences of stopping a sand grain on its journey are huge. The effects of dams . . . include major modifications to the delivery of sediment of the river system downstream and to the ocean; this, in turn, alters entire landscapes.”

Louisiana loses more than twelve square miles of critical wetlands every year as a result of reduction in sediment carried by the Mississippi River and the effects of levees and canals. This is land that should not only maintain biodiversity but also act as a natural defense against hurricanes. “In the United States, large dams have been built at a rate equivalent to one a day since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Today, increasing effort is being put into removing them.” The megadams of such places as South America, Egypt, and China bear watching.

There are desecrations as well—natural dune forms of astonishing beauty opened up to dune buggies and recreational vehicles. People insist on building and rebuilding along the immediate coast, undaunted (human arrogance and ignorance at work) by the fact that “beach nourishment” can cost up to ten million dollars per mile. Says Welland, “Hurricanes always have, and always will, remove beaches; waves always have, and always will, erode the coast. Sea level is rising, and much of the world’s coastline is eroding.” It is interesting to note that in setting global climate change—ice ages and warm periods—in the context of deep time (hundreds of millions to billions of years), and in viewing the history of this restless and ever-changing planet, with its driving force of plate tectonics and instances of extraterrestrial influence, Welland places in perspective the current concern and intense debate.
over the prospect of human-driven global warming.

My awareness and understanding of sand, its nearly inconceivable role not just in Earth’s history but in the universe, has been more than cubed. At the outset of this book I was present at the birth of a grain of sand on Earth, and in the final passages I found myself in a place of “numerical excess,” 4.6 trillion miles from the Sun, in the Oort Cloud beyond Pluto, among perhaps 10 trillion comets. Sand is a vast and never-ending story, consummately related by an extraordinarily knowledgeable scientist-naturalist who is also an enormously gifted writer. If Joseph Wood Krutch is the voice of the desert, Michael Welland is the voice of sand. I am strongly tempted to end my essay by quoting the author’s final line—before his epilogue—but I want to leave it to the reader to arrive there on his or her own, at the compelling endpoint of the remarkable journey that is this book.

David M. Carroll was the JBA 2001 Medalist for Swampwalker’s Journal: A Wetlands Year. His other books include The Year of the Turtle: A Natural History (1996) and Following the Water: A Hydromancer’s Notebook (2009).

Connections

Adapted from the acceptance remarks by 2010 JBA Medalist Michael Welland

I would like to thank Robert Michael Pyle and all the members of the judging panel, and, in particular, Franklin Burroughs for his generous remarks.

Researching and writing Sand has been a source of surprises, of unexpected connections that have been both satisfying and entertaining. In the next few minutes I would like to take you on a journey through some of the connections around the book and this award.

Even today I found a delightful example here in the American Museum, whose Web site for kids includes a page about sandstone in a section called “Oölity.” There we learn that two, once companionable, pieces of 400-million-year-old Old Red Sandstone, one from the Catskills and the other from Scotland, were reunited at the museum after a separation of some 200 million years. That “story of separation and heartbreak” was the result of the break-up of a tectonic plate and the subsequent separation of Europe and the Americas by the Atlantic Ocean. The two cousins were reunited by the scientists preparing the Hall of Planet Earth. The traditional New York City curbstones, by the way, are made from Old Red Sandstone from the Catskills.

In my own collection in London I’ve reunited two other branches of the same family—the Oriskany, an Old Red Sandstone from New York, and its cousin from Wales. I have brought them together on a sentimental journey here today.

The bestowing of this American award on this British writer is another transatlantic connection. And there are further parallels. I have spent long periods of time living and working over here since I was six; my wife is American and I have two half-American kids.

And there is another, longer connection. My father specialized in American studies, and Mark Twain was one of his favorite writers. He worked extensively on Twain’s reception in Europe (which was enthusiastic—Charles Darwin, for example, was a great fan) and his relationships with his English publishers. My father used to periodically quote to me Twain’s reference to “The Old Oölitic Silurian,” to remind me of the connections between his own field, American literature, and mine, and to illustrate his familiarity with geological terminology. This led me to appreciate how often, amongst his prolific and highly entertaining observations, Twain wrote about geology—and yes, sand. My dad’s quotation comes from Life on the Mississippi and ends with one of Twain’s classic comments:

In the space of one hundred and seventy-six years the Lower Mississippi has shortened itself two hundred and forty-two miles. That is an average of a trifle over one mile and a third per year. Therefore, any calm person, who is not blind or idiotic, can see that in the Old Oölitic Silurian Period, just a million years ago next November, the Lower Mississippi River was upwards of one million three hundred thousand miles long, and stuck out over the Gulf of Mexico like a fishing-rod. And by the same token any person can see that seven hundred and forty-two years from now the Lower Mississippi will be only a mile and three-quarters
long, and Cairo [Illinois] and New Orleans will have joined their streets together, and be plodding comfortably along under a single mayor and a mutual board of aldermen. There is something fascinating about science. One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact.

Twain seemed to have a particular fondness for the Old Red Sandstone, the gigantic piles of sand and other sediments that poured off the growing mountain chains of Europe and North America 400 million years ago. These are the rocks that contain the testaments to the remarkable evolution of fish and the first evidence of life on the land—footprints in the sand. Twain wrote the following, in his 1903 essay “Was the World Made for Man?”:

So the Old Silurian seas were opened up to breed the fish in, and at the same time the great work of building Old Red Sandstone mountains eighty thousand feet high to cold-storage their fossils in was begun. This latter was quite indispensable, for there would be no end of failures again, no end of extinctions—millions of them—and it would be cheaper and less trouble to can them in the rocks than to keep tally of them in a book.

And elsewhere, referring to an institution not dissimilar to this museum, Twain wrote of “that poor, decrepit, bald-headed, played-out, antediluvian Old Red Sandstone formation which they call the Smithsonian Institute.” Unfortunately, here he got his geology wrong: the original Smithsonian building was constructed from the New Red Sandstone, the sediments that filled the rift valleys as Europe and North America began drifting apart 200 million years ago. New Red Sandstone is what makes New York City’s brownstones.

I am very grateful to the Smithsonian for the help that they provided me in using one of their illustrations in my book. In the process of researching the stunningly diverse journeys that grains of sand can take you on, I was often surprised. And one of my greatest surprises was to be introduced to the remarkable world of *meiofauna*, the teeming zoological garden of microscopic life that exists in the spaces between the sand grains of our planet’s beaches. They represent a level of biodiversity greater than that of a rainforest, and play a key role for which we should be grateful: they keep our beaches clean. It was an exquisite illustration of a sampling of these creatures that the Smithsonian supplied.

Which brings me to a connection with one of the earlier recipients of the John Burroughs Association Medal. But first, looking over that list of fine writers, I must mention John McPhee, the chronicler of western U.S. terrains and the deep time of geology, who received the medal in 1990 for *The Control of Nature*.

Then, Aldo Leopold, honored in 1977 for his classic *A Sand County Almanac*. His son Luna was one of last century’s foremost researchers in sedimentary
processes. He set out the basics of our understanding of how rivers work, just as his great collaborator and friend, Ralph Bagnold, set out our understanding of how deserts work. Bagnold, an extraordinary soldier, engineer, and scientist, was essentially the hero of my book. He and Luna Leopold produced work that endures today.

But I would like to conclude with the extraordinary writing of another member of the JBA award list, Rachel Carson. I spoke of meiofauna, and in Sand I used an extract from her book, The Edge of the Sea, to convey the scope of that subject. It reminds us of our connections to the natural world around us, and is a compelling example of the poetry of wonderful nature writing:

Walking back across the flats of that Georgia beach, I was always aware that I was treading on the thin rooftops of an underground city. Of the inhabitants themselves, little or nothing was visible. . . .

In the intertidal zone, this minuscule world of the sand grains is also the world of inconceivably minute beings, which swim through the liquid film around a grain of sand as fish would swim through the ocean covering the sphere of the earth. Among this fauna and flora of the capillary water are single-celled animals and plants, water mites, shrimplike crustacea, insects and the larvae of certain infinitely small worms—all living, dying, swimming, feeding, reproducing in a world so small that our human senses cannot grasp its scale, a world in which the micro-droplet of water separating one grain of sand from another is like a vast, dark sea.

And from The Sea Around Us, for which Carson was awarded the John Burroughs Association Medal in 1952, I chose as a chapter epigraph her words that essentially sum up so eloquently much of what I felt I was stumbling to try to achieve with my book—and which also reminds us of our reunited sandstones here in the museum: “The sediments are a sort of epic poem of the Earth. When we are wise enough, perhaps we can read in them all of past history.”

Ladies and gentlemen and the John Burroughs Association, again my sincere thanks.

Acceptance Remarks
by Scott Russell Sanders
Winner of the 2009 Nature Essay Award

I am deeply honored to receive the John Burroughs Nature Essay Award, all the more so because “Mind in the Forest” appeared in Orion, the magazine that has provided me with a vital community of artists and an inspiring field of ideas for more than twenty years. I regret that other commitments keep me from thanking the judges and the members of the Association in person.

I also thank the editors at Orion, especially Chip Blake and Jennifer Sahn, for their guidance and friendship over the years. And I thank the individuals who made it possible for me to spend time in the company of great trees on the western slope of the Cascade Mountains, where “Mind in the Forest” was conceived—Kathleen Dean Moore and Charles Goodrich of the Spring Creek Project at Oregon State University, and Fred Swanson of the U.S. Forest Service. My sojourn in the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest was one in a projected 200-year series of residencies by writers, who will compile a record of observations to complement the observations made by scientists and foresters.

When interviewers ask whether I consider myself a “nature writer,” I like to say that I am an Earth writer. Although I often direct my gaze and my imagination out into the cosmos, my prime subject is life on this planet. Not just human life, but all life. We shouldn’t need a label for writing that recognizes our place as creatures living amid countless other crea-
tures, here on this gorgeous, resilient, marvelous globe. John Burroughs showed us that there is no contradiction between an interest in human works and an interest in wildness. On the contrary, he demonstrated in essay after essay that we cannot understand ourselves as individuals or as a species without understanding the natural matrix out of which we arise. Like all of our fellow species, we are made of Earth, powered by sunlight, shaped by weather and landscape. Our bodies are attuned to the sensations and patterns of this brimming world. The writing published by Orion, the writing honored by this award, seeks to enrich our understanding of who we are and where we dwell. I rejoice in being part of that effort.

Excerpt from the Award-Winning Nature Essay “Mind in the Forest: An Intimate Encounter with Really Old Trees”

by Scott Russell Sanders

(Orion, November/December 2009)

I TOUCH TREES, as others might stroke the fenders of automobiles or finger silk fabrics or fondle cats. Trees do not purr, do not flatter, do not inspire a craving for ownership or power. They stand their ground, immune to merely human urges. Saplings yield under the weight of a hand and then spring back when the hand lifts away, but mature trees accept one’s touch without so much as a shiver. While I am drawn to all ages and kinds, from maple sprouts barely tall enough to hold their leaves off the ground to towering sequoias with their crowns wreathed in fog, I am especially drawn to the ancient, battered ones, the survivors.

Recently I spent a week in the company of ancient trees. The season was October and the site was the drainage basin of Lookout Creek, on the western slope of the Cascade Mountains in Oregon. Back in my home ground of southern Indiana, the trees are hardwoods—maples and beeches and oaks, hickories and sycamores—and few are allowed to grow for as long as a century without being felled by ax or saw. Here, the ruling trees are Douglas firs, western hemlocks, western red cedars, and Pacific yews, the oldest of them ranging in age from five hundred to eight hundred years, veterans of countless fires, windstorms, landslides, insect infestations, and floods.

On the first morning of my stay, I follow a trail through moist bottomland toward Lookout Creek, where I plan to spend half an hour or so in meditation. The morning fog is thick, so the treetops merge with gray sky. Condensation drips from every needle and leaf. My breath steams. Lime-green lichens, some as long as a horse’s tail, dangle from branches. Set off against the somber greens and browns of the conifers, the yellow and red leaves of vine maples, bigleaf maples, and dogwoods appear luminous in spite of the damp. Shelf fungi jut from the sides of old stumps like tiny balconies, and hemlock sprigs glisten atop nurse logs. The undergrowth is as dense as a winter pelt.

Along the way, I reach out to brush my fingers over dozens of big trees, but I keep moving, intent on my destination. Then I come upon a Douglas fir whose massive trunk, perhaps four feet in diameter at chest height, is surrounded by scaffolding, which provides a stage for rope-climbing by scientists and visiting schoolchildren. Something about this tree—its patience, its generosity, its dignity—stops me. I place my palms and forehead against the furrowed, moss-covered bark, and rest there for a spell. Gradually the agitation of travel seeps out of me and calm seeps in. Only after I stand back and open my eyes, and notice how the fog has begun to burn off, do I realize that my contact with this great tree must have lasted fifteen or twenty minutes.

I continue on to a gravel bar on Lookout Creek, a jumble of boulders, cobbles, pebbles, and grit scoured loose from the volcanic plateau that forms the base of the Cascade Mountains. Because these mountains are young, the slopes are steep and the water moves
fast. Even the largest boulders have been tumbled and rounded. Choosing one close to a riffle, I sit cross-legged and half close my eyes, and I am enveloped in water sounds, a ruckus from upstream and a burbling from downstream. Now and again I hear the thump of a rock shifting in the flow, a reminder that the whole mountain range is sliding downhill, chunk by chunk, grain by grain.

Although I have tried meditating for shorter or longer stretches since my college days, forty years ago, I have never been systematic about the practice, nor have I ever been good at quieting what Buddhists call the “monkey mind.” Here beside Lookout Creek, however, far from my desk and duties, with no task ahead of me but that of opening myself to this place, I settle quickly. I begin by following my breath, the oldest rhythm of flesh, but soon I am following the murmur of the creek, and I am gazing at the bright leaves of maples and dogwoods that glow along the thread of the stream like jewels on a necklace, and I am watching light gleam on water shapes formed by current slithering over rocks, and for a spell I disappear, there is only this rapt awareness.

Each morning at first light I repeat the journey to Lookout Creek, and each time I stop along the way to embrace the same giant Douglas fir, which smells faintly of moist earth. I wear no watch. I do not hurry. I stay with the tree until it lets me go.

When at length I lean away, I touch my forehead and feel the rough imprint of the bark.

© 2009 by Scott Russell Sanders. Scott Russell Sanders is Distinguished Professor of English at Indiana University Bloomington. He earned a previous JBA Nature Essay Award in 1999 for “Through the Eyes of a Hawk” (Audubon, July-August 1999). Among his other honors, he was named the 2009 winner of the Mark Twain Award bestowed in recognition of a body of creative work by The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature. His most recent book is A Conservationist Manifesto (Indiana University Press, 2009).
One of the five books chosen this year actually does “show you the live bird on the bough.” Another book, shows how the scientist can also “enlist your sympathies and arouse your enthusiasm.” All of the books demonstrate a love and appreciation of nature through the beauty of their words and images, and the passion of their message. The authors and illustrators continue in the Burroughs tradition of sharing a love and appreciation of nature with young readers.

It is our pleasure to introduce you to the John Burroughs Association’s

LIST OF NATURE BOOKS
FOR YOUNG READERS FOR 2009

Cycle of Rice: A Story of Sustainable Farming, by Jan Reynolds, with photographs by the author (Lee & Low Books Inc.); Grades 3-5.

In Cycle of Rice, the young reader is introduced to rice farming on the island of Bali. For centuries, these rice farmers have produced a major food crop by using practices in harmony with the natural world. The author uses well-chosen, colorful photographs to accompany her interesting text about Balinese agricultural, religious, and cultural practices. The last section of the book introduces the young reader to rice farming on the island of Bali.
book shows how those practices have faced challenges from those who have attempted to replace traditional ways with modern technology. This book could well spark a young reader’s interest in other people and their cultures.

**What Bluebirds Do**, by Pamela F. Kirby, with photographs principally by the author (Boyd’s Mill Press); Preschool-Grade 4.

What do bluebirds do? Any one who has ever watched a bluebird take a bath in a rain puddle probably has wanted to know a lot more about these little birds with big personalities! Pamela Kirby has brilliantly captured the mating season of a pair of Eastern bluebirds in text and photographs. The pair built a nest in a nest box Kirby built in her backyard. She photographed the birds from a nearby blind and was able to get clear and remarkably close-up photos of all aspects of how the pair raised their chicks. The text is easy to read yet remarkably complete with all of the details you might wish to know. The last section of the book provides a wealth of further information about bluebirds.

**Whaling Season: A Year in the Life of an Arctic Whale Scientist**, by Peter Lourie, with photographs by the author (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt); Grades 4-8.

Whaling Season tells the story of one year in the life of John Craighead George (“Craig”), who has studied bowhead whales for nearly thirty years. Craig’s respect and passion for the whales, the Inupiaq Eskimos, and their environment is apparent on each page of this book. The crisp, clear photographs have helpful captions that enrich the well-written and descriptive text. The reader is drawn into the fascinating, cold, arctic environment of Alaska’s North Slope and the everyday life of a man whose “thirst for knowledge about these whales, as well as his desire to answer questions about them, comes second only to his tendency to pose new questions.”

**A Mirror to Nature: Poems about Reflection**, by Jane Yolen, with photographs by Jason Stemple (Boyd’s Mills Press); Grades: 3-5.

Lovely to look at and great fun to read aloud, *A Mirror to Nature* challenges the reader to play with reflection to see creatures and habitats in new ways. Jane Yolen’s use of words is clever and playful. Consider the following poem on a deer: “Oh dear, oh dear, don’t stand reflecting. Run on your swift feet. A deer that stays too long reflecting is a deer called meat.” The poem is enhanced when you can see the deer in question in the accompanying photo considering what to do next!

**The Riverbank**, by Charles Darwin, illustrated by Fabian Negrin (Creative Editions); Grades 3-6.

The elegant last four sentences of Charles Darwin’s seminal book, *The Origin of the Species*, seem like an unlikely choice for the text of a children’s book. Yet when placed alongside Fabian Negrin’s beautiful, lush watercolors, the words seem to invite a child to investigate their full meaning. Inquisitive children might well use The Riverbank as a stepping stone to explore the ideas put forth in a book that changed the scientific world when it was published 150 years ago. Definitions of the major terms used are listed at the back of the book in the order of their appearance in the text. This is a lovely, well-designed book worth keeping for a long time.
Dark Walk on the Wild Side

By Gary Noel Ross

When reading about the outdoor adventures of John Burroughs and other iconic naturalists such as John Muir and even President Theodore Roosevelt, I have often wondered whether those pioneers in virgin America had potentially deadly encounters with reptiles, and if so, what their reactions and emotions were. I wonder about such things because I have spent a lot of time conducting fieldwork with butterflies in places where venomous reptiles pose a real danger. Indeed, my life-long home in southern Louisiana has no less than six species of venomous snakes: cottonmouth (water moccasin), copperhead, coral, and three kinds of rattlesnakes.

When I was a teenager, my mother insisted that I always dress to safeguard myself from snake-bite whenever I took to the field—even if it were just a walk down a nearby railroad track in the outskirts of New Orleans. My standard field attire included loose-fitting heavy trousers, long-sleeved shirt, and calf-length, lace-up leather boots—or as mother called them, “snake-proof” boots. And I carried one of those popular snake-bite kits that consisted of a string tourniquet, a small lancet, and rubber suction cups. Fortunately, I never needed it.

In the summer of 1962, at the age of twenty-two, I began my graduate studies in Mexico. My project involved a survey of the butterflies of the Sierra de los Tuxtlas (“Los Tuxtlas”), an isolated, poorly known volcanic range in southeastern Veracruz. For the first six months I lived in a rented house on the shore of picturesque Lago Catemaco. My Mexican neighbors were quick to warn me of a common local snake able to kill a human within minutes following its bite. They called it _la sorda_ (“the the deaf one”). The name—always spoken in hushed tones—referred to the snake’s tendency to remain motionless when approached.

As if that weren’t enough to scare me, I met an older gentleman, named Juan, who moved with a decided right-legged limp. He had been bitten decades earlier by a small _sorda_. Because he had been able to secure medical attention quickly from a local physician and because the snake was a juvenile, the bite proved non-lethal. “But as you can see,” Juan told me, “I can’t use this leg.” He then pulled up his right pant, revealing that all the muscle tissue had atrophied, leaving only discolored skin covering bone.

By consulting my traveling library of references, I learned that the _sorda_ is scientifically known as fer-de-lance (_Bothrops atrox_), a ground-dwelling pit viper found throughout the American tropics, related to the bushmaster and rattlesnake. The name fer-de-lance, of French derivation, means “lance head,” referring to the arrow-shaped head of most vipers. The fer-de-lance has vertical eye pupils, as do all pit vipers. Other common names include _barba amarilla_ (Spanish, referring to the pale yellow chin color of adults) and _nauyaca_ (Nahuatl, literally “four tips,” referring to the two nostrils and the two sensory pits below the eyes).

Individuals are heavy bodied and commonly attain lengths of five to six feet. They are basically grayish brown highlighted with large triangular blotches of black, brown, tan, and cream, a coloration that provides camouflage within ground litter. Feeding mainly on small rodents, birds, and amphibians, the snakes haunt both forests and disturbed areas such as cornfields and coffee, banana, and sugarcane plantations. They are easily agitated, striking rapidly and repeatedly. Their venom, potent and quick acting, targets blood and muscle tissue. A single bite can deliver between 129 and 342 mg of venom (50 to 62 mg is usually lethal to a human). The fer-de-lance is responsible for the most human deaths by a reptile throughout Central and South America, largely owing to the snakes’ tendency to seek prey in agricultural areas. All in all, herpetologists consider the species to be the most dangerous of all snakes in the Western Hemisphere.

The _sorda_ became my new arch-villain. The specter of this serpent became the stuff of many a nightmare. During my waking hours, I made sure to maintain my teenage dress protocol when searching for butterflies, even though such duds were uncomfortable in the hot syrupy climate. As an added precaution, while in the field I made it a point to walk only fifteen to twenty feet at any given time before pausing to scrutinize the ground ahead of me. That served me well, but on one occasion I lowered my guard, and I can recall the results nearly five decades later with heart-thumping clarity.

It was late August 1962, not long after my arrival in Los Tuxtlas. The bulk of the lands surrounding the lake and bordering roadsides had been deforested to
establish pastures and milpas (fields cyclically planted and left fallow). Those open, conveniently accessible areas usually were ablaze with sun-loving flowering plants and, naturally, butterflies. From an academic vantage point, however, real “prizes” in the tropics are found in less disturbed environments such as secondary and virgin forests. Such shadowy habitats, though, are usually difficult to approach. Los Tuxtlas proved no exception. That said, there was one sizable swath of pristine forest covering several ridges and hillocks and accessible from a dirt road connecting Catemaco to the Gulf of Mexico.

And so on a morning with little hint of clouds, I hitched a ride in the back of an open truck transporting beverages. I chose to be dropped off beside a pasture fenced with barbed wire. The fifteen to twenty acres had been cleared in typical slash-and-burn fashion, but since the surrounding slopes were relatively steep, the forest there had been left undisturbed. That Forest Primeval was my target, but first I had to cross the intervening pasture, knowing full well that rural cattle—bulls in particular—were suspicious of over-dressed, light-toned strangers carrying butterfly nets. I lingered outside for thirty minutes, eased my way under the fence, and inched along the perimeter to avoid spooking the animals.

That obstacle cleared, I found the forest to be intact, perhaps even virgin. The vegetation was stratified and taxonomically diverse, including a fair sampling of tall, buttressed trees that pierced the high canopy. Trunks and limbs of most trees were heavily carpeted in sprays of bromeliads and orchids, many in bloom. Tarzanesque lianas dangled and looped throughout the greenery. The ground was rocky and latticed with the feathery fronds of diminutive palms and ferns, but the plants were sufficiently spaced so as not to impede my walking. The brown leaf litter sheltered a goodly number of small toads, which hopped away to avoid my advancing steps.

The butterfly diversity was gratifyingly good, including such exotic showstoppers as clearwinged ithomiids, longwinged heliconians, and the dazzling metallic blue morpho (Morpho helenor montezuma). Yet what caught my attention was a species of medium-size butterfly that somewhat resembled the zebra longwing (a basically dark butterfly with with yellowish/light-green bands that is common in peninsular Florida and southern Texas). I had seen one of these unfamiliar striped butterflies on an earlier occasion, but had failed to net it. Here was my chance, with many individuals flying slowly close to the ground. After netting a few specimens, I determined that all were females and members of the family Pieridae ( sulphurs/whites). To my delight, I then saw other butterflies—forewings white with black borders, hindwings basically white—descending to the ground within a shaft of sunlight filtering through a gap in the canopy. Once near ground level, these “whites” (which resembled the imported cabbage white butterfly of North America and Europe) began pursuing the darker, striped individuals in typical courtship behavior. I netted one, two, and ultimately six individuals. All were males and sported the same underwing pattern found on the darker females. I knew I was dealing with a dimorphic species. (I later determined it to be Pieriballia viardi, a shade-loving species.) With no time constraint, I dallied in paradise.

But all Edens have their serpent. I was standing perhaps a hundred yards or so up a slope, removing a specimen from my net, when I heard a dull THUMP near my feet. Looking down, I saw nothing. I concluded that one of the toads so common in the area had bumped into one of my boots while attempting to clear out of my path. Therefore I returned to the business at hand. Another THUMP! Again I cast my eyes to the ground, and again I saw nothing. By chance, my gaze moved onto a fern frond arching to the ground only about fifteen inches from my feet. Without changing stance, I tilted my head slightly to better view beneath the frond. There, its own gaze transfixed on my legs, was a three- or four-foot-long coiled serpent, its upper body elevated in a characteristic “S” striking pose. The snake gave no hint of motion or sound. Head—large and arrow-shaped; eye pupils—slit-like; jaws—yellow; body color—dark with diamond-shaped blotches. FER-DE-LANCE! BARBA AMARILLA! NAUYACA! SORDA!

Those two previous “thumps” had been the sounds of the snake striking one of my boots! I froze in abject freight, heart pumping wildly, my forehead breaking out in a cold sweat, my body shaking uncontrollably. “Act NOW!” I thought, but my mind went blank.

Thank God for instinct! With eyes riveted on the snake, I tensed every muscle in my body, bent my legs slightly, and jumped backward as rapidly as possible.
sible. Simultaneously, the *sorda* launched its attack, but because of the distance, missed. With the third strike thwarted, I paused to take stock of my situation. I felt no burning sensation in either leg—at least not yet. So, I raced downhill toward the forest edge. (I now realize that was a dangerous decision because I could have stumbled and hurt myself or, worse, stepped on another snake—but I was panicking.) Even the cattle in the pasture didn’t slow me down. Only when I reached the road did I stop to catch a second wind.

I still was experiencing no signs of envenomization. Nevertheless, I sank into the dirt on the edge of the road in order to check my boots. I could discern two sets of pinhole-like injection sites practically side-by-side, barely below the collar on the outer side of my right boot. A stain was visible beneath the pricks, likely from a rivulet of venom. Not satisfied, I removed the boot to check my leg. Mercifully, no marks! I concluded that I had been at the maximum limit of striking range, so that the fangs barely contacted my boot. Just an inch or two closer and the outcome might have been deadly.

I remained in Los Tuxtlas for my allotted time without having additional encounters with a “deaf one.” But I NEVER returned to the patch of forest: I had learned to avoid temptation!

*Gary Noel Ross is a Research Associate at the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity, Florida Museum of Natural History (University of Florida), and Director of Butterfly Festivals, North American Butterfly Association. This story is adapted from “My Scariest Moment in the Field,” by Gary Noel Ross, Southern Lepidopterists’ News 2009 Vol. 31(1), with the permission of the editor.*

**MEMBER HIGHLIGHT**

**Spotlight on Jason Dempsey, Our Naturalist**

Come to the John Burroughs Sanctuary and explore the paths, retracing the trails you often take on a spring evening or weekend afternoon, and you are likely to meet up with Jason Dempsey as he checks on a bluebird box, follows fresh tracks, or assesses a newly fallen tree. Our resident naturalist, Jason lives at the Sanctuary at Pond House. Over the past nine years he has come to know the land there, its inhabit-

ants, and those birds and amphibians that are there just for the season. From the sounds and the sights, Jason is tuned in to the faintest of subtleties. If you are lucky enough to find him out on the trails, ask him about his latest observations and sightings that you might have missed. You can also arrange in advance for an interpretive nature walk with him.

Jason knows the region well. He was born in Kingston, New York, as a third-generation inhabit-

ant of that town, and grew up in the foothills of the Catskills, where he began his education learning about life in the woods around him. Before moving to the Nature Sanctuary, Jason received his undergraduate degree in philosophy at SUNY New Paltz. With his love of the natural sciences Jason went on to earn a Masters in Science Education in hazardous waste and environmental control. For the past seven years he has taught seventh-grade English in the Arlington School District in Dutchess County, New York.

When he became our naturalist, Jason learned that his paternal grandmother, born in 1908, had read Burroughs when she was young. Jason’s eyes were opened wider and he began his journey, getting to know John Burroughs, the early keeper of this land. The words of John Burroughs are with him as he too has forged a close relationship with the woods. Jason gives us a regular window into the life at the Sanctuary—always personal and intimate—through his Sanctuary Reports, “From Pond Side,” that are often featured in *Wake-Robin*. His interactions with many of the creatures living in the Nature Sanctuary are constant.
Jason shares his deep knowledge of the natural world surrounding Slabsides with the many groups that take advantage of the educational component we offer. His interpretive guided nature walks may just take you back to the time of John Burroughs. You will hear the same bird species and observe the same plants and wonders in nature that Burroughs recorded in his insightful essays. You can call the Association at Pond House (845-384-6320) or the main office (212-769-5169) to set up a hike for your club, class, or family.

JBA Member
Joins Kayaking Adventure

Successfully carried out from August 2 to 17, 2009, The Great Champlain-Hudson Paddle was held by the Hudson River Valley Greenway to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Hudson’s and Champlain’s explorations of the waterways that now bear their names as well as to celebrate and promote the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail. The Paddle started in the Fort Edward area and journeyed 192 miles to Manhattan along the Champlain Canal and the Hudson River.

JBA member Roger Donegan joined the group on August 8 in New Baltimore, New York, and participated in the Paddle as far as Yonkers. In writing up an account of his experience, “Thirty Seven Leagues to the Zee,” he had occasion to refer to John Burroughs:

Placing the loaded kayaks on the water, one or two at a time, was a group effort, with four people always completing the carry, one on bow and stern, and one on each side by the cockpit. As this process generally took some minutes to set some twenty something kayaks and paddlers on the water, patience required a hove to the side or floating in a back eddy until the group formed up.

Before this ritual was completed on Saturday morning a young American bald eagle came down and alighted in a tree bough over the launch ramp. There could not have been a more memorable omen to the adventure. We were to see eagles often throughout the day, and daily for the remainder of the paddle. I quickly became attuned to the bald eagle’s call, which is not unlike an osprey’s. Houghtailing Island fronting New Baltimore is one known eagle nesting area.

Belonging to the John Burroughs Association since the 1970s, I am familiar with his writing retreats, his Catskill haunts, his family farm site and final resting place in Roxbury, and with the content of his twenty-nine books. In Burroughs’s time American nature writing had reached a formidable dimension. As an author and prodigious magazine writer he was known to criticize other writers for embellishing wildlife observation with human traits. With that in mind consider the following excerpt from the “River View” chapter in his seventh volume, titled Signs and Seasons (1886):

“The eagle seldom or never turns his back upon a storm. I think he loves to face the wildest elemental commotion. I shall long carry the picture of one I saw floating northward on a large raft of ice one day, in the face of a furious gale of snow. He stood with his talons buried in the ice, his head straight out before him, his closed wings showing their strong elbows, a type of stern defiance and power.”

The Paddle was organized by Scott Keller, The Hudson River Valley Greenway’s Trails and Special Projects Director. Keller's journal of the trip as well as the full text of Donegan’s journal are available online from the organization’s Web site (go to www.hudson-greenway.state.ny.us/Trailsandscenicbyways/GHRP/GHRPStories.aspx). Elsewhere on the Web site you can learn about the Greenway’s upcoming activities.

The Hudson River Valley Greenway is a regional state agency charged with creating a locally based regional planning compact and developing a multi use trail system, which includes hiking, biking, and water trails. The Greenway also runs the upcoming Ramble in which the JBA is participating (see our calendar on page 20). And The Greenway manages the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, a federal program whose mission is to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley.

The Desert Year Back in Print

The University of Iowa Press has announced that in November it is issuing a new edition of The Desert Year, by Joseph Wood Krutch. Originally published...
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 mission of the John Burroughs Association by becoming a member. Patron and benefactor memberships reflect an even greater interest and provide valuable support. Stewardship of the John Burroughs Sanctuary can happen with your contribution.

Tax-deductible dues for the membership year April 1, 2010, through March 31, 2011

- Student $15
- Senior $15
- Annual $25
- Family $35
- Additional Gift of $________ for the John Burroughs Sanctuary
- Gift Membership of $_____ for (name and address): ____________________________

To Donate By Credit Card: We can now have membership payments and donations made by credit card through the NYCharities Web site. Go to NYCharities.org, type in “John Burroughs” to get the JBA listing, and click on it. Click on the “Donate Now” button to make a donation or pay membership dues. Add a 3 percent handling fee when making your contribution.

To Donate By Check: 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. We are a 501 (3)c tax exempt organization.
Group shot, from left: Hannah Erlich, Erica Zappy, John Sprague, Franklin Burroughs, Jenny Lando, Susan Burroughs, Michael Welland, Maria Hernandez, Vittorio Maestro, Lisa Breslof, Andy Boyles, Paul Lewison, Robert Abrams, Jack Padalino, Jane Yolen, Jan Reynolds

Left to right: Franklin and Susan Burroughs, Michael and Carol Welland, and Julianne Warren (a descendant of John Burroughs, Warren is Master Teacher of Science at New York University)

Volunteer Dr. Merryl Kafka (left) with Jane Yolen, author of A Mirror to Nature

Michael Welland with Board President Emeritus Jack Padalino

Board member Regina Kelly, left, with Lisa Breslof

Photos by Denis Finnin
published in 1952, the book earned its author the 1954 John Burroughs Association Medal.

Although Krutch—often called the cactus Walden—came to the desert relatively late in his life, his curiosity and delight in his surroundings abound throughout *The Desert Year*, whether he is marveling at the majesty of the endless dry sea, at flowers carpeting the desert floor, or at the unexpected appearance of an army of frogs after a heavy rain. This edition contains thirty-three exacting drawings by noted illustrator Rudolf Freund that are closely tied to Krutch’s uncluttered text.

Krutch’s trenchant observations about life prospering in the hostile environment of Arizona’s Sonoran Desert turn to weighty questions about humanity and the precariousness of our existence, putting lie to Western denials of mind in the “lower” forms of life: “Let us not say that this animal or even this plant has ‘become adapted’ to desert conditions. Let us say rather that they have all shown courage and ingenuity in making the best of the world as they found it. And let us remember that if to use such terms in connection with them is a fallacy then it can only be somewhat less a fallacy to use the same terms in connection with ourselves.”

**Sharp Eyes VI Examines Burroughs and Other Nature Writers**

*By Jeff Walker*  
*JBA Board Member*

“Old Lessons for a New Millenium: Nature Writing and Environmentalism in the 21st Century,” the sixth conference in the Sharp Eyes series, was held at SUNY Oneonta June 7-11, 2010. The conference was very ably convened by Daniel G. Payne, Professor of English at that university.

The meeting began Monday with a sumptuous lunch and an opening keynote address by Julianne Lutz Warren (New York University), entitled “Remembering Nature as Hope.” After another great meal Wednesday evening John Elder (Middlebury College) presented the closing keynote. In between the two keynotes were talks presented by attendees of the meeting on a variety of topics, including John Burroughs and his contemporaries, such as Ernest Thompson Seton, as well as contemporary authors such as Barry Lopez, Loren Eiseley, Mary Oliver, Aldo Leopold, Edgar Pangborn, Margaret Atwood, Mike Roselle, Paul Watson, Rick Bass, Mary Borden, and Jim Harrison. A session on contemporary Appalachian Nature Writing completed the eclectic scholarly program.

Field trips during the conference included an afternoon excursion to Woodchuck Lodge on Tuesday, and a daylong field trip to Kaaterskill Falls and the site of the Catskill Mountain House on Thursday. Evening events included screening of a movie about Ora E. Anderson, and readings by the Slabsides poets (who will be featured at the upcoming Slabsides Day, October 2, 2010).

Honors for farthest distance traveled were shared by George Main (Australian National Library, Canberra), who spoke on Dame Mary Gilmore, and Klyth Soo-Hang Tan (independent researcher/writer, Singapore), who spoke on the last remaining wilderness in Singapore.

The next Sharp Eyes conference will be held in the summer of 2012. The location is yet to be finalized, but we hope that it will be hosted by the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. Watch for more details.
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 next issue of *Wake-Robin* is November 1. Direct inquiries to the editors.