

## Seneca Rocks Birdathon 2005

Report from Janice Horn

What do you do on Fri. the 13<sup>th</sup> in May? Probably not spend 17 hours looking for birds as Margaret Buckwalter and I did. Janice Grunenwald joined us in the morning which began before 5 a.m. As I was on my way to her home a **robin** flew across the street ahead of me. As usual it was my first species of the day.

We joined Margaret and then went to the Rapp farm where we were relying on our "birding-by-ear" skills and heard **woodcock**, many **field sparrows**, **song sparrows**, a **brown thrasher**, and **chipping sparrows**.

From there we went to Paint Mills Road which always provides us with many species. The sun was rising so we were seeing, as well as hearing, the birds. This year proved to be as good or better with **wood thrush**, **chickadee**, **ovenbird**, **tufted titmouse**, **blue jay**, **winter wren** (in some hemlocks and our very first on a birdathon), **scarlet tanager**, **Baltimore oriole**, **white breasted nuthatch**, **mourning dove**, **rose-breasted grosbeak**, **starling**, **downy woodpecker**, **barn swallow**, **turkey**, **red-winged blackbird**, and **cardinal**. All of those were between Rt. 66 and the bridge on Paint Mills Road and many of them were at the feeders that one family provided. By the time we crossed the bridge we had added **crow**, **northern rough-winged swallow**, **goldfinch**, and **phoebe**.

Turning on Benner & Schimp Road we found **English sparrow**, **eastern meadowlark**, **common yellowthroat**, **rufous-sided towhee**, **broadwing hawk**, and **bobolink**. Sharp-eyed Janice G. saw the bobolinks in a field just before we reached Rt. 208 and was especially excited because they were the first she recalled seeing. There were other birds along the road that we saw but were unsuccessful in identifying. At John Street's home we declined his generous offer of breakfast and a chance to find more birds from chairs on his deck. We had to be on our way.

We brought out our breakfasts at Margaret's house and watched for more species in her backyard. Coming to her feeders in addition to some we had seen already were **junco**, **hairy woodpecker**, and **ruby-throated hummingbird**.

On the Gamelands south of Shippenville on School Street there were **northern flicker**, **tree swallow**, **grackle**, **chestnut-sided warbler**, and **indigo bunting**. This area has often been more successful but the warblers were late in coming, so we didn't find as many.

Continuing our search we went to the Beaver Creek ponds where we saw a **red-tailed hawk** sitting in the top of a tree, **killdeer**, **Canada geese**, and **yellow warblers**. One of the well-established ponds probably will not yield many ducklings or goslings because a pair of snapping turtles were doing what they need to do to produce more of their kind. We were fascinated by the maneuverings of these large creatures.

There was still a little left of the morning so we went to Walt Fye's ponds and on the way we saw a **kestrel** sitting on a utility wire and a **turkey vulture**. At the ponds we found **mallards**, and **purple martins**. Lunch time had come and Janice G. had to leave us. She's probably surprised that she had spent 8 hours looking for birds with us and we enjoyed having her join us. I hope the time went as fast for her as it did for us.

Margaret and I went to our favorite birdathon lunch spot, "the Mehrton", where we relaxed and surveyed the area while having lunch. It netted us a **red-bellied woodpecker**, **red-eyed vireo**, **yellow breasted chat** (another first for us on a birdathon), and a **pileated woodpecker**.

It was time to move on so we went to Kahle Lake where Margaret found at the far end of the lake with the use of her scope a **great blue heron** stretching out its wings and sunning itself. We also located **blue birds**, **ring-billed gulls**, and a pair of **common loons**. Our afternoon was shorter than our morning and we were ready for dinner, so we met Roger at Gringo's North to eat before setting forth again.

We started our evening search on Popetown Road and added a **least sandpiper** at a farmpond, a **purple finch**, and **rock pigeons**. Our goal was to get to Mt. Airy to find an **upland sandpiper** which we did. At Mt. Airy or Mt. Zion we also found **northern mockingbird**, **eastern kingbird**, and **Henslow's sparrow**. We also saw an eastern meadowlark which in the morning we had only heard.

There were several species we thought we should have seen or heard, but we were pleased with having found 64 species and all in Clarion County. On years when we had greater numbers we had gone to Pymatuning to locate more water and shore birds.

The money the chapter raises through this fundraiser will go to support education and conservation efforts in this area and to the work of Audubon Pennsylvania. We appreciate all of the contributions that people make. Thank you everyone.

It is always wonderful to be able to spend time with friends, learning from a long-time birder and sharing the experience with someone new to the birdathon craziness. Sadly Margaret announced that this would be her last one. I have relied on her knowledge about birding for a long time and am very grateful to her. Thank you Margaret.