

# Seneca Rocks Drummer



February, 2005

Newsletter of the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society

Volume 21, No. 5

*A Chapter of the National Audubon Society*

[www.senecarocksaudubon.org](http://www.senecarocksaudubon.org)

Next Meeting – February 14  
Room 249, Peirce Science Center  
Refreshments & conversation at 7:00 p.m.  
Program begins at 7:30 p.m.

**Sara Fitzsimmons**

## **The American Chestnut Foundation**

by Gary Edwards

The American chestnut tree once dominated over 200 million acres of eastern hardwood woodlands from Maine to Florida and west to the Ohio Valley. The chestnut blight, a lethal fungus infection imported on Asian chestnut trees in the early 1900s, essentially killed the entire American chestnut population.

The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) was founded in 1983 by a group of scientists who recognized the economic and forest ecology impacts of such a loss. In 1989, a backcross breeding program was initiated at TACF's Wagner Research Farm in Meadowview, Virginia with the goal of breeding the blight resistance of the Chinese chestnut tree into the American chestnut tree.

This month's program features Sara Fitzsimmons, TACF's Tree Breeding Project Coordinator at

Penn State University. Sara will explain the backcross methods being used, outline the progress to date, and share with us TACF's hopes for the future of this sorely missed natural resource. Please join us for an interesting and informative evening. (For more chestnut info, see p. 3)

**SRAS Midwinter Bird Seed Sale** - see order form on page 7. Order by Feb. 18. To order from Oil City Agway, contact Gary Edwards.

## **Field Trips**

by Ron Montgomery

The first Sunday after the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox (Easter to the pithy) falls on the same weekend as we normally schedule our Conneaut Marsh outing, so I have moved the latter into April (I tried unsuccessfully to move the former). Please mark the following on your new calendars!

Sat, April 2	Presque Isle
Sat, April 9	Conneaut Marsh & Pymatuning
Mon, April 25	Oil Creek State Park
Mon, June 20	Atlas Block Busting

For all of these trips we will meet at the field trip location site rather than car pooling. Feel free to

invite guests, but warn them that the weather can be unpredictable. Mike, our intrepid duck guy, will lead both of the following outings. If you have two-way radios, you may wish to bring them.

Saturday, April 2; Presque Isle. We will meet inside Presque Isle State Park in Erie at 9:00 AM (it is 100 miles and 2 hours from Clarion by way of Custards, Rt 79, Rt 20 and Peninsula Drive). Our meeting place is a large parking lot on the right about a mile inside the Park. It is the first obvious place to scope the Lake. We will have lunch in a restaurant and bird until late afternoon, but folks can leave anytime they wish. Let me know if you would like to stay in Erie Friday night and would like a motel recommendation.

Saturday, April 9; Conneaut Marsh. We will meet and begin this outing at the spillway bridge at Custards, off Route 285, at 8:30 AM. We will eat lunch in a restaurant, but you will be home in time for dinner.



## Crow's Nest

by President Deb Freed

### Waiting for Lady Winter

Above my desk hangs a whimsical Mary Hamilton print of Lady Winter scattering snow and calling in the white wolves. Her image has never threatened me since I prepare for the problems and pleasures that come with the season. My snow shovels were stacked and the grit I scatter on my driveway filled the coffee can outside my door. The sleds and skis were ready to go.



*(Green Frog in January  
Photo by Deb Freed)*

What I wasn't prepared for were the mild temperatures and rain that greeted us this New Year. The green shoots and buds that I noticed would surely meet an icy end. The Carolina Wren's "teakettle, teakettle" was loud and clear on January 3rd. Did I hear the birds singing more or was it simply that my ears were not covered with polar fleece? Just after counting a lone robin on my CBC tally, another solitary robin landed near the feeders in my back yard. Three green frogs were hanging out on the rocky ledges of our backyard mini-pond and the goldfish were swimming close to the surface. My senses were picking up too many signs to avoid a mild case of spring fever! I found myself longing for more daylight and the arrival of the migratory birds. I met a lot of happy people who were in the same state of mind. What happened to my usual eagerness to cross-country ski and snowshoe? Would I miss finding tracks in the snow?

Then, without much fanfare, Lady Winter arrived. After clearing the walk and driveway I wasted no time finding some interesting tracks and imprints in the snow. Now I'm wishing for a few more inches for skiing. I guess I'm over my spring fever. I knew you would eventually get here Lady Winter; "Welcome!"

### SRAS Officers

President	Deb Freed	226-4719
Vice-President	Gary Edwards	676-3011
Secretary	OPEN	
Treasurer	Janice Horn	226-7367

### Committee Chairs

Armchair Activist	OPEN	275-2058
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Conservation	OPEN	
Education	Paulette Colantonio	797-2031
Field Trips	Ron Montgomery	764-6088
Hospitality	Janice Horn	226-7367
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Mill Ck/Piney Tract ..	Pete Dalby	782-3227
Newsletter	Flo McGuire	755-3672
Programs	Gary Edwards	676-3011

***Some background info on presenter  
Sara Fitzsimmons -***

Sara is a native of southern West Virginia and studied Biology at Drew University in Madison, NJ. She earned her Master's in Forest and Soil Resource Ecology at Duke University. While working on her master's program, Sara took an internship one summer with the Pennsylvania Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation (PA-TACF). In 2003 Sara accepted a position at PA-TACF, to coordinate activities within the state chapter's breeding program. Her office is centered at Penn State University in University Park. The PA Chapter has grown to over 1000 members and has planted over 20,000 trees throughout Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. Sara is very enthusiastic about her work in helping to return the "redwood of the east" to its proper place.



*Photo, copyright The American Chestnut Foundation, used with permission*

**American Chestnuts**

This chestnut program will be particularly interesting to us at Seneca Rocks, since members Ruth and Karl Schurr found two healthy 15-inch American Chestnut trees near their home in Fisher in the Spring of 2003. Our club has harvested nuts from these trees, both in fall of 2003 and 2004, for TACF. Sara Fitzsimmons has reported that thirty-one healthy trees are growing from our 2003 harvest, in two different orchards.



**PROGRAMS AT COOK FOREST  
STATE PARK**

by Dale Luthringer

Saturday, January 29 at 9:00am

***'Cross Country Ski Cook Forest: Log Cabin Inn-Liggett Trail-Tom's Run Road'***

Please bring your cross country skis and meet at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Center for an interpretive cross country ski trip within the picturesque Tom's Run Valley. Learn how to identify animal tracks in the snow as you ski amongst ancient trees within a secluded section of old growth forested wetland. If the snow conditions aren't good, we'll hike instead. Hot chocolate and a luke-warm center will be available to warm us up! (2hrs)

Saturday, January 29 at 12:30pm

***'Snowshoeing the Cathedral'***

Please bring your snowshoes (not required) and meet at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Center for an interpretive snowshoe hike into the Forest Cathedral. Observe the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest white pine in overall dimensions in the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, learn how to identify old growth forest characteristics and tracks of various animals that call the Forest Cathedral home. Hot chocolate and a luke-warm center will be available to warm us up! (2 hrs)

Visit the Cook Forest State Park website at [cookforestsp@state.pa.us](mailto:cookforestsp@state.pa.us)





## Atlassing Report – Region 30

by Flo McGuire

The first year of the Second Breeding Bird Atlas went pretty well in Region 30. Our Region goes from the New York border down to Oil Creek State Park in the west, and the north end of Tionesta in the east. It is primarily western Warren County (about 45 blocks) but also includes a corner of Venango (about 12 blocks), a corner of Forest (about 9 blocks), part of Crawford (about 11 blocks), and a small corner of Erie County (about 7 blocks). Although I am the official Regional Coordinator, and handling the paperwork, my husband birded with me almost every day. It's great to have a birding companion, and also, when atlassing, it's a big help to have one person to drive and one to read the map and record the data.

## Maine Audubon Camp Scholarship

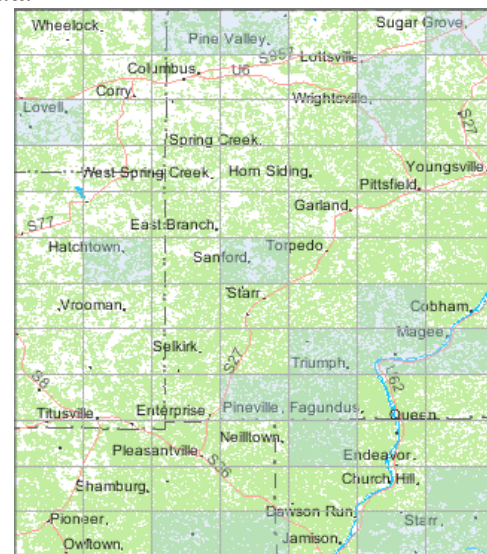
by Deb Freed

Seneca Rocks continues to support educational experiences that connect educators with wildlife and the environment. We view educators as teachers and individuals, 18 years of age or older, who will have the opportunity to share their experience and knowledge within a classroom or community setting.

Hog Island Audubon Camp is a 330 acre coastal wildlife sanctuary in mid-coast Maine staffed with outstanding naturalists and experts in a variety of fields. A choice of one of three summer 2005 sessions is sponsored by Seneca Rocks: Natural History of the Maine Coast July 3 – 9; Field Ornithology June 26-July 2; and Workshop for Educators July 17-23.

The application is available on our website at [www.senecarocksaudubon.org](http://www.senecarocksaudubon.org) (click on Education Opportunities) or by contacting chapter president, Deb Freed at 814-226-4719. Applications are due March 15, 2005 with selection by April 1, 2005. More information about the camp sessions is available at [www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org) or by calling 1-888-325-5261 ext 215.

**Did you know?** E. A. McIlhenny, founder of Tabasco Hot Sauce Co in 1892, created Bird City at Avery Island, LA. Egrets were extremely scarce at the time and he brought in 8 Snowy Egrets. From this stock developed an enormous nesting colony, one of the largest American rookeries.



On this Region 30 map (Page 30 of the DeLorme Gazetteer), the bluish (or darker gray) blocks have been adopted. Two blocks have been chosen for 2005, so 20 are now owned.

The habitat is very diverse – the southeastern corner (Pleasantville to Tionesta to Tidioute) is heavily wooded, but as you move to the northwest, you encounter some wetlands and a lot of farmland. We were glad to find some Amish farms, where you don't have to worry about habitat destruction or chemical methods.

We were fortunate to have some great volunteers in Region 30. With 84 blocks to finish in 5 years, 17 per year would be a good target. Eight of us  
*(continued on last page)*

## Great Backyard Bird Count

from the GBBC web site

During the weekend of February 18 through 21, people across the North American continent are encouraged to count the birds in their backyards and report them over the Internet, as part of the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), one of the world's largest volunteer efforts of its kind. In addition to its value as a research study, the GBBC allows people of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate birds and provide vital information about North America's birds.



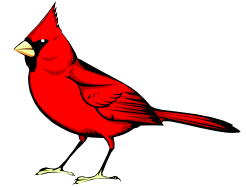
This is the eighth year of the popular event, developed and managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited store owners. People are encouraged to enjoy the birds around

them by going out into the "Great Backyard" during any or all of the count days and keeping track of the highest numbers of each bird species they see. People then report their sightings over the Internet at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc)

"We call it the Great Backyard Bird Count to make the point that anyone can participate," says John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "But really, a 'backyard' can be anywhere you happen to be, a schoolyard, a local park, the balcony of a high rise apartment, a wildlife refuge. No matter where you go in this 'Great Backyard,' you're almost certain to find birds in all their beauty. By participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count, you can help researchers better understand bird population numbers and distribution across the continent."

The web site is full of tips of all kinds, including information on bird feeding; how to use binoculars; how to make your yard bird-friendly; and how to identify birds, especially those tricky, similar-looking species. There are even tips on how to be a bird-friendly family.

Participating is Easy. We need every bird enthusiast in North America to count for the birds! All you need is basic knowledge of bird identification and access to the Internet at home, a friend's house, local library, school, or anywhere you can get access to the Web.



Here's what you do:

- ◆ Count the birds in your backyard, local park, or other natural area on one or all four count days. You can count in as many different locations as you wish, just make sure to keep separate records and fill out a checklist for each area.
- ◆ Watch the birds for at least 15 minutes on each day that you participate. We recommend watching for a half-hour or more, so that you'll have a good sense of what birds are in your area.
- ◆ How to count: Your data will be used by scientists to analyze bird populations, so it is very important that everyone count their birds in exactly the same way. On the day(s) that you count, watch your bird feeders or take a short walk (less than 1 mile) in your neighborhood or park.
- ◆ For each species of bird that you see, keep track of the **highest number of individuals that you observe at any one time**. Use a "tally sheet" to help keep track of your counts.
- ◆ At the end of the day go to "Submit your bird checklist" on our GBBC web site. Fill out the questions about your location, local habitat, and count duration. Then enter your high counts for each species sighted on that day and location. You can submit one bird checklist for each day that you count or for each new area that you count in.
- ◆ Finally, after you've submitted your data, explore our web site. Check our results section to see other reports from your community, and watch as data come in from other areas. Enjoy!

## SRAS Bird Seed Sale

This is your opportunity to purchase quality bird seed from our local Agway dealer and support the conservation, education and environmental activities of the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society. For your convenience, you will have a one week period to pick up your order by checking the SRAS order in the store. If there is any question about your order, please contact Janice Horn.

ORDER BY FRIDAY FEBRUARY 18 , 2005      PICK-UP from MONDAY MARCH 7  
to SATURDAY MARCH 12

Mail this order form with check (payable to SRAS) to:      Seneca Rocks Audubon Society  
c/o Janice Horn  
32 Barber St.  
Clarion, PA 16214

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ SRAS member Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Quantity	Seed Type	Lbs	Unit Price	Total
_____	Classic Blend 55% sunflower	40 lb	\$19	_____
_____	Premium Blend 30% sunflower	50 lb	\$15	_____
_____	Premium Blend	20 lb	\$ 7	_____
_____	Deluxe Blend 25% sunflower	50 lb	\$13	_____
_____	Deluxe Blend	20 lb	\$ 6	_____
_____	Econo Blend 12% sunflower	50 lb	\$10	_____
_____	Econo Blend	20 lb	\$ 5	_____
_____	Finch Treat	50 lb	\$30	_____
_____	Finch Treat	10 lb	\$ 7	_____
_____	Sunflower Blend	50 lb	\$14	_____
_____	Sunflower Blend	25 lb	\$ 8	_____
_____	Black Oil Sunflower	50 lb	\$13	_____
_____	Black Oil Sunflower	25 lb	\$ 7	_____
_____	Grey-Striped Sunflower	50 lb	\$15	_____
_____	Sunflower Hearts	50 lb	\$30	_____
_____	Sunflower Hearts	10 lb	\$ 8	_____
_____	Peanut Hearts	per lb	\$.85	_____
_____	Cracked Corn	per lb	\$.35	_____
_____	Niger Seed	25 lb	\$19	_____
_____	Niger Seed	10 lb	\$ 8	_____
_____	Hanging Suet Feeder	28 oz	\$ 4.50	_____
_____	Hanging P-Butter Suet Feeder	28 oz	\$ 4.50	_____
_____	Beef Suet Cake	12 oz	\$.80	_____
_____	Peanut Butter Suet Cake	12 oz	\$.80	_____

<b>Make checks payable to:</b>	Subtotal	_____
<b>Seneca Rocks Audubon Society</b>	6% tax	_____
Donation to Seneca Rocks Audubon	<b>Total</b>	_____

*(Continued from p. 5)*

atlassers worked on eighteen blocks in 2004, and I believe all the data has been entered. The highest number of species per block was 83 in Spartansburg 6. Highest number of confirmed species per block was 48(!), by Terry Ashbaugh in Tidioute 5. The total number of species found in all blocks of Region 30 last summer was 118.



“Species of Special Concern” found in Region 30 included a Bald Eagle nest, a Great Blue Heron rookery, and a Swainson’s Thrush. The “Regional Rarity” species found include: Alder Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo (nest-building), Red-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, and Grasshopper Sparrow.



### Upcoming Programs & Events

- March 14 – Scott Stoleson, “Birds of New Mexico”
- April 11 – Dave Brinker, Northern Goshawks
- May 9 – Membership Celebration, Timberwolf Lodge
- May 20-22 – PSO Annual Meeting in Clarion**



### Hosting our upcoming meetings

- February – Jim Wilson & Gary Edwards
- March – Fran and Jack Williams
- May – Kathy Pokrifka

### The second year of the Atlas Project has begun!

Great Horned Owls are now “safe”. If you haven’t tallied one in your block yet, please listen. Dusk and midnight seem to be good times to hear them hooting – step outdoors and listen for a few moments. February is an opportune time to confirm a Great Horned Owl, by looking for their nests in the leafless woods. If you find a large nest, take your binoculars and look closely - there might be an ear tuft showing.

SENECA ROCKS AUDUBON SOCIETY  
C/O SHERRY YOWINCKEL, MEMBERSHIP CHAIR  
59 MAPLE DRIVE  
SHIPPENVILLE, PA 16254