



THE DRUMMER



www.senecarocksaudubon.org

March/April 2019

Volume 35, No.3

Travel to Africa with SRAS in March and April



Photos by Jeffrey Hall



Tanzanian Tapestry

Jeffrey Hall

March 13 Program

Serengeti...Ngorongoro Crater...Olduvai Gorge...Zanzibar...Lake Victoria. These names conjure up images of nature at its most exotic. A visit to these and other sites in Tanzania reveals the majesty of the elephant, the grace of the cheetah, the stunning power of the martial eagle, the kaleidoscopic beauty of the lilac-breasted roller, and so much more.

(continued on page 2)

Birds of Southern Africa

MarLa Sink Druzgal

April 10 Program

"Traveling MarLa" brings you the colorful, crazy birds of southern Africa. Bird calls will accompany the photo and video presentation by MarLa Sink Druzgal. See and hear the bird with "The Call of Africa," and listen to folklore, stories of the unique backyard birds of South Africa, and behavioral accounts of the vibrant, flying wildlife of southern Africa. Presentation will include an exhibit of crafts and other items, along with a Q&A following the talk.

(continued on page 2)

(Tanzania, continued)

“Tanzania Tapestry” will share photographs, facts, and legends from this East African nation.

Jeffrey Hall is active in the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society and is President of the Bartramian Audubon Society. He has presented a number of programs for SRAS, on subjects as diverse as Patagonia, Alaska’s Pribilof Islands, and the Galapagos Islands.

Preview and Sample of Tanzania -

Jeffrey Hall has created two Youtube videos relating to this program. The first (shorter) one is a preview, the second (longer) one is more of a sampler. Enjoy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTdS5AlfXhk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNq-fS7eEqs>

2019 Winter Raptor Surveys – Venango County

~ Gary Edwards

This year the Venango County winter raptor survey results were a mixed bag, bad and worse. Jim Wilson, Nick Kolodick, and I tallied just nine raptors on the South Route, the second lowest total in 19 years (five red-tails, one red-shouldered, three kestrels). The average is 22. The North Route total was somewhat better. Russ States, Nick Kolodick and I managed 11 red-tails, one eagle, one red-shouldered and one kestrel. The North Route was established five years after the South Route. This year’s total is three below the 14-year average.

The *Drummer* is the newsletter of Seneca Rocks Audubon Society (SRAS), PO Box 148, Clarion, PA 16214. SRAS is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. The *Drummer* is published 4 times per year – September, November, February, and April.

The *Drummer* is available on our website in Adobe pdf and may be read or downloaded from the site —

www.senecarocksaudubon.org.

Members are encouraged to contribute announcements, articles, photos, etc., to Editor Flo McGuire, 609 Ponderosa Lane, Tionesta, PA 16353 (814 755-3672) or email at

fmcguire1@verizon.net.

(Southern Africa, continued)

Bio: MarLa Sink Druzgal, an Indiana County native, is a freelance writer, teacher, digital photographer, and global explorer. With an undergraduate degree from IUP, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Chatham University, she puts her diplomas to work through her published stories, poems, and travel essays. In addition to writing and photographing her travels, MarLa is a part-time adjunct professor, and workshop instructor in both the United States, and South Africa. She is dividing her time in 2019 among living in Indonesia, the United States, and South Africa where she is helping to create a new Travel Writing curriculum with Sol Plaatje University. When she's not chasing birds, her free time is spent revising a manuscript about her years living and traveling throughout southern Africa. Follow her work on her website:

TravelingMarLa.com

Book Project Wrap-up

~ Paulette Colantonio

The Clarion County Garden Club and Seneca Rocks Audubon recently purchased books for elementary school and public libraries in Clarion County. This year, librarians chose titles from a list of 10 books including poetry, folktales, historical fiction, science, and ecology. 13 organizations were contacted about this annual book project. Librarians selected 4 titles from the list to enhance student learning and collection development issues. Six elementary schools responded, including Allegheny-Clarion Valley, Clarion Limestone, Keystone, North Clarion, St. Joseph, and Union. Clarion Free Library, Foxburg Library, and Knox Public Library completed the list of respondents. In addition, the Seneca Rocks Audubon donated books to West Forest Elementary School and Oil City Public Library. A new slate of books will be offered again in the fall of this year.

Our meetings are held at the Clarion Free Library, lower level. Come early to socialize— programs begin at 6:30 pm.



American Tree Sparrows were scarce on our CBC this year. Photo by Meg Kolodick

32nd Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

~ Gary Edwards

On December 15, 2018, 20 mobile participants in nine vehicles and 22 feeder watchers participated in our 32nd annual CBC. The day was pleasant and the rain held off until early evening. With no snow, the birds were scattered. The total number of birds tallied, 5,038, was the lowest since count year No. 1 but we managed 54 species, two above average. All in all there were more positives than negatives.

The highlight was a new species for the count, a Bufflehead, spotted by the team of Jeff Hall, Jennifer Conner, and newby Tabby Shah who also saw the only White-crowned Sparrow. The next new species will be No. 100, quite a feat for a count averaging just 54. Northern Harrier and robin, missed last year, were found but, after 30 consecutive years, Ruffed Grouse was missed the last two years. One Short-eared Owl, our trade mark species, was disappointing after 11 were tallied last year and several were seen the week prior to the count.

Feeder watchers again made significant contributions. Among the 482 birds they added to the final number were the only Common Grackles, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks.

Other notable positive reports include:

2 American Black Ducks, reported for just the third year;

164 Mallards, a new high;
2 Common Mergansers, last seen in 2009;
1 Short-eared owl, Mal Hays & Larry Towse saved the day;
1 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, last seen in 2010;
4 Common Ravens, 2nd highest count and becoming a regular—5th consecutive year;
21 Carolina Wrens, a new high;
2 Common Grackles, last seen 2013; and,
2 Evening Grosbeaks, last seen in 2008, before that 1998.

On the other side of the coin were some disappointments:

0 Ruffed Grouse for the 2nd consecutive year;

0 Northern Flickers for 3 of the last 4 years, only five misses in 32 years;

15 American Tree Sparrows, a new low, our 10-year average is 127;

230 Dark-eyed Juncos, only our first CBC was lower, our 10-year average is 714.

Field birders were: Jennifer Conner, Pat Conway, Joanne Crosbie, Kurt Crosbie, Pete Dalby, Don DeWolf, Gary Edwards, Deb Freed, Jeff Hall, Mal Hays, Ann Hunt, Nick Kolodick, Mike Leahy, Flo McGuire, Jim McGuire, Eva Palmer, Tabby Shah, Larry Towse, Jim Wilson, and Carole Winslow.

Feeder watchers were: Carol Best, Jack Best, Hendrika Bohlen, Cindy Bonner, Deborah Call, Vicki Daniels, Sue Faunce, Carolyn Frampton, Jolene Frampton, Ben Freed, Layne Giering, Vickie Goatskie, Brad Grant, Delores Grant, Susan Joy, Terry Morrow, Phyllis Morrow, Kathie Poprifka, Ruth Schurr, Barb Songer, Alice Thureau and Dee Wenner.

Next year, Debbie McCanna will be taking over as CBC compiler. It's been fun, but it's time to pass the torch. Let's make Debbie's first year memorable by getting species No. 100. Thanks for your support.



A few lucky local birders saw Philadelphia Vireos migrating this fall. Photo by Meg Kolodick

Clarion County Fall 2018 Bird Sightings

~ Carole Winslow

Locations: Curllsville (CV), Kahle Lake (KL), Mount Zion/Piney Tract/SGL 330 (MZ), New Bethlehem (NB), Rimersburg (RI), Redbank Valley Trail (RVT), Sarah Furnace (SF).

Two **Long-tailed Ducks** and one **Common Goldeneye** were both found on Redbank Creek at NB 11/30 (MM), species that are much more commonly located on large bodies of water. A species not previously noted much in the seasonal summary, **Ruffed Grouse**, will probably need to be added more often, not due to increased sightings but just the opposite. A single grouse was reported this fall near RI 8/7 (MM), and it constitutes only the second report of the year for the county in eBird, not a promising statistic for the state bird. **Red-necked Grebes** are becoming a little more regular as migrants, most commonly on KL, and a single bird was again reported there 11/2 (KD, BG, DK).

A **Common Nighthawk** watch was once more conducted along the Clarion River at Millcreek

from 8/14-9/7, from approximately 6:30 pm-8:30 pm each evening (MH, LT, GE, TS, JH). The period of highest numbers was from 8/23-31, with the highest total of 271 birds 8/26. Numbers were recorded for half hour intervals and consistently 7:30-8:00 pm was the peak time. The total count for the season was 710, topping last year's number of 567. Hopefully as this watch continues in the future, more useful information will be obtained on this declining species and might be able to be contributed to a larger effort to understand population changes. Another report of this species was from East Brady overlook, with seven seen at dusk migrating along the Allegheny River 8/27 (CW). Two **Eastern Whip-poor-wills** were noted calling remarkably late into the season, at a breeding location near Strattanville from 9/14-19 (MH).

At a fall roosting site in RI, **Chimney Swifts** continued rather late into the season with approximately 75 still present there 10/11 (MM). A single adult **Sandhill Crane** was spotted in fields near Tylersburg 9/16 (MH). This is not far from where breeding evidence was found in Venango County and as there is suitable habitat, it seems hopeful that breeding will eventually be confirmed for the county. A **Double-crested Cormorant** was spotted at NB between 8/12-10/29, rather an unusual small body of water for this species (J&AK). At this same location, a **Great Egret** was seen between 8/13-17 (J&AK, MM).

Reports were down for the year for **Northern Harriers**, and this continued into fall with only one reported at MZ 8/3 (MS). Hopefully this is more due to lack of observers than a real trend. In what is an early report for **Rough-legged Hawks**, a light-morph bird was seen at one of their winter strongholds near Wolf's Corners 11/23 (KS). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was

Visit us on Facebook!
<https://www.facebook.com/SenecaRocksAudubon>

noted outside of RI, responding to a whine call during a targeted search using playback 10/30 (MH).

Only a single sighting of **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** was noted, with one seen near CV 9/4 (CW). An **Acadian Flycatcher** continued calling late into the season at a breeding location along the RVT at Lawsonham, still present through 8/31 (CW). Typically an uncommon species, a **White-eyed Vireo** was noted at MZ 8/3 (MS). Two **Yellow-throated Vireos** continued singing at known breeding locations along the RVT at Lawsonham through 9/4, unusually late, although it is impossible to be certain that these were the same individuals present through summer (CW). A **Philadelphia Vireo** was found near CV 9/22 (CW), and another seen at SF on the Armstrong Trail 9/23 (TR), during their typical migration period.

In a late breeding attempt, two adult **Cliff Swallows** were found with an active nest located in a large equipment barn near Clarion 8/13 (RM, GS). Two **Brown Creepers** were noted at a suet feeder at a home in Strattanville 11/1, where there have been two birds present each winter for the past six years (MH). They continued to be seen there regularly through the remainder of the season. **Winter Wrens** are yearly nesters in the northern reaches of the county, but not as regularly seen in migration, so it is worth noting two together near CV 10/19 (CW).

In what has proven to be the best year in some time for **Evening Grosbeaks**, the first report was of birds at a feeder in Strattanville 11/7 (LT). They continued regularly through the

season there with numbers up to 12, feeding on sunflower seeds at platform and hopper type feeders. At what has become a regular breeding and year-round location for **Purple**

Finches in RI, this species has continued to be successful with numbers this fall reaching a high of 32 in a single day, and remaining present throughout the season (MM). **Pine Siskins** were noted at a feeder in Clarion with 14 birds 10/14 (TS), and were also reported at feeders in RI (MM). Numbers there ranged up to eight and were present from 9/27-11/31.

Two **Lapland Longspurs** were seen in a field near KL 11/9 (JS), always a species worth noting as they occur in limited numbers each year. **American Tree Sparrows** were conspicuously

absent from feeders near CV where they are usually present, with only a single bird first noted late in the season 11/29 (CW).

Henslow's Sparrows showed typical numbers for the past year, and they continued actively singing at MZ into early fall. Sixteen were reported there 8/3 (MS), and a single singing bird near CV through 8/21 (CW). Only one **Lincoln's Sparrow** was noted this year, found at a weedy field edge near CV 10/18 (CW).

An unusual fall warbler was a **Mourning Warbler** reported near CV 9/12 (CW), more typically reported in spring. At the same location on the RVT where several other species were still actively singing into early fall, **Yellow-throated Warblers** can be added to the list. Two singing males were present 8/12 and one still remarkably singing 8/17 near a breeding location (CW). A single **Prairie Warbler** was reported rather late into migration for this species, but at a breeding stronghold at CV strips 9/23 (TR). The last warbler of note was an adult male **Canada Warbler**, not a commonly reported fall warbler, near CV 9/12



Prairie Warbler, photo by Meg Kolodick

(CW). A **Scarlet Tanager** was also seen at the late end of migration in a yard in RI 10/5 (MM).

Observers: **Carole Winslow, 159 Moggey Rd, Sligo PA 16255, (814) 745-3818, cjwinslow94@gmail.com**, Karyn Delaney, Gary Edwards, Deb Freed, Barbara Griffith, Mal Hays, Janice Horn, Deborah Kalbfleisch, John and Avis Keener, Ron Montgomery, Mark Moore, Theo Rickert, Greta Sawyer, Michael Schall, Tabassam Shah, K Springer, Jerry Stanley, Larry Towse.



Male Evening Grosbeak, photo by Jeffrey Hall

Tracking Evening Grosbeak Winter Movements

(From the PABIRDS listserv)

Evening Grosbeaks have been a recent regular winter occurrence in my hometown of Marienville in Forest County, appearing during 7 of the last 11 years. With a 92% decline since 1970, Evening Grosbeak shows the steepest decrease among all continental land birds in the U.S. and Canada (Partners in Flight 2016) with little explanation as to why.

This winter the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP) at the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Powdermill Avian Research Center at the Carnegie Museum of

Natural History are collaborating to study winter and migration movements of Evening Grosbeaks in and around the Allegheny National Forest. By color-banding and deploying nanotag radio transmitters on select Evening Grosbeaks, we aim to learn more about this species via the Motus Wildlife Tracking System and resighting banded birds.



Female Evening Grosbeak with nanotag radio transmitter. Photo by Jeffrey Hall

Over the years many birders have enjoyed viewing the grosbeaks in Forest County. With the current irruption of grosbeaks this winter, birds may be encountered widely across the state, and we ask that if you observe any **COLOR-BANDED** or **TAGGED** birds, please report them to us!

When you encounter Evening Grosbeaks, especially in western Pennsylvania, pay particular attention to the legs and take note of any color band combinations and look for a long thin antenna extending from the back/ rump area for any tagged birds.

Please include date, time, location (address and GPS coordinates), and most importantly, COLOR-BAND combination/NANOTAG transmitter presence.

Identifying photos of birds are great!

Email observations and photos to dyeany@paconserve.org.

For anyone wishing to visit the Evening Grosbeaks this winter in Marienville:

1. Please contact me via phone, text, or email (#814#221#4361 or dyeany@paconserve.org) to arrange a visit, as we are actively conducting research at the site.
2. Please view birds at the feeding station from the sidewalk near the blue spruce at the corner of the yard. Please do not enter the yard. Parking may be available at municipal lot behind the Quick-N-Easy, on-street, or at the church (if not in use).
3. Finally, please submit an eBird checklist! Share any color-banded Evening Grosbeaks with me at dyeany@paconserve.org.

We appreciate any additional observations of Evening Grosbeaks from our project as we try to learn more about this declining nomad from the boreal forest!

David Yeany II
Conservation Planning Specialist/Ornithologist
Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy



Bald Eagle photo by Flo McGuire

Upcoming at Seneca Rocks

Our annual field trip to **Conneaut Marsh** will be led by Mike Leahy. **It will be held on Saturday, either March 16 or 23 depending on the weather forecast.** The date will be announced at our March 13 meeting and by email.

Birdathon Dates will be May 4 thru May 12.

The **Oil Creek State Park Warbler Walk** will be led by Mal Hays on **May 11**. Meet at the Blood Farm Day Use Area at 8:00 am.

Our May 8 program will be **"Raptor Banding on the Allegheny National Forest"** by Don Watts of Warren, PA.

For June 12, we are planning a program about **Piney Tract**, including the history of this famous local birding hotspot.

There will be a National Audubon photography exhibit at Jennings Environmental Center April 3-24.

Eagle Watch Cook Forest State Park

Sunday, March 3 at 8:30am to 12:30pm

Please bring your binoculars and spotting scopes to the Park Office for a driving tour to eagle hotspots along the National Wild & Scenic Clarion River. This is the prime time of the year to view bald eagles on their nests and find new nesting sites. Expect a long car-pool and aggressive hike to some of the better areas, but the rewards will be worth it. Hot chocolate and coffee will be available at the Park Office to warm us up.

SRAS Blue Seal Bird Seed Sale

This is your opportunity to purchase quality birdseed from our local **Blue Seal** dealer and support the conservation, education and environmental activities of the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society. Blue Seal will offer a 15% discount on bird feeders, suet cages and nyjer sacks when you pick up your order. There are two store locations: J&J Feeds on Route 66 midway between Marianne Corners & I-80 and J&J Feeds Brookville on Allegheny Blvd across from the old Agway Store

ORDER BY FRI, FEB 15 PICK-UP from SAT, MAR 2 to SAT, MAR 9

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 _____ E-mail _____

City _____ State PA Zip _____

Please indicate your pick-up location: Brookville _____ or Shippenville _____

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Seed Type</u>	<u>Lbs</u>	<u>Unit Price</u>	<u>Total \$</u>
_____	Nature's Choice - premium mix with corn	40 lb.	\$ 24.00	_____
_____	Concerto – no corn premium mix	40 lb.	\$ 26.00	_____
_____	Songmaker – economy mix	40 lb.	\$ 21.00	_____
_____	J & J Blend – most popular	50 lb.	\$ 21.00	_____
_____	Black Oil Sunflower	50 lb.	\$ 21.00	_____
_____	Black Oil Sunflower	25 lb.	\$ 13.00	_____
_____	Black Oil Sunflower Hearts	50 lb.	\$ 42.00	_____
_____	Cracked Corn – triple cleaned	50 lb.	\$ 14.00	_____
_____	Cracked Corn – triple cleaned	25 lb.	\$ 8.00	_____
_____	Cracked Corn – once cleaned	50 lb.	\$ 12.00	_____
_____	Cracked Corn - once cleaned	25 lb.	\$ 8.00	_____
_____	Nyjer Seed	50 lb.	\$ 50.00	_____
_____	Nyjer Seed	25 lb.	\$ 28.00	_____
_____	Suet Cakes		\$ 1.20	_____

Make checks payable to: Subtotal _____
 Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
 Note: NO TAX

Donation to Seneca Rocks Audubon _____

Total _____

Upcoming Dates & Events

March 13 — Tanzanian Tapestry by Jeffrey Hall

March 16 or 23 — Conneaut Marsh Outing, begin at Custard's 8:00 to 9:00 am

April 10 — Birds of Southern Africa by MarLa Sink Druzgal

May 8 — Raptor Banding on the Allegheny National Forest by Don Watts

May 11 — Oil Creek State Park Warbler Walk, Meet at Blood Farm Day Use Area

June 12 — Piney Tract program



Cooper's Hawk, photo by Meg Kolodick

SRAS Leadership Team

Deb Freed	Media & Membership	226-4719
Paulette Colantonio	Nature Books	797-2031
Pat Conway	Facebook	752-2036
Gary Edwards	Outreach Pgrms/CBC	676-3011
Jeffrey Hall	Facebook	732-0258
Janice Horn	Treasurer/Seed Sale	226-7367
Mike Leahy	Beaver Creek	229-1648
Flo McGuire	Newsletter & Website	755-3672
Ron Montgomery	Outreach Programs	764-6088
Jim Wilson	Nest Boxes & Feeders	676-5455

“Walk away quietly in any direction and taste the freedom of the mountaineer... Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”

~ John Muir

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
P.O. Box 148
Clarion, PA 16214