



# THE DRUMMER



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

December, 2007

Volume 24, No. 4

**Next Meeting – December 10**  
**Room 150, Becker Hall**  
**Refreshments & Social – 6:30 p.m.**  
**Program – 7:00 p.m.**

## Christmas Bird Count

by Deb Freed

**Saturday, December 15, 2007 –**  
**Meet at BJ's Eatery in Knox 6:00 pm**

## Members' Night

**D**ecember is our traditional Members' Night. Our members spend a lot of time outdoors, and many of them have wonderful nature photos. There is usually a surprise or two, so it is sure to be a fun evening. You're invited to bring anything you would like to share.



Both laptop with projector and slide projector will be available for presenters. If you have photographs, a book, a poster, a new squirrel proof or bear proof feeding station, etc. please let Pete Dalby know by calling 814-782-3227 so that Pete can schedule everyone.



**T**he 108<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count will soon engage over 55,000 observers in Canada, United States, the Caribbean and Latin America. Last year over 2000 counts were submitted. It takes the better part of a year for the data to be summarized and published in the magazine that each reported participant is eligible to receive. The last 20 summaries, written by Geoffrey LeBaron, provide interesting details and trends. The magazine arrived at my house in November. After reviewing a variety of charts, tables and graphs and reading articles by authors like Scott Weidensaul I am primed and anxious to join the census day inside the count circle.



The CBC data will be used in a new study to learn how birds may react to global climate change. Together with Breeding Bird Survey data, the information will provide a good look at over 550 species in North America. According to Weidensaul, "...the CBC is not so much the perfect data set for

such analysis – it's the only one. As the longest-running and most geographically inclusive wildlife study in the world, nothing comes close to the CBC for the breadth of time and space, to say nothing of the range of species, it covers."

SRAS recognizes the significance of the event started by Frank Chapman more than a century ago. It is also fun and has an element of friendly competition. When we gather at the end of the day to compile the total of species and numbers of each species, it's fun to report an unusual sighting or a huge flock of Cedar Waxwings or several hundred American Crows.

If you have never participated and want to get involved, come to the December program or call Deb Freed at 814-226-4719. Several teams are ready to cover portions of the 15-mile diameter count circle and would be happy to have another observer.

Many folks enjoy counting the birds at their feeders. If that interests you, call Ruth Schurr at 814-764-3239. Your feeder location needs to be within the count circle. A map of the count circle is on page 7.

We will meet at BJ's in Knox at 6 pm for supper and tallying the birds.

#### **Also at our December meeting...**

Items for sale:

1. Pre-ordered calendars will be available (\$10)
2. SRAS Patches (\$5)
3. New batch of hats with logo (\$12)

#### **Important birding dates in 2008:**

1. PSO Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh May 16-18
2. Oil Region Birding Festival May 2-4
3. International Migratory Bird Count May 11

**Our Birdathon** will be between May 3 and May 11. This year funds raised by our birdathon teams will be designated for habitat support and improvement at IBA #21, the grassland habitat on SGL 330.

## **Bird Seed Sale Update**

The Fall 2007 Bird Seed Sale totaled 2 2/3 tons (5,256 lbs.) with sales at \$2,413.60. After subtracting the bill from Agway and the postage for contacting non-members we had a profit of \$228.32. In addition we had round-ups and donations totaling \$159.30. That results in \$387.62 to help fund our programs this year. Thanks to everyone who participated.

~Janice Horn

## **Programs at Cook Forest State Park**

by Dale Luthringer



**December 16 at 9:00 am -**

**'Cross Country Ski Cook**

**Forest: Log Cabin Inn-**

**Swinging Bridge'** 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 within the old growth forest at the base of the Forest Cathedral. 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)



**December 16 at 12:00 pm -**

**'Snowshoeing the Forest**

**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 Longfellow Pine, tallest known tree in the entire Northeastern U.S., learn how to identify old growth forest characteristics and tracks of various animals that call this National Natural Landmark home. Hot chocolate and a luke-warm center will be available to warm us up. (2hrs)



Greater Roadrunner by Kirsten Munson  
From Audubon Chapter Resources

## SRAS Southwest – sightings and droppings

Former SRAS and board member Dennis Beaver has relocated to New Mexico and sent us the following article about his “winter” birding.

Backyard birding has been quite different in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. The black-chinned, broad-tailed and rufous hummingbirds have left for the season, and we have taken down our hummingbird feeders. The scaled quail seem to number about a dozen, and the resident greater roadrunner believes he owns the back porch furniture, since he is frequently seen sitting in a chair there. When our sunflowers produced seeds, the lesser goldfinches appeared and devoured the seeds, while the house finches only seem to be interested in the seeds in the feeders. The curve-billed thrasher still wakes us as the sun peeks over the Sandia Mountains.

It must be winter here, because the gray-headed juncos (*Junco hyemalis caniceps*) and white-crowned sparrows have shown up. Since we live on a mesa overlooking Albuquerque, we are surprised that there seems to be a resident Cooper’s hawk, because there are no trees until you get into lower altitudes. Nancy took a picture a week or so ago that in one frame included the neighbor’s black and white cat, the roadrunner who is afraid of nothing, and the Cooper’s hawk sitting on a fence post. We only see Gambel’s quail at lower elevations – our house is at 5,400 feet. We have an abundance of common ravens, but we only

see crows near the Rio Grande where there are cottonwood trees.

Saturday, we went on a bird walk with the local garden club. We saw a lot of sandhill cranes along the Bosque in Corrales, New Mexico, which are just a few miles from our house. The spotted towhee was a life bird for me on an otherwise quiet “winter” morning, with a high temperature of 68 degrees. Waterfowl are beginning to show up along the Rio Grande which has created the rift valley that is the central part of New Mexico. This week is the Festival of the Cranes at Bosque del Apache in Socorro, New Mexico, and we plan to go down for a day or two. We are also planning to go back to Socorro the Friday after Thanksgiving with a group from the Wild Bird store. By then there should be more snow geese, sandhill cranes, and other “light” geese. There are over 500 species of birds that have been recorded in New Mexico, so I think there will be enough activity to keep us busy here.

~Dennis Beaver  
November 12, 2007

## Clear Creek State Park News

A major rehabilitation project is anticipated to begin in late spring 2008 at Clear Creek State Park, Jefferson County. All park day-use activities will continue during construction. More information in our next Drummer.



Did you know?

- ◆ The New World bird with the largest breeding range is the Great Horned Owl.
- ◆ The most abundant bird in North America north of Mexico is the Red-winged Blackbird.

## National Aviary Premieres Indoor Free-flight Bird Show

The National Aviary has added a new indoor bird show to its roster of interactive activities, giving visitors the opportunity to see rare and endangered birds in flight in the intimate setting of the Aviary Atrium.

Flights of the North Shore: Bird Myths and More launches December 1 and features a varied cast, including Sarabi, a Black Vulture; Gryphon, a Snowy Owl; Beatrice, a Green Aracari; and Melon, a Red-fronted Macaw. African Penguins Stanley, Elvis, Patrick and Simon will make individual appearances at each show, with additional birds to be added in coming months.

Each bird will demonstrate natural behaviors and will fly freely just inches above the heads of the audience, giving guests a true bird's eye view. National Aviary trainers will present information on the featured species, their unique adaptations and conservation status, and the threats the birds currently face in the wild. Audiences will have the opportunity to contribute to efforts to protect the birds both in the wild and through the AZA (American Zoo and Aquarium Association) Species Survival Plan.

“This new program enables visitors to experience close interaction with birds they will not see on exhibit or in our popular summer bird show,” says National Aviary CEO Linda Dickerson. “This memorable learning experience will resonate with adults and children alike - the birds fly so close you can see the wonderful detailing in their plumage and feel the rush of wind as they move overhead.

### Piney Tract Sightings

Mike Weible reported 2 small flocks of Common Redpolls at the Piney Tract in early November, feeding in larch trees and white and gray birch. Also, a Northern Shrike, Pine Siskins and large numbers of Purple Finches. On November 9 he located a second Northern Shrike, a brown juvenile, along Mauthe Road. We are fortunate to live so close to such a great area for birds!



### Time to focus on feeders!

The 21st season of Project FeederWatch is underway, but you can sign up at any time. Your counts will help scientists monitor changes in feeder-bird populations over the winter from year to year. New participants receive a kit with a handbook, a bird-identification poster, a calendar, and an instruction booklet.

Join the flock! For more information about Project FeederWatch or to sign up, please visit [www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/) or call (800) 843-2473. There is a \$15 fee to defray the cost of the materials (\$12 for Lab members).

*Note – if you enter your Project FeederWatch sightings via paper forms, you may count 2 consecutive days every 2 weeks. If you enter your sightings on line, you may count 2 consecutive days every week.*

Unusual sightings from last winter include a Western Tanager visiting a feeding station in Baldwin, New York, when the species should have been somewhere between southern California and Panama. A Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch frequented feeders in Longlac, Ontario, located well to the east of other rosy-finches. Numerous Brown Thrashers were reported north of their typical winter range, with confirmed reports from Colorado, Michigan, Montana, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Vermont.





## Winter Raptor Survey

The 2008 Winter Raptor Survey (WRS) will be conducted from January 19 through February 10. This is a one-day road-side survey done by volunteers in each county. This will be the 8<sup>th</sup> year for the survey, which was begun by Greg Grove. Greg coordinates the WRS and analyzes the results.

Greg reports from 2007, "Red-tailed Hawks were found in good numbers...and American Kestrels set a record high, an encouraging sign. However, in the southeastern part of the state, kestrels are not doing well."

If you are interested in participating, please contact: Carole Willenpart ([cwillenpart@windstream.net](mailto:cwillenpart@windstream.net)) in Clarion County, Gary Edwards ([gedwards@csonline.net](mailto:gedwards@csonline.net)) in Venango, Pat Conway ([bkeeper1@alltel.net](mailto:bkeeper1@alltel.net)) in Jefferson, or Flo McGuire ([fmcguire1@verizon.net](mailto:fmcguire1@verizon.net)) in Forest.

You may either join an existing team or design a new route, but the route cannot overlap an existing one.

Greg informed volunteers, "Your efforts at data collection on mid-winter raptor populations in Pa. have been noticed and our results so far are becoming of interest. In particular, I was asked earlier this year to contribute a chapter to a book to be published by the Pennsylvania Academy of Science on Avian Biology in Pa. My topic - wintering raptors and a summary of WRS results and conclusions thus far....The book is to be published in a year or so."

Greg also states, "The Hawk Migration Association of North America - "HMANA" - is pushing for the establishment of WRS projects in other states. At the least, they would like to get routes established and run once in mid-winter, as we have done for 7 years."



## Audubon Watchlist

From the PA Environment Digest website,  
<http://www.paenvironmentdigest.com/newsletter/>

One hundred seventy-eight species in the continental U.S. and 39 in Hawaii have the dubious distinction of landing on WatchList 2007, the newest and most scientifically sound list of America's most imperiled birds, including 6 species found in Pennsylvania.

"Habitat loss due to development, energy exploration and extraction, and the impact of global warming remain serious threats for the most imperiled species, along with others on both the red and yellow lists," said David Pashley, American Bird Conservancy's Director of Conservation Programs and co-author of the new list. "Concerted action will be needed to address these threats."

### **In Pennsylvania, species of highest national concern include:**

- Golden-winged Warbler: The golden-winged warbler is suffering from loss of suitable successional habitat, dense shrubs and young saplings, due to reforestation and development. The species, down 98 percent in Pennsylvania, also faces competition from the closely-related blue-winged warbler, which is expanding its range to the north.
- Henslow's Sparrow: Between 1966 and 2005, Breeding Bird Survey data indicates an average range-wide decline in Henslow's sparrows of 7.9 percent each year. The species has declined by almost 70 percent in Pennsylvania over the past 40 years. Dependent on grassland habitat with standing dead stems, they are threatened by the loss of agricultural land to development and the intensified cropping of remaining farmland. Their highest densities in the Commonwealth now occur on former strip mines that are large, open, and grassy.

### **Pennsylvania species in the declining category include:**

- Semipalmated Sandpiper: This tiny shorebird is a new addition to the WatchList. It depends on mudflats for stopover and staging areas while undertaking its remarkable migration between the Arctic tundra and South America. The loss of stopover habitat is an important factor in its

population decline. At the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, Audubon Pennsylvania has assisted with developing land management techniques to provide additional stopover habitat for semipalmated sandpipers and other migrant shorebirds.

- Short-eared Owl: This ground-nesting owl, which inhabits large open meadows and other open habitats, has declined drastically in Pennsylvania in recent decades due to loss of suitable habitat. Rampant development and changing agricultural practices have been the primary causes of habitat loss for this species, which is currently considered to be endangered in Pennsylvania.

- Wood Thrush: Wood thrushes rely on large interior forests and are threatened by habitat fragmentation, deforestation, and nest parasitism. Each year wood thrushes, down 62 percent in Pennsylvania over the past 40 years, migrate from Central America to the U.S., where Pennsylvania houses 8.5 percent of the world's breeding population. Audubon Pennsylvania is actively engaging landowners and helping them improve their deer management practices as well as advocating statewide improvement to deer management. A deer herd out of balance with Penn's Woods hinders healthy forest regeneration and serves as a contributing factor to habitat loss for forest-dwelling species, like the wood thrush, and other wildlife.

- Cerulean Warbler: The cerulean warbler is found in the forests of riparian valleys and ridge top habitats in the eastern United States. Over the past half century it has steadily declined in numbers primarily due to habitat loss directly associated with numerous types of human activities on both breeding and wintering grounds. In more recent years large areas of both types of breeding habitat have been destroyed through a practice of coal extraction known as mountaintop removal mining. Audubon Pennsylvania supports alternate placement of wind power turbines, many of which are currently sited along ridge tops. Such placement further promotes fragmentation of ridge top habitats utilized by cerulean warblers.

WatchList 2007, a joint effort of Audubon and American Bird Conservancy, reflects a comprehensive analysis of population size and trends, distribution, and threats for 700 bird species in the U.S. It is based on the latest available research and assessment from the bird

conservation community along with data from the Christmas Bird Count and the annual Breeding Bird Survey.



## Breeding Bird Atlas Project

Next year, 2008, will be the 5<sup>th</sup> and final year of the PA Breeding Bird Atlas Project. According to their website, 4,568 out of the total 4,937 blocks have some data. Owned blocks number 3,358, or 68%. Completed blocks number 1,343, or 27%. The number of species reported is 208, with 186 confirmed.

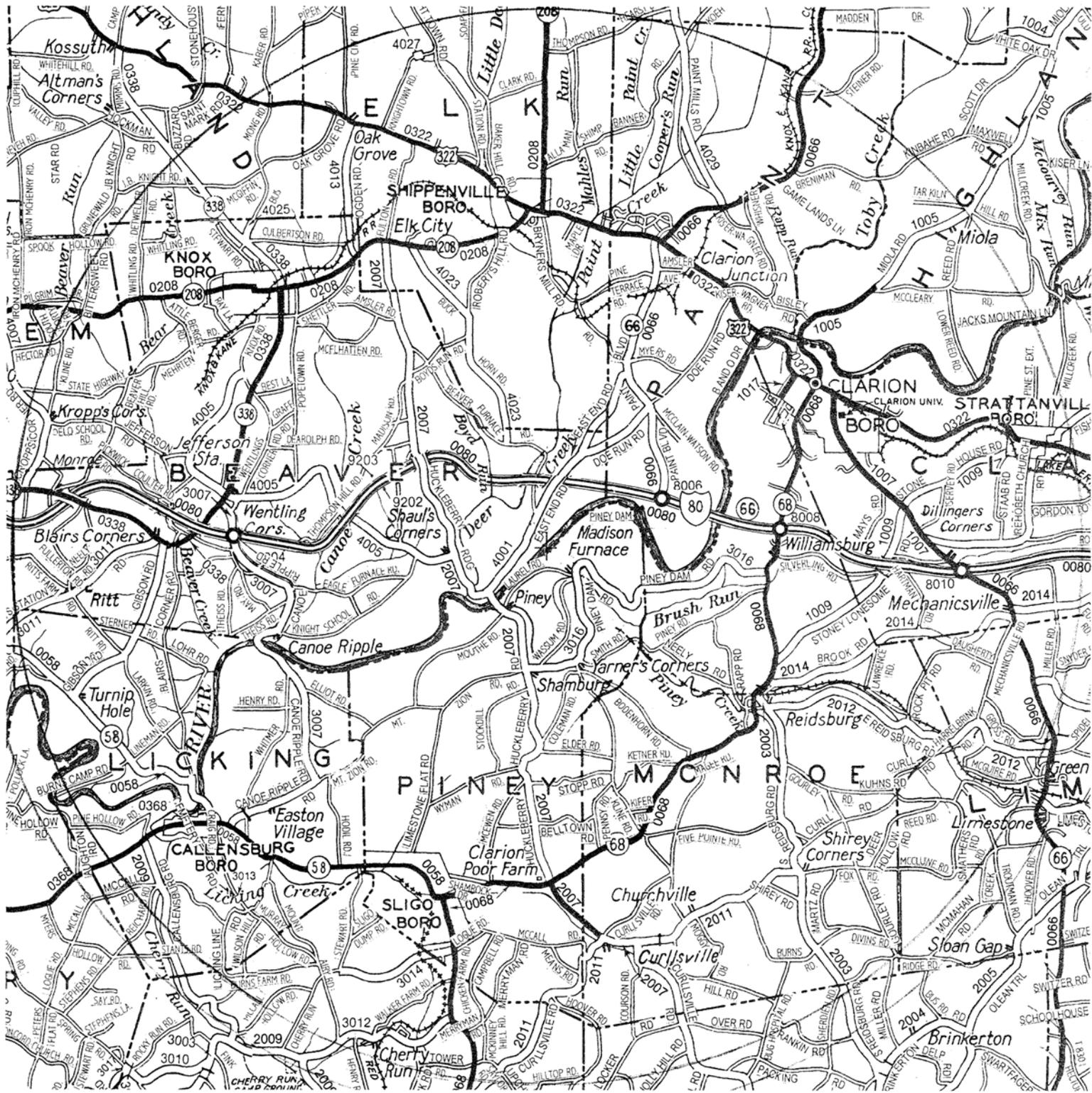
Winter is a good time to review your blocks and see what species you may be missing. Should you plan to go out in March to look for woodpeckers? You might even find a hawk nest then, before the leaves obscure it – you can mark your map and check on it later.

Great Horned Owls will be safe on December 20, so if you hear one, it would be “Possible” in that block. Rock Pigeons are safe all year, Barred Owls come in on January 15, and House Sparrows on February 1.

The breeding season is very short; if you do some planning this winter, you will be glad you did.

### David Sibley Blog

Would you like to read about David Sibley's experiments with an inexpensive way to avoid window-kills? Or his expertise on how to tell if there is a Hoary Redpoll among the Common Redpolls? Check out his blog at <http://sibleyguides.blogspot.com/>.



For more information about our chapter and current updates, please check our website at [www.senecarocksaudubon.org](http://www.senecarocksaudubon.org)



### Looking Ahead

No meeting in January.  
February meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

### Field Trips & Events

Christmas Bird Count -  
December 15

### Hosting Upcoming Meetings:

December - Hendrika Bohlen & Mary Emerick  
February - Joan Magistrella and Carol Riffer

### SRAS Board Members

President --	None	
Vice-president, Programs -	Pete Dalby	782-3227
Treasurer, Birdseed, Birdathon -	Janice Horn	226-7367
Website, Drummer Editor -	Flo McGuire	755-3672
Field Trips, Events -	Jim Wilson	676-5455
Secretary, Membership -	Deb Freed	226-4719
Community Programs -	Ron Montgomery	764-6088
Education -	Paulette Colantonio	797-2031
History -	Pat Conway	849-6315
Mill Creek Coalition -		
Beaver Creek -	Walter Fye	797-1019



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