



THE DRUMMER

www.senecarocksaudubon.org



February/March, 2010

Volume 26, No. 3

February 8 Program

Birding Arizona

presented by **Roger Higbee**

Roger and Margaret Higbee traveled to southeast Arizona in late July of 2009 and visited various birding hotspots, including Patagonia, Madera Canyon, Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, and Cave Creek Canyon. Highlights of their trip included Sinaloa Wren and Brown-backed Solitaire.

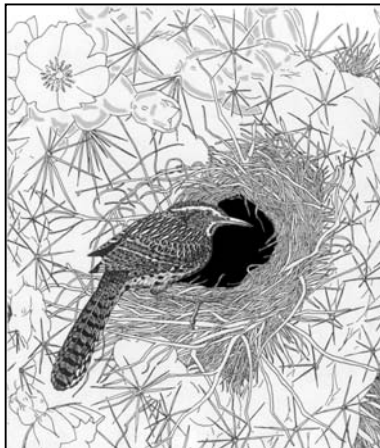
Roger is an engineer for Rosebud Mining in Kittanning, also a long-time member of the Indiana Color Slide Club. Many of his photos have won awards.

The Higbees have taken numerous birding trips to the west, and are among the most well-known and respected birders in Pennsylvania. They were active in the first and second PA Breeding Bird Atlas, and are founding members of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO); Roger is the PSO secretary, and Margaret has edited the PSO newsletter for many years.

Come and relax and enjoy what is sure to be an outstanding program!



SRAS meetings are held on the second Monday of each month
Room 136, Science Technology Center
Social – 6:30 p.m. Program – 7:00 p.m.



Cactus Wren by Steven D'Amato, Audubon Resources

March 8 Program

The History of Our State Parks & Forests

presented by **Marci Mowery**

Marci Mowery, in her new position as President of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, has developed a presentation about the history of the Pennsylvania state park and forest system. This presentation explores the evolution of our state forests from desert-like conditions in the

post lumber boom to the rich natural resource heritage that we have today. It is a combination of interactive and lecture, and serves as a celebration of our natural heritage. The program also explores the benefits of state parks and forests to local economies, human health, and quality of life, and presents some of the threats facing our resources today.

This program is available through a donation from the Heinz and William Penn Foundations.

Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF) began in 1999 as a state-wide non-profit organization

supporting the 117 state parks and 2.2 million acres of forest land. PPFf accomplishes this by providing a means for citizens to donate or bequeath money to parks and forests, promoting and supporting local volunteerism, and through recreation, and education. PPFf has 21 chapter friends groups and supports an additional 14 independent groups throughout the commonwealth. To learn more, visit their website at www.PaParksAndForests.org.

Anyone interested in Pennsylvania's natural history will be sure to enjoy this program.

Thanks to all who participated in the Christmas Bird Count! The report will be in the next *Drummer*.



Chapter News

Ron Montgomery and Gary Edwards will present a program on the history of Piney Tract for the Todd Bird Club in Indiana, PA, on Feb. 2. Their meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. at Blue Spruce County Park, just off Route 110 east of Earnest.

Ron has revised the *Grassland Birding Document* which is on our website, and has also revised the map of Game Land 330, adding road names and making it a lot more user-friendly. You can view or print these from our website.

The *Drummer* is the bi-monthly 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 now published 4 times per year – September, November, February and April.

The *Drummer* is available on our website in color 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.

Cook Forest State Park Bird Checklist Completed

~ Doug Gross,
Endangered Bird Specialist, PGC



(Originally published in *The Pileated, the Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology*)

Margaret Buckwalter can rest easy now. The Cook Forest bird checklist is finally finished and ready for distribution.

We would like to give a special “tip of the field cap;” to Margaret and the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society for running field trips, collecting the bird data, and sending the data to the SAP office. Dale

Luthringer of Cook Forest State Park contributed his own field observations and assisted with finishing the checklist.

Cook Forest is one of the very few places you can find old growth forest in Pennsylvania. Some of the largest and most majestic trees in the state are found in Forest Cathedral, a Registered National Natural Landmark. I count 19 different wood warblers as summer residents there. That must be one of the longest warbler lists for any of the state's parks. The tall hemlocks are home to many Blackburnian and Magnolia Warblers in summer. You can hear songs of Golden-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creepers, and Winter Wrens. The “yank, yanks” of Red-breasted Nuthatches are never far away. The big conifers also provide lots of food for Red and White-winged Crossbills as well as other winter finches. Then, there is the matter of the Clarion River. That stream is getting to be a regular place to see Bald Eagles. And, big woods like the ones in this park can be good places to see other rare raptors. It is a very important place for birds and an inspiration to all of us. No

wonder it is considered a PA Important Bird Area. Make that an important birding area, too.

You may get a copy of the Cook Forest State Park checklist by visiting the park, then go birding and add more data for the list by logging your observations into eBird.



A note about the checklist from Dale Luthringer:

The state has just completed the 'Birds of Cook Forest State Park'. It's been a long time coming. It was only able to be completed through the many years of hard work, data compilation, and patience from many in the birding community. I'd put Margaret Buckwalter and Doug Gross on the top of that list. Without their persistence, this project would likely never have been completed.

Please feel free to pass it along. It prints out alright on 8.5 x 14 paper, 8.5 x 11 will likely be too small for most of us. 11x17 is ideal, but most folk's printers won't handle that kind of paper.

Best Regards and Many Thanks!

Dale

(The checklist can be viewed and/or downloaded from our website – note paper size.)

DRUMMER'S LOG SIGN-UP



If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

If you would like to join a group of potential nature outing companions, then add

your name to the Drummer's Log. These folks would like to be notified of trips to birding destinations or other places of interest to nature lovers. To join, call or email Deb Freed at dfreed208@comcast.net.

Spring Bird Seed Sale!

Order by Feb. 12 -
see the order form on page 9



Great Backyard Bird Count

The next Great Backyard Bird Count will be Friday through Monday, February 12 – 15, 2010. It's free, it's easy! You can participate as little as 15 minutes or as long as you want, watch birds only in your yard or anywhere! You may not see any Roseate Spoonbills in Clarion County, but your sightings are still of interest.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent and in Hawaii. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts.

The object of the game is to tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report your counts, fill out an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site, <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>. The deadline for submissions is March 1st.

As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported from their own towns or anywhere in the United States and Canada. They can also see how this year's numbers compare with those from previous years. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see. A selection of images is posted in the online photo gallery.

Regional checklists and Data Forms are also available on the website. The GBBC also has a photo contest, with 6 categories: Overall, Bird in its habitat, Behavior, Group shot (2 or more birds), Composition, People enjoying birds. See the GBBC website for more details.

Join the folks who submitted 93,629 checklists, observed 619 species and 11,550,200 total birds in 2009.





photo by Carole Winslow

Bald Eagles in Clarion County

~ Carole Winslow

With bald eagle numbers and known nest numbers getting higher each year in PA, it is exciting to know that Clarion County shares in that trend, and that within a short drive of most of us, these beautiful birds are making our county their home. Last year for 2009 there was high record of 172 active nesting pairs for the state, and of course there are some nests not reported in that count. Clarion County has the benefit of having several good waterways through the county with appropriate habitat, such as the Allegheny River on the south and west, the Clarion River running through the center and some nice stretches of water along Redbank Creek on the south.

On July 9, 2008 I heard from Janice Horn about a new nest found along the Clarion River by a friend of Pete Dalby's who had found the nest while fishing and found young ones in the nest. Pete was able to view the nest from a boat and get some initial pictures later in the summer. Since the breeding bird atlas was in full swing this was a great find for within Region 44 and for the county. Later in the fall, with the leaves off the trees, I was able to view the nest from a nearby roadway though from some distance. The nest was very large and located in the open top of a large white pine towards the top of the hillside above the river. It was in an isolated area as far as not near any highway or town, so not much disturbance for the birds here. From the size of the nest it looked as if it may have been used for several years

previously but not been found or reported. I was determined to watch for activity the following spring and hoped to see the birds return.

On Feb 23, 2009, while traveling along the roadway nearby I saw a single adult eagle flying in the direction of the nest, the river was open and my hopes were high. I planned to make regular checks for activity, especially as the viewing was good with no leaves out on the trees for some time. On March 3, I was able to see one adult eagle actually on the nest and moving around, looking to be moving sticks or possibly eggs. I wasn't sure when the nesting might have started so it was hard to tell about the timing of eggs and incubation periods but at least there was activity. As the winter ended and spring began I continued to observe the regular presence of an adult at the nest, sometimes standing but most often sitting on the nest with only the white head visible above the edge. On April 2, the adult present seemed to be moving about more on the nest, but I wasn't able to see any other clues on whether hatching was occurring or some other change. On April 14 an adult remained on the nest and I was still unable to tell if any birds had hatched, although just the presence of the bird indicated that at least the nest appeared to have not failed. Finally on May 1, with some good luck in timing, I was able to confirm that the eagles had had a second successful nesting. My hopes had been dimming as I feared the forest would leaf out making the view too obstructed to see the nest. But while stopping for my regular check of the nest I observed one adult on the nest and then, on hearing the cry of a red-tailed hawk, I looked up to see a second adult bird circling above the river. It then started after the hawk and after a rather brief encounter the hawk took off back east along the river and the eagle flew over and landed on the nest with the other adult. They sat together while the one appeared to preen the other for a few minutes and then one bent over the nest further and I was just able to make out a grayish appearing young bird moving about in the nest. What a thrill to see these magnificent birds nesting so close to my own home and know the nesting was successful, at least to this point. I was able to get some pictures on that day, despite the strong wind, and was able to see the birds

just a few more times over the next week or so, but then with the leaves coming I was unable to see the nest well enough to follow its progress further.

On October 24, 2009. I observed an adult bald eagle once again flying over an open area just across the river from the nest site. Hopefully this pair will continue in the area and return to nest again this year, I know I'm already watching !

Pennsylvania State Park System is Number Ranked #1 In the Nation

The Pennsylvania State Park system joined the ranks of the Pittsburgh Steelers, Pittsburgh Penguins, the Philadelphia Phillies, and the Hershey Bears as National Champions. On October 14th, 2009, in Salt Lake City Utah, the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks won the prestigious National Gold Medal Award presented by the American Academy of Park and Recreation Management in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association, and proudly sponsored by Musco Lighting.

The Gold Medal Award, presented every two years, is the highest honor a park system can receive. Winners are determined by a panel of parks and recreation professionals who evaluate application materials with an emphasis on excellence in long-range planning, resource management, citizen support systems, environmental stewardship, program and professional development and agency recognition. Emphasis is given to addressing the needs of those served through the energies of citizens, staff, and elected officials.

Pennsylvania has 117 state parks and three conservation areas that host more than 35 million visitors each year.

To see the eight-minute video about Pennsylvania State Parks that was part of the award application, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us and choose the "Modern Day Legacy" icon on the homepage. 🐞🐞🐞

Happiness is like a butterfly, which when pursued is just beyond your grasp, but which if you will sit down quietly may alight upon you.

~ Hawthorne



An eager group of Blockbusters

Remembering the 2nd PBBA by Pat Conway

From 2004 to 2009, Seneca Rocks Audubon Society participated in the collection of field data for the 2nd PA Breeding Bird Atlas Project (2nd PBBA). Four members of SRAS were Regional Coordinators for the project; Gary Edwards, Flo McGuire, Carole Winslow and myself. That first year, many of us had never heard of places named Owls Nest or Coder, but by the final year we could find our way, without a GPS, blindfolded or in the dark, to not only Owls Nest and Coder, but Panic and Desire as well.

When I first learned what was required of me as a regional coordinator and saw the accompanying material that went with the job, I was a tad overwhelmed. Fortunately, there were several SRAS members who had participated in the first Atlas Project 20 years prior who were more than happy to help me figure things out. I couldn't have done it without them and my faithful volunteers.

During this five-year time period, topics of conversation via telephone and internet between myself, my volunteers and my fellow Regional Coordinators (RC's), consisted of a whole new language. i.e. *Powdermill...PC...RC... DeLorme's... GPS... NAD 83... USGS... SGL's... Block Sixes... Pishing... Protocols... Toot Routes... Wetland Surveys... Safe Dates... Species of Conservation Interest... % Of Target... Breeding Codes... Observed... Possible... Probable and*

Confirmed...and last but not least... Blockbusting. Whew! In five years we learned what every one of these terms meant and then some. Ten years from now, most of us will have forgotten or won't care.

I hope that even though we forget the forms, charts, graphs, reports, frustration and technicalities involved with the BBA, we will never forget our experiences birding together. In a recent e-mail to my dedicated volunteers, I asked them to share a memory of their BBA participation. I thought it would be good to get some of these memories down on paper. The following are excerpts from their responses:

This isn't earth shaking but for me it comes back as a really happy time; getting up very early on some June mornings, driving down to Cathers Run, sometimes with Karl, and walking up and down the stream hearing birds I knew and some I couldn't identify. It was hard to quit and go home and sometimes I would drive up Iron Bridge Rd. to the enclosure the game commission built. Here were more birds than ever. That block was the most fun of the three I worked in...another great morning was when you took Deb, Ann and I to one of your blocks south of Brookville and we heard at least five veery on one of those wooded dirt roads.

~ Ruth Schurr

I was doing a Toot Route between two farmsteads. While listening to the tape and trying to listen for owls, I had a gentleman approach me... well, scared the scats out of me is more like it as I was concentrating so much and he approached silently! He whispered to me as to what I was doing and I whispered back the answer. He waited silently with me for the tape to finish and we both heard both Great Horned and Barred Owls around the valley. Right before the "Stop" on the tape, we had an answering Saw-whet. He seemed so excited as he explained that he had been hearing the bird on the tape for quite some time and could not figure out what it was...He then explained that he had another owl species on the property and walked me into the back yard where he proceeded to whinny up a Screech Owl..

~ John Fedak

I'm afraid I have no specific memory, but a lasting good feeling about getting out in some of the prettiest habitat one could ever imagine. The maps you so carefully constructed for the teams were almost like treasure hunts each time we went birding. Even poor weather could not interfere with the mission. I remember a wet and dark drive with the windows down only a few inches as we made our way slowly through some deep forest logging roads. Thank you and the other coordinators for your dedication to the BBA. You inspired many of us to get involved.

~ Deb Freed

My fondest memory of the bird watching was one day Aidan and I went with you and Annie. I am so novice at this and my bird identification may never get anywhere near yours and it was funnier than all get out watching the two of you from my "perch" on the back seat. You were driving along, and either you or Annie would hear a chirp or a tweet and yell out, "There's a red eyed vireo" and whammy, the binoculars would fly up to your eyes. Aidan and I were like, "Where? I don't see it do you?" We had NO idea where to look - you and Annie were busy watching and talking and then "Boing" you'd turn your head and spy another bird and the same thing would happen. It was so funny to me. I don't think I saw half the birds the two of you did. I don't know how you kept us out of the ditches. But we sure did laugh a lot. You and Annie have a skill I envy and hope one day, to be just a fraction as adept at it as you two are.

~ Lisa Moore

I have good memories of the Atlas Project. I significantly improved my birding skills, particularly song recognition, and I discovered and very much enjoyed some beautiful areas of Jefferson County. I particularly enjoyed the early morning hours I spent wandering little-traveled forest trails of Clear Creek State Forest. In fact, I enjoyed the setting so much that I had difficulty admitting that I had finished the blocks and should move on. I also found some surprisingly beautiful areas in southern Jefferson Co, near Red Bank Creek.

Then there were the people I had the opportunity to meet. Many asked what I was doing and then gave

me complete access to their land. I was given keys to locked gates and actually encouraged to visit farms anytime. I got the opportunity to show and teach people about the birds that shared their land, and they taught me about farming and forestry and Jefferson county genealogy. More than a fair trade!



Pat & Ron check the map while Ruth looks on

In Potter County I helped an inexperienced birder take a block and enjoyed seeing her & her husband discover the wonderful world of birds and nature. I particularly recall a field coming alive with Woodcock at dusk. Although we all thrill to the display anew each time, the wonderment it brings to the first time observer is special.

And there were the memorable wildlife experiences. Watching coyotes hunting and bears searching for food and suckling young. I watched 5 large bucks in velvet, all 8 points or larger, gather in a heavily forested area along Red Bank Creek and then plunge across in single file. Turtles basking in the early morning sun on a remote pond. Once while I was quietly observing a young owl, a porcupine walked so close to me that I had to shoo it away.

I thrilled finding birds like Henslow's, Grasshopper and Clay-colored Sparrows in fields near my house, and multiple locations for Mourning Warblers in Clear Creek State Forest. A Great Blue Heron rookery in my home block. I enjoyed discovering how common Hooded Warblers are in this area and thrilled to each I found. I finally learned to distinguish the songs of the Willow and Alder Flycatchers!

Pretty wonderful stuff! I never would have gotten up before dawn so often had it not been for the project.

~ Ron Montgomery

Within this region I found to my surprise and delight a great variety of habitats and birds, many more than I had imagined. Agricultural areas, prairie-like grasslands, Riparian corridors with old sycamores and willows, oak and beech forest, tulip poplars and old white pines and hemlocks. Marshes and ponds with swamp sparrows calling and wood ducks and hooded mergansers fleeing from intrusion on their nesting activities. In old overgrown farm fields, orchards and roadsides, orchard orioles fed on apple blossoms, and common yellowthroats and yellow-breasted chats sang from their perches. Willow flycatchers gave their "whit" calls softly from streamsides and kingbirds chattered overhead. In the cooler hemlock-lined streams in larger woods, Louisiana waterthrush bobbed along the rocks, sending out their gorgeous rippling song and magnolia warblers, Acadian flycatchers and winter wrens could often be found nearby, sometimes with all songs in unison. And of course, as this region is known for its grasslands, there were many, many beautiful areas where Henslow's and grasshopper sparrows raised their families, as well as savannah sparrows and dwindling numbers of vesper sparrows. Pine plantations along the edges of these reclaimed strip mine grasslands were found as new homes for prairie, pine and yellow-rumped warblers. Along the larger waterways on sunny and drier hillsides with forested areas, the tiny but beautiful cerulean warblers fed and flitted through the treetops, often with yellow-throated vireos singing alongside and worm-eating warblers giving their buzzy calls from the rhododendrons below. In moist hillsides and lowland forest with good undergrowth, the ringing song of Kentucky warblers could sometimes be heard as well, usually before they were seen. All of these places were contained within this fantastic region that we live in and yet I had been unaware of them, and willing to bet that many more are as well.

~ Carole Winslow

My husband and I were atlassing an unfamiliar area near Corry, driving slowly down a country road with the windows down, looking and listening for bird activity. There was a thick border of trees, vines and shrubbery on the left, evidently with a house behind, because we suddenly heard a voice:

“What are you lookin’ at?”. Jim said “birds” and proceeded to calmly explain about the Breeding Bird Atlas and that we were looking for all birds in the area, especially for signs of breeding activity. A short conversation ensued, the voice replying that there had been some robberies in the area and he was suspicious of strangers, but would remember our car. Needless to say, we did not feel very welcome after having a conversation with a disembodied voice – we headed on down the road, and within a mile noticed in our rear-view mirrors that a man was standing on the road, watching us. We sighed and backed up to speak to him, to tell him about the project. He said “Oh! I had a Baltimore Oriole nest in that maple tree right there – they’re gone now.” After seeing our excitement, he gave us more details – the orioles definitely were feeding young at the nest, so we coded “NY”; he also had a nest of tree swallows in one of his birdhouses, and bluebirds in another, a pair of pileated woodpeckers had been visiting his yard, and hummingbirds were coming to his feeder. These are probably the two extremes of encounters with homeowners, both within a mile and on the same morning. I’m glad we ended with the positive one!

Another time, we were driving carefully, following our topo map in an unfamiliar block, trying to get closer to a stream and some different habitat. We knew we were near a small airport, but were very surprised to see some very stern “no trespassing” signs – and realize that we were already on the wrong side of them! We hastily retreated.

It was Sunday afternoon, June 29 (almost the last day that ALL birds would be “safe”), and we decided to go atlassing in a block that had been adopted but not done. It was already after 3 p.m., and we didn’t expect to see much. The block had some habitat that looked interesting on the topo – a road that meandered down a wooded hillside to Oil Creek and the bike trail at Miller Farm. We had previously tallied a Blue-winged Warbler and Winter Wren along this road, but neither one of them was seen or heard today, so we could not “T” them. As we got to the steep part of the road near the creek, though, we heard a Northern Waterthrush singing, so that was a nice addition to

our list. Then, as we crossed the old iron bridge, we surveyed the creek with our bins and saw a mother Hooded Merganser being followed by 6 young! We watched them for a few minutes as they crossed the creek – they were swimming toward us, but then became wary and went into the brush at the shore. (There were actually 127 instances of confirmed Hooded Merganser in the state, but this was a first for us!) We were still in the clouds from that experience a little while later, when we saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk flying out of the woods and across a field. We also saw a pair of Purple Finches. In two hours, not prime-time birding hours, we had added 4 species, and were able to upgrade another 14 species. As Gary says, timing is everything.

~ Flo McGuire

Personally, I learned a lot from the PBBA over the last five years: I learned that the Daryl brothers are real when my sister Kath and I had a flat tire birding in Loleta one summer day. Daryl and his other brother Daryl showed up to fix our flat. We just made it to the Farmer’s Inn before it went flat again and didn’t get home until midnight. I also learned that... LBJ’s are not the initials of a president... a “target” is not something you shoot at...an RC is not a cola and going looking for wood ducks has two different meanings.

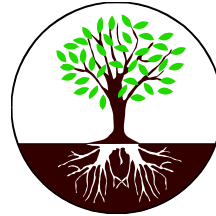


Black Cohosh

I will never forget seeing a red fox move her kits while birding with Flo, the beautiful barred owl I saw with my sister Kath, the phoebe nest in the furnace I saw with Deb, the black cohosh flower my sister Jane and I found along a railroad

track, birding at Buzzard Swamp with Ron and Gary, and the many beautiful birds of Jefferson County, Pennsylvania
- Pat Conway

Thanks for the memories!



Consider the environment and sign up for e-Drummer today! You will save us printing and postage, receive your Drummer earlier and in color! Call or email Deb Freed at dfreed208@comcast.net

More Upcoming Events -

- BIRDSEED SALE - ORDER BY FEB. 12
- Birding Arizona, February 8
- History of our State Parks & Forests, March 8
- Warblers, April 12

NOTICE

Our meetings are now being held in the Science Technology Center, Rm 136.
Park in Lot # 11, across the street from the building.

Hosting our Meetings

January: Hendrika Bohlen and Mary Emerick.

March is open for help.
PLEASE LET DEB FREED
KNOW IF YOU CAN HOST IN MARCH.



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Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
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