



THE DRUMMER



www.senecarocksaudubon.org

May/June 2017

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Dan Gomola Wildlife Photography

May 10 Program

Dan Gomola is a Software Developer with a deep love and understanding of photography, especially wildlife photography. Through the years, Dan has had opportunities in professional, collegiate, and high school sports photography, newspaper photojournalism, and some wedding and event photography. His love of nature and wildlife prevailed and with a busy career and family life, he now focuses on wildlife photography and maintaining his website (www.dangomola.com) and wildlife-related photo essay blog.

Whether it be location, health, or some other reason, not everyone can experience what a wildlife photographer does. Dan's blogs are a lighthearted, conversational way to share interesting wildlife facts, field stories, and photographs with people who cannot have the same experiences. His goal is to take those people on the same journey through his lens.

In the presentation, Dan will speak briefly on his photography background and his interest in wildlife photography. Bald Eagles, Hawks, and Owls will be his primary focus throughout the program and he will discuss his equipment, photography tips, and stories from the field while displaying his photographs.

This will be an interactive session with shared conversation throughout.



Hummingbirds

Judy Acker

June 14 Program

Judy Acker, Outreach Project Coordinator for Audubon Pennsylvania will present on the Ruby Throated Hummingbird while exploring interesting and humorous hummingbird myths. Her talk will include tips for attracting Hummingbirds to your yard--including what native plants they prefer--as well as information about feeders, food and ways to ensure your yard is a safe and nutritious haven for

hummingbirds and other wildlife as well! She will also introduce National Audubon's fun new monitoring program called "Hummingbirds at Home" which utilizes an app on your smart phone to report hummingbird sightings and nectar sources. Acker will provide informational handouts as well.

Judy Acker is the Outreach Program Coordinator for Audubon Pennsylvania in Northwestern PA. Since January of 2012, Acker has been doing in-school, adult and public education programs focused on Hummingbirds, Owls, Forestry for the Birds, Migration, Beginning Birding, Watersheds, Great Backyard Bird Count, Audubon @ Home and Using Pennsylvania Native Plants for Habitat Enhancement. From 1998 to 2011, she was the Director of the French Creek Outdoor Learning Center providing specialized experiential, hands-on programming and curriculum development focused on environmental science for local school district students. Before that Acker worked for the PENNCREST School District for 12 years.



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.

Music of Nature – An Invitation to Listen from Deb

~ Deb Freed

When I went to Hog Island in 2011 as a camper, I met Lang Elliott. He was doing audio nature recordings there. Some time later I came across a new website where Lang posted short segments of these and other recordings. The full-length nature sound recordings are available on CD for purchase under titles such as “Insect Lullabies”, “Birds and Brooks”, “Thrush Flutesongs” and many more. I frequently check out Lang’s newest nature recordings, enjoying the sounds of birds, frogs, insects, streams, or whatever nature provides to the ear. Lang is also a videographer. His on-line library contains short videos of birds, mammals, and amphibians that bring nature remarkably close for the viewer.

Now, Lang has set out on a 6-month recording and videography adventure. His “2017 Soundscape Expedition” is a series of nature recording podcasts from both well-visited destinations and remote locations. The real beauty of listening to Lang’s recordings is that he can focus our attention on the sound at the perfect time of day and minimize any distractions. It’s as if he has fitted the listener with super “nature ear buds”!

His March podcasts come from Louisiana Coastal Marshes, Big Bend National Park and the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The length of the recordings varies from 6 to 13 minutes. Listening can be like traveling to these destinations. Just close your eyes. You’ll find these and future podcasts at www.musicofnature.com . I invite you to visit Lang’s website for your listening pleasure.

Visit us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/SenecaRocksAudubon>

Our meetings are held at the
Clarion Free Library, Lower Level.
Come early to socialize -
programs begin at 6:30 pm.

The Name Game

~Gary Edwards

...Continuing our latest theme.

Common Gallinule - Gallinule is the diminutive form of the Latin **gallina**, meaning hen. So here we have a common little hen.

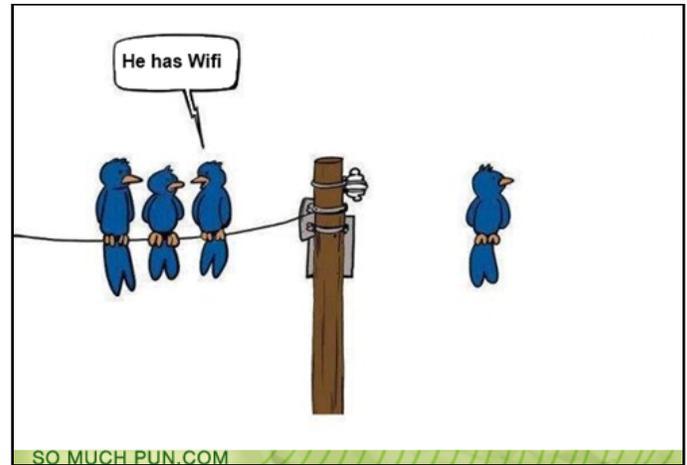
Phalarope - This shorebird's name is from the Greek **phalaris**, meaning coot, and **pod**, foot. So it's a bird with the foot of a coot, that is, lobed. Both birds do have lobed feet. Phalaropes are pretty unique in the bird world in that their sex roles are reversed. Females are larger and more colorful than males and defend their mate from other females. Males do all the incubating and care for the young while the female searches for another mate. One thing isn't reversed - the female lays the eggs. There are three species - Red, Red-necked, and Wilson's (named for early ornithologist Alexander Wilson, not our Jim Wilson).

Bittern - This comes from the Middle English **bitoure**. **Toure** has the same root as **ox**. In 1676, English ornithologist Francis Willughby wrote "It is called by later writers **Butorius** or **Botaurus** because it seems to imitate *boatum tauri*, the bellowing of an ox." -referring to its call. At first I thought this referred to our American Bittern's deep, resonant "pump-er-lunk" call - but 1676 is a little early for that, so he must be referring to the Eurasian Bittern that closely resembles ours and gives a call sounding more like a fog horn than the bull to me. **Botarus** is the genus name for both.

Avocet - Probably from the Latin suffix for small and graceful, **avis**. Pretty well named.

Plover - This one is a real mystery. Plover from the Latin **pluvial**, meaning rain. There have been a number of attempts to explain the relationship between the bird and rain, including: "caught more easily in rainy weather; they haunt rainy places; they arrive in flocks in rainy weather; they have markings on their upper plumage like raindrops; and they foretell rain by their restlessness." None of these hold water (much less rain), but as we've learned from these bird names, this isn't the only name that doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

Pheasant - The word comes from the Latin **phasianus** derived from the Phasis (now Rioni) River in the western Asia country of Georgia. From here the Greeks, under Alexander the Great, imported these birds into Europe. 🐦🐦🐦



Annual Picnic Wednesday August 9th 5 p.m. Beaver Creek Nature Area Pavilion

~ Deb Freed

Seneca Rocks will begin the 2017-18 program year with the annual picnic in a new location. The Beaver Creek Nature Area is located along Route 208 about 2 miles west of Knox. There is lots of parking near the pavilion and facilities nearby.

Seneca Rocks will provide beverages and grilled meats. Everyone is asked to bring table service and a dish to pass.

There are several pathways to explore at Beaver Creek and nest boxes that might be active. Come early to walk and socialize. The dinner will be ready at 5:30 p.m.

This will be your last chance to purchase raffle tickets for the Great-Horned Owl print; the winning ticket will be drawn at the picnic.

Friends and families are welcome. 🐦🐦🐦



Clarion County Birds Winter 2017 Report

~ Carole Winslow

Locations: Curlsville (CV), Mt. Airy (MA), Mt Zion/
Piney Tract/SGL 330 (MZ), Rimersburg (RI)

Two waterfowl sightings are worth a mention for the season, with the first being 2 male **Green-winged Teal** that remained present from 12/28-2/28 on Redbank Creek in New Bethlehem (AB, MH, RH, J&AK, MM). At this same location, 2-4 male **Hooded Mergansers** also spent the winter, being present from 12/31-2/21 (J&AK).

The first raptor of note is the **Northern Harrier**, which once again showed improving numbers, possibly with another mild winter season. A pair was seen at MZ main site 12/1 (SG), and an adult female was there 2/4 (MVT). During a WRS in various areas in the western part of *Clarion*, 5 birds were seen 1/22 (GE, ML). An immature bird was seen at MA 2/3 (F&JM), and on 2/4 two birds were again seen in the area (MH, RH, AB). At least one bird was still being seen regularly at MA through 2/28 (KD, DF, BG, MM, SS, et al.) **Rough-legged Hawks** had an excellent showing this year, which was surprising given the mild weather throughout a good part of the season. The first sighting was 12/12 with a light bird near CV (SG), and the last was 2/17 with a light bird at MA (DD, CW). Reports throughout the season indicate a possible total of as many as 14 different birds, although that is an estimate based on location of

sighting (m.ob.). The total number of birds reported during the 8 different WRS in the county showed 12 individuals, not far off the estimate. Locations for this species included MZ, MA, CV, farm fields outside of New Bethlehem, Ninevah, Lake Lucy/Frills Corners area and RI. Breakdown of morph showed 3 dark 9 light for the WRS and on the other estimate showing 4 dark to 10 light.

American Woodcocks made the earliest return yet based on records available to this observer. Four birds were heard calling and displaying at dusk 2/22 at a known breeding location near CV (CW), and 8 were found displaying at Beaver Creek Nature Area near Knox 2/28 (ML). There were just three areas with **Short-eared Owls** reported this winter. One was found along Stockdill Rd at MZ 12/1 (SG), and 2 were found along Rankin Rd outside of CV 12/5 (CW). During the *Clarion* CBC 12/18, a single bird was again found at Rankin Rd (SC, CW) and 3 were found at MA (PC, DF, AH, MalH, RM). Of the woodpecker species, **Red-headed** is the least commonly reported. The only one noted this year was seen at Riverstone Farm near Foxburg 2/18 (ML). This area has seen the only regular sporadic reports, and would seem to have some appropriate habitat, making it worth more observation time to determine if it might be a possible undiscovered breeder.

Several sightings of **Merlins** were submitted, another species which seems to be trending upwards across the seasons although still rare. One was found and photographed at MA 12/1 (SG), and another outside of Sligo 12/18 during the *Clarion* CBC (PCon, DF, AH). A third bird was seen in Foxburg 2/28 (ML). Once again, **Northern Shrikes** made their winter home in the overgrown shrubby habitat that is plentiful south of I-80. This year they were in three locations, the first at CV strips noted 12/1 (SG), where they are regular. An adult was found at MA 2/2 (RN, CW), and also seen 2/4 (AB, MH, RH, MW, DY) and finally 2/28 (MM). A third bird was found along Packing and Bug Rd outside of CV 2/25 (MiW).

With the lack of much snow cover this year, there were not many reports of field birds. In the northern agricultural areas near Wolf's Corners, a flock of 125 **Horned Larks** was found 1/7 (MD, DY). Eight were found on corn fields near CV 2/2 (RN, CW), and along Rankin Rd also outside of CV, 12 were found 12/12 (SG) and 7 were also found

there 1/9 (AB, MH, RH). Only 2 **Snow Buntings** were noted for the entire season, with those also being located on Rankin Rd 12/12 (SG).

Red-breasted Nuthatch were reported in several spots to start the season, but then numbers seemed to drop by mid-January. In Clarion 12/2 a single bird was reported (TS), and one to 2 birds were present at feeders near CV from the start of December through 1/5 (CW). Two locations had up to 2 birds present through the season, feeders in RI (MM) and near Strattanville (RM). A lingering migrant female **Eastern Towhee** was found in the western part of the county for the *Clarion* CBC 12/18 (GE).

Purple Finches continue to be present at feeders in RI where they are now year-round as resident birds (MM). Numbers vary daily with up to 12 birds seen. A single bird was also reported 1/11 near New Bethlehem (J&AK). The last species of note is one that is rarely reported anymore, **Evening Grosbeak** (fide MalH). A single female was seen at a feeder near Strattanville for one day only in late December, with a photo obtained for documentation (though not seen by this reporter).

Observers: Carole Winslow, 159 Moggey Rd, Sligo, PA 16255 (814) 745-3818, cjwinslow94@gmail.com, John Boback, Anthony Bruno, Paulette Colantonio, Pat Conway (PCon), Sue Courson, Michael David, Karyn Delaney, Gary Edwards, Donna Foyle, Steve Gosser, Barbara Griffith, Mal Hays (MalH), Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Janice Horn, Ann Hunt, John and Avis Keener, MaryAlice Koeneke, Glenn Koppel, Mike Leahy, Flo and Jim McGuire, Ron Montgomery, Mark Moore, Ramona Sahni, Tabassam Shah, Marge VanTassel, Matt Webb, Mike Weible (MiW), David Yeany II.

There is a beauty in discovery. There is mathematics in music, a kinship of science and poetry in the description of nature, and exquisite form in a molecule. Attempts to place different disciplines in different camps are revealed as artificial in the face of the unity of knowledge. All literate men are sustained by the philosopher, the historian, the political analyst, the economist, the scientist, the poet, the artisan and the musician.

*-Glenn T. Seaborg,
scientist, Nobel laureate (1912-1999)*



Programs at Cook Forest State Park

~Dale Luthringer

Saturday, May 6 at 9:00am—‘Friends of Cook Forest Series: Milkweed for Monarchs Planting Event’ Monarch butterflies cannot survive without milkweed; their caterpillars only eat milkweed plants and monarch butterflies need milkweed to lay their eggs. Milkweed continues to decline across the landscape, which negatively affects monarch populations. Please join us at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom for a short presentation before splitting into groups to plant milkweed in a few prime locations in the park. (2 hrs)

Friday, May 26 through Sunday, May 28—Cook Forest Living History Weekend Please join us for a fun-filled weekend of living history as we journey through various historical eras: Medieval, French & Indian War, Lumber Era, Industrial Revolution, Civil War, Spanish-American War, and the War on Terror. Join living historian and master story-teller, Paul Stillman from *Historically Speaking!*, and historical interpreters, Dave Clark and Dennis Knowles, as they take us through these noteworthy periods in history through first person character portrayals, and hands-on demonstrations.

Sunday, June 4, 10:00 am—Children’s Fishing Rodeo Children 12 years and under are permitted to fish freshly stocked Tom’s Run from the Swinging Bridge to the Children’s Fishing Pond. Registration and prize give-away will be held at the Children’s Fishing Pond behind the Park Office.

This event is sponsored by the Marienville Rod & Gun Club, PA Fish & Boat Commission, Cook Forest Vacation Bureau, and Cook Forest State Park. All prizes donated by area merchants. (2 hrs)

Saturday-Sunday, June 10-11 - 'Cook Forest French & Indian War Encampment' Cook Forest State Park will host a series of living history events depicting life during the French & Indian War. Highlights of this full two-day encampment sponsored by the Sawmill Center for the Arts include woodland natives, cannon and musket firing, cooking, primitive skills, 18th century surgical techniques, blacksmithing, tinsmithing, pottery, children's games, sutler camp, renown living historians, French & Indian War Era artisans, and live tactical engagements. Every battle is different! Take a walk back in time along the Black Bear Trail by the Sawmill Center for the Arts during open camp hours to view British, Colonial, French, and Native American re-enactors as they portray lifestyles of the 18th century.

Saturday, June 17 at 1:00pm—'Friends of Cook Forest Series: Susquehannock Hemlock' Please meet at the Deer Meadow Picnic Pavilion at the Deer Meadow Campground for a short presentation on the hemlock woolly adelgid and interpretive hike to view the Susquehannock Hemlock, the Pennsylvania State Champ and largest known hemlock by volume north of the Great Smoky Mountains. (1.5 hrs)

Thursday, June 22 at 10:00am—'Kayaking 201' Please meet at the Park Office for an intermediate skill level kayaking class. Remember to bring your swimsuits, sturdy river sneakers, change of clothes, and lunch. Water & snacks provided. We WILL get wet! Designed to integrate skills learned in Introduction to Kayaking and Kayaking 101, we will be focusing on T-Rescues, Self Recovery, Buddy Assists, and ferrying. Participants must pre-register prior to the course by contacting the Park Office at (814)744-8407. We're only accepting 10 participants for this course. Space is limited so please reserve early. Sorry, no children under 16 years old. Minors must be with a participating adult. This course can be used as a pre-requisite to Kayaking 301 and to justify skill level requisites for more advanced river boating programs to be held later this year. Participants who complete any of our kayak trainings qualify for a 50% discount on future river programs. (4 hrs)

Saturday, June 24 at 8:30am—'Clarion River Paddling Program: Portland Mills-Arroyo Bridge' Cook Forest State Park will be conducting a 6-mile interpretive historical paddling program from Portland Mills to Arroyo Bridge for experienced canoeists/kayakers only. This section of river is rich in local history. We will pass evidence of the old log booms & mills at Portland Mills as well as bridge remnants of the Clarion River Railway. Come see where John Cobb's mill was located before he was flooded out at Beech Bottom. Bald eagles & osprey often make an appearance in this secluded wilderness section of the National Wild & Scenic Clarion River. We will meet promptly at the Park Office and car-pool to the starting point up-river. Remember to pack water, protective footwear, raingear, and change of clothes. Don't forget your fishing poles! Cost is \$50/boat with check or money order made out to 'Commonwealth of Pennsylvania'. Lunch provided to those who register by 6/22. Prior Cook Forest kayak training participants receive a 50% discount. Space is limited, so please reserve early, pre-registration required. (8 hrs)

Friday, June 30 at 10:00am—'Kayaking 301' Please meet at the Park Office for an advanced skill level kayaking class. Remember to bring your ear and nose plugs, swimsuits, sturdy river sneakers, change of clothes, and lunch. Helmets are suggested, but not required. Snacks & water provided. Designed to integrate skills learned in Kayaking 201, we will continue practicing our T-rescues, self recovery, and buddy assists, as well incorporating various throw bag rescues, and dumping with skirts. Kayaking 201 or appropriate equivalent is a pre-requisite for this class. Participants must pre-register prior to the course by contacting the Park Office at (814)744-8407. We're only accepting 10 participants for this course. Space is limited so please reserve early. Sorry, no children under 16 years old. Minors must be with a participating adult. This course can be used to justify skill level requisites for more advanced river boating programs. Participants who successfully complete any of our kayak trainings qualify for a 50% discount on future river boating programs. (4 hrs)





Screech Owl Adventure

~Article & Photos by Pat Conway

Two summers ago, I purchased a screech owl box from Seneca Rocks Audubon Society, made by one of our members, Jim Wilson.

With the help of my son, Patrick, and his girlfriend, Heidi, we stained the box and put flashing around the outside of the entrance hole to keep the flying squirrels from chewing the hole bigger. (I did this because from past experience the flying squirrels would chew my dad's bird boxes around the entrance holes). We stained the box because I have also learned over the years that bird boxes last much longer if you stain them or waterproof them on the outside only. Staining my bluebird boxes has never deterred the bluebirds, chickadees, or tree swallows from nesting in them.

I did some research on-line to find out where to place a screech owl box, which direction to place it and how high up it should be. The website from Cornell University, www.allaboutbirds.com, recommended placing the box ten to thirty feet high, and facing in any direction. We only had a twenty foot ladder, so that's all the higher we could go. Patrick didn't think that was high enough, but I didn't want him risking life and limb to go any higher, considering how heavy the box was, and the balancing act he would have to perform on a twenty foot ladder with a heavy box, screw gun and deck screws in his shirt pocket. It was a bit of a precarious scenario.

We gave this some thought, since once he was up the ladder, he had to somehow hold the box and screw the deck screws into the tree, while trying to keep his balance. (I also worried that, if he dropped, the box, it would land on my head, since I was holding the ladder below). Our solution was to screw a board into the tree, under the box first, so that he could rest the box on that. It worked.

Before taking the box up the ladder, we put two or three inches of wood shavings in it, to make it nice and comfy for the owls. We also placed the box so that from inside the house, I could keep a scope on it from the upstairs window. Then we waited. We waited that first summer and we waited last summer. Patrick checked the box last fall, but there was no sign of a screech owl.

One early afternoon this past February, I looked up at the box and the entrance hole looked different. "Could it be?" I thought. I came into the house, got my binoculars and looked up at the box. Looking back at me was the face of a red-phase screech. I was elated! Of course I had to try and get a picture, so I got my camera, went upstairs, opened the window very carefully and took several shots. I got lucky. The pictures came out. I sent one to Patrick and he couldn't believe it.

It's now April, and the screech is still in the box. It appears that he/she has taken up residence. In the evenings I hear it softly calling from the nest box. Now we wait and see if the screech will find a mate. It will be interesting to watch over the summer. To be continued...



Upcoming Dates & Events

May 10 - Dan Gomola, Wildlife Photography

*May 27 - Oil Creek State Park Warbler Walk,
Meet at Blood Farm Day Use Area*

*June 14 - Judith Acker, Ruby-throated
Hummingbirds*

*August 9 - Annual Picnic, Beaver Creek Nature
Area*

SRAS Leadership Team

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Sharp-shinned Hawk by Meg Kolodick

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