

Seneca Rocks Drummer



September, 2005
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Newsletter of the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society

Volume 22, No. 2

www.senecarocksaudubon.org



Next Meeting – September 12
Room 249, Peirce Science
Center
Refreshments & conversation
at 7:00 p.m.

Program begins at 7:30 p.m.

Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas

Please join us on Monday, September 12, for our first meeting of the year. Regional Coordinators will discuss atlassing and progress in their areas after the second year of this five year project. Some surprises were – Blue-winged Teal, confirmed in Region 30, and – well, we don't want to give away all the surprises!

Carole Willenpart will demonstrate entering data on the PBBA website, so if you've been having problems, be prepared to take notes.

This is a significant project concerning birds in Pennsylvania, and we should all be involved. If you aren't ready to adopt a block, start by recording your yard birds. A field card for your region is a good way to keep track of your sightings. You can get one from the SRAS website or from any coordinator or board member.

We will try to answer any questions about atlassing, the project in general, or data-entry. ☘☘☘☘

Field Trips

by Ron Montgomery

Th/Fr 10/28&29	Allegheny Front
Sat 4/1	Presque Isle
Sat 4/8	Conneaut Marsh & Pymatuning
Mon 5/5	Oil Creek State Park
Mon 6/19	Block Busting p. 45

Allegheny Front Hawk Watch

Jerry Stanley will again join us at Allegheny Front for the fall Hawk Watch, but due to his schedule we have slated the trip for Thursday and Friday. Last year we did it on the preceding Monday & Tuesday. I will provide driving instructions in the October Newsletter.

We'll officially meet down there mid-morning on Thursday and leave Friday afternoon, but you are free to come earlier or stay later, or to come for just one of the two days.

We have had a variety of experiences on this outing: ghosts, fog, snow, and hundreds of hawks. The two day-outing provides a nice opportunity to share both a birding and social experience. Please mark it on your calendar. I hope you can attend.

(continued on next page)

Field Trips, Continued
Input

I will not attend the September meeting but Deb will solicit your thoughts then concerning how we go about the Field Trip program. The table above (plus the Conneaut OH trip in August) represents my 6th yearly planning cycle. We have done a variety of things, starting with wildflowers at ENWR and Box Turtles at McKeever back in 2000. Some trips, like to the Aviary or the bird rehabilitation facility, are not the kind to do every year; but generally I have repeated those birding trips that were best attended. Eventually an annual schedule of proven programs has evolved.

This year I cut back a little, mostly because of the Atlas Project. While the Atlas requires a lot of effort, it also serves some of the same purposes as field trips.

We have a surprising number of scheduling conflicts from mid-April through May (think National Wildlife Week, Birdathon, Migration Count, the PSO meeting), so the 3 field trips I get in are about all that will fit.

Jim Wilson has offered to help with the Field Trip program and this may allow more of a committee approach in the future.

At the September meeting Deb will ask you about the above and some specifics like: which days of the week work best, hiking or not, close to home or not, brief or multiple days, more or fewer trips, new program or continuation of the current approach. ☺☺☺☺



Crow's Nest

by President Deb Freed

Would you like to know what we hope to accomplish this coming year? The officers and committee chairs met in July to plan the year. Our activities and long range plans support our mission and goals. As always, we welcome member comments. We especially welcome your help with any of the activities.

Read along and select a way to get involved then contact any of the officers or committee chairs listed in each issue of the Drummer. With your help and enthusiasm this will be the beginning of another great year for Seneca Rocks.

Goal 1. To promote the conservation of wildlife and natural environment and encourage interest in the study of nature.

- a. Hold 8 monthly meetings.
- b. Publish 8 issues of the Drummer.
- c. Keep our website current and add to the on-line newsletter subscribers.
- d. Update and distribute our chapter brochure.

SRAS Board Members

<u>Deb Freed</u> , President, Membership	226-4719
<u>Gary Edwards</u> , Vice-president, programs . . .	676-3011
<u>Janice Horn</u> , Treasurer, Birdseed, Birdathon	226-7367
<u>Flo McGuire</u> , Web-site, Drummer Editor . . .	755-3672
<u>Ron Montgomery</u> , Field Trips, Community Programs	764-6088
<u>Jim Wilson</u> , Events	676-5455
<u>Paulette Colantonio</u> , Education	797-2031
<u>Pat Conway</u> , History	849-6315
<u>Margaret Buckwalter</u> , Mill Creek Coalition	782-3925
<u>Walter Fye</u> , Beaver Creek	797-1019

Regional Coordinators for the PBBA:

Gary Edwards, Region 43	676-3011
Mike Leahy, Region 44	797-2287
Pat Conway, Region 45	849-6315
Flo McGuire, Region 30	755-3672

Ruffed Grouse artwork in masthead
 by George Miksch Sutton, used with permission.

- e. Update and display our chapter history albums.

Goal 2. To provide the opportunity to observe and enjoy the world of birds and other wildlife.

- a. Offer field trips and link with outings sponsored by other nature groups.
- b. Use chapter events to introduce SRAS participation to others.
- c. Add 2 birding locations “ little gems” to our website link “Go Birding”

Goal 3. To contribute to research in the fields of conservation and ornithology by monetary support and active participation.

- a. Support Audubon PA financially and help members with Birdathon ask letters.
- b. Continue the Christmas Bird Count dinner and member registration.
- c. Identify unadopted block “6” in our region and recruit help plus help members with data entry.
- d. Use established IBA points at Mt. Zion to monitor birds and erect signs with the PGC land manager. Compile a Cook Forest checklist.
- e. Register for Audubon PA workshops.
- f. Promote birdseed sales. Identify alternative seed suppliers, sell guides and bird feeders.

Goal 4. To foster an appreciation of the natural environment through education.

- a. Sponsor 25 classrooms in these counties: Venango, Forest, Jefferson and Clarion.
- b. Provide an educational scholarship or forum and identify potential resources or sponsors for a grassland conference in 2007.
- c. Sponsor public walks at accessible public locations.

Goal 5. To be known as a leading wildlife conservation organization in our area.

- a. Partner with Audubon PA for a regional grassland conference and support other Audubon initiatives.
- b. Cooperate with other organizations that share our mission.
- c. Monitor legislative action on conservation bills and inform our membership.

Cook Forest Seeks Conservation Volunteers



Cook Forest State Park is accepting Conservation Volunteer Applications for the following volunteer opportunities:

Park events:

- Woodsy Owl Workday (September 2005, April 2006)
- Clear Creek Valley Lumber Heritage Day (September 2005, June 2006)
- Cook Forest French & Indian War Encampment (June 2006)
- Children's Fishing Derby (June 2006)
- Cook Forest Big Tree Extravaganza (April 2007)

Also needed:

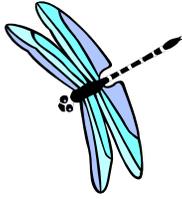
- Camp Hosts (April-October)
- Photography (year round)
- Historical and Natural History Research (year round)
- Environmental interpretation and education (year round)
- Trail maintenance (year round)

Camping fees are often waived in exchange for volunteer work. Interested applicants can obtain a Conservation Volunteer Application at:

www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cons

or by contacting the Park Office at (814)744-8407 or cookforestsp@state.pa.us





PROGRAMS AT COOK FOREST STATE PARK

by Dale Luthringer

Thursday, August 25 at 8:00 pm

'Bat Emergence'

Ever watch a colony of bats emerge in the evening to feast on pesky insects? Bring your lawn chairs, iced-tea, and bug repellent to the Park Office to learn about the natural history of bats, dispel some of their myths, and help the park naturalist discover how many bats can actually live in soffit & fascia. (2 hrs)

Friday, August 26 at 8:30 pm

'Dragonflies: On Wooshy Wings'

They're fast, they're colorful, and they're just about everywhere. Please bring your chairs and blankets to the Ridge Camp Park Amphitheater to take a look at dragonflies and damselfies, from egg to larva to fast-flying adult with this John Acorn the Nature Nut video. (1 hr)

Saturday, August 27 at 2:30 pm

'Hike Cook Forest Series: Cook Trail'

Please meet at the River Cabin Picnic Area, adjacent to Henry Run, for a 1.75 mile hike through one of the best kept secrets of Cook Forest. Join the park naturalist for a leisurely hike as we discover the many intricacies of this relatively unknown old growth forest ecosystem. (2 hrs)

Saturday, August 27 at 8:30 pm

'Man-Eating Bugs'

A food show with bugs on the menu. Please bring your chairs and blankets to the Ridge Camp Park Amphitheater to explore the fascinating topic of entomophagy, from the gross to the reasonable with this John Acorn the Nature Nut video. This program should leave everyone with an odd taste in their mouth. (1 hr)

Tuesday, August 30 at 10:30 am

'Clarion River Canoeing Program'

Cook Forest State Park will be conducting a 10-mile interpretive canoeing program along the Clarion River. The Cook Forest Canoe Livery, located at the

RT36 Clarion River Bridge, will sponsor this event. Cost will be \$24/canoe, payable at the canoe livery, who will transport the group to the starting point in Clarington. Please meet at the canoe livery, pack a lunch, bring plenty of water and proper river footwear. The following topics will be presented along the float: canoe safety, river history, and fish and aquatic insects of the Clarion River. Participants must register prior to the trip at the Cook Forest State Park Office at (814)744-8407 or CookForestsp@state.pa.us. (6 hrs)

Friday, September 2 at 8:00 pm

'Black Bears'

How large can black bears really get? What do their tracks look like? What do they eat? Bring your chairs and blankets to the Ridge Camp Park Amphitheater to find out. (1 hr)

Saturday, September 3 at 2:00 pm

'A Walk Through the Forest Cathedral'

Please meet at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Center for an interpretive hike into the Forest Cathedral. Observe the 3rd tallest tree in the entire Eastern United States, learn how to identify old growth forest characteristics, and observe different types of environmental disturbance that are an integral part of old growth forest ecosystems. (2 hrs)

Saturday, September 3 at 8:00 pm

'Owls of PA'

Please bring your chairs and blankets and meet at the Ridge Camp Park Amphitheater to observe owls found in Penn's Woods. Listen to their calls, observe their sign, and learn why they are PA's greatest hunters of the night. (1 hr)

Sunday, September 4 at 11:00 am

'Fire Tower/Seneca Point Historical Tour'

Please bring your binoculars and meet at the Fire Tower Parking Lot for a 45 minute historical interpretive tour of the Fire Tower and Seneca Point. Learn about local logging history, observe Indian sign, and take a breathtaking view from the box at the very top of the Fire Tower which will be open until 200pm. (3 hrs)

Friday, September 9 at 7:30 pm

'Owl Prowl'

Please bring your flashlights and meet at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom for an evening owl prowling. Explore Cook Forest at night for Pennsylvania's owls as we car-pool to owl hotspots in the park. Barred, great horned, screech and saw-whet owls have been known to make an appearance. (2 hrs)

Saturday, September 10 at 11:00 am
'Searching for the Giants'

Join the park naturalist at the Hemlock Trail trailhead as we comb the woods to document tall and exceptional trees of Cook Forest. The Forest Cathedral holds the most remarkable white pine stand in the Northeastern U.S., but don't forget about the monster Eastern hemlock, black cherry, Northern red and white oaks in Cook Forest's six other old growth forest areas. We will be documenting very seldom seen areas of the park, which may include the following areas: Cook Trail, Deer Meadows, Seneca Forest, Maple Drive, Ridge Camp and Swamp Natural Area. We have the potential to break height records for a number of Northeastern U.S. trees. Be prepared to car-pool to study areas. (3 hrs) ♡♡♡

Picnicking at the Merhten

by Deb Freed

A small gathering of members and friends enjoyed the comfortable weather and pastoral scenery at the Merhten this year. Upon arrival Jim Wilson was putting out some picnic supplies while Shirley and Walter were stoking the campfire. Before dinner, several pairs of binoculars were focused on the Eastern Kingbirds diving to skim the pond's surface for insects. A Harrier passed through and several Cedar Waxwings were sighted. The food was a great sampling of the summer harvest and favorite recipes.



After dinner the group discussed reviving the bluebird box building to be ready for nest box replacements at Beaver Creek in the spring. Many walked to the lookout above the Beaver Creek ponds while others tended the glowing fire. Attending: Schurrs, Horns, McGuires, Buckwalter, Fye, Monrean, Pokrifkas, Goodmans, Montgomerys, Wilson and Freed.

Blockbusting Outing

Monday, June 20, 2005



Artwork by Georgette Syster

The Blockbusting Outing was held in Region 30 this year. We atlassed block 30D16, which hadn't been worked on yet, contained a lot of public land (Oil Creek State Park!) and also had a variety of habitat. All these factors, plus the comfortable temperatures and the fact that all species were "safe", contributed to a great day.

Blockbusters were: Paulette Colantonio, Gary Edwards, Deb Freed, Ron Montgomery, Jim and Flo McGuire. We were joined mid-morning by Tom Johnson, one of the Atlas Point Counters who happened to be working in the area. We split into three teams: one team walked the bike trail, and the other two "road-birded" different areas of the park and surrounding countryside. We birded until about 11:30 am, then traveled to the Pizza Hut for lunch and tallying. We were pleasantly surprised to find that our totals for the morning were 72 species, with 14 confirmed! Some of the highlights were Eastern Wood-Pewee, Blue-winged Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Canada Warbler, all confirmed with "Carrying Food". Other good species found were Acadian Flycatcher, Winter Wren, Warbling Vireo, Northern Parula, Cerulean and Mourning Warblers.

Including the birds found while scouting the block, and a few more hours atlassing on the 20th, the block totals came to 83 species, with 22 confirmed. Many thanks to our fellow blockbusters for so much help in Region 30!





A Young Hawk's Lesson

by Jeff Michaels

The following article is from a posting to the PABIRDS listserv earlier this month, from a birder in Boalsburg, PA, reprinted here with permission.

As is my typical morning routine, I walked to the raceways with American Shad in them that are under my care and looked out across the ponds at the upper end of the hatchery where I noticed several herons. I looked with my binoculars to get a count and quickly noticed two juvenile Cooper's Hawks (1 female and 1 male) on one of the pond banks. The two seemed as if they were waiting for something and maybe slightly unsure of themselves. The male flew and the female hopped farther along the bank. My interest waned slightly until the male returned and another male also joined his brother and sister on the bank.

By this time, I was starting to wonder what was keeping the three siblings' interest (and out in the open exposed to predators). I suspected that there was a kill nearby or maybe a parent down in the half-empty pond with food where I couldn't see. While trying to figure out why, I noticed something chocolate brown moving and mostly hidden behind some tufts of high grass along the bank. This seemed to draw the attention of the female and nearer male who both hopped closer with just a hint of hesitation. The unknown object of the hawks' curiosity disappeared and reappeared even closer to the two juveniles. And in a once in a lifetime instant, the chocolate brown form of a mink shot out and sank its teeth into the downy leg



of the female. For the next 20 seconds, the struggle between fur and feather raged. I stood incredulous and transfixed, the spell only partially broken when the Cooper's wrenched herself free and flew.

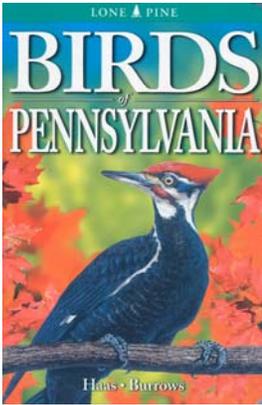
I was torn. I didn't know which bird to watch because the male furthest from the action was still standing on the bank maybe ten or so feet from the mink. Instead, I watched his sister's flight for any signs of damage. I couldn't see any obvious signs of weakness in her flight. I returned my attention to the young male on the bank and the mink, who quickly slid over the other side of the bank, moving in the direction of the remaining hawk. To me it seemed as if the mink realized it couldn't make a direct attack, so decided to use cover (or maybe it had enough). Unbelievably, the young male started to hop in the direction of where the mink had gone over the bank. I thought to myself that I surely couldn't possibly witness the same lesson happen to a sibling and within a minute of the first one's ordeal. Fortunately, he flew.

Afterwards, I went to the spot to see if I could tell the condition of the female from whatever evidence (if any) was left behind. There were several wet and matted clumps of downy feathers and two tail feathers, but not a drop of blood to be found. My guess would be that the mink only got hold of the downy feathers on the upper part of the leg, but that the hold was sufficient to keep the hawk until those feathers worked free. Whether the mink sustained any injuries I don't know, but the two took turns being on top during their struggle (the mink more often than the hawk).

I can only guess that the three juveniles thought that the mink was a food source. There is no other obvious explanation for why all three were on that pond bank that I could find. I'd also guess that this is one female Cooper's hawk who will not soon choose a mink for a meal.

I still can't believe that I witnessed a mink trying to kill a hawk. I only wish that my words could do the whole natural act even an inkling of justice.





Book Review

Birds of Pennsylvania by Franklin Haas and Roger Burrows, published in softcover, April, 2005, by Lone Pine Publishing, contains 352 pages and retails for \$21.95.

Birds of Pennsylvania is a nicely bound and beautifully illustrated field guide to the species of birds that can be found in the commonwealth. By focusing only on birds of Pennsylvania and including a detailed range map for each species, the authors have allowed a new birder or visitor to the state to easily see where and when a species can be expected. By including a wealth of information on each species, they have made the book worthwhile and interesting for any birder.

The back cover of the book and Contents page are both designed to quickly lead the reader to a group of birds via a color-coded "tab" in the margin. The first section of the book features a small illustration of each species, with its name, size, and page. Here the reader can find a likeness and go directly to the page for that species; on each species' page, the group name is prominently displayed in the top margin. This system makes it very easy to find a group of birds or a particular species.

The Introduction provides general birding information in layman's terms, including a short explanation of AOU order and avian classification, plus specific information on recommended places to bird in Pennsylvania. There is a map showing the state's top 100 birding sites, and descriptions of 15 of them. However, Mt. Zion (Piney Tract) in Clarion

County, which received its IBA status in 1998, and is now a Globally Important IBA, was not mentioned.

A full page is devoted to each species, and the illustrations are larger than in most field guides. In many cases, a separate sketch of the bird in flight or non-breeding plumage is included. In some sexually dimorphic species, both sexes are shown. Most of the artwork captures the "jizz" of the species, portraying the bird in true color and a characteristic pose. Three artists provided the illustrations, so there is a variety of technique, style, and use of color. This fact might have contributed to some inconsistency. One disparity noted is that the Gray-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes are depicted as vastly different shades, but both are described as "gray-brown".

The species accounts are excellent. Perhaps the best feature of the book is the narrative on each species: it is a colorful discussion of the bird, its behavior, its name, and/or its habitat. The reader is certain to learn some bit of avian trivia or a helpful hint on identification. For example, a good way to differentiate foraging Long-billed from Short-billed Dowitchers is that the long-bills chatter softly, while short-bills feed silently.

Each species account also has a map depicting the species' range and seasonal distribution in Pennsylvania. These maps, however, would be more beneficial if county lines were indicated, to give the reader a frame of reference. The technical information - ID, Size, Status, Habitat, Nesting, Feeding, Voice, Similar Species, and Best Sites - follows in an organized manner. The details on nesting and feeding are particularly welcome, and not usually found in a field guide.

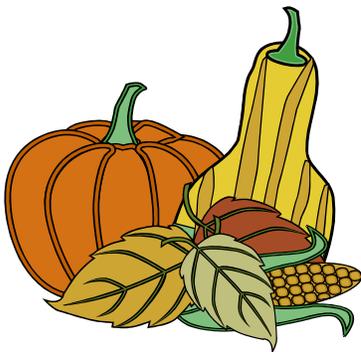
In the Appendix, each "occasional species" is described and discussed; a few are illustrated. A Glossary of avian terms and a Checklist follow, plus Indexes by both Scientific and Common Name. A nice feature in the Common Name Index is that the page of each species account is in boldface. An index of sites is not included, but would be useful. For example, Allegheny National Forest is listed under "Best Sites" on the Yellow-throated Vireo page, but there is no cross-reference to this information.

It is a bonus for Pennsylvania birders that so much information on avian life in the state has been assembled in one book. Birds of Pennsylvania is a compact, attractive book, interesting, well organized, and easy to use.

- Flo McGuire

Did you know?

The Common Poorwill hibernates – it sleeps in a torpid condition for up to 3 months.



Do you have a Birding Story to share?

We're looking forward to more birding stories, to continue the column initiated in August by Deb Freed. Also, articles, photographs and artwork are always welcome. Please send to Editor Flo McGuire at mcguires@csonline.net or HC 1 Box 6A, Tionesta, PA, 16353.

Pennsylvania Forestry Association

Please see p. 9 for more info on the upcoming annual meeting in Clarion, and a registration form

The Pennsylvania Forestry Association is the oldest forestry association in North America (1886) and was founded by a number of civic-minded women in Philadelphia. Joseph T. Rothrock, the Father of Pennsylvania Forestry, became the 1st president. Through his efforts, a forestry commission was formed (now the Bureau of Forestry) a forest academy was founded (now the PSU School of Forest Resources), foresters were hired, fires controlled, state forest nurseries established, and the State Forest Land system established through the purchase of abandoned, cut-over land. The members of PFA believe in the conservation (wise use) of the forest resources within the Commonwealth. Our members are forestland owners, foresters and those with a love of Penn's Woods and all within this dynamic ecosystem.

The meeting's purpose is to allow the attendees to mingle with knowledgeable professionals and learn a number of fascinating facts about one portion of the forest, Forest Birds. We further believe that many of our members who own woodland can be a valuable resource to birders and ornithological organizations and those involved in the home schooling of their children. What better opportunity than naturalists, educators and the forest resource meeting in one place to learn more about our feathered neighbors and what is available to birders and home schoolers. The field trip and banquet promise to be informative AND entertaining. Missing this meeting would truly be a shame.

Margaret Brittingham, Penn State Extension, has assembled a very entertaining field and banquet lecture covering birds and their natural history. George Freeman and his committee will discuss various harvesting and forest thinning practices on his Tree Farm. What beneficial impact these forestry practices have on Forest Birds will be covered, along with general natural history of Forest Birds.



Pennsylvania Forestry Association 119th Annual Meeting

October 12-14, 2005
Clarion Holiday Inn
Clarion, PA

“FOREST BIRDS and a MANAGED FOREST”



For more details (717) 766-5371
E-Mail: thepfa@juno.com

Wednesday, October 12, 2005

7:00 PM **PFA Board of Director’s Meeting** Clarion Holiday Inn
Registration/Exhibit set-up/Informal Get-together

Thursday, October 13, 2005

8:15 AM – 4:00 PM **Bus Tour** Boarding at Clarion Holiday Inn
Tour of George Freeman’s Tree Farm
Discussion of Woodland Bird Habitat

12:00 Noon – 1:00 PM Bag Lunch (Provided)

4:30 PM Return to Holiday Inn

6:00 PM **Your favorite beverage hour** (Cash Bar)

7:00 PM **Banquet Dinner and Awards Presentation**
Speaker: **Margaret Brittingham**, PSU Extension
“Forest Birds”



CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS!!

Friday, October 14, 2005

9:00 AM – 12:00 Noon
**PFA Annual Business Meeting
and Election**
12:00 Noon Adjourn

For Room Reservations Contact Directly: Clarion Holiday Inn (800) 596-1313



We can do this!

REGISTRATION FORM
119th PFA Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet
(Sorry we do not have the ability to accept Credit Cards at PFA or the Event.)

Name: _____

Street: _____

City/ZIP: _____ Phone: _____

Meeting Registration:

(We do not have the ability to accept Credit Cards)

Individual PFA Member # _____ @ \$25 = _____ Couple PFA Member # _____ @ \$40 = _____

Individual Non-PFA Member # _____ @ \$40 = _____ Couple Non-Member # _____ @ \$55 = _____

Activities:

Thursday Tour w/Lunch # _____ @ \$40 = _____ Thursday Banquet # _____ @ \$35 = _____

Make Checks Payable to **PFA** & Mail to 56 E. Main St., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055. **TOTAL \$** _____



Coming up at our
October meeting

Tom LeBlanc of
Allegany State Park in
New York will present
a butterfly program.

Save a Tree!

If you have internet access and are still receiving your *Drummer* in the mail, please consider requesting the e-*Drummer*. You may email Deb Freed at dfreed208@adelphia.net to request it.

You will be notified by email when the *Drummer* is available for download on our website, about a week before you would receive it in the mail. You will save the club printing and postage costs by printing it yourself, and your *Drummer* will be in color!

Thank you to the following hosts
for the coming meetings:

Sept 12	Janice Horn & Margaret Buckwalter
Oct 10	Ruth & Karl Schurr
Nov 14	Walt Fye & Shirley Monrean
Dec 12	OPEN
Feb 13	Judy & Ron Montgomery
Mar 13	Jim Wilson & Gary Edwards
Apr 10	OPEN
May 8	OPEN

Do you like to surf the net?

Notice our chapter Goals, part c of Goal 5 – “Monitor legislative action on conservation bills and inform our membership”. Kathy Janik stepped down last year after many years in this position – we are looking for a new volunteer to step in. Material is forwarded to the *Drummer* editor via email. Please talk to Deb, Kathy or any board member if you are interested.

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
c/o Deb Freed
208 Briar Hill Drive
Clarton, PA 16214