



# THE DRUMMER



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

April/May 2014

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## PA Amphibian & Reptile Survey

Marlin Corn

*April 9 Program*

The Pennsylvania Amphibian and Reptile Survey (PARS) is a joint citizen science atlas project between the Mid-Atlantic Center for Herpetology and Conservation and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, with additional funding from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Wild Resource Conservation Fund. This exciting project, which launched in 2013, is an attempt to determine the current status of Pennsylvania's reptile and amphibian populations.

Amphibians and reptiles (collectively called herps by some) are important species found in just about every Pennsylvania landscape. Very little information about our state's herps has been collected through the years when compared to other groups of organisms. This is unfortunate as herps are important indicators of the health of our natural places and the very presence of certain species can tell us a lot about an area. The PARS project is attempting to create an army of citizen scientists, from amateur naturalists to professional

scientists, to thoroughly document the distribution of Pennsylvania's turtle, lizard, snake, frog and salamander species.

Marlin Corn, PARS State-wide Coordinator from the Mid-Atlantic Center for Herpetology and Conservation, will be offering a presentation about this important new project. Marlin has worked as a professional naturalist and herpetologist in various capacities for over 25 years. Join him to learn about the details of the PARS project, and how you can get involved. Visit the PARS website at <http://www.paherpsurvey.org>.

## Master Falconer Gary Ratay & Jessie, the Red-tailed Hawk

*May 14 Program*

Becoming a falconer is a time-intensive process. Master falconer, Gary Ratay, from Titusville is dedicated to his sport and the birds 24/7. He will present a program on his life as a falconer and how he acquires, trains, and maintains the wild raptors.

Mr. Ratay has been handling birds for 43 years. His lifelong passion for wildlife eventually led him to the seven year process necessary to achieve Master falconer status. He is permitted and monitored. His hawk enclosure, or mew, is inspected by the Pennsylvania Game Commission for safety, shelter from the elements and adequate habitat for the birds to spread their wings and perch. Gary also works

*Our programs are held at the Clarion Free Library. Come early to socialize - program begins at 6:30 pm.*

with the Game Commission as a volunteer bird bander. The data recorded track migration paths while taking blood samples provide breeding data. This information adds to the base of knowledge about the birds for the Game Commission. Gary will bring his Red-tailed Hawk, Jessie, and a new bird. Weather and bird permitting, Gary will give us a live demonstration outside!

~ Deb Freed

*Correction - The Snowy Owl photo in the Feb/March Drummer was incorrectly credited. It was taken by Mike Leahy.*

## SRAS - Looking Back 30 Years

~ Deb Freed

When Pete Dalby dropped thirty years of Drummers in my lap earlier this year it made an impression on me. . .what history! Looking back at our organization is fun. Here are a few snapshots over time.

### Spring 1984

The April 1984 newsletter, not yet named, reported the results of the vote to name the chapter. Sixteen voting members chose from the three choices: Seneca Rocks, Allegheny Heartland and Clarion River with Seneca Rocks receiving 9 votes. Other news included nest box workshop with Walt Fye, Identification of Amphibians with Gil Twiest and an Owl Walk with Roger McPherson.

### Spring 1994

The March/April Seneca Rocks Drummer announced Gil Twiest's program on amphibians once again. SRAS president John Fedak reported hearing Short-eared Owls at Mt. Zion. The

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

[www.senecarocksaudubon.org](http://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](mailto:fmcguire1@verizon.net).

following poem by Lois Callahan, member and early logo creator, was featured.

### Signs of Spring by Lois A. Callahan

Wild geese flying in formation  
head northward during migration.  
A sure sign, spring is on its way  
to progress slowly day by day.

A crocus peeking thru snow  
with maple buds starting to show.  
A forsythia's glowing yellow  
shows weather starting to mellow.

Trees in blossom, flowers in bloom,  
vanishes traces of winter's gloom.  
Singing birds make your spirits soar  
as you stand beneath the sycamore.

A doe with her tiny spotted fawn  
slips from the woods and thru the lawn.  
Croaking of frogs, a roaming bear.  
Signs of spring now appear everywhere.

### Spring 2004

This issue can be found in our on-line archives. It includes some of our favorite field trips. We launched our logo contest in May and voted at the picnic during the summer with the winner being our current "Observe Conserve" logo integrating the forest, river and grassland habitats that we enjoy.



Former SRAS President John Fedak is now president of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology, whose annual meeting will be held in Bradford June 6-8.

An exciting meeting is being planned, and John extends a special invitation to his old friends at SRAS.

See page 7 for more information.



## Presque Isle Outing-April 12

~ Jim Wilson

We meet inside Presque Isle State Park in Erie. It is approx. 100 miles from Clarion by way of Meadville. From Clarion, take Rt. 322 West to Meadville. From Meadville, take Interstate 79 at Meadville. At the end of I-79 in Erie, take Rt.20 West (26th Street) to Rt. 832 North, which becomes Peninsula Drive. There is a McDonalds on the right after you cross Rt. 5. **Our meeting place at 9:00 a.m. (Vista One Parking Lot)** is a large parking lot on the right about a mile after you see the Presque Isle State Park sign. It is the first obvious place to scope Presque Isle Bay. Spring migration at Presque Isle is best in March and April. It is usually windy on Presque Isle, and the weather can change quickly. Dress for winter weather.

### RESTAURANTS

There are a number of restaurants along Peninsula Drive and East on both Rt. 5 and 20. Also, at Mill Creek Mall and the interchange with I-90 and Peach Street, you will find a wide range of restaurants.

### RESTROOMS

Most restrooms in the park will probably be closed. The park office, the Stull Interpretive Center and the boat launch restrooms should be open. If not, there is McDonald's on the way in.

**Annual SRAS Picnic  
August 20**

Our picnic will again be held at scenic Cook Forest. (It is already marked on your calendar!) Reminder postcards will be sent out in August.



## Roderick Reserve Outing Saturday, May 3

~ Jim Wilson

(State Game Lands 314)

This is a PSO Site.

Directions from Clarion:

I-80 to I-79

I-79 north to the Edinboro Exit (Rte. 6 N)

6N north to West Springfield (Rte. 20)

Rte. 20 west to Rudd Road on the right

We will begin birding just across the railroad tracks.

Time approximately 2 hours from Clarion.

**I will be at the end of Rudd Road from 9:00 – 9:30 a.m.** At 9:30 we will proceed to the monument until approximately 11:00. Dress appropriately for the weather. Bring something to drink and a lunch.

Jim Wilson's cell phone - 657-8247

## Oil Creek State Park Warbler Walk May 17 at 8:30 a.m.

~ Jim Wilson

We meet inside Oil Creek State Park. Go north on Route 8 out of Oil City, through Rouseville. The park entrance is on the right about a mile north of Rouseville, immediately after you cross Oil Creek. The park entrance sign is about thirty-two miles or fifty minutes from the Court House in Clarion. We meet in the Blood Farm day use area parking lot, on the right less than a mile into the park.

Restrooms are available in the day use area and at the park office approximately three miles away. Food is available in Oil City and near the Cranberry mall.

# The Name Game

## Bachman's Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow

~ Gary Edwards

The Reverend Doctor John Bachman (1790-1874) was both a friend and collaborator of John James Audubon. He was born at Rhinebeck, NY, February 4, 1790. As a young lad he served as secretary for a group that met with representatives of the Oneida Indians. He was an ardent outdoorsman and spent a great deal of time in the countryside with a family slave who he credited with piquing his interest in nature by teaching him to trap birds and animals. Bachman intended to become a lawyer, but contracted tuberculosis and abandoned the study of law for the ministry.

He met Alexander Wilson, Audubon's predecessor, in Philadelphia. Bachman, then teaching school, assisted Wilson in collecting birds for about two years. In 1813, Wilson died unexpectedly without completing his *American Ornithology*. That same year, Bachman became a Lutheran pastor and returned to Rhinebeck where he served for two years. He then "was invited to become pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Charleston, South Carolina, a call he accepted in part because he thought this southern seaport town would be kinder to his respiratory problems. Arriving in January 1815, he ended up staying at St. John's for 56 years!"

"Although his father was a slave owner, Bachman helped educate scores of Charlestonians of African heritage--an act both illegal and/or socially unacceptable in the antebellum South--and is said to have baptized as many as 90 blacks in one year, helping raise the black membership of St. John's as high as 40%."

By the time he met Audubon in 1831, Bachman was married with eight living children; five others died in infancy. The two developed an immediate friendship and corresponded regularly. Audubon remained with Bachman for a month before

Audubon left for Florida and eventually Newfoundland. During Audubon's two-year absence, Bachman collected two previously unknown warblers, Swainson's Warbler and Bachman's Warbler. He also collected a presumed new sparrow-like bird. In 1834, Audubon named it Bachman's Pinewood-Finch. Later, it was discovered that the species had been described in 1823 by Heinrich Lichtenstein from a specimen taken in Georgia. Now accepted as Bachman's Sparrow, the bird was previously known as the Pinewoods (or Pine-woods or Pine Woods, depending on the source) Sparrow because of its habitat preference. This skulker's primary range is the Southeast where it is strongly associated with open pine woods with dense palmetto understory.



*Lucy Audubon with two of her granddaughters, who were also Bachman's granddaughters.*

The enigmatic Bachman's Warbler is probably extinct. For about 50 years after its discovery it flew under the radar of ornithologists. In the 1890s it was rediscovered and seemed to be at least reasonably common. However, probably because of its limited range, little effort was made to study the species extensively. Historic population estimates range from rare to abundant. A dramatic population decline between the early 1900s and the 1950s. This resulted in listing the species as threatened and endangered when the Endangered Species Preservation Act was enacted in 1967. The last confirmed breeding record was in 1937. The last (unconfirmed) sighting was in Louisiana in 1988.

The friendship between John Bachman and John James Audubon was only intensified by the marriage of Audubon sons to Bachman daughters: John Woodhouse Audubon wed Maria Rebecca Bachman in 1837, and Victor Gifford Audubon married Mary Eliza Bachman a short time later. John Woodhouse and Maria Rebecca Audubon soon produced two daughters, these named respectively for their grandmothers--Harriet (first wife of Bachman) and Lucy (Audubon's wife, shown in the attached photo with the two granddaughters). Unfortunately, the two younger

Audubon wives died of tuberculosis within a few years of marriage.

“Despite his dedication to natural history--which he pursued by rising very early in the morning--during normal business hours Bachman was intensely active in church affairs and public education. He helped establish the Lutheran Synod of South Carolina, and twice served as its president (1824-1833, 1839-1840). He helped found the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary at Pomaria, SC, in 1831, and then Newberry College in 1856. He served the College as its first board president and oversaw the school's development and expansion for many years.

As Audubon's bird folios began to sell, he and Bachman conceived of another set of volumes that would include paintings of North American mammals. Audubon acknowledged that Bachman knew far more about the habits of these creatures, so Audubon did the paintings while Bachman wrote nearly all of the scientific text for another massive work on the *Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*. These volumes included such exotic species as the American Bison, Wolverine, and Musk Ox--animals unknown to the average American citizen--but also documented common mammals such as Eastern Gray Squirrels and White-footed Mice; the gentlemen even included invasive European species such as the House Mouse. Bachman was so intent on doing an accurate job with the mammals text that he devoted ten years to writing it--and declined the presidency of the University of South Carolina lest it interfere with his work. Bachman--with Audubon's sons--brought the *Quadrupeds* volumes to press after the old artist's death in 1851.

Although he held Unionist views, when South Carolina met to enact the Ordinance of Secession in December 1860, Bachman opened the meeting with a prayer and thereafter minimized his political activities, choosing to spend the war years ministering to the sick and dying.

Bachman was severely beaten and had an arm permanently paralyzed by Union soldiers, and his scientific collections and library--slated for delivery to Newberry College--were destroyed by Sherman's Army. Partially disabled by this attack, Bachman eventually died in Charleston SC on 24 February 1874 at the age of 84 years and 20 days.”

Sources: (1) <http://www.johnbachman.org/HPersonalBackgroundMain.html> and (2) Mearns, Barbara and Richard, *Audubon to Xanthus*, 1992, San Diego, Academic Press, 29-38.

## Birdathon 2014

~ Janice Horn



You might see a Prairie Warbler on the Birdathon - photo by Jeff Hall

The budget for Seneca Rocks Audubon includes three approximately equal fundraising sources. Bird Seed Sales in the fall and late winter, calendars in the fall and early winter, and the Birdathon in the spring. Several years ago when Margaret Buckwalter was leading the Birdathon it was our largest source of income. Participants have come and gone and we need to find a new group of people to add to those who are still active, so that we can begin to increase this source of fundraising. It supports our education and conservation work.

To participate in the Birdathon spend a day in early May looking for as many species as possible -- a really enjoyable time -- and finding people who will support your effort with pledges and donations -- for some a less enjoyable time. To show your appreciation for their support send them a report on your day. They look forward to that report and even expect you to ask them in succeeding years.

The dates we set during which we will hold the Birdathon are May 3-11. There are other birding events in that time and you can participate in the Birdathon while enjoying another event. The PA Migration Count, a snapshot of birds by county, is Saturday, May 10.

If you have questions about the Birdathon, contact Janice Horn ([jhhorn35@yahoo.com](mailto:jhhorn35@yahoo.com)).

# Calendar Project

~Ron Montgomery



*Our members take great photos -Yellow-bellied Sapsucker by Pat Conway*

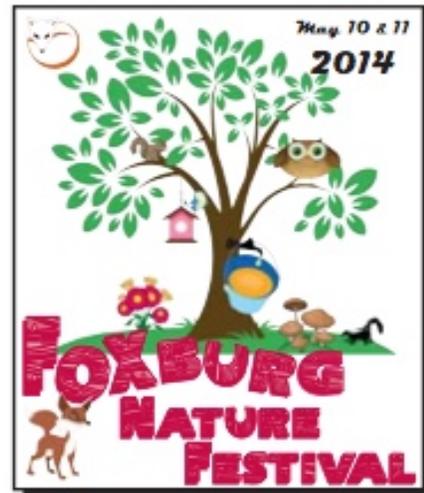
We sold 97 calendars last fall for a profit of \$390. Our only significant expense was for printing (\$636) at 512 Main in Knox. Since our average sales price was \$10.60, we had to sell 60 calendars to break even. We were also able to give calendars to folks supportive to our group, like the Clarion County Garden Club and

various speakers. The calendar included 23 bird photographs contributed by 11 members. Thanks to all who helped with the effort by buying or selling calendars or by contributing their time and expertise.

We anticipate producing a calendar again this year so we encourage members to begin submitting pictures. Gary & Ron are prepared to accept pictures at any time, including right now! Since there are many bird calendars available, we plan to distinguish ours by including only pictures taken locally or on our field trips. We only work with digital pictures and we request they not be cropped. Cropping before we have defined the space we wish to put it in, sometimes prevents us from using the picture.

Photos can be submitted as an email attachment or by handing us a flash drive, but be sure no resolution is lost in the process; that happened sometimes last year. Please also give us a description of where the pictures were taken. We are not sure how we will incorporate location information but we want to demonstrate that surprisingly beautiful and sometimes exotic looking birds can be seen close to home.

We are open to ideas of how to improve the calendar, lower its production cost or improve our marketing efforts.



## 6th Annual Foxburg Nature Festival

Saturday, May 10, 2014

Calling all nature lovers! Seneca Rocks Audubon will again be sponsoring this festival in Foxburg. We will be one of the ten exhibitors, and there will also be several vendors.

### Some of the highlights:

- 8:00–10:30 – Fieldtrip for the serious birders & Nature Watchers – A guided 2.5 mile hike from Riverstone Farm to the Clarion & Allegheny River Valleys.
- 10:30–11:00 – Birdhouse auction at Foxburg Pizza.
- 11:00–12:00 – Nature program for kids – RiverStone Farm.
- 1:00–2:30 – A family-oriented nature hike and butterfly release at Riverstone event barns.
- 2:30–4:30 – Tree, wildflower & mushroom fieldtrip on a hay wagon throughout Riverstone
- 5:00–6:00 – Bonfire & hotdog roast downtown Foxburg. Free to the public.
- 7:00–8:30 – Guest speaker Scott Shalaway at ACV elementary auditorium.
- 9:00–10:30 – Owl prowls throughout the Riverstone woodlands. Gates open at 8:30.
- All fieldtrip participants should meet at the RiverStone Farm Gates 15 minutes prior to the start of their fieldtrip.

Preregister at the Foxburg Inn --- 724-659-3116

# Volunteer Opportunities in Saw-whet Owl Research

Are you captivated by this adorable raptor? Do you enjoy being outside or want to experience field research? If so, we need your help!

Saw-whet owls are very small owls that inhabit the forests of North America and were once thought to be a rare breeding bird in Pennsylvania. But thanks to targeted owl surveys we now know that they are fairly widespread throughout the state. Unfortunately, due to their size and secretive nature, saw-whet owls are rarely seen and we still know very little about them. Kathleen Kolos is a biology graduate assistant at Shippensburg University who is trying to learn more about saw-whets by studying their breeding ecology here in Pennsylvania.

Kathleen is revisiting the old "Toot Route" protocol (a statewide owl survey from the late 90s) to sample saw-whet owl breeding sites and is taking a closer look at their habitat by collecting data on vegetation and small mammal populations. This important research is being conducted this spring from April through June in three different regions of Pennsylvania throughout the following counties: Adams, Cumberland, Franklin, Centre, McKean, Elk, Forest, and Warren. If you want to participate in this study, there is something for everyone! Volunteer opportunities include: assisting with night time listening surveys, conducting vegetation sampling, and collecting data on small mammal populations. This is a great learning opportunity and no experience is necessary!



Invites you to attend our annual meeting

**June 6-8  
at  
Bradford, PA**

**Six field trips will be offered Saturday and Sunday to area hotspots such as Kinzua Dam & the Allegheny National Forest**

**Field trips will be limited to 20 participants - you will need to go online and register to reserve your spot!**

### Saturday afternoon presentations:

**Saw-whet Breeding Habitat - Kathleen Kolos  
Involving Youth in Nature – Don Bickford  
Golden-winged Warbler – Jeff Larkin  
Project Snowstorm – Mike Lanzone  
Raptor Program – Mark Baker**



Photo by Mark McConaughy

**Banquet speaker will be renowned ornithologist and writer Dr. Bridget Stutchbury, a professor at York University in Ontario**



Photo by Sandy Lockerman



Photo by Jeff Larkin

**For more information visit our website at: [pabirds.org](http://pabirds.org) or find us on Facebook!**

If you are interested in helping with one or all aspects of this study please contact [katiekolos@gmail.com](mailto:katiekolos@gmail.com) for more details. With your help we can better understand saw-whet owls breeding ecology here in Pennsylvania. Thank you!

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society now has a Facebook Page!



Like us on Facebook!

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

## Upcoming Dates & Events

April 9 Program - Marlin Corn, PARS

April 12 Outing - Presque Isle

May 3 Outing - Roderick Reserve

May 3-11 - BIRDATHON

May 10 - Foxburg Nature Fest

May 10 - PA Migration Count

May 14 Program - Falconer Gary Ratay



*Northern Parulas will be back to PA soon -  
photo by Ron Montgomery*

*To me a lush carpet of pine  
needles or spongy grass is  
more welcome than the most  
luxurious Persian rug.*

*~ Helen Keller*

### SRAS Leadership Team

Deb Freed	226-4719
Paulette Colantonio	797-2031
Pete Dalby	782-3227
Gary Edwards	676-3011
Janice Horn	226-7367
Mike Leahy	229-1648
Flo McGuire	755-3672
Ron Montgomery	764-6088
Jim Wilson	676-5455

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