



THE DRUMMER



www.senecarocksaudubon.org

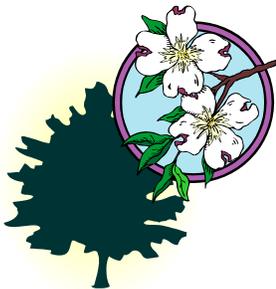
May, 2008

Volume 24, No. 8

Next Meeting – May 12
Room 150, Becker Hall
Social – 6:30 p.m. Program – 7:00 p.m.

The Best from SRAS

-Deb Freed



The May 12 program will feature our very own members, maybe you, about a variety of topics.

It's the time of year for sharing tips for our backyard habitats. What plants do you find grow well here in western PA? What plants attract particular birds and butterflies? Have you ever successfully transplanted native plants? Where can you purchase native plants? What invasive or non-native plants should we avoid? What's working well in your yard?

Looking forward to May, June and July, what Breeding Bird Atlas blocks need attention? How can members and visitors join other birders to canvas a block?

What special nearby destinations do you expect to visit for birding this summer? How could you easily reach other members who might want to join you? We'll set-up a call-list or e-mail list.

For next year's planning, what program topics interest you? What field trips do you want to be planned? What about repeat programming or destinations? Do you have a good contact for program topics or places to visit?

Have any answers for us? Come to share what's working and what's not! We'll all go home with the best from SRAS!

Wildflower Walk

-Deb Freed



A number of members and friends are interested in a wildflower walk. One location would be Wolf Creek Natural Area near Slippery Rock, Butler County. SRAS visited Wolf Creek a couple of years ago and found wildflowers galore.

We will be selecting a couple of possible dates at the May meeting. The walk will be open to anyone who signs up at the meeting or contacts Deb Freed at 814-226-4719 or dfreed208@comcast.net. We will be watching the weather for a good day then put our contact plan into action. We will also talk about car pooling or meeting at the Barkeyville Exit # 29 on I-80 to travel south on Route 8 to Route 108 into Slippery Rock.

Wolf Creek Natural Area is on West Water Street from Slippery Rock. West Water Street is one block northwest of the intersection of routes 108 and 173, the main intersection in Slippery Rock. The entrance to the area is at the east end of the bridge over Wolf Creek. There are no facilities at Wolf Creek, but it is not far from the center of town.

Another option for wildflowers will be the Wildflower Walk at McKeever Environmental Center on May 24 from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Julie Ferringer will lead a walk on the property following an indoor presentation to learn about the wildflowers at McKeever. The program is free and open to the public.

Three other upcoming walks that may interest you:

- ◆ Jennings Environmental Education Center at 2 p.m. on Mother's Day, May 11 (724-794-6011)
- ◆ McConnells Mill State Park at 2 p.m. Saturday, May 17 "Ferns and Flowers"
- ◆ Oil Creek State Park at 2 p.m. on Mother's Day, May 11. Meet at Petroleum Centre Indoor Amphitheater.

Correction:

Our apologies for the jumbled second paragraph in the article about Kurt Regester's amphibian program in the April *Drummer*.

The last sentence should read: Kurt will discuss the many ecological roles that amphibians play in the environment; he will also show how understanding these ecological roles is important to understanding the ecological consequences of population declines and species losses.

The *Drummer* is the 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 published 8 times per year – September through December, and February through May.

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, HC 1 Box 6A, Tionesta, PA 16353 (814 755-3672) or email at fmcguire1@verizon.net.



Certified Weed Warriors

The Forest Service provided a training session for Certified Weed Warriors in Warren, PA, in April. We provided the information on our website, but unfortunately we did not have it in time for the April *Drummer*.

Forest botanists have selected locations on the Allegheny NF where volunteers can work on their own to help control non-native invasive plants.

People interested in becoming a Weed Warrior may still learn about the Weed Warrior program by attending any of the Weed Warrior scheduled events:

- July 12: Purple Loosestrife Removal and Picnic Lunch at Point Park (Warren); and
- September 27: Invasive plant Pull and Picnic Lunch at the Buckaloons Recreation Area.

Please contact April Moore at 814-728-6168 for additional information or to register.

Birdathon

~Janice Horn

For anyone who plans to participate in the Birdathon please get in touch with Janice Horn for sign up sheets. Pick a day between May 4 and 10 and record all the species that you see. Send a report of your day and the pledges that you have collected to Janice by May 23rd.

The funds garnered during the Birdathon will be used for local bird conservation projects and for a contribution to Audubon Pennsylvania. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated. Thanks to all.

Oil Creek State Park Warbler Walk

~Deb Freed

Members and friends who participated were: Gary Edwards, Mike Leahy, Paulette Colantonio, Stephanie Wilshire, Hendrika Bohlen, Deb Freed, Flo and Jim McGuire, Dick Means and Karen Eckley.

April 26 was too early to find the Canada Warblers along the seeping rock face at the bike path in Oil Creek Park, but the Louisiana Waterthrush was nearby singing his heart out. It may have been the longest look any of us has ever had as Mike got his scope set up and focused on this songster.

The foliage, barely unfurled, allowed easy viewing of the birds in the branches. We had a spectacular look at two Yellow-throated Vireos and four handsome Baltimore Orioles. We enjoyed some of the flora as well; Red Trillium, Marsh Marigold, Bluets, various violets, Yellow Trout Lillies and yes, Skunk Cabbage.

Earlier in the walk along the creek we found the following 41 spring arrivals and year-round residents: Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Tree Swallow, American Goldfinch, Tufted Titmouse, Canada Goose, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, White-throated Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird, Eastern Towhee, Red-winged Blackbird, Blue-headed Vireo, Northern Flicker, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Immature Bald Eagle, Common Grackle, Chipping Sparrow, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, Common Merganser, Black-throated Green Warbler, Turkey Vulture, Northern Cardinal, Gray Catbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula, Blue-winged Warbler, Dark-eyed Junco, Belted Kingfisher, Pileated Woodpecker, Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, European Starling and American Crow.



Why kill a tree to grow a flower?

~Deb Freed



In March I visited central Florida and Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Corkscrew contains the world's largest remaining old-growth Bald Cypress forest. The Suncoast Native Plant Society produced an informative brochure where I learned about the problem of cypress forests being logged to produce mulch. I am sharing this information from their brochure.

The cypress mulch industry began as a by-product of lumber operations, but demand for mulch has led to the use of the whole tree for nothing but mulch. Cypress trees are now being clear-cut from native wetlands and not being replanted. The land is easily taken over by invasive pest plants and sometimes planted in pine. Replanting cypress is not highly successful.

They suggest ways to reduce the demand for cypress mulch by simply choosing one of these alternatives: Eucalyptus Mulch, Pine Bark, Pine Straw, Melaleuca Mulch branded as "Florimulch" or Promulch, made from recycled rubber tires. Our Pennsylvania garden centers offer alternatives to cypress as well. Spread the word and spread the right kinds of mulch!

IBA #21 Mt. Zion (Piney Tract)

~Deb Freed

Last June we sponsored the Grassland Seminar. Among other successful outcomes, the seminar spawned a plan to bring local awareness to the habitat and its importance for the grassland birds. SRAS received a grant from National Audubon that will provide the following:

- Classroom Kits for 8 elementary libraries and 2 public libraries that will include educational materials about grasslands from Audubon Adventures for grades 3 – 6
 - Birdsong CDs to help with identification of the grassland birds
 - Brochures outlining a visit to Piney Tract
 - Signs to identify the Important Bird Area #21.
- This should all be in place sometime in May.

Good News in New York

Kevin McGowan, from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, presented a program to the RTPI Ornithological Club on March 26. He discussed the 2nd New York State Breeding Bird Atlas, which was held from 2000 through 2005.

He spent some time analyzing the changes since the first New York Breeding Bird Atlas, which was done in 1980 through 1985. Interestingly, the data showed that 49% of the species' distribution remained the same, 23% decreased, and a whopping 28% increased. This was based on the number of blocks in which each species was found.

The website for the atlas is very similar to Pennsylvania's. It shows the blocks where each species was found, with different shades for Possible, Probable, and Confirmed, and also shows the data from the first New York atlas. The upcoming book will also include another map for each species, highlighting the differences between the 2 atlases. While one color represents a block where the species was found in both surveys, a second color will show where the species was only in the first atlas, and a third color will show where the species was only in the second atlas.

Mr. McGowan stated that the coverage (number of volunteers, hours spent, and records entered) were comparable between the two atlases.

Birdwatcher

Review of a new book, from the Audubon newswire

Roger Tory Peterson - the Renaissance man who taught Americans the joy of watching birds - also invented the modern field guide. His 1934 landmark *Field Guide to the Birds* was the first book designed to go outdoors and help people identify the elements of nature. This self-proclaimed "student of nature" combined spectacular writing with detailed illustrations to ultimately publish many other books, winning every possible award and medal for natural science, ornithology, and conservation. Peterson also traveled the world, giving lectures on behalf of the National Audubon

Society and, despite his self-effacing demeanor, becoming recognized as the key force to alerting the public to the importance of preserving nature. There are now an estimated 70 million bird-watchers in the United States.

For this meticulously detailed biography of Roger Tory Peterson, *Birdwatcher*, author Elizabeth J. Rosenthal has interviewed more than a hundred of Peterson's family, friends, and associates to create a fully rounded portrait of this hero of the conservation movement. Never-before-seen photographs enhance this intimate portrayal.

Survey Questions from National Audubon Society – What should SRAS be doing?

- 1) How does your chapter promote keeping birds and wildlife safe from cats, windows, or other hazards?
- 2) How does your chapter promote using bird feeders, nest boxes, or birdbaths?
- 3) How does your chapter promote reducing pesticide use?
- 4) How does your chapter promote protecting water quality in local streams, rivers, or lakes?
- 5) How does your chapter promote water conservation?
- 6) How does your chapter promote planting native plants?
- 7) How does your chapter promote removal of exotic invasive plants?
- 8) Does your chapter have a list of priority bird species that you are trying to help in your area through policy work?
- 9) Does your chapter have a list of species that you encourage private landowners to help on their property?
- 10) Does your chapter work with local county or municipal government to protect bird habitat from development?
- 11) Resources — Audubon has created a number of resources to help promote bird-friendly habitats and bird conservation in urban, suburban, and rural areas. How has your chapter promoted any of these resources?

The Hummingbirds are Back!

~ *Scott Weidensaul, from a post to the PABIRDS listserv*

At the risk of repeating what a lot of people already know, here's a quick reminder of the basics.

Use only a mix of one part white sugar (cane or beet) to four parts water – that means one cup sugar to four cups water, or the same ratio in greater or lesser amounts. Do not add anything else, including food colors, which aren't necessary and may be potentially hazardous to the birds. Artificial nectar mixes are, in the opinions of most experts, a waste of money.

Do **not** use any other sweetener, like molasses, brown/turbinado sugar, maple syrup, honey or (heaven forbid) artificial sweeteners.

Why processed sugar instead of something more "natural"? **Flower nectar is almost entirely sucrose**, the form of sugar found in cane sugar, and also the form that hummingbirds have evolved to process most efficiently. Processed sugar may be empty calories for humans, but it's a natural diet for hummers. Don't worry about needing to give hummingbirds a "balanced" diet, since more than half of what they eat anyway are insects and other small arthropods, as well as the natural nectar they're finding in your garden and the wild.

The 4:1 ratio is proven safe and effective for hummingbirds, but there are potential risks of dehydration at higher concentrations. Yes, the birds will use feeders with higher sugar ratios, the same way kids will opt for candy and ice cream if given a choice...doesn't mean it's good for them. Stick with 4:1.

Never add anything to your nectar – not food coloration, and nothing to "add protein" like fish food, which simply spoils the mix.

Clean your feeders at least once a week, and change the nectar every few days if the weather is hot. Keep a jug of premade nectar in the fridge, and use hot water and a bottle brush to scrub the entire inside of the feeder. Buy feeders based on their utility, instead of how twee or cute they are – a

cute feeder that doesn't come apart for cleaning is dangerous to your hummers. If you wouldn't drink out of it, don't expect a hummingbird to.



"The Birdwatcher"

Thanks to Mavis Anderson, Janice Horn's sister, for this fun photo, taken at a ranch in SE Arizona.

Studies of Vagrant Birds

~ *Greg Grove, from a post to the PABIRDS listserv*

The link below is to an interesting report which suggests that vagrant birds migrate the correct distance but in the wrong direction. This was based on analysis of 100+ years of vagrant records in Eurasia.

The conclusion was that if weather (mostly wind presumably) caused vagrancy, distance of vagrants from their normal range should be variable and small birds would be more likely to be vagrant (affected by wind), neither of which is suggested by the analysis. Thus this work supports the hypothesis that bad (or at least altered) genetic wiring is suggested to explain vagrancy.

Migratory Birds Make Mistakes In Direction, But Not Distance

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/04/080410115420.htm



PAMC on May 10

~Bill Etter, PAMC Coordinator

The 17th annual PA Migration Count (PAMC) takes place on Saturday, May 10th! I hope **everyone** will try to get out and help! There are lots of new migrants pouring through the state in early May...go find them! (and count them...)

The PA Migration Count has taken place on the second Saturday in May since 1992. It's a great excuse to take some time to visit your favorite areas and count some birds! For those unfamiliar with how the count works, it's very similar to a Christmas Bird Count, but with much warmer weather. Count all the birds you find in a given area, then fill out the form and send it in! **PAMC is a county based count.** Some counties have dozens of participants, while others have none. If you are new to the count, send me a message indicating your location, and I'll be glad to put you in touch with your county's coordinator (if there is one...). If you live in a rural region, it's probably safe to assume that no one is covering your area, but feel free to ask!

Participants are free to participate wherever they like to go birding...within a neighborhood, a park, a gameland, or even within your own yard.

The 2008 PAMC form is available for download here: http://pa.audubon.org/PAMC_Form2008.xls The form is also available as an Adobe pdf; let me know if you need it.

It would be great to get some new participants this year (we had well over 900 last year!) If you want to help out, or need more info, let me know! As far as I know, Pennsylvania is the only state that does anything even remotely similar to this in spring! It's fun AND worthwhile...we've built up an impressive block of data since 1992....keep it going! Please get out there and help next Saturday!

Great Backyard Bird Count Report

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) broke yet another record this year! Birders submitted more than 85,000 checklists during the four-day event, surpassing last year's all-time record by several thousand. Participants also identified a record 635 species and sent in thousands of stunning bird images from around the continent.

This year's top 10 most-reported birds are Northern Cardinal, Mourning Dove, Dark-eyed Junco, Downy Woodpecker, American Goldfinch, Blue Jay, House Finch, Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee, and American Crow. This is similar to 2007 except that House Sparrow is gone from the list and Black-capped Chickadee is now on it.

Pennsylvania, with 4,326 checklists submitted, was third in the number of checklists per state. Only New York and North Carolina residents submitted more checklists.

Some species showed up in GBBC reports for the very first time, including a Masked Duck in Texas—a bird that is usually found in the tropics. An Arctic Loon, seldom seen outside Alaska, was spotted in California. An Ivory Gull wandered down from the high Arctic to show up on a checklist in South Dakota.

For an even more detailed summary of this year's results, visit the GBBC web site at www.birdcount.org. You can explore maps, see beautiful photos, prize-drawing winners, and the list of cities and towns that topped their state or province for the number of checklists submitted—our “checklist champs.”

Each year, awareness of the GBBC seems to spread. Visit the GBBC web site to read about some of the ways individuals, nature centers, parks, and schools adopted the GBBC as their own.

*"Spring has returned.
The Earth is like a child that knows poems."*

~ Rainer Maria Rilke

HELP!

This is the last *Drummer* for the breeding season, and the last year of the PBBA, thus the last chance for the Coordinators to ask for help with the Breeding Bird Atlas. We won't bother you again! For a current map showing progress, go to <http://bird.atlasing.org/Atlas/PA/> -- click on "View Results". Under "Select a Theme" choose "Number of Species" and see where help is needed. After 4 years, we should be 80% finished; while parts of the map look about 80% complete, there are still blocks in Regions 44 and 45 with less than 25 species. From this page, you can click on "View Previous Atlas Data" and see how much better the coverage was in the first Atlas, particularly in Clarion County.

If you have adopted a block and won't be able to finish it, please disown it as soon as possible so that another atlasser can be found. If you have data that isn't entered, please enter it as soon as possible so that the coordinators know where more atlas coverage is needed. If you have any questions about the project, don't be shy, just ask a coordinator.

Remember, every bird counts. If you're not in your block and you see something interesting, notify one of the coordinators. Any coordinator would be happy to get a phone call or an email saying "Baltimore Oriole nest June 1st at Main and 7th" or "Killdeer doing broken wing act May 15 at Potato Farm".

As Pat Conway said in her article last month, she will be letting folks know when she plans to blockbust a block. You can let Pat know if you'd like to be added to this list. These trips have all been great fun.

What is more fun than being outdoors on a June morning watching birds – in the company of other folks who love birds, continuing the camaraderie with a good lunch, plus the knowledge that you're contributing important data to the project?

Coordinators:

- Region 43 – Gary Edwards, 814-676-3011, gedwards@csonline.net;
- Region 44 – Carole Willenpart, 814-745-3818, cwillenpart@windstream.net
- Region 45 – Pat Conway, 814-849-6315, bkeeper1@alltel.net
- Region 30 – Flo McGuire, 814-755-3672, fmcguire1@verizon.net

Winter Raptor Survey Summary

~ Greg Grove, from a post to the PABIRDS listserve

The 2008 Pa. Winter Raptor Survey is complete. This year, we logged 504 hours, about the same as in the previous 4 years. Thus we now have a well established period of consistent coverage wherein most of the territory covered is the same each year. The number of routes run was 141, with reports from 62 counties.

Totals: Bald Eagle – 56, Harrier – 133 (record high), Sharp-shinned – 42, Cooper's – 73, Goshawk – 1, Red-shoulder – 39 (record high), Red-tailed – 2390 (second highest count), Rough-legged – 88, Golden eagle – 1, Kestrel – 510 (second highest count), Merlin – 6 (record high), Peregrine – 4, Black Vulture – 610 (record high), Turkey Vulture – 1681 (second highest count).

As usual, the greatest concentration of Red-tails and Kestrels was in counties in the lower and central Susquehanna Valley, with Red-tails in good numbers over most of the state. The Kestrel number was very consistent with the previous two years. Kestrel counts in the southeast, however, remain far below the rest of the state. This is not simply a matter of habitat because Red-tail numbers are strong there.

Harriers were recorded in record numbers and the number per hour was also the highest in the eight years. For the last few years harrier counts have been trending up. Why?? Maybe the effect of the CREP program begun about 6-7 years ago(?). Rough-leg numbers were low again this year. Too mild?

A much more extensive report will be published in *Pennsylvania Birds*.

For more information about our chapter and current updates, please check our website at www.senecarocksaudubon.org



Consider the environment and save postage for SRAS! Read and/or print your next Drummer from the website.

Please send your e-mail address to :

dfreed208@comcast.net to request an e-Drummer. You will be notified by email when the next Drummer is ready.

Events Coming up...

Birdathon - May 3 through May 11.
ARCA Bird Watching Day - Foxburg - May 10
International/PA Migratory Bird Count - May 10
PSO annual mtg in Pittsburgh - May 16-18
Blockbusting for the PBBA - June & July

SRAS Board Members

President -- None	
Vice-president, Programs - Pete Dalby	782-3227
Treasurer, Birdseed, Birdathon - Janice Horn	226-7367
Website, Drummer Editor - Flo McGuire	755-3672
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History - Pat Conway	849-6315
Mill Creek Coalition -	
Beaver Creek - Walter Fye	797-1019



Note:

This will be our last *Drummer* until September. Watch your mail for a postcard announcing our annual Summer Picnic.

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