

Seneca Rocks Drummer



September, 2004
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Newsletter of the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society

Volume 21, No. 1

www.senecarocksaudubon.org



Next Meeting – September 13
Room 249, Peirce Science
Center
Refreshments & conversation at
7:00 p.m.
Program begins at 7:30 p.m.

Don Watts presents Kestrels, Kestrels, Kestrels

by Gary Edwards

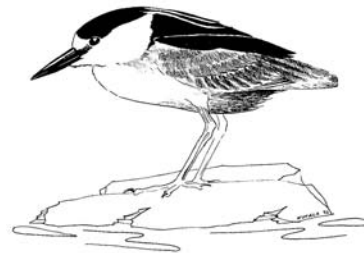
Don Watts, Master Bird Bander and Biological Technical Assistant for the U.S. Forest Service in the Allegheny National Forest, will present an information-packed slide show and narrative based on 18 years of participation in the Kestrel Nest Box program. Don presently is monitoring 43 boxes and is also actively involved in bird surveys in the Forest, two Breeding Bird Survey routes, a Pennsylvania Grassland Bird Survey Route, the Warren Christmas Bird Count and bird banding. In addition, he and Ted Grisez are co-coordinators for a Breeding Bird Atlas Region.

His slides show Kestrel nesting up-close as well as other plants and animals he's captured on film while monitoring his boxes. Please join us for an enjoyable and informative evening.

Field Trips

by Ron Montgomery

Planned Field Trips for 2004/2005 are as follows. Two differences from previous years: we will not do Snowbirding this year and we will meet at birding sites rather than caravanning to the more distant locations. Please arrange appropriate car pooling before hand.



(Black-crowned Night-heron by Stan Kotala)

Sat 9/11	Conneaut, OH
Week of 9/19	American Chestnut Collection
M&T 10/25&26	Allegheny Front Hawk Watch
Sat 3/26	Conneaut Marsh, PA
Sat 4/2	Presque Isle
Mon 4/25	Oil Creek State Park
Sat 5/14	Mt. Zion & Mt. Airy
Mon 6/20	Atlas Block Busting

Sat, September 11; Conneaut OH. This trip is for migrating shore and water birds, and will be led by Jerry Stanley. It will probably be joint

with Bartramian. We will all meet at the McDonalds Restaurant on Route 7 & State Street in Conneaut OH, at such time that we will be able to depart McDonalds at 8:30 AM. We will eat lunch at a local restaurant and bird through mid-to-late afternoon, but individuals are free to leave any time they wish.

Since identifying fall migrants is a significant challenge, I look forward to Jerry's patient and expert explanations. Please let me know if you plan to attend so I can inform Jerry how many to expect.

Since we will not meet in the Clarion area, you may wish to check with me just before the trip to be sure we are still going. One way to get to our meeting place from Meadville is to take Route 6 west into Ohio and turn right onto Route 7, which leads to Conneaut. McDonald's Restaurant is at 312 State Street/Route 7. The trip from Clarion will take about 2 hours and 15 minutes.

Week of September 19; Fisher Area. Since we invested in figuring out how and when to collect American Chestnuts last year, we expect to do it again this year. Ruth Schurr will give details at our meeting of September 13. Even though collection was a trial and error affair last year, in the end we were very successful. The American Chestnut Foundation was quite laudatory.

Other

We will discuss details of the other outings at future meetings and in future Newsletters, but note that we are doing the Grassland trip much earlier this year. In the past I have had no trouble finding Upland Sandpipers during my scouting trips in mid May, when by the time we get together in late May, the little devils are no where to be seen! Apparently they take a low profile when brooding their young. So we will try catching them during the flirting stage this time!



Crow's Nest

by President Deb Freed

Welcome back to our 21st official year! Your officers and committee chairs have planned another great year of programs and field trips. We've put together a balance of new topics and traditional favorites.

In May, SRAS will sponsor the annual PSO (Pennsylvania Society of Ornithology) meeting at the Clarion Holiday Inn. In April we will be electing new officers. We are currently looking for a secretary to document the board meetings and issue publicity. The BBA (Breeding Bird Atlas) is underway and regional coordinators welcome observers to adopt blocks.

There are a variety of ways to contribute to the goals of our chapter. Let one of your officers know how you want to get involved.



SRAS Officers		
President	Deb Freed	226-4719
Vice-President	Gary Edwards	676-3011
Secretary	OPEN	
Treasurer	Janice Horn	226-7367
Committee Chairs		
Armchair Activist ...	Kathy Janik	275-2058
Beaver Ck Maint.	Walter Fye	797-1019
Conservation	OPEN	
Education	Paulette Colantonio	797-2031
Field Trips	Ron Montgomery	764-6088
Hospitality	Janice Horn	226-7367
Membership	Sherry Vowinckel	782-3294
Mill Ck/Piney Tract ..	Pete Dalby	782-3227
Newsletter	Flo McGuire	755-3672
Programs	Gary Edwards	676-3011

Four Days, Four Million Birds

GBBC report by Margaret Buckwalter

Seneca Rocks members who participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) in February will be interested in the following results as tabulated by Allison and Jeffrey Wells of the Cornell Lab.



Total checklists submitted	42,492
Species observed	555
Number of birds counted	4,304,810

Most frequently reported species:
(number of checklists)

Mourning Dove	23,307
Northern Cardinal	22,920
Dark-eyed Junco	20,909

Highest number of birds:

Canada Goose	609,679
European Starling	249,035
American Goldfinch	211,456

“This year’s GBBC reports add up to the most successful and amazing snapshot of winter bird populations yet,” says John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “By birdwatching during the GBBC, participants have provided an unprecedented window into the distribution and abundance of North American birds.”

Reports came in from all 50 states and every Canadian province except Nunavut. More information on the count is at <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>. There’s a map for every species and much, much more.

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count in 2005!
Save the Date--February 19-21.



(Yellow-throated Warbler photo courtesy of Robert Mulvihill, Powdermill Nature Reserve)

Warbler Walk, Oil Creek State Park April 26, 2004

by Deb Freed

Attending: Gary Edwards, Dennis and Susan Beaver, Barbara Knapp, Ruth and Karl Schurr, Tom Crawford, Lloyd Shaffer, Flo and Jim McGuire, Gil Twiest, Ron Montgomery, Fran Williams, Hendrika Bohlen, Nancy Baker, and Deb Freed.

Gary was able to tell us that 25 warblers breed in this beautiful valley. We got a glimpse of that population with these eight: Black-throated Green, Black-and-White, Blackburnian, Parula, Blue-winged, Yellow-throated, Yellow, and Yellow-rumped.

Additional species included: Northern Flicker, Blue-headed Vireo, Gray Catbird, Tree Swallows, Tufted Titmouse, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Warbling Vireo, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal, Common Merganser, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Crow, American Robin, Wood Duck, Sharp-shinned Hawk, White-breasted Nuthatch, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, Rufous-sided Towhee, Black-capped Chickadee, Brown Thrasher, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Mallard, European Starling, Common Grackle, Barn Swallow, Eastern Bluebird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Downy Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Canada Goose, Fox Sparrow, Great Blue Heron, Baltimore Oriole, Belted Kingfisher, Turkey Vulture, Coopers Hawk, Northern Harrier, Ruffed Grouse.

A fifty species field trip on a very moist, cool morning isn't bad!



Armchair Activist

by Kathy Janik

Judicial Update:

The US Navy was ordered by the courts to stop work on plans for a jet landing field in eastern North Carolina. This field would have been within five miles of the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, winter home to thousands of tundra swans, snow geese, and other migratory birds.

The Defenders of Wildlife, the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, and the Southern Environmental Law Center, representing Audubon, successfully convinced the court that the location for the field was a clear danger to low flying aircraft and pilots. And, of course, this is great news for the birds!

Susquehanna River Birding & Wildlife Trail

(News release from PA Audubon)

HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania – On May 7, 2004, the Susquehanna River Birding & Wildlife Trail Project unveiled the newly-published 85-page map and guide to watching birds and other wildlife, in honor of International Migratory Bird Day. This multi-phased project successfully identified more than 215 locations where wildlife or bird watching activities can take place throughout the Susquehanna River watershed. Thirty-nine counties in Pennsylvania are represented, and wildlife watchers can choose from a variety of locations including state parks, state forests, vistas, urban settings, and wild areas.

The project, spearheaded by Audubon Pennsylvania, creates a state-wide network of locations where wildlife and bird watching can be developed, promoted and marketed, developing the State's nature tourism industry. Marci Mowery, Director of Education for Audubon Pennsylvania, said, "The development of bird and wildlife watching corridors is a valuable addition to a regional or state economy. Bird and wildlife watchers spend about \$40 billion on trips,

hotels, equipment and other items each year and the majority travel to take part in those activities. Regions who develop their natural assets and make visitors aware of them, stand to benefit considerably."

"Pennsylvania is ideally located and contains the diversity of habitats necessary for a successful birding and wildlife watching trail," continues Mowery, "Bird watching is big business, and can contribute significantly to the economy of the state, while also serving to protect our valuable natural assets."

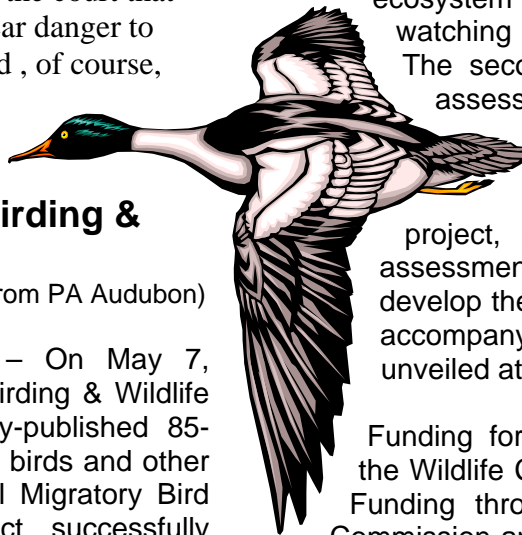
This is the final phase of the Susquehanna River Birding & Wildlife Trail Project. The first phase successfully identified over 300 potential ecosystem sites where wildlife or bird watching activities could be carried out. The second phase was an on-ground assessment of each site. Public forums were held to allow the community the opportunity to comment on the project, and hear results of the site assessments. The third phase was to develop the guide and map, along with an accompanying website that will be unveiled at the end of May.

Funding for the project was provided by the Wildlife Conservation Reinvestment Act Funding through the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission; Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; Department of Community and Economic Development; Wild Resource Conservation Fund; and TEA21 funds through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

The map and guide will be available at birding trail location facilities, local outfitters and visitors bureaus, and through Audubon Pennsylvania. Check their website at <http://pa.audubon.org> or www.pabirdingtrails.org for more information.

Contact: Marci Mowery, Audubon Pennsylvania
717-213-6880 Ext. 16

Editor's note: some local areas that appear in the guide are Buzzard Swamp (under Elk County) and Cook Forest (under Jefferson County).



Ron & Gary's Grassland Fieldtrip May 22, 2004

by Deb Freed

After two nights of rip-roaring stormy weather it didn't look promising for the early morning rendezvous at Mt. Zion. When meeting time arrived, however, the skies dried up and eventually gave way to sunshine. *(Savannah Sparrow Photo by Mike Leahy)*



Birders included: Jack and Fran Williams, Margaret Buckwalter, Gary Edwards, Ron Montgomery, Paulette Colantonio, Mike Leahy, Jim and Flo McGuire, Carole Willenpart, and Deb Freed.

From Mt. Zion to Wyant Road to Morris Road and Mt. Airy we collected the following species: Bobolink, Field Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Grasshopper Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Killdeer, Mallard, Northern Harrier, Turkey, Henslow's Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow (Mike and McGuires took extra time to find this one), Eastern Kingbird, Savannah Sparrow, Indigo Bunting, Song Sparrow, Tree Swallow, Eastern Towhee, American Robin, Eastern Meadowlark, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Prairie Warbler, Canada Geese, Red-eyed Vireo, Black-capped Chickadee, Mourning Dove, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Eastern Bluebird, Yellow Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Swamp Sparrow, Veery, Black-and-white Warbler, Hairy Woodpecker, Scarlet Tanager, Blue Jay, Ovenbird, Purple Finch, Chimney Swift, Horned Lark, American Crow, Turkey Vulture, House

Wren, Northern Cardinal, Barn Swallow, Gray Catbird, American Goldfinch, American Kestrel, Northern Flicker, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Common Grackle, Common Raven, Willow Flycatcher, Black-throated Green Warbler, Red-tailed Hawk, Wood Thrush, and Northern Rough-winged Swallow. Some of the group added an Alder Flycatcher in a brushy field, on their way to lunch.

Although the Upland Sandpipers eluded us at this outing, we were treated to perfect spotting scope views of both Grasshopper and Henslow's Sparrows singing. Margaret and Jack took a side trip seeing some of the species the rest of the group sighted, but added Chipping Sparrow and Blue-headed Vireo. All this totaled 62. Think what we would have missed by staying home.



Margaret Buckwalter has decided on a "second retirement" and has retired from her position as Conservation Chair on the SRAS board. Her knowledge and thoughtful contributions to discus-

sions will be missed, along with her sense of humor and ability to keep things in perspective.

Margaret has assured us that she will still be an active member of Seneca Rocks and continue to contribute Drummer articles, which we enjoy. She intends to tackle a formidable project - organizing decades of birding data to produce a comprehensive Clarion County Bird List. Margaret is calling this "retirement squared".

Margaret, thanks so much for your years of service in many capacities on the SRAS board. We wish you smooth sailing in your new project, but - we'll miss you!



(photos, copyright The American Chestnut Foundation, reproduced with permission)

Chestnut Update

by Ruth Schurr

I recently had a call from Sara Fitzsimmons, tree breeding coordinator for the American Chestnut Foundation. She was reporting on our chestnuts harvested last fall.

Our seeds have been planted in two orchards. Twenty seeds were planted at Camp Mack in Lancaster County. Thirteen trees are growing well; seven died. Thirty nuts were given to a grower in Julian, Center County. Of these, eighteen are growing and most have exceeded two feet in height. She says it has been a great growing season and had we planted earlier in May the trees would be three feet tall by now. But no matter, this is very encouraging and I hope we will be able to send in more seeds this year. Karl and Ron have the method down pat after all. There is the possibility that the tract will be timbered yet this year and though we have put signs on the trees, the timber company may choose to cut them. We will let members know when the time is right for shaking the trees, probably about the end of September.

Some background information from Ruth Schurr's article in The Drummer, Aug-Sept, 2003 -

For the last twenty years the American Chestnut Foundation has been back-crossing



resistant American Chestnuts with Chinese Chestnuts with the goal of restoring this beautiful tree to its former place in our mid-Atlantic forests. In five years they should have 95% American trees available for distribution. We (Ruth and Karl Schurr) are very lucky to have found these healthy 15-inch trees. (In

Spring of 2003) we sent in twigs to verify that they are indeed pure American Chestnut.

The American Chestnut Foundation has an informative website at <http://www.acf.org>



Photo by Judy Montgomery

National Wildlife Week 2004

by Deb Freed

Thanks to those who staffed our display at the mall: Carl & Joan Rowe, Gary Edwards, Hendrika Bohlen, Flo and Jim McGuire, Margaret Buckwalter, Ruth and Karl Schurr, Patty Laswick, Judy and Ron Montgomery, Patt Conway, Mary Emerick and Doris McLean, Shirley Monrean, Walt Fye, Pete Dalby and Fran and Jack Williams.

We netted \$234.50 selling our Audubon items and Bluebird boxes. Lots of good information was distributed about birds, wildlife and their habitats. Best of all, we attracted attention to the chapter and engaged dozens of visitors on a variety of birding topics.





(Ruffed Grouse photo by Margaret Buckwalter)

Birdathon 2004

by Janice Horn

This year there were 12 teams consisting of 1 to 4 people who spent up to 24 hours spotting birds with at least one team “birdathoning” in conjunction with the NAMC. A total of 161 species were sighted which is 29 more than last year. Pledges and donations came in at \$4008.70 and were down from last year’s high by \$1211.30. Margaret Buckwalter was the leader in the amount collected. The number of pledges and donations that the teams turned in ranged from 1 to 40.

Most teams spotted at least one species that the others did not. There were 37 of those (in AOU order):

Red-throated loon (Colantonio & Leahy)
 Lesser scaup, Common golden-eye (Montgomery, Freed & Conway)
 Hooded merganser (Willenpart)
 Red-breasted merganser, Osprey (Colantonio & Leahy)
 Sora (Buckwalter & Horn)
 American coot (Willenpart)
 Semipalmated plover (Montgomery, Freed & Conway)
 Spotted sandpiper (Colantonio & Leahy)
 Common tern, Barred owl (Montgomery, Freed & Conway)
 Northern saw-whet owl (McGuire)
 Red-headed woodpecker (Williams)
 Olive-sided flycatcher (Colantonio & Leahy)

Acadian flycatcher (Williams)
 Alder flycatcher (McGuire)
 Willow flycatcher (Williams)
 Least flycatcher (McGuire)
 White-eyed vireo (Willenpart)
 Common raven (Montgomery, Freed & Conway)
 Horned lark (Dalby)
 Red-breasted nuthatch (McGuire)
 Ruby-crowned kinglet (Willenpart)
 Townsend’s solitaire (Rowe)
 Swainson’s thrush (McGuire)
 Golden-winged warbler (Rowe)
 Tennessee warbler (Willenpart)
 Orange-crowned warbler (Rowe)
 Yellow-throated warbler (Rowe)
 Pine warbler (Schurr)
 Blackpoll warbler (Willenpart)
 Northern waterthrush (McGuire)
 Mourning warbler (Buckwalter & Horn)
 Wilson’s warbler (Colantonio & Leahy)
 Vesper sparrow (Pokrifka)
 Swamp sparrow (Willenpart)

The following 19 species were sighted by two teams: Blue-winged teal, Ruddy duck, Bald eagle, Ruffed grouse, Least sandpiper, Yellow-billed cuckoo, Eastern screech owl, Common nighthawk, Whip-poor-will, Yellow-throated vireo, Purple martin, Bank swallow, Golden-crowned kinglet, American pipit, Northern parula, Blackburnian warbler, Bay-breasted warbler, Orchard oriole, and Pine siskin.

If you’re curious about where a particular species was found ask someone from the team; or check out the team reports which will be available for you to peruse at the September meeting. The list of all the species will also be there.

Thank you to everyone who supported the Birdathon this year. We look forward to next year and another exciting Birdathon.

Did you know?

The covering of prey with the wings by a feeding raptor is called “mantling”.



Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Report

The first year of this 5-year project went fairly well. The website at <http://bird.atlasing.org/PA/> is accepting data input, and as I write this, the following totals are displayed on the “View Results” page:

Total Blocks	4937
Blocks Unowned	3314
	(1623 blocks are adopted)
Blocks Complete	0
Block Effort Hours	4171
Other Effort Hours	718
	(this included traveling to and from blocks, plus data entry)
Submissions	20582
Registered Participants	934
Species Confirmed	147
Species Reported	175

If you like to browse, this is an interesting page. You can select a species, and it will show where that bird has been found in Pennsylvania, whether it was a Possible, Probable, or Confirmed breeder. Or you can select “Owned” to see which blocks have been adopted, or “Hours of Effort” and see how many atlassing hours have been reported so far.

Once you start entering your own data, it’s fun to see the maps change.

You can also pick a particular block and click on “2004-2008 results” to see a list of species that have been reported so far for that block.

Here is just one highlight of my summer: on a sunny June morning, we were driving slowly next to a farm field, hoping to confirm Bobolinks, when we saw two recently-fledged Barn Swallows perched side-by-side on a wire fence. The two heads would move in unison as they watched their parents circle overhead, insect-catching. We watched for several minutes, and the young did not leave their perch. When the parents finally swooped down with tidbits for the kids, I don’t know which was more phenomenal – their speed, their aim, or their brakes!

If you haven’t joined this project, please plan on joining for the 2005 breeding season. The directions for atlassing couldn’t be simpler: get a map, go birding, write down what you see. You’re sure to discover new places to bird.

“Block Busting” Outing

by Flo McGuire

The term “Block Busting” refers to an atlassing trip where a group of people work in the same block on the same day, hoping to quickly accumulate breeding species. The best time is between June 15th and June 30th, when ALL birds are safe.

This outing took place on June 21 at Clear Creek State Forest near Barkeyville in Gary Edwards’ and Russ States’ Region 43. Gary and Russ, Ron Montgomery, Paulette Colantonio, Anita Mason, and Jim and Flo McGuire participated. Gary led us to the State Forest parking lot, where he quickly split us into 3 teams, distributed maps and sent us on our way.

Our area included a cool hemlock ravine – a great place for a hike anytime – and 30 species. Since all birds were safe, these were all coded as “Possible” breeders. We saw pairs of both Scarlet Tanager and Black-throated Green Warbler, raising them to “Probable”. A family of Wood Thrush fledglings, calling as they moved through the understory, and a Hooded Warbler feeding young raised these species to “Confirmed”.

Gary reports that, combined with a follow-up trip that he and Russ made a week later, the block had 1 Observed, 7 Possible, 23 Probable, and 7

Confirmed, for a total of 38 species. Highlights were Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Great-crested Flycatcher, both probable. Two other warblers, Ovenbird and Common Yellowthroat, were among the confirmed. During the last atlas they had 55 species total for that block – so the blockbusting plus one return trip produced about 70% of the total from the last atlas.

Results from the other block were at least as good. One of the highlights was a Field Sparrow nest with eggs, found by Ron, Anita and Paulette.

It was a good morning! The teams then enjoyed lunch at Bob Evans in Cranberry as we discussed our findings and transferred data to field cards for Gary and Russ.



Audubon Adventures 20th Season!

by Deb Freed

Audubon Adventures was recently named among the top ten most popular environmental projects in K-12 schools by Classroom Earth and the National Environmental Education Training Foundation. Seneca Rocks Audubon will sponsor classroom materials to area teachers on these topics:



- The Secret World of Plants
- People and Wildlife Sharing the Earth
- Birds of Prey
- Butterflies
- Healthy Habitat - Poster

Included in each classroom kit are a teacher's resource guide and 32 individual student editions of Audubon Adventure Nature News for kids.

Contact Deb Freed at dhfreed@csonline.net for your FREE Audubon Adventures !

Since Margaret has retired, there is a new opening on the SRAS board:

The Conservation Chair keeps the chapter informed on conservation issues and projects. These issues and projects may include bird monitoring, data collection and reporting, habitat preservation and cooperation with other regional organizations that share our conservation purpose.
Please contact President Deb Freed if interested.

SRAS Annual Picnic

August 16th, the day of the annual SRAS picnic, turned out to be one of the few days in August with no rain! We met at Cook Forest Shelter 2B across from the Log Cabin. The hemlocks along beautiful Tom's Run provided a cool walk for those who came early, but the birds were mostly memories, due to post-breeding dispersal. Hendrika's eyes sparkled with delight as she told of finding a singing Winter Wren there earlier this year. Real birds included Dark-eyed Junco, Black-capped Chickadee, and Blue-headed Vireo.

As we enjoyed the wonderful variety of food, we compared notes about atlassing, trips taken, and trips planned. Culinary highlights included, but were not limited to, Pat Conway's barbecued pork, Judy Montgomery's spicy chicken wings, Margaret Buckwalter's vanilla custard, and Kathy Pokrifka's fruit pizza.

At the short business meeting, members were reminded of the upcoming PSO meeting in Clarion on May 20-22, 2005. Award-winning photographer Gil Twiest has agreed to be one of the vendors at the Clarion Holiday Inn during this weekend. Deb showed a flyer of Audubon 2005 calendars that can be sold for \$10, and the group decided this would be a good fund-raiser.

Picnickers included Janice & Roger Horn, Deb & Ben Freed, Pokey & Kathy Pokrifka, Karl & Ruth Schurr, Gil & Linda Twiest, Judy & Ron Montgomery, Pat Conway, Ann Hunt, Gary Edwards, Jim Wilson, Margaret Buckwalter, Hendrika Bohlen, Barb Songer, Patty Laswick, Fran Williams, Jim & Flo McGuire.





Get your newsletter on line with e-Drummer
E-mail Deb Freed to sign up for e-Drummer at dhfreed@conline.net

Upcoming meetings

- Oct. 11, Mike Leahy - "South Carolina & Florida Birding"
- Nov. 8, Jerry Lucot - "Florida Birds"
- Dec. 13, Members' Night

Hosting our meetings:

September – Judy Montgomery
October – needed
November – Hendrika Bohlen
December - needed

LOGO CONTEST

Submit your design to be used for our newsletter masthead and new SRAS patch. The dimensions fit a line $5 \frac{1}{2}$ inches long with an arc $1 \frac{3}{4}$ inches high over the mid-point of the line. Submit designs to Deb Freed, 208 Briar Hill Drive, Clarion, PA 16214.

