



THE DRUMMER

www.senecarocksaudubon.org



February/March 2014

Volume 30, No. 3



Elk photo taken near Benezette by Pat Conway

Pennsylvania Elk

Eric Perlock

February 12 Program

Our speaker, Eric Perlock, who works with the elk in Pennsylvania, will give a brief history of the Pennsylvania elk herd. He will talk about some of the methods the PA Game Commission uses to monitor the herd, such as radio telemetry, darting elk, calf capturing, and the winter survey.

Eric earned his bachelor's degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Penn State University in 2010. In 2011 he was hired by the PA Game Commission as a Deer Biologist Aide and in the winter of 2012 he was given a new position as the Elk Biologist Aide.

Join us for this interesting program and learn more about these wild creatures living about an hour and half from Clarion.



The White-throated Magpie Jay is one of a number of Costa Rican birds Scott will talk about.

Pura Vida! Costa Rican Adventures

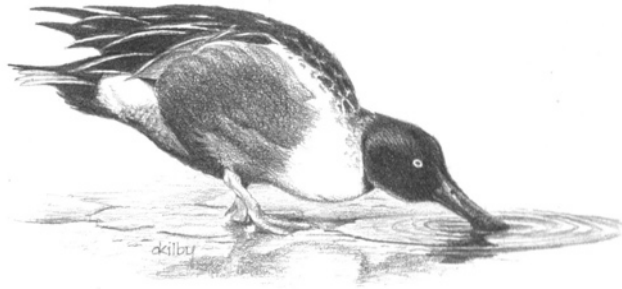
Scott Stoleson

March 12 Program

Scott Stoleson is a Research Wildlife Biologist for the US Forest Service research lab in Irvine, PA, where he studies various aspects of forest bird ecology and conservation. Scott serves on the boards of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology and the Association of Field Ornithologists, and on the PABS Ornithological Technical Committee. He has worked in numerous places in North, Central and South America, but keeps returning to Costa Rica, and just might retire there.

Scott will present a slide show titled "Pura Vida! Costa Rican Adventures", which will highlight birds, other wildlife, and scenery from his 30 years of travels to Costa Rica.

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



A Northern Shoveler is a possibility on this outing - art by Daniel S. Kilby, Audubon Chapter Resources

Conneaut Marsh Outing

~ Jim Wilson

We begin this outing at the spillway bridge at Custards, off Route 285. Follow Route 322 west from Clarion, through Franklin, to Route 173 near Cochranston. Turn left and follow Route 173 south about 1 mile, through Cochranston and across French Creek, to Route 285. Follow Route 285 about 6 miles to Custards and turn right on Mercer Pike Road. Follow Mercer Pike about a half mile to the bridge. The drive from Clarion area is as long as to Meadville.

I will be there at 8:00 a.m. We will move from there about 9:30 A.M.

Spring Bird Seed Sale

The birds are still hungry!

See our Bird Seed Sale Form on

Page 8



The *Drummer* is the newsletter of Seneca Rocks Audubon Society (SRAS), PO Box 148, Clarion, PA 16214. SRAS is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. The *Drummer* is published 4 times per year— September, November, February, and April.

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

www.senecarocksaudubon.org.

Members are encouraged to contribute announcements, articles, photos, etc., to Editor Flo McGuire, 609 Ponderosa Lane, Tionesta, PA 16353 (814 755-3672) or email at

fmcguire1@verizon.net.



We had a new high of eight Northern Mockingbirds seen on the CBC - photo by Pat Conway

27th CBC

~ Gary Edwards

What a beautiful day to be counting birds! As if apologizing for the blizzard last year, that lucky old man sun began to shine early and continued throughout most of the day, driving the air temperature into the 40s. In response, the 26 participants in vehicles and 19 feeder watchers shrugged off the last two record-setting low counts and tallied 52 species. Thank you one and all.

At the risk of sounding like never being satisfied, the day may have been too nice. Most groups reported good activity in the morning and then a more-than-usual reduction in sightings in the afternoon. That may partially account for the total of 4,652 birds, the lowest total in 25 years, 3rd lowest total overall, and more than 3,000 birds lower than our average of 7,663. In fairness, we haven't come close to the average in the last five years.

Low numbers of nine common species accounted for most of the discrepancy. The 600 European Starlings counted were 750 below average.

Likewise, totals for the following were down significantly; Dark-eyed Junco (-450), Canada Goose (-300), House Finch (-275), Black-capped Chickadee (-250), Blue Jay (-150), American Tree Sparrow (-150), American Goldfinch (-150), and Mourning Dove (-100).

Enough negativity! Our CBC Short-eared Owl sighting streak extends to 27 years (!!), with two found by the team of Mike Leahy, Paulette Colantonio, and newby Eva Palmer and a third by Gary Edwards and Jim Wilson. The owling team of Mike, Paulette and Eva also recorded nine Eastern Screech Owls, one Barred Owl and one Great Horned Owl.

Other highlights include:

- four Gadwall, new to the count, bringing our overall species number for all counts to 96;

- new highs for Northern Shrike (4), Northern Mockingbird (8), and Snow Bunting (150);

- the first Brown-headed Cowbird in six years;

- the return of Brown Creeper, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, and Golden-crowned Kinglet to the list of sightings.

Feeder watchers once again provided significant contributions with the only reports of Northern Bobwhite, undoubtedly a released bird but one of several seen consistently for the last two years in Marianne Estates, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Northern Flicker.

Field birders were: Ernie Aharrah, Al Bratkovich, Paulette Colantonio, Jennifer Conner, Pat Conway, Kurt Crosbie, Gary Edwards, Shelly Gracey, Jeff Hall, Janice Horn, Ann Hunt, Mike Leahy, Wayne Meier, Ron Montgomery, Eva Palmer, Carol Riffer, Carl Rowe, Joan Rowe, Ruth Schurr, Gil Twiest, Kathy Weaver, Fran Williams, Jack Williams, Jim Wilson, Carole Winslow, and Donna Woodman.

Feeder watchers were: Patty Bell, Henricka Bohlen, Cindy Bonner, Ted Buckwalter, Dorothy Flick, Ben Freed, Layne Giering, Irwin Henry, Sally Hockman, John & Susan Joy, Reba Klingler, Bill & Henrietta Kodrich, Charles Marlin, Judy & Glenn Rock, and Skip Young.

The 52 species seen this year include 25 species tallied on all 27 counts. They are R. Grouse, W. Turkey, Red-tailed Hawk, A. Kestrel, R. Pigeon, M. Dove, Short-eared Owl, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, and Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, A. Crow, B-c Chickadee, T. Titmouse, W.-breasted Nuthatch, E. Starling, A. Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, N. Cardinal, Purple Finch, House Finch, and House Sparrow.

C. Goose, N. Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Carolina Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, A. Robin, Cedar Waxwing, and Song Sparrow, all found this year, have been recorded in 26 years. The remaining 18 species and the number of years recorded are N. Flicker (25), Brown Creeper (25), E. Bluebird (25), R-n Pheasant (23), Red-breasted Nuthatch (23), Mallard (21), E. Screech Owl (18), Great Horned Owl (18), N. Mockingbird (16) N. Shrike (15), Barred Owl (13), Red-shouldered Hawk (12), C. Grackle (12), B-headed Cowbird (12), Bald Eagle (6), Snow Bunting (5), N. Bobwhite (2), Gadwall (1).

Group highlights were: Ron, Al & Carole, one E. Screech Owl, one N. Shrike, one B. Creeper; Jack, Fran, and Kurt, two N. Mockingbirds, 11 C. Waxwings; Gary, Jim & Gil, one S.-eared Owl, one N. Shrike; Janice & Jeff, 54 W. Turkeys, one R-shouldered Hawk, one Purple Finch; Ernie, Carol, Jennifer & Donna, one R-tailed Hawk; Deb, Ann, Pat, & Shelly, three N. Harriers, two N. Shrikes, 150 Snow Buntings, the only C. Grackle and B-headed Cowbird; Mike, Paulette, & Eva, four

Gadwall, the only B. Eagle, nine E. Screech Owls, one Barred, one Great Horned, and two S.-eared Owls; Carl, Joan, Wayne & Kathy, the only S-shinned Hawk, one R-shouldered Hawk; Ruth, no real highlights in Strattanville; Feeder Watchers, the only N. Bobwhite, N. Flicker, and R-breasted Nuthatch.

The nine teams logged 57.05 daylight party hours and covered 595.7 miles plus 5 hours and 39 miles owling. Feeder watchers contributed 29 hours.

As icing on the cake, 22 counters and friends gathered at Cozumel for a meal and an opportunity to share their experiences. Thanks to all who participated. Plan to join us next year, it's a fun time.

**2014 Pennsylvania Audubon Member
Assembly
Healthy Forests for Birds and People
Sept. 19 & 20 Wellsboro, PA**

Come together with other Auduboners and experts for learning, sharing and taking action to ensure that Pennsylvania's forests remain healthy habitats for wildlife, headwater sources of clean streams, and enjoyable places for recreation.

Sessions will include:

- Birds that depend on Pennsylvania forests
- How to create bird-friendly yards and communities
- Latest research on the value of Pennsylvania's urban forests for bird migration and rural forests as bird nurseries
- Impacts on our forests from fracking operations
- What individuals and groups are doing locally and statewide to make a difference.

Enjoy Pine Creek Gorge — known as PA's Grand Canyon — in its autumn splendor! Birding, biking, fishing, hiking!

Local hospitality and field trips by members of the Tiadaghton Audubon Society.



Bald Eagle photo by Tom Skubel

Pittsburgh Bald Eagles

by Deb Freed

Something special is happening in Pittsburgh. In fact, it hasn't happened for over 200 years, according to the Audubon Society of Western PA! There are nesting bald eagles on all three rivers in Pittsburgh. It is the pair nesting on the Monongahela River in Hays that has been the talk of the town. Last year, Pittsburghers and visitors watched the pair fledge a chick not far from the new nest site visible along the Three Rivers Heritage Trail near the Keystone Iron and Metal scrap yard.

It is a winter delight to be able to watch nesting eagles. Two years ago I watched a webcam focused on a pair of bald eagles in Decorah, Iowa throughout February, March and into mid-summer. When I traveled to Decorah the following fall, I visited the site of the nest, which was along a road near a fish hatchery. Now I am thrilled to find that the Hays eagles have their very own webcam! The PA Game Commission is managing the webcam with the technical support of PixController, Inc of Murrysville. There's more about the project at the link below. At the writing of this article, the webcam is not streaming 24/7, but that will come soon. In the meantime, limited webcam hours and posted YouTube videos from December offer an excellent view into the nest.

The Hays eagles are experienced in fledging one chick and building a nest. Let's hope that their new and improved nest will provide a stable nursery for their young. We will be able to watch the finishing touches on the nest as both adults continue to bring nest material to the site. The laying of eggs, incubating, hatching and rearing of the young will be in full view these cold months ahead and our hearts will be warmed with wonder. Check the following webcams.

<http://www.pixcontroller.com/eagles/> (live cam)

<http://beta.wildearth.tv/video-archives/pgc-eagles-01> (archives of live cam)

The Name Game #3

~ Gary Edwards

Continuing with birds named for women:

Grace Darling Coues, the sister of the well-known ornithologist Elliott Coues, was born in New Hampshire in 1847. When Elliott was 17, Dr. Baird at the Smithsonian found a place for him on an expedition to Labrador. He later attended medical school and was a surgeon during the Civil War. In 1864, Dr. Coues was sent to Fort Whipple, Arizona, where he collected over 600 bird skins and shipped them to Baird. Among the skins were nine examples of a new warbler. In his notes to Baird, Coues stated that he wanted to name the new species after his sister Grace in the hope "that my affection and respect keep pace with my appreciation of true loveliness of character." Baird complied, and named the bird, *Dendroica* (now *Oreothlypis*) *graciae*, Grace's Warbler.

In 1866, Grace married Charles Albert Page, a diplomat, and the couple moved to Zurich, Switzerland and then to London. The couple had three boys and a girl before her husband died in 1873. Grace and the children returned to the U.S. to live with her mother in Washington, D. C. In 1884, Grace married a wealthy friend of Elliott's, Dana Estes. They had no children. In the final

years of her life, Grace lived in San Diego with her daughter and son-in-law. She died December 27, 1925, at age 78.

Anna Messena, Duchess of Rivoli, was born Anna DeBelle, daughter of French General Jean Francois DeBelle, in 1802. She married Victor Massena, Duke of Rivoli and Prince of Essling in 1823. Victor's father, the original Duke of Rivoli, was Andre Massena, Napoleon's greatest general and a Marshall of France. Victor was a wealthy collector of birds who took a serious interest in natural history. The couple had four children, two boys and two girls. Anna later became Mistress of the Household of Empress Eugenie.

Dr. Paolo Botta, a 23-year-old Italian surgeon, discovered Anna's Hummingbird during a round-the-world voyage on a French trading ship that took him up and down the coast of California for more than a year. On returning to France, Botta gave some of the birds to the Duke, who showed them to his friend Rene Lesson. Lesson described the new hummingbird in one of his publications in 1829 and named it after Anna. He stated that she shared her husband's interest and that he was indebted to them both for allowing him to examine the collection.

Audubon met the Duke and Duchess in 1828 while in Paris seeking new subscribers to his *Birds of America*. He described the Duke as "...delicate, pale, slender, and yet good-looking, entirely devoted to Natural History" and the Duchess as "...a beautiful young woman, not more than twenty (actually 25 or 26) extremely graceful and polite." Anna died in 1887.

The Elk Country Visitor Center

A beautiful building was erected in 2010 to house the Elk Country Visitor Center. This is in Benezette, a short drive from the Dubois exit of I-80. Worth a stop!

From January through March, they will be open only on weekends, Saturday and Sunday 9 to 5. In summer they will be open 7 days a week.

Programs at Cook Forest State Park

~Dale Luthringer &
the Cook Forest Vacation Bureau

Saturday, February 1 at 08:30am - 'Otter Watch'

Please bring your binoculars and spotting scopes to the Park Office for a driving tour to otter hotspots along the National Wild & Scenic Clarion River. This is the prime time of the year to witness otter activity. Chances are good to observe otter sign such as slides, tracks, and carp kills along the banks of the river. Hot chocolate will be available at the Park Office to warm us up. (2 hrs)

Saturday, February 8 at 11:30am - 'Snowman in the Forest Day' Come join us for a day of fun wintry activities within the heart of Cook Forest State Park. Various activities will be held at the Sawmill Center for the Arts complex located on Forest Road. Event sponsored by the Cook Forest Vacation Bureau.

Schedule:

11:30 Chili Cook Off (entries should be here by 11:00) Mild and Hot Divisions

11:30 Guided hike within the old growth forest on Cook Trail. Bring your snowshoes if you have them, not required.

11:30 – 2:30 pm – Carriage Rides, Sledding, Snowman Building Contest, Wildlife Presentation, K-9 Rescue Team Presentation, Face Painting, Indoor Games and much more!!!

1:00 pm Happy Dog Contest, guided hike within the old growth forest on Cook Trail.

2:00 Door Prize Award.

Pura Vida!

"Pura vida" is a characteristic Costa Rican phrase. It literally means "pure life"; its meaning is said to be closer to "plenty of life" or "this is living!". The phrase can be used in many ways; for example, it can be used both as a greeting or a farewell, as an answer expressing that things are going well, or as a way of giving thanks. Thought to have come from a Mexican film, "Pura Vida!" in 1956, it was formally recognized and incorporated into dictionaries in the mid-1990s.



This Snowy Owl, found near Neiltown, was a welcome addition to the Pleasantville Christmas Bird Count, photographed by Jeff Hall

Snowy Owl Takes Region by Storm

By Mary Ann Thomas

This article has been reprinted from the Valley News Dispatch with permission.

An invasion of snowy owls from the Arctic has reached Southwestern Pennsylvania, with several sightings in the past few weeks at the border of Allegheny and Butler counties and an unconfirmed report in Indiana Township.

This white puff of a bird with large yellow baby-doll eyes stands about 2 feet tall. It has been showing up frequently in the northeastern and Great Lakes states, making this year's invasion the largest in decades, according to experts.

The bird has been seen in about 23 counties in Pennsylvania so far, with additional sightings expected in the next few months.

In Pennsylvania, the greatest number of snowy sightings so far has been in Presque Isle State Park. More than a half-dozen were spotted in the park at the same time, followed by multiple sightings in Centre and Lancaster counties, according to reports submitted by birders to the Nemesis Bird website.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Audubon Society and other wildlife organizations in

the Northeastern states have been tracking the movement of these nomadic birds.

"This is the biggest invasion in the last 40 or 50 years," said Scott Weidensaul, a wildlife researcher and author from Schuylkill Haven.

Weidensaul is working with other scientists and nature organizations in other states on a snowy owl research project called SNOWstorm, which includes banding and outfitting some of the birds in the wild with transmitters to document their movements.

"We probably won't see something like this again in our lifetime," he said.

A population boom in lemmings and other wildlife in northern Quebec fueled an enormously successful breeding season for the snowies last year, Weidensaul said.

And it's mostly those young birds that have migrated south for the winter.

"The assumption is that the owls are out of food," Weidensaul said. "That's wrong. The vast majority of these birds are fat, healthy and happy."

The owls are general-purpose predators that are known for taking rodents but have been found to dine on a range of birds, from the nearly 4-foot-tall great blue heron to the diminutive snow bunting, Weidensaul said.

The size of the snowy owl and its habit of perching in open areas makes it hard to miss — that is, when the landscape isn't carpeted in snow.

"I've seen them perched on large highway signs, on top of homes and in the middle of a field," said Brian Shema, conservation director at the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, headquartered at Beechwood Farms in Fox Chapel.

"The birds don't like to hunt in the woods," Shema said.

"If we find one and it stays around, it finds a conspicuous perch that (makes it) easy for us to see them and easy for them to scan fields."

A snowy owl spent more than a month in 2012 in the farm fields of West Franklin, [near Worthington] attracting onlookers far and wide, including Shema.

However, the owls' affinity for fields has been causing problems at airports.

John F. Kennedy International Airport and LaGuardia Airport in New York recently reversed their policies of killing the birds because environmental groups pushed to have the owls humanely trapped and released outside of the airports.

At least 30 snowy owls have been relocated from Logan International Airport in Boston, Weidensaul said.

There have been a number of snowies that have showed up at Philadelphia International Airport; at least two have hit planes, Weidensaul said.

The owls attract a lot of attention if they stay in one spot.

"The snowy owls are so big and obvious," Weidensaul said. "If anybody gets too close and pushes the envelope, the bird will have to use up its energy reserves."

Weidensaul and Shema urge residents who see the birds to watch from a distance.

"If the owl seems agitated, then you are too close," Weidensaul said.

The snowy owls are expected to continue to show up for the next two months before they head back up to their Arctic breeding grounds.

Editor's Note: Project SNOWstorm is so-named because "SNOW" is the banding code for "Snowy Owl". You can find more information and follow the movements of the tagged owls on the Project SNOWstorm site, www.projectsnowstorm.org.

Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Jamestown, NY

RTPI is currently hosting the art of Bob Hines, one of the great wildlife artists and illustrators of the 20th century.

Visitors may also see a 13,000-year-old Columbian Mammoth fossil discovered in 1934 in Randolph, New York. The fossilized 4-foot tusks and a life-size replica of the Randolph Mammoth skull are now on display.

SRAS Blue Seal Bird Seed Sale

This is your opportunity to purchase quality birdseed from our local **Blue Seal** dealer and support the conservation, education and environmental activities of the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society. Blue Seal will offer a 15% discount on bird feeders, suet cages and nyjer sacks when you pick up your order. There are two store locations: J&J Feeds on route 66 midway between Marianne Corners & I-80 and J&J Feeds Brookville on Allegheny Blvd across from the old Agway Store

ORDER BY FRI, Feb. 14, 2014

PICK-UP from MON, Feb. 24 to SAT, MAR. 1

Mail this order form with check (payable to SRAS) to: Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
c/o Janice Horn
32 Barber St.
Clarion, PA 16214

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ E-mail _____

City _____ State PA Zip _____

Please indicate your pick-up location: Brookville _____ or Shippensburg _____

Quantity	Seed Type	Lbs	Unit Price	Total
	Nature's Choice - premium mix with corn	40 lb.	\$ 25.00	
	Concerto - no corn premium mix	40 lb.	\$ 29.00	
	Songmaker - economy mix	40 lb.	\$ 22.00	
	J & J Blend - most popular	50 lb.	\$ 25.00	
	Black Oil Sunflower	50 lb.	\$ 25.00	
	Black Oil Sunflower	25 lb.	\$ 15.00	
	Cracked Corn - triple cleaned	50 lb.	\$ 15.00	
	Cracked Corn - triple cleaned	25 lb.	\$ 8.00	
	Cracked Corn - once cleaned	50 lb.	\$ 13.00	
	Cracked Corn - once cleaned	25 lb.	\$ 8.00	
	Nyjer Seed	50 lb.	\$ 44.00	
	Nyjer Seed	25 lb.	\$ 24.00	
	Suet Cakes		\$ 1.25	

Make checks payable to:
Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
Note NO TAX

Subtotal _____

Donation to Seneca Rocks Audubon _____

Total _____

Upcoming Dates & Events

Winter Raptor Survey - Jan. 10 through Feb. 10

February 12 Program - Pennsylvania Elk

Spring Bird Seed Sale - Order by Feb. 14,

Pickup Feb. 24 thru March 1

Great Backyard Bird Count - Feb. 14 through Feb. 17

March 12 Program -Pura Vida! Costa Rican

Adventures

March 22 - Conneaut Marsh Outing



American Kestrel by Pat Conway

*If you truly love Nature, you
will find beauty everywhere.*

~Vincent Van Gogh

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