

Seneca Rocks Drummer



Aug.-Sept. 2003

Newsletter of the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Volume 20, No. 1



September Program

by Gary Edwards

In anticipation of the upcoming hawk migration season and our scheduled field trip to Allegheny Front hawk watch, the program on **September 8th** will be a 30 to 40 minute video entitled "Hawk Watch – A Video Guide to Eastern Raptors." A review of the video by Susan Fogleman, Director of NorthEast Hawk Watch states, in part:

Richard Walton and Greg Dodge have endeavored to provide both veteran and would-be hawkwatchers with a means of studying the "jizz" of our Eastern raptors....While actual observation time is unparalleled in improving one's identification skills, this video can be a useful tool for preparing yourself for field time....The quality of the video is quite good....One trick that can enhance your viewing pleasure is to watch some segments through your binoculars. It is amazing how this increases the "reality" of the experience. (Note to Margaret: I promise this will be more exciting than viewing a web page through binoculars)....Overall the video is a very helpful new tool. It can be viewed repeatedly as a refresher prior to the onset of each migration season.

SRAS has purchased the video so that members who wish to do so may borrow it from our growing library.

Following the video and before our business meeting there will be an opportunity to discuss suggestions for programs and fieldtrips.

Annual Bring-A-Friend Picnic August 12

by Deb Freed

Our picnic returns this year to The Mehrten near Beaver Creek. Starting at 4:00 p.m. we will be setting up and enjoying the surroundings with short hikes. Plan to eat between 5:30 and 6:00 p.m. There is no water for drinking or washing at this site, so bring what water you will need. Please bring a covered dish or dessert to share, table covering, water, beverage and table service.



Following the meal we will talk about plans for the coming year. Birding takes place from start to finish. Perhaps we'll even call in some owls while sitting around the campfire.

(Please see p. 10 for directions to The Mehrten)

Crow's Nest

by President Deb Freed

This Drummer marks the beginning of our 20th year as an official chapter of Audubon. I believe we have been a model chapter due to the careful attention to our mission and guidance by many of the charter members and others who have joined over the years. As we approach the anniversary of our charter, May 1, 2004, I will offer some historical snapshots of Seneca Rocks.

It may have been the summer of 1983 when casual talk about forming an Audubon Chapter began. By the fall, a first meeting to organize was held at the Chapel Theater on the campus of Clarion University. The steering committee included Pete Dalby, Sue Zamzow, Gary Edwards, Lynn Langer and Dick Krear, Jr. Their goal was to recruit the 35 members needed to apply for a provisional charter. We began with no name and a modest half-page newsletter stamped with the Audubon logo.

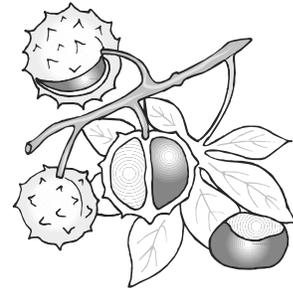
SRAS Officers

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	Margaret Buckwalter	782-3925
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

We can be proud to have published our newsletter without interruption, provided interesting and informative programs, guided numerous field trips, contributed to a variety of surveys, supported both the state and national organizations, maintained a core membership and had a lot of fun along the way.



American Chestnut Restoration

by Ruth Schurr

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 as little as five more years they should have 95% American available for distribution in the wild over chosen sites in the former range. Seneca Rocks may be able to make a small contribution to the effort by volunteering to harvest the nuts from two large, fairly healthy trees on timberlands near the Clarion River in Millcreek Township. Germ plasm is needed from this geographic area, and we are very lucky to have found these healthy 15-inch trees.

What we will need for the job will be a couple of people able to climb tall ladders and some others to pick up the burrs. Timing will be important because we have to get the nuts before the squirrels and before a hard frost. Karl and I have been monitoring these trees for two years and this spring sent in twigs to verify that they are indeed pure American Chestnut. We can't set a date yet for the harvest but Audubon will be in touch with those interested in helping, probably in late September.



Our Own True “River Keeper”

A memorial for Dick Krear by Fran Williams

DICK KREAR: Certified River Boat Captain, River Keeper, Master Falconer, Naturalist and Outdoor Educator.

On Thursday, June 26, 2003 Richard (Dick) Krear Jr. passed away, and it is truly a great loss, not only to his family, but to all of us who live on this earth.

Dick had been a member of Seneca Rocks Audubon Society since its inception in 1984. He was one of the original five people who formed a steering committee to develop what became our chartered chapter. Many of our members didn't know Dick, and we did not often see him at meetings or field trips. This is probably because he was working behind the scenes doing what so many only talk about doing – protecting our environment and teaching others how to respect it.

Dick grew up in Emlenton and learned to love the land and the waters that sustain it by spending his time outdoors. He made his first float trip on the Allegheny River when he was 10 years old. As an adult he spent much of his time working the land: as a logger, a driller, and a coal miner; but he knew that it was necessary to do these things in a sustainable way so that the land and the waters would be healthy and productive for his children and his children's children. So he became a deputy waterways patrolman. And he taught an outdoor survival course at Slippery Rock University. He became a river guide. And then he followed his dream. He bought himself a 24-foot john-boat and launched himself onto the Allegheny with a business he named “Red Tail Eco Tours”. Deborah Weisburg, of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, quoted Dick: “I had to get over the idea I was selling out. That this was *my* river. People are already here, so I may as well educate them. If I didn't have to pay off my boat, I'd probably do it for free”.

Some of us in SRAS were fortunate enough to ride on the Allegheny with Dick. Ours was a very

cold (45 degrees), rainy day in May 2002 and most of us spent a lot of our time shaking and shivering. But it was so exciting! Dick showed us the nests of Bald Eagles – with eagles! He talked about all the other avian residents along the river, and the fish, and the trees, and the old villages which are no longer there. He stopped at the inlet of Schull Run and suggested we “take a little hike” – which we did, to a lovely waterfall, observing Wild Ginger, Large-flowering Trillium and Dame's Rocket. He took us to another inlet that was crowded with Turkey Vultures – in the trees, on the ground, and in the air. There were about two dozen birds in that community, and probably because we were in a boat, they were not afraid of us, so they just sat there or moved about, doing whatever it is that Turkey Vultures do in their private lives. At the end of our 4-hour trip, the rain stopped, the sun came out and Dick finished the ride with a very fast, wild buzz past the Silver Fox Inn and back to our landing site. One thing I especially will remember about Dick during that ride was that he was smiling most of the time. It was obvious that he was thoroughly enjoying himself. So was I. What a great day!

We had two young boys with us that day, and though they had a difficult time keeping warm and dry – (when it wasn't raining, it was either drizzling or pouring!) – they were so fascinated by the whole experience that they were ready to go again – but on a sunnier day.

Unfortunately we'll never be able to do that ride again because there will never be another Dick Krear. The world is definitely a sadder place because he has left us. So I would like to end this memorial to Dick with his own words. This is what he said to Brian Ferry of *The Derrick* in February 2002: “The idea of this boat is pretty much a floating river classroom. To show people the beauty of the Allegheny River. If you want to get a kid interested in the outdoors, you show him something in his back yard. The idea is to educate and let the kids know that it is their river. It empowers them. It's up to you to take care of that river.” And this: “My quality of life is wonderful around here.”

Dick, I hope your future is on your beloved river.



Armchair Activist

by Kathy Janik

Many of the birds in your backyard this time of year are neotropical migrants - birds that breed in North America and winter in Central and South America and the Caribbean. They return each spring by the millions and enliven our lives with their colors and songs.

The National Audubon Society has requested once again that we contact our senators and representatives to ask that they fully support the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. Below is a sample letter:

Dear _____:

As a constituent concerned with conservation, I stand with the National Audubon Society in urging you to fully fund the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act at \$5 million for Fiscal Year 2004. Habitat destruction overseas has pushed many bird species closer to extinction. Neotropical migratory birds are currently migrating to our shores and backyards in ever decreasing numbers. These populations of birds are dwindling due to destruction of their wintering habitats in South and Central America and the Caribbean.

Full funding of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act can help change the fate of these birds.

I urge you to support full funding of this Act.

Please let me know where you stand on this issue and what you feel are the chances that it will receive full funding.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Addresses:

Senator Arlen Specter
711 Hart Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
arlenspecter@specter.senate.gov
(202) 224-4254

Senator Rick Santorum
511 Dirksen Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
santorum.senate.gov/emailrjs.html
(202) 224-6324

Representative John Peterson
123 Cannon House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515
www.house.gov/johnpeterson
(202) 225-5121

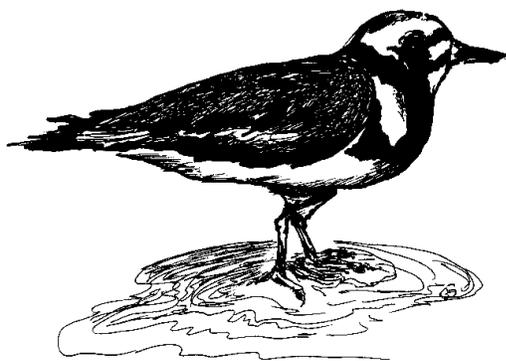
The National Audubon Society thanks you very much for your time and attention to this matter. Letters, emails, and calls really do work!



Grassland Field Trip May 31

by Deb Freed

Twelve hearty souls attended the field trip with Ron and Gary to view the grassland birds of Piney Tract. The soaking rain and early 7:30 start did not dampen the enthusiasm of the group. Ron and Gary's planning produced the predictable Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows. The Vesper Sparrow is still an elusive possibility and the Clay-colored Sparrow did not respond to the taped songs. We did see Song and Field Sparrows, Bobolinks and Meadowlarks. Even in the rain, the grassland of Piney Tract is an inviting location especially for tracking the song to the songster, hidden by the waves of grasses. Attending the walk were: Ron Montgomery, Gary Edwards, Margaret Buckwalter, Hendrika Bohlen, Paulette Colantonio, Joan and Carl Rowe, Flo and Jim McGuire, Ruth and Karl Schurr and Deb Freed.



(Ruddy Turnstone by Georgette Syster)

BIRDATHON OVER THE TOP

by Margaret Buckwalter

Both in amounts of money and in numbers of new members recruited, Birdathon 2003 hit new highs. We gathered \$5220 in pledges and added 40 new members, thanks to National Audubon's new policy of allowing all non-members donating \$20 or over to become chapter members. We were more than a thousand dollars over last year's total of \$4115.30. We hope Last Chance Audubon has had its last chance at first place for chapters under 300 members.

In any Birdathon, Audubon members get pledges from sponsors beforehand on birds they hope to see in a twenty-four hour period. Then they actually go out and find the birds. This year 32 birders in 12 teams saw a total of 138 species. Without a doubt, the Montgomery/Conway/Freed/Mason team was the best organized. They found 95 species in carefully scouted locations over three counties within the time limit. The team of Jack and Fran Williams were second in terms of species found, 88; with the rookie team of Jim and Flo McGuire a close third with 87 species.

Since the amount of money raised is crucial to the success of the Birdathon, mention must be made (I say modestly but with a bit of pride) of the Horn/Buckwalter team that raised a total of \$2130.00 with 82 species. To be sure, our combined sponsors numbered 164 with no duplications of pledges. Obviously, success in raising money depends on getting a lot of sponsors. Second place in terms of money

raised and number of sponsors was the Williams team: \$745.50 from 32 sponsors. Third in the money category was the Montgomery team mentioned earlier with \$735. BUT the all time high for per capita amount per sponsor goes to the Haines/Janik team with a total of \$509.50 and only 7 sponsors.

Different teams birding in different habitats were bound to come up with some unique sightings. The Montgomery team was the only one to find a Northern Goshawk, a Connecticut Warbler, a Cerulean Warbler, and a Worm-eating Warbler. The Fye/Ganoe/Rowe team's unique species were: Black-billed Cuckoo, Palm Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat. For the Buckwalter/Horn team unique species were Bobwhite, Ruddy Turnstone, and Warbling Vireo. The Colantonio/Leahy team was the only one to see a Tennessee Warbler, and an Orange-crowned Warbler. The Schurr team had the only Sharp-shinned Hawk and the only Swainson's Thrush. The McGuire team found the only Tundra Swan, Saw-whet and Common Tern of the count. They shared hearing a Whip-poor-will with John and Kathy Pokrifka.

Recognition of the teams' accomplishments wouldn't be complete without mentioning that our youngest participant, Abby Hileman, was just nine years old. (The oldest participant will not be identified.)

In summary, this year's Birdathon shows a level of birding skill that is ever increasing. SRAS members are to be congratulated once again.

Many thanks to all the participants for making this year's Birdathon a success: H. Bohlen, M. Buckwalter, P. Colantonio, P. Conway, D. Freed, W. Fye, H. and S. Ganoe, A. Hileman, J. Horn, K. Janik, M. Leahy, A. Mason, F. & J. McGuire, S. Monrean, R. Montgomery, K. & J. Pokrifka, C. & J. Rowe, L. Sager, R. Schurr, A. Thureau, F. & J. Williams. Special thanks to members P. Dalby and D. Seidle for their generous contributions.

With a sigh of relief and a tinge of regret, I turn over next year's Birdathon to Janice Horn who actually volunteered for the job!

SRAS members, please continue with your best efforts next year.

PSO Meeting Report

by Ron Montgomery & Flo McGuire

The annual PSO meeting was held in Indiana, PA, on the weekend of May 16-18, 2003. SRAS members Margaret Buckwalter, Ron Montgomery, and Flo and Jim McGuire were among the 96 attendees.

The Todd Bird Club did a remarkable job of hosting this event. The cookies were plentiful and delicious; the vendors had some unique birdy merchandise to offer; the field trips covered diverse habitats and were well-led by the experienced and friendly Todd members; 141 species and 1 hybrid (including 31 warblers!) were tallied in the two mornings – in short, it was great fun.

Some information and announcements:

- The journal *PA Birds* is part of PSO, so if one subscribes to *PA Birds*, he belongs to PSO.
- *PA Birds* has about 600 subscribers.
- Two editions of *PA Birds* will be combined to help get the publication caught up.
- Flo McGuire was elected to the PSO Board.
- The next PSO meeting will be at Montour Preserve, hosted by John Beam.

There was some discussion of the new Breeding Bird Atlas project, which will begin January 1, 2004. Entries will go into eBird. The project will need 60 regional coordinators and about 2000 block owners. They will de-emphasize breeding confirmations in favor of better and more uniform coverage, especially of the less populated blocks. Bob Mulvihill from the Powdermill Nature Preserve (which is part of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History) will lead the Atlas Project. Tim O'Connell is the statistician who is designing the sampling plan. Joe Bishop is preparing a Gap Analysis that is designed to show where certain, particularly less common birds, should be found; people will then be sent to look for those birds if they are not being reported.

Bob Mulvihill, as the leader of the Atlas Project, will immediately go on the speaking circuit to explain and promote the Atlas Project. He will be speaking to Seneca Rocks at our November meeting.



(photo by Gloria Scilli)

Warbler Walk, May 3, 2003 (They're Baaaack!)

The day started out a little cool, but the sky was blue and full of warblers. Gary Edwards' Warbler Walk at Oil Creek State Park was better than any of us expected, with 11 warblers, many of them posing nicely for observation. More than one American Redstart fooled us with its confusing song until we finally found the brightly colored creature. We had great looks at 2 different Black-throated Blues as they foraged in the low vegetation and called their *zur zur zur zree*. We had a beautiful view of an Osprey soaring, saw a Northern Flicker's tail sticking out of a tree as it worked on its cavity, witnessed Common Mergansers and a Belted Kingfisher as they flew busily up and down the creek. A male Scarlet Tanager showed off its plumage, while at least 2 male Baltimore Orioles were foraging and calling from the trees along the creek. The Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were making a lot of noise near the location of their reported nest. Gray Catbirds were singing all along the trail, and several Ruby-crowned Kinglets were going *ji-dit ji-dit* as they did their flit-flit. We were able to see a Yellow-throated Vireo and hear its hoarse call.

Wildflowers seen included Trout Lily, Ground Ivy – we learned how to tell a male from a female Bluet. One member of the group (who shall remain nameless) pointed to some fern fronds and asked if we knew why Wood Anemone wouldn't grow near them. "With fronds like these, who needs anemones?"

In addition to leader Gary Edwards, birders Ron Montgomery, Margaret Buckwalter, Deb Freed, Stephanie Wilshire, Gloria Sciulli, Jim & Flo McGuire enjoyed this trip to “Warbler Heaven”.

The 47 species tallied that morning included: Great Blue Heron, Common Merganser, Osprey, Cooper’s Hawk, Barred Owl, Mourning Dove, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Gray Catbird, Wood Thrush, Veery, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Blue-headed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-winged Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Red-winged Blackbird and Baltimore Oriole.

Wildflower Walk, May 6, 2003

by Deb Freed

Fran Williams had everyone watching where they walked in the copse at Kahle Lake as fragile flowers were our focus for the day. The temperatures began in the low fifties and rose to the mid-sixties under cloudy skies. Before the walk, Fran described eleven years tracking the American Columbo, a wildflower not found in several field guides. It would be our destination flower. Along the route to the rare Columbo the following 46 wildflowers were identified.



(* designates not in flower on this date)

* American Columbo (Monument Plant, Green Gentian, *Frasera carolinensis*, *Swertia carolinensis*) - Very rare!, Barren Strawberry,* Bedstraw, Blue Violet, Buttercup (Bulbous or Swamp),* Cleavers (sp.), Coltsfoot, Common Dandelion,* Creeping Buttercup,* Crown-vetch, Cut-leaved Toothwort (finished blooming), Daisy Fleabane, Dwarf Ginseng,* False Hellebore, Foamflower (False Miterwort), Garlic Mustard, Gill-over-the-ground (Ground Ivy), Golden Ragwort, Greek Valerian, * Jewelweed, Kidneyleaf Buttercup, Large-flowered Trillium, Marsh Marigold (Cowslip), * May-apple (Mandrake), Miterwort, * Partridgeberry (with fruits), Rue-anemone, Smooth Yellow Violet, Spring-beauty, Strawberry (Common or Wood), Swamp Saxifrage (with flower buds), * Sweet Cicely, Trout-lily (Adder's Tongue), Toothwort, Thyme-leaved Speedwell (*Veronica serpyllifolia*), * *Uvularia* sp. (Bellwort, Indian Cucumber-root ?), Wild Blue Phlox, Wild Geranium, Wild Ginger, * Wild Oats, Winter Cress (Wild Broccoli - Ron's name for it), Wood Anemone, Non-flowering plants: Christmas Fern, Cut-leaved Grape Fern, *Equisetum* sp. (Horsetail, Scouring Rush), Sensitive Fern.

We found a large patch of American Columbo that Fran plans to count in June. In early May the plant is a deep green cluster of smooth elongated leaves from a few inches to nearly a foot in length. Mature plants grow over six feet tall. Standing stalks of last year's plants were present. We learned a lot and found ourselves watching closely at the ground in front of us. In doing that we also collected several garbage bags of bottles, cans and other trash. I won't mention the birds that caught our ears and curiosity from time to time. We tried our best to ignore them.

Attending with Fran Williams were Jack Williams, Judy and Ron Montgomery, Sara and Harvey Ganoë, Kathy Pokrifka, Margaret Buckwalter, Hendrika Bohlen, Mike Leahy, Jane Schautz, Sally Liebermann, Janice Horn and Deb Freed.



Clear Creek State Park & Forest, Jefferson County, June 23

by Margaret Buckwalter

Today Seneca Rocks AS went on a half-day field trip to Clear Creek State Park and Clear Creek State Forest, including Callen Run Research Area, an IBA. Gary Edwards and Ron Montgomery ably led the trip which was enhanced by blue skies and sunshine after all the rain. This area is not heavily birded but it has great possibilities for birders along the Clarion River as well as on the higher plateau. By car and on foot we visited Bear Rocks, the Laurel Gardens in almost full bloom, and were treated to the sights and sounds of a typical mature deciduous forest. A most enjoyable trip.

Species included: Turkey Vulture, Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Common Raven, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Veery, Cedar Waxwing, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-burnian Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole and American Goldfinch.

With Jack and Fran Williams as well as Ron Montgomery along, we didn't pass up identifying many interesting trees and wildflowers. The experts advised us on telling huckleberries from blueberries, wintergreen (teaberry) from partridge berry, and gave us many tips on the vegetation. A very tall, straight-trunked tree turned out to be a tulip poplar in full bloom. The large, pale green flowers were inconspicuous but beautiful. A good-sized American chestnut sapling with no signs of blight surprised us too. Among the ferns

we found spleenwort, bracken, hay-scented, New York, interrupted and Christmas. A small orchid not quite in bloom was probably helleborine. Pyrola was in bloom.

A Great May Morning

by Jerry Stanley

(Ed. Note: The following article was submitted to the PABIRDS listserve on May 20 and is being reprinted here with the author's gracious permission)

The spring passerine migration in this part of northwestern PA has been rather lack-luster....once again. Despite this, Kathie (spouse), Thrasher (canine friend) and I were determined yesterday morning to make the most of the first relatively warm and sunny day in what seemed like a long time.



We came across some interesting things. On the driveway, a ring-necked snake was sunning and pearl crescents were exploring the merits of rather large calibre coyote scat. Down by French Creek, a cerulean warbler was building a nest. A singing Acadian flycatcher was apparently setting up territory on the purely deciduous floodplain, unusual in that they mostly prefer the occasional evergreen woods around these parts.

Nevertheless, I had a persistent feeling of emptiness as once again there was no great warbler or thrush fallout. At this point, we were observing some soft-shelled turtles that were basking on a river island. We were standing by what I call the woodpecker boundary of our property. There are numerous relatively large sycamores here. Either their wood is soft or they are prone to heart rot, because the woodpeckers just love to excavate them.

A baby bird erupted into chatter close to me. I turned to find (without binoculars), a baby woodpecker peering out from a nest cavity. The tree was a 3.5 foot diameter sycamore that split

only a few feet from the ground into two trunks each 18 to 24 inches in diameter. It was leaning slightly over French Creek. The cavity was about 25 feet above the creek. Judging by the size of the hole I anticipated either a hairy or sapsucker.

I was feeling quite pleased with my discovery as my binoculars came into focus only to find that more than one of my instantaneous impressions were wrong. This was not an excavated cavity – it was a rotted knot hole from a long ago broken off branch. And the baby woodpecker was a duckling! How in the world did an adult duck fit into this cavity, not even a hooded merganser could have squeezed in. As I called to Kathie to come over, the duckling emerged onto the lip of the hole and quickly plunged toward the creek, disappearing behind the steep bank.

Kathie didn't get to see it, but not to worry. A second chattering duckling rapidly appeared to replace the first. Now we realized that an adult female wood duck was perched motionless at the entrance to a second larger cavity about 2 feet further up than the first and part way around the right side of the trunk. Almost as soon as we spotted her, the mother flew down toward the creek. For the benefit of the birds, Kathie suggested that we leave quickly. I reluctantly agreed, but insisted that since we were already there, we at least watch the second duckling take the plunge. It very shortly obliged. Kathie gasped as it ricocheted off a small branch on its descent.

Quite satisfied, we turned to vacate the premises. But before we finished our first step, ducklings began pouring out of both holes. No hesitation on the lip. It looked like a scene from a military paratroop maneuver, only the chicks were much cuter. Three or four ducklings at a time were now constantly falling. It was like one of those dramatic moments in life that goes by in slow motion. Small birds were striking branches all over the place. Some were briefly catapulted back upwards by the branches. Kathie gasped with each hit. I was surprised she had any wind left in her. Because I know their cartilage is like rubber, I was quietly chuckling and unconcerned. That is, until one got caught by its stubby little wing in the fork of a branch. We both gasped. It struggled loose, only to hit another branch on its way down.

We couldn't see if they landed in the water or on the shore. Probably a combination of both. The whole process took perhaps a minute and a half. In the last few seconds, no fewer than 16 additional chicks fledged, it was too fast to count accurately. Kathie crept up to the brim of the bank. A tight flock had successfully formed around the mother with 2 stragglers playing catch up. Again, they were too small and compact to count.

What a great thrill to watch them fledge the way they traditionally have for perhaps thousands of years. For 90 seconds I stood transfixed in a time before nest boxes, starlings, and chainsaws. I no longer resented the fact that I couldn't find a Cape May Warbler. It was truly, a great morning.

Buzzard Swamp Field Trip, July 8

by Deb Freed

Under threats of wind and thunderstorms our walking plans changed to a drive-and-bird outing between Marienville and Loleta, bordering swamp lands and ponds. Ron and Gary's plans did not include one new road we explored. It turned out to be a real Cedar Waxwing day as we observed them eating the ripe red berries of the Serviceberry trees. We enjoyed the interesting fruits of the Hophornbeam trees and ended our day with sunny skies at the ponds.



Our 52 species included: Ruffed Grouse, Ovenbird, Common Raven, Gray Catbird, Eastern Towhee, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Bluebirds, Cedar Waxwings, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Kingbird, Blue Jay, Red-eyed Vireo, Belted Kingfisher, Indigo Bunting, Field Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Black-throated Green Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Baltimore Oriole, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Hermit Thrush, Purple Finch, Yellow Warbler, Solitary Sandpiper, Great Blue Heron, Blackburnian Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Red-shouldered Hawk, Turkey Vulture.

Attending were Flo & Jim McGuire, Judy & Ron Montgomery, Margaret Buckwalter, Hendrika Bohlen, Deb Freed, Gary Edwards and Fran & Jack Williams.

Directions to The Mehrten Pavilion at Beaver Creek:

Take Rt. 322 west from Clarion to Shippenville. In Shippenville take Rt. 208 toward Knox for 3.3 miles to the traffic light in downtown Knox. Turn left on S. Main St. and go .4 miles to Mehrten Rd. Turn right on Mehrten Rd. and go 2 miles. Mehrten turns left at Attleburger Rd. and then right at the next junction. Follow Mehrten over one small rickety bridge. From the bridge go .1 mile and turn right where you see the open orange gate and proceed up the hill to the pavilion. (If you go across the second bridge you have gone too far.) The road is OK for cars. The parking lot is beyond the pavilion. There is a well constructed outhouse at the parking area, sometimes inhabited by critters.

Youth Conservation Camp

for 13 to 16-year-olds will be held on August 4th through the 8th. **Scholarships are available.** For more information, please contact Pete Dalby: 782-3227.

Not a Member? Join Seneca Rocks Audubon Society and

- Enjoy the world of birds
- Protect wildlife & its habitat
- Promote education that fosters appreciation of the natural environment.



To join, please contact Membership Chair Sherry Vowinckel at 814-782-3294 or svo@mail.usachoice.net.

All meetings are open to the public.

Conversation at 7 p.m.

Program begins at 7:30 p.m.

Rm. 244, Peirce Science Ctr.,

Clarion University Campus,

on the second Monday of each month.