



THE DRUMMER



www.senecarocksaudubon.org

September/October, 2009

Volume 26, No. 1

Next Meeting – September 14
Room 134, Science Technology Center
Social – 6:30 p.m. Program – 7:00 p.m.

October 12 Program

Into the Great Unknown – Patrick Koepl

Patrick Koepl is an applied anthropologist and a seasoned and adventurous traveler. His travels have taken him deep into the rain forests of Cameroon, to the Anatolian Plateau of central Turkey, the frozen rivers and fjords of northern Iceland, the passage graves of Ireland's Boyne Valley, the Jasper Ice Fields of the Canadian Rockies, and the Spice Island of Zanzibar.

He has explored Mayan ruins in Belize, swam in bioluminescent bays in Puerto Rico, roamed the Palace of Knossos in Crete, and wandered the
(continued on page 2)



September Program

Dr. Jeffery Larkin of IUP – Fishers

Dr. Jeff Larkin of the Indiana University of PA will present a program about the ecology and distribution of fishers in Pennsylvania. The study of fishers is one of his many on-going research projects.

Dr. Larkin is an associate professor of Conservation Biology and has been a member of the IUP faculty since 2005. He received his BA degree from Ithaca College and MS and Ph. D degrees from the University of Kentucky.

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For Field Trips See Page 4

NOTICE

September 14th will be our first meeting in the newly constructed Science Technology Center. Room 134 is on the main floor – no steps. The STC is on Greenville Avenue, next to the Peirce Science Center, which is being torn down.

Parking is available across Greenville Avenue in Lot #11. There is also handicap parking and a handicap entrance at the south end of the building, (to the right as you face the front door) and a “drop off” area in front of the main door.

Dr. Larkin – Fishers in PA, continued

Prior to joining the IUP faculty, Dr. Larkin was a post-doctoral scholar at the University of Kentucky. He has also completed research at Yellowstone National Park, Pennsylvania State University, and Ithaca College. Dr. Larkin has published extensively in professional journals and has contributed chapters to several books, as well as editing *Large Mammal Restoration: Ecological and Sociological Challenges in the 21st Century*, which won the 2002 Wildlife Society book award. He has organized and presented at numerous national and international symposia and conferences.

Dr. Larkin and his students have recently completed or are currently working on several research projects including: 1) estimating black bear population size in Kentucky; 2) estimating fisher population size and distribution in PA; 3) the impact of forest management practices on Cerulean Warbler ecology in the Daniel Boone National Forest, Kentucky; 4) Golden-winged Warbler habitat relations in PA; 5) identifying high quality habitats of the Allegheny Woodrat within the Chestnut and Laurel Ridge systems of PA; 6) resource selection of Pennsylvania elk; 6) potential impacts of wind development on red bats; and 7) the use of highway overpasses by moose and roe deer in southwest Sweden.

Dr. Larkin lives in southern Indiana County with his wife, Debra and their two sons. His favorite activity is observing his children in the outdoors as they experience nature through self-discovery.

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, 609 Ponderosa Lane, Tionesta, PA 16353 (814 755-3672) or email at fmcguire1@verizon.net.

Patrick Koepl - Great Unknown, continued

Olduvai Gorge and Ngorongoro Crater of the Great Rift Valley. His favorite adventures include backcountry skiing in the San Francisco Peaks of northern Arizona and canoeing in Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario.

His most recent adventure took him and his father down the Great Unknown, 277 miles on the Colorado River through Grand Canyon National Park. He will present stunning and often dramatic photos from his 21 day trek through the Grand Canyon via a small flotilla of dories and rafts. It includes spectacular scenery, exhilarating white water, and incredible natural history. Learn about the history of John Wesley Powell's canyon exploration in the 1800s, and the modern-day explorers and adventurers who now travel the "Great Unknown" for recreation.

Originally from Madison, Wisconsin, Mr. Koepl currently lives in Limestone with his wife Susan Allison and their two children, Katherine (5 years old) and John (16 months). When not traveling, he works as the director of the Social Marketing & Applied Research Team of Deloitte Consulting, a professional services firm located in Tysons Corner, Virginia. He is pursuing his Ph.D. in Public & Community Health at the University of Maryland.

Birdathon 2009 Report

~ Janice Horn

Thank you to everyone who participated in this annual fundraiser for SRAS programs. Birders who were out identifying species during the first week of May were Paulette Colantonio, Vicky Daniels, Janice Horn, Mike Leahy, Flo and Jim McGuire, Ray McGunigle, Ruth Schurr, Fran and Jack Williams, Carole and Alan Winslow. Most of them birded in Clarion County, the McGuires only in Forest County, and the Winslows spent much of their day at Presque Isle. Several participated in the Migratory Bird Count.

A total 134 species were spotted and Margaret Buckwalter said that this was the best Migratory Bird Count report. Donations for the Birdathon totaled \$1473.00. Again, thanks to everyone.



Photo by Flo McGuire

PICNIC TIME AGAIN

~ Deb Freed

Our picnic will be held on Saturday, September 26, at the Quiet Creek Herb Farm & School of Country Living, the home of Rusty and Claire Orner. The farm is north of Brookville off of route 36.

Claire recently attended a workshop sponsored by Jamestown Audubon featuring butterflies, birds and dragonflies. She will share some highlights from her trip.

4 – 5 p.m. Farm tour and social gathering
5 – 6:30 p.m. Picnic in the Pavilion
6:30 p.m. Greetings and program by Claire

Please bring a dish to share and your own table service. Beverages will be provided.

If you need further information please contact Rusty or Claire Orner, 93 Quiet Creek Lane, Brookville, PA 15825 or call 814-849-9662 or e-mail quietcreek@windstream.net

Directions - Quiet Creek is located 3.5 miles north of Interstate 80 off Exit 78 on Highway 36, turn west (left if traveling north) onto McManigle Road, travel ½ mile and turn right onto Quiet Creek Lane.

New Books for School Libraries

~ Janice Horn

The donations from the Garden Club of Clarion County for the past two years have been used to buy books for thirteen elementary schools. Paulette Colantonio and Janice Horn have delivered books to all the schools in Clarion and Forest Counties and to Brookville and Cranberry. SRAS is grateful to the Garden Club for their strong interest in bringing the love of nature to the children of our area.



Photo by Margaret Buckwalter

SIGN UP AT THE DRUMMER'S LOG

~ Deb Freed

Members and friends are invited to get together for nature walks or short trips. Our wildflower outing last May was a real hit with the group so we want to encourage more such spontaneous trips.

The best way to be notified of an outing is to sign-up on the **Drummer's Log** with your e-mail or phone number. You'll be contacted about the next event by the person organizing it. These events can be as simple as meeting somewhere with date and time. The person choosing the destination can make the plans simple or detailed. The main purpose is to get out and explore! It is a perfect way to find someone of common interest to go with you.

Let's see how many interesting places we can explore together! Look for the **Drummer's Log sign-up sheet** at each of our regularly scheduled monthly programs.

Eastern Shore Eco-expedition

Gene Wilhelm will be leading an Eastern Shore Eco-expedition on October 23-28, which includes guided tours of Blackwater NWR, Wallops Island, Assateague Island, Chincoteague NWR, Chincoteague Island, the Estuarine Ecosystem of Delmarva Peninsula, and Federal Natural Areas. The group will have access to restricted natural areas where the public is not permitted, and can expect to see over 125 species of birds as well as dozens of migrating butterfly species.

Dr. Gene Wilhelm will serve as our leader-guide. For the past 30 years he has led expeditions in ten states and nearly one dozen countries. Registration and total fee of \$735.00 is due by September 15. To register, contact Gene Wilhelm, 513 Kelly Boulevard, Slippery Rock, PA 16057.

Field Trips

Oil City Marina Nighthawk Watch

Gary Edwards, Jim Wilson, and Russ States have been manning a site at the Oil City Marina to count migrating Common Nighthawks since 2003. Last year they counted 343, and the average number counted per year is 435. Yearly numbers have ranged from 276 in 2003 to 664 in 2005. Gary, Jim and Russ will be at the marina from about 6:30 to 8:30 each evening from mid-August to September 10th or 12th. Bring a lawn chair and join them any evening.

Directions: From the Cranberry Mall take route 257 into Oil City at the point where route 257 meets route 62. Follow route 62 to the second bridge (also the second stop light). Make a left turn at this light (Petroleum Street) go one block to West First Street. Turn right on West First Street go to Wyllis Street. Turn right on Wyllis Street, at the bottom of the hill is the Oil City Marina. Parking is in the parking lot on the right.

Erie National Wildlife Refuge

This trip to our closest National Wildlife Refuge is being planned for Sunday, October 25. The refuge is 12 miles east of Cochranton, PA. Details will be available at our October meeting and on the website.

Project Chimney Swift

Gary Edwards and Jim Wilson are also participating in Project Chimney Swift. There is more information at

www.chimneyswifts.org.

Click on "A Swift Night Out" for a map showing locations that have been counted.



As summer draws to a close and the swifts have finished raising their young, these fascinating aerial acrobats begin to congregate in communal roosts prior to their migration in the fall. Some roosts may consist of an extended family group of a half a dozen

birds or so, but the larger sites can host hundreds or even thousands of swifts!

Gary and Jim counted at the Crawford Center in Emlenton this month and estimated 1,000-1,500 Chimney Swifts. This is the only one in PA presently showing on the map. Gary and Jim also tallied about 200 Chimney Swifts at the 7th St. School in Oil City; this count hasn't been posted yet.

There is one more weekend this year to count: September 11, 12, & 13. It would be nice to see a bunch of locations in western PA added. Gary and Jim plan to do the Crawford Center and 7th St. School again that weekend. To participate, you just need to find a chimney where they roost and be there about 30 minutes before sunset; they're all in by 30 minutes after sunset.

Bartramian Audubon Field Trips

**September 12, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. –
Fall Migrants at Buttermilk Hill Nature Sanctuary.**

We will look for migrating warblers, sparrows and other song birds. This is a great opportunity to brush up on the fall plumage of many of our feathered friends. Beginning birders are very welcome. Bring binoculars and good walking shoes. Contact Kathie Goodblood at 814-432-4496, larkwren@hughes.net or go to the Bartramian website, www.bartramianaudubon.org, for directions.

**October 4, 2009-Sunday, 8:30 a.m. –
Polk Wetlands SGL39, Venango County.**

This wetlands restoration area can be very good for migrating sparrows. We will be looking for Lincoln's, White-throated, and Swamp sparrows as well as Yellow-rumped Warblers. Bring a scope if you have one, to view the pond for water birds. LeConte's and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows have been recorded at this site. As always, beginners are welcome.

We will meet at the parking lot on Polk Cut Off Road near Polk. For more detailed directions contact Kathie at 814-432-4496 or larkwren@hughes.net.

The Rainmakers

It was a dark and stormy night in May when the Pennsylvania Rainmakers were in Saddlerock Canyon of the Gila Wilderness searching for owls. It had not rained in months in south-western New Mexico until the Rainmakers arrived. After encountering a dust storm shortly after leaving Amarillo, they brought rain wherever they went in the Land of Enchantment. It was a surprise when a large thunderstorm preceded them to Roswell. Was there alien involvement? Wherever they went it rained! Who are the Rainmakers?

They brought the rain with them to Silver City where they had a guide who would work for food and gasoline. The next five days were days of continuous birding in four counties of southwestern New Mexico, and each day was punctuated by rain.

Sunday was a trip to the Glenwood Fish Hatchery in the San Francisco River Valley and a nesting Common Black Hawk. Continuing to The Catwalk of Whitewater Creek the Rainmakers found a nesting American Dipper. Then it was on to Mogollon (pronounced MuggyOwn) where they found a Magnificent Hummingbird along with Broad-tailed and Black-chinned Hummingbirds at a feeder. This is where the rain came, along with some small hail.



Gila Cliff Dwelling, non-rainy day, by Flo McGuire

Monday was a day for Hutton's Vireo, Red-faced Warblers, and Painted Redstarts, en route to the Gila Cliff Dwellings, and Rain.

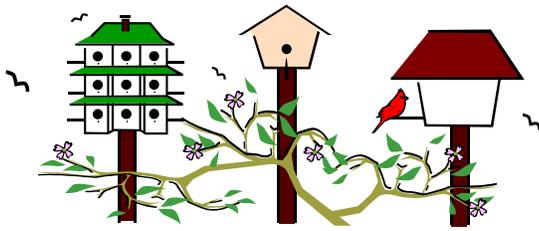
Tuesday was a trip into Hidalgo County, with Bendire's Thrasher, Chihuahuan Ravens, and Burrowing Owls on many fence posts, and Rain. It was too early for the eleven Mexican specialty birds to have arrived. Near the Mexican border, the Rainmakers turned west toward Clanton Canyon on Coronado National Forest land in the Peloncillo Mountains. The resident Arizona Woodpecker and the Whiskered Screech-Owl refused to be seen, but the Rainmakers did find a sign which read "Travel Caution - Smuggling and Illegal Immigration May Be Encountered In This Area." As the Rainmakers proceeded into Arizona back country toward Douglas, it Rained!

Wednesday was marked by a trip into Sierra County to Percha Dam and Scott County to Caballo Lake State Park where a Green Heron was sighted along the Rio Grande River. Returning to Silver City via Emory Pass, the Rainmakers found cooperative Olive Warblers and Hepatic Tanagers and Rain.

Thursday began with sighting Mexican Mallards on Tyrone Ponds near the mine of the same name. It was already raining. Proceeding into the Redrock area Sage Thrashers, Gray Vireos and Rufous-crowned Sparrows were identified in the Little Burro Mountains. After supper in Silver City, and intermittent rain throughout the day, the Rainmakers found themselves deep into Saddlerock Canyon by sunset. Two Western Screech-Owls and four Elf Owls were calling on a dark and cloudy night. The Rainmakers even helped their guide find his way out of the canyon. And it rained!

Friday the Rainmakers departed the Land of Enchantment, which typically has 300 days of sunshine each year. The day after they left New Mexico dawned with bright, cloudless, azure skies. Arizona normally gets winter rain, while New Mexico experiences most of its rain in July and August. Is Arizona now getting rain? Was there a disturbance in The Force? Who are these Rainmakers?

--The Old Curmudgeon



JIM'S WOODSHOP

~ Deb Freed

Jim Wilson has been the SRAS Bluebird nestbox builder for several years now. He also builds feeding stations. He contributes his talent and time and also a share of each handcrafted feeder or nest box sold to SRAS.

Favorite feeders of some members include the oriole feeding station and the platform feeder. Jim has experimented with several Bluebird nestbox designs like the Peterson and Troyer as well as our standard box. If you have a special need, talk with Jim. He has some flexibility with designs.

Thank you, Jim, from the members and most importantly, from the birds!

PA CleanWays Report

We have received a letter from PA CleanWays telling of the results of the Clarion County Illegal Dump Survey. It reads, in part:

Illegal dump surveys are a valuable tool that can be used by communities for planning solid waste and recycling programs as well as garnering funds for education, cleanup and abatement activities. The Clarion County survey identified 102 dumpsites containing an estimated 263 tons of trash.

A total of 4,159 illegal dumpsites containing an estimated 14,193 tons of illegally dumped trash have been identified thus far in 37 counties across the state since 2005. Surveys are available for download on our website at http://www.pacleanways.org/IDS/ids_index.html.

Since 1990, PA CleanWays has helped local municipalities, watershed groups, and concerned citizens across the Commonwealth to clean up over 10,000 tons of trash from their communities. If

you would like to learn more about how to utilize this valuable tool within your community or about how PA CleanWays can assist you in your efforts to address illegal dumping, please call toll free at 877-772-3673.

~ Todd M. Crouch
Program Manager

Piney Tract Visitors

Over the summer, many birders have visited Piney Tract and reported to SRAS members. Here are excerpts from some of the comments received:

I was able to 'rise and shine' at 6 AM on May 22 (Friday) to be at the gate of IBA #21 by 9 AM. Unfortunately, I don't believe that that time was early enough. I could hear the Henslows' call, but did not see them. I didn't want to walk off the dirt road into the grass to rouse them as I'm a little nervous concerning that type of intrusion.

My trip was as wonderful as could be expected. The grassland restoration is definitely of monumental importance for the many creatures that inhabit it, as well as the National Natural Area of the spectacular Cook Forest. These are two places I will be revisiting.

Carl Bauer

...I drove up yesterday (6/2) from York, PA and, despite an almost constant rain, had a great experience. The directions your website provided were perfect and the birds were exactly where you instructed one to look.

I birded the area for most of the afternoon and had great looks at Henslow's Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Bobolinks, and Upland Sandpipers (a pair were in the grass within five yards of the road along Mt. Airy Rd.). Wild Turkey and Vesper Sparrows were also seen.

...Thanks for such a fine website and for working to maintain such a great birding spot.

Dick Cleary
York, PA

I've had the pleasure of birding the Piney Tract for the past 4 years because of your organization's web-site and I thought I'd send a trip report as a way of thanking all of you.

The Clay-colored breeding spot still continues, but this year we also found 2 territorial males singing along Stockdill Rd.

At the bottom of the hill on Mt. Zion we had Ruffed Grouse feeding in the road, along with a family of Woodcocks.

Singing Yellow-rumps (2) were along Wyman. Henslow's numbered in the upper 20's from the road alone so it's probably a huge population, along with Grasshoppers.

Upland Sandpipers we only heard calling, but the fog was so thick on Saturday morning we couldn't see much of anything.

Thanks so much for the directions on your site...it's become a yearly Mecca for me.

Good Birding,
Harvey Tomlinson
New Jersey

I used some of the web resources available on the SRAS web site to plan a day of birding and wanted to just say "thanks" to the SRAS for providing the information.

In a nutshell, I was able to find most everything that I should have (Henslow's and Clay-colored Sparrows being the targets), as well as a couple of species, such as Yellow-breasted Chat and Prairie Warbler, that are very difficult to find in northwest PA, and a couple of Pine Siskins.

I also ventured outside of the game lands to McCall Hollow Rd., where I was also afforded some nice looks at a family group of Orchard Orioles (another toughy for NW PA) as well as another Clay-colored Sparrow.

Yes, I did eat lunch at the Korner Restaurant in Sligo as recommended by the web page...it was great. How welcoming it was [to a former western Pennsylvanian] to see "Pop" listed on the menu!

Jim Flynn
Forsyth Co., GA

In Florida, Henslow's Sparrows rarely make it as far south as the Tampa Bay area...what a treat it was to see and hear Henslow's Sparrows on their breeding grounds at IBA #21, a former strip mine site near Sligo.

We saw Grasshopper, Clay-colored, and Savannah Sparrows, dozens of Chipping and Song Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks, a pair of American Kestrels and two young, Eastern Towhees, a perched Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and the list goes on and on.

Just as interesting was the butterfly life. Aphrodite Fritillaries were everywhere, as were several species of hard-to-catch-up with skippers. Other highlights included Northern Pearly-eye, Common Wood-Nymph, and just one, but cooperative American Copper.

Thank you Seneca Rocks Audubon, and especially Deb Freed, for taking the time to put together a brochure about the place and the easy directions on how to get there.

Ron Smith
Tampa, FL

I thought I'd let you know about our visit to the Grasslands of Clarion County as requested. My husband and I had noticed the PA Bird postings about your area and knew we'd like to visit. I googled Piney Tract and got all the info I needed. Thanks for the great directions. We spent Friday night in Brookville, having gotten a late start from Bucks County, and made the loop Saturday. We saw our 2 target birds, Henslow's and Clay-colored Sparrows (both lifers) at Mount Zion, had lunch at the Korner Restaurant in Sligo, then got the Upland Sandpiper in the fenced pasture along Stewart Road. In addition we had very cooperative Brown Thrashers on Elliot, Mt Zion and Stewart Roads, Prairie Warblers and Grasshopper Sparrows in multiple places, a Horned Lark on Mt Zion Road and a wonderful look at a Harrier. Other birds as well but I won't make this any longer. Again, thanks for the great information we got online. It sure made the visit easy as well as rewarding.

Vicky Smith
Bucks County, PA

Outings -

- Common Nighthawk Watch - daily through mid-September
- September 12 - Buttermilk Hill Nature Sanctuary (with Bartramian Audubon)
- October 4 - Polk Wetlands (with Bartramian Audubon)
- October 25 - Erie National Wildlife Refuge

Upcoming Events -

- Fisher Program - September 14
- Annual Picnic - September 26
- Grand Canyon Program - October 12
- History of the Clarion CBC - November 9

NOTICE

Beginning in September, our meetings will be held in the Science Technology Center, Rm 134

Hosting September meeting...
Deb Freed & Janice Horn

Consider the environment and sign up for e-Drummer today! Call or email Deb Freed at dfreed208@comcast.net



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Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
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