



THE DRUMMER

www.senecarocksaudubon.org



February/March 2012

Volume 28, No. 3



Roseate Spoonbill, photo by Flo McGuire

The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail

February 8 program by Jeffrey Hall

Not many places in the United States can match the Texas Coast for outstanding birding opportunities. The Lone Star State has developed birding routes, with maps and signs, to renowned spots like Santa Ana, Aransas, Brazos Bend, Laguna Atascosa, and Rockport/Fulton. Follow along some of the best of these avian journeys.

One of Seneca Rocks' newer members, Jeffrey Hall, will present this program. His articles and photographs have appeared in *Living Bird*, *NJ Audubon*, *Underwater Naturalist*, and numerous other publications. Over the last two decades, Jeffrey has given over a hundred presentations to birding groups, nature and wildlife organizations, and photography clubs. He served four terms as president of Washington Crossing Audubon Society in New Jersey. Jeffrey recently retired after 25 years of teaching biology at the Pennington School in New Jersey. He lives in Franklin, Pa.

Escape with us this February to the sunny coast of Texas, where we are sure to enjoy some stunning bird photography.

Birding Southern Ecuador

March 14 program by Jerry Stanley

Jerry Stanley and his wife Kathie Goodblood have been avid birders for 28 years, and have lived in Venango County for the past 20 years. Jerry states that they enjoy bird-watching vacations in foreign countries whenever they get the chance. Jerry and Kathie are active members of the Bartramian Audubon Society, and well-known to many of us. They graciously host an annual get-together after the Pleasantville Christmas Bird Count, and Jerry has led our Allegheny Front Hawk Watch trip several times.

This program will include photos of birds from southern Ecuador - 200 plus photos of the rich and diverse bird life of Ecuador.

Ecuador is one of 17 megadiverse countries in the world, according to Conservation International, and it has the most biodiversity per square kilometer of any nation. The country boasts 1600 bird species. In comparison, Ecuador has a little more than twice the area of Pennsylvania, and the Official List of the Birds of Pennsylvania numbers 418.

Join us for a view of this birding paradise in March.

Our programs are held on the second Wednesday of each month at the Clarion Free Library. Come early to socialize - the program begins at 6:30 pm.



Audubon Camp in Maine - photo by Deb Freed

Coastal Maine Adventure Scholarships for Area Teens

~Deb Freed

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society will offer two scholarships to a summer ornithology camp for students currently in grades 9, 10, 11, or 12 from Clarion, Forest, Jefferson or Venango counties. The camp dates are June 24 to June 29, 2012. The full scholarship includes meals, lodging, expert instruction, boat trips and field trips. The primary requirement is that the student should demonstrate an interest in the outdoors and natural sciences. The application deadline is March 30, 2012.

Applicants should visit two websites to learn about the camp before applying.

<http://fohi.org/2010/12/14/new-video/>
<http://www.projectpuffin.org/OrnithCampsDescriptionCMBST.html#Programs>

Applicants need not register themselves. SRAS has already reserved two spaces and will complete the registration on behalf of the scholarship recipients.

The *Drummer* is the bi-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 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.

All applicants should know that the scholarship will not be based entirely on bird watching experience. Outdoor experience and interest in ecology and conservation of natural resources will be taken into account. Scholarship recipients will be required to attend some field orientation before going to the camp. This could include how to use binoculars, birding etiquette, recommended clothing and gear for the camp, plus other help and information from former campers. The recipient will also be required to submit a short article for Seneca Rocks Audubon newsletter “The Drummer” after returning from camp.

The application form is available on-line at www.senecarocksaudubon.org

Application deadline is March 30, 2012. The recipients will be notified by mid-April 2012.

Program at Cook Forest

~Dale Luthringer

Saturday, February 18 - ‘Snowman in the Forest Day’

Come join us for a day of fun wintry activities along the picturesque National Wild & Scenic Clarion river within Cook Forest State Park. Various activities will be held at the Ice Skating Pond, along River Road approximately 1-mile up-river from the Park Office:

11:30am-2:30pm - Antlered reindeer pulled wagon rides

11:30am-12:45pm - Snowshoe interpretive hike within the old growth forest along Cook Trail

1:00pm-2:15pm - Snowshoe interpretive hike within the old growth forest along Cook Trail

It will be a wonderful day for the family to enjoy ice skating, sled riding, and a snowman building contest (pray for snow).

Come sample the chili during the ‘Free Chili Cook-off’, that is, after the judges have tried some first. Hot chocolate, coffee, fire, and a warming hut will be on hand to help take the “chill” out of your bones.

Enjoy a wonderful day among family and friends in Cooksburg’s winter wonderland. Event sponsored by the Cook Forest Vacation Bureau.

Nature Books Purchased for Area School Libraries

~Paulette Colantonio



Seneca Rocks has purchased library books for 11 elementary schools in our area using funds donated by the Clarion County Garden Club.

Eight selections were offered on the list covering three genres. Fictional titles included

"Feathers for Lunch" by Lois Ehlert, "How to Heal a Broken Wing" by Bob Graham, and "Mouse and Mole: Fine Feathered Friends" by Herbert Yee.

The boldly colorful "Feathers for Lunch" begins, "Uh-oh. Door's left open, just a crack. My cat is out and he won't come back." The black-and-white escapee tries to devour twelve common backyard birds for lunch. However, due to the bell on his collar, "jingle, jingle", the feline only captures feathers. A glossary entitled, "The Lunch That Got Away" is found in the back of the book to give young readers scientific information about each species.

Bob Graham's "How to Heal a Broken Wing" uses limited text and wordless sequences in full color to advance the serious story of Will and an injured city pigeon. "High above the city, no one heard the soft thud of feathers against glass. No one saw the bird fall. No one looked down ... except Will." Children are pulled into the saga as Will persuades his mother to carry the bird to their apartment home via the subway. This offering is a catalyst for discussions about life and death in the city setting.

Yee's fiction selection, "Mouse and Mole: Fine Feathered Friends", is the recipient of an ALA Notable Children's Book Award and a Theodore Seuss Geisel Honor Book Award. This chapter book for young readers finds Mouse and Mole on a fruitless birding excursion as they frighten every single bird away. The tenacious friends then design and create costumes for up-close observing. In the last chapter, the two budding ornithologists create a journal complete with illustrations!

Nonfiction books included "Thunder Birds: Nature's Flying Predators" by Jim Arnosky, "The Life Cycle of Birds" by Susan Gray, "Bird, Butterfly, and Eel" by James Prosek, and "In the Belly of an Ox: The Unexpected Photographic Adventures of Richard and Cherry Kearton".

Young and old naturalists will be mesmerized by the cover on Arnosky's "Thunder Birds: Nature's Flying Predators": a formidable staring osprey clutching a rainbow trout in its talons. Employing acrylic paints and white chalk pencil, the author creates spectacular full-page illustrations and four gatefolds of various birds, including eagles, hawks, vultures, owls, herons. The illustrations enable the reader to compare sizes of the birds and various body parts. The first-person narrative makes the reader feel the author is speaking directly to him. This beautiful book provides scientific information about each species in caption-like text and a bibliography for further research.

Susan Gray's "The Life Cycle of Birds" is part of the Heinemann Publishing Company's Infosearch science books on the Animal Kingdom. This book gives young readers an in-depth look into what makes a bird a bird. Adaptations are examined such as beaks, feathers, and feet and how the bird uses them to live in its unique habitat. Each chapter of this 48-page photo-book begins with a question the child can answer after careful reading.

"Bird, Butterfly, and Eel" is an intermediate narrative accompanied by full-color watercolor illustrations and soothing text. In this inspiring story of changing seasons, Prosek introduces the basic elements of bird, insect, and fish migration. In the summer, the barn swallow, the monarch, and American eel live on a New England farm. In the autumn, the three creatures embark on a mysterious migration: Bird journeys to Argentina, Butterfly wings to Central Mexico, and Eel swims many miles to the Sargasso Sea. Do the three voyagers return? (Did you know that James Audubon was the first hero of this author and illustrator?)

Rebecca Bond's picture book biography, "In the Belly of an Ox", relates the story of two brothers, Richard and Cherry Kearton. Watercolor and pen-and-ink illustrations accompany the text to reveal the passion of two aspiring naturalists and

photographers. During the week, they worked in 19th century London at a publishing house. However, weekends found the brothers in the preferred country, utilizing clever disguises to capture birds on film. These two men published the very first work about nature entirely illustrated with photographs in 1895! Some of the original photos are actually included!

The only book of poetry on the list was written by Michael Rosen, "The Cuckoo's Haiku and Other Birding Poems". Rosen offers haiku describing 24 different species of birds, arranged by season. The watercolor illustrations rendered by Stan Fellows add to the charm of this gorgeous selection. The brevity and intensity of the haiku is a perfect medium for mimicking the sometimes fleeting glimpse of a bird: "Twittering at dusk, chimney swifts sail above the citronella glow." This book includes an appendix with extra information on birds and poetry. It is a perfect choice for young or mature birders.

Books will be delivered in the spring to the following schools: Allegheny-Clarion Valley, Brookville, Clarion Area, East Forest, Immaculate Conception, Keystone, North Clarion, Redbank, St. Joseph, Union, and West Forest. A display of the various titles will be available for your perusal at a Wednesday evening meeting.

Olympians of the Sky

Bar-headed Geese, the world's highest-flying birds, cruise at an altitude of 29,500 feet, over the Himalayas to their wintering range in India. Formerly scientists thought that the geese depended on strong tailwinds and updrafts for this feat. However, by the use of satellite transmitters in small backpacks on some of the geese, it was found that they fly at night and early morning, when there is actually a slight downdraft. The theory now is that the cooler and denser air allows the geese to generate greater lift, contains more oxygen and helps to regulate body heat.

Scientists were also amazed to find that the geese cross the Himalayas in a single day. They are airborne for seven to eight hours, requiring a 10- to 20-fold increase in oxygen consumption. In contrast, Canada Geese cannot sustain *resting* levels of metabolism at this altitude. The Bar-headed Geese were found to have bigger wings and lungs, a dense network of capillaries

surrounding the flight muscle, and hemoglobin that more tightly binds oxygen to the lungs. Study of the Bar-headed Goose physiology might elucidate human respiration as well.

~ Abstract from "Olympians of the Sky"
by David Godkin in *Scientific American*, Nov. 2011

Advanced Notice - Birding Class



Do you know someone who would like to know more about birds? Ron Montgomery and Gary Edwards will be teaching a class for beginning birders on Tuesday evenings, beginning March 20, from 7 to 8:30 pm in the Clarion Free Library. It will consist of four classes plus three Saturday field trips. Topics covered include bird identification, discussion of binoculars and field guides, an introduction to bird

songs, local woodpeckers, and bird habitats. This class will soon be advertised to the general public and enrollment is limited. Interested parties should contact Ron Montgomery.

SNOW FLEAS DON'T BITE

From our archives - a delightful article written by Margaret Buckwalter for our March, 2004 Drummer

At first I thought the dark patches on the thawing snow were just wind-blown dust. Then I noticed they were mostly under the big oak trees, or near downed logs or exposed leaf litter. So I bent down for a closer look. Imagine my surprise to find the whole patch alive with minute insects making prodigious leaps into the air. It turned out they were Snow Fleas and my insect guide said they were springtails known as *Achorutes nivicola*, which sounds like a very exotic beverage. They belong to the family of Podurid Springtails which are "elongate, wingless insects. . . with a springing organ on the underside of the last abdominal segment. On warm winter days these insects often swarm on the surface of snow, forming dark patches. Sometimes they are found floating in buckets of maple syrup."

I took some home to look at with a magnifying glass. They are really tiny—only 1/16th of an inch long. So look for Snow Fleas as the weather warms and begins to melt all the snow in the woods. Don't worry, they don't bite!





Short-eared Owl at Mt. Airy from this CBC.
Photo by Pat Conway.

25th Clarion CBC

~ Gary Edwards

If the numbers are any indication, Mike Leahy and I are off to a less than auspicious start as CBC compilers. Mike, the eternal optimist, points out that there's a whole lot of up-side potential going forward.

So, while the weather on December 17th cooperated and the sharp-eyed, 22 field-team members and 7 feeder watchers were eager to count, count, count, for the most part the birds decided stay north, go south, or remain anti-social. Our final species count was 42, the lowest number in count's 25-year history. The total number of birds counted was 5,354, historically the 3rd lowest number.

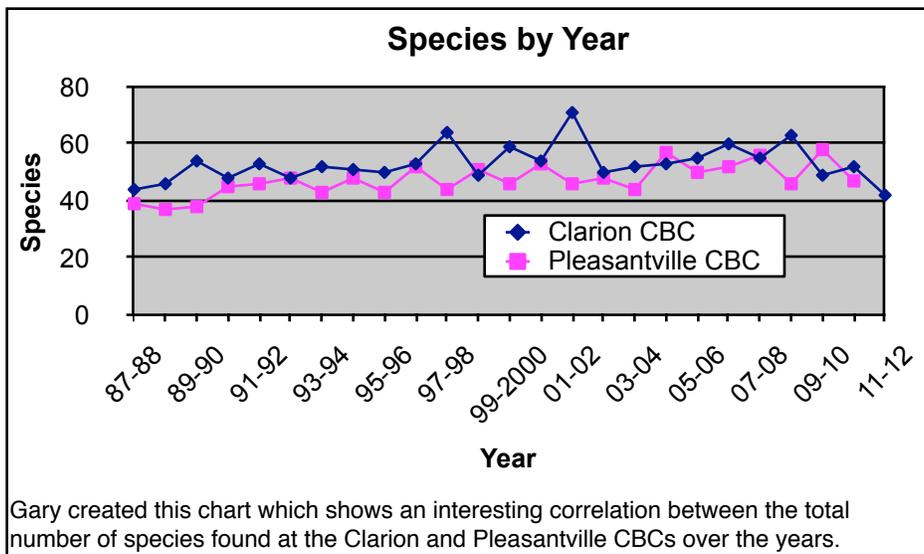
To put this in perspective, in 2001 we tallied 71 species-- our all-time high, and in the last 12 years we've dipped below 50 species only once ... and that year we tallied 49. From a numbers standpoint, only the first two years of the count were lower. Last year had

been the third lowest, but we managed to slide in 25 birds short of that mark. To make matters worst, last year we found 10 more species than this year.

There were a few highlights. Six Short-eared Owls, while nowhere near our all-time high of 19, should rank No. 1 or 2 statewide. That's based on last year when the high number for PA was 2. We also extended our streak of Short-eared sightings to 25 years. Not many count circles that can match that one—thanks Walter for finding them all those years ago.

One hundred and eight Mallards was impressive considering we didn't have any last year and the previous high number was 70. Also somewhat unexpected was a total of 366 American Robins, 2nd only to the 545 counted in 1984. In last year's summary, Flo noted the low number of European Starlings (884) compared to the average (1335). Well, that didn't last long. This year's number was 1625. The House Finch count rebounded to 165 after 2 years of being below 100.

So much for the good news. For the first time in history, we had no Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren, or Cedar Waxwing reports. We also missed Northern Flicker for only the 2nd year and Red-breasted Nuthatch for the 4th year. White-throated Sparrows continue to be elusive. Flo reported last year that our average count is 30, but that the counts for the past three years have been well below that. Things haven't improved. Only 3 were located, tying our all-time low. Dark-eyed Juncos also were scarce with only 305 reported, our 2nd worst count. Finally, 181 House Sparrows is our all-time low, edging out the 182 seen in the first year. I'm including this in the bad news section in deference to Gil Twiest who is always in the minority as a defender of the House Sparrow. Like me, he's getting old and grasps at any straw for a trace of positive support. This is his straw for the day.



Field birders were: Ernie Aharrah, Deb Freed, Flo McGuire, Carl Rowe, Pat Conway, Jeff Hall, Jim McGuire, Joanne Rowe, Joanne Crosbie, Janice Horn, Charles Marlin, Jack Williams, Kurt Crosbie, Ann Hunt, Wayne Meier, Carole Winslow, Pete Dalby, Pam Jordan, Ron Montgomery, Gary Edwards, Mike Leahy, and Kurt Register. As usual, everyone had a great time, even though at times it seemed like being at a hawk watch with the wind from the wrong direction.

New participants this year were Jeff

Hall, Pam Jordan and Charles Marlin. Charles has been a feeder watcher in the past but jumped in with both feet, going owling with Mike Leahy's team and continuing on through the day. Hope to see all of you next year.

Special thanks to the 7 feeder watchers - Hendrika Bohlen, Rheba Klinger, Bill Kodrich, Carol Riffer, Kathy & John Pokrifka, Layne Giering, and Dixie Humphrey - who tallied 18 species and 248 birds and special, special thanks to Ruth Schurr for handling the feeder watcher portion of the count.

Mike and I are going out on a limb and guaranteeing better numbers next year. Mike's selling me some CBC Count Insurance & we're going to start training the birds earlier. This year's training will concentrate on popping up when phished. We anticipate a banner 26th Clarion CBC.

Managing Young Forest Habitat

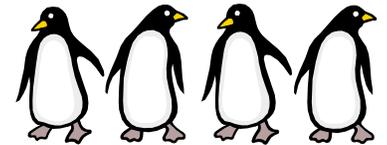


Tammy Colt of the PA Game Commission is holding a free workshop in Somerset, PA, on February 25 for landowners. You will learn more about three species of greatest conservation need: Golden-winged Warbler, American Woodcock, and Snowshoe Hare; how you can manage your land to create habitat for these species, and where you can find funding for habitat improvements. There is an optional tour of young forest habitat in the afternoon.

Registration is free. The workshop will be held at the Somerset Historical Center in Somerset, PA. Contact Tammy Colt at tcolt@pa.gov or 814-233-2281 to register. Registration deadline is February 15.

Plurality of Birds

Would you like to add some interesting words to your vocabulary? I seem to have a Glister of Goldfinches at my feeder as I write... Thanks to Deb Freed for contributing the following.



An Exaltation of Larks
 A Brood of Hens
 A Murder of Crows
 An Unkindness of Ravens
 A Fall of Woodcock
 A Dule of Doves
 A Dropping of Pigeons
 A Murmuration of Starlings
 A Clutter of Starlings
 A Chattering of Coughs
 A Spring of Teal
 An Ostentation of Peacocks
 A Hill of Ruffs
 A Paddling of Ducks
 A Team of Ducks
 A Sword of Mallards
 A Gaggle of Geese
 A Covert of Coots
 A Rafter of Turkeys
 A Drumming of Grouse
 A Covey of Partridge
 A Host of Sparrows
 A Ubiquity of Sparrows
 A Glister of Goldfinches
 A Chain of Bobolinks

A Shimmer of Hummingbirds
 A Descent of Woodpeckers
 A Gatling of Woodpeckers
 A Wake of Vultures
 A Cast of Hawks
 A Leash of Merlins
 A Flight of Goshawks
 A Convocation of Eagles
 A Jubilee of Eagles
 A Tiding of Magpies
 A Squabble of Seagulls
 A Flight of Swallows
 A Swoop of Swallows
 A Mutation of Thrushes
 A Building of Rooks
 A Watch of Nightingales
 A Congregation of Plovers
 A Time-step of Sandpipers
 A Stand of Flamingos
 A Wobble of Ostrich
 A Nye of Pheasants
 A Charm of Finches
 A Radiance of Cardinals
 A Party of Jays
 A Scold of Blue Jays

A Dissimulation of Birds
 A Deceit of Lapwings
 An Assembly of Fowls
 A Siege of Herons
 A Mustering of Storks
 A Dopping of Sheldrakes
 A Wedge of Swans
 A Herd of Cranes
 A Herd of Wrens
 A Colony of Penguins
 A Parade of Penguins
 A Company of Parrots
 A Prattle of Parrots
 A Peep of Chickens
 A Parliament of Owls
 A Herd of Curlews
 A Walk of Snipe
 A Gulp of Cormorants
 A Siege of Bitterns
 A Scavenging of Gulls

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 Feb10

PICK-UP from MON Feb 27 to SAT Mar 3

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 _____ email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please indicate your pick-up location: Brookville ____ or Marianne _____

Quantity	Seed Type	Lbs	Unit Price	Total
_____	Nature's Choice - premium mix with corn	40 lb	\$ 23.00	_____
_____	Concerto - no corn premium mix	40 lb	\$ 24.00	_____
_____	Songmaker - economic mix	40 lb	\$ 18.00	_____
_____	J & J Blend - most popular	50 lb	\$ 23.00	_____
_____	Black Oil Sunflower	50 lb	\$ 30.00	_____
_____	Black Oil Sunflower	25 lb	\$ 16.00	_____
_____	Cracked Corn - triple cleaned	50 lb	\$ 14.00	_____
_____	Cracked Corn - triple cleaned	25 lb	\$ 8.00	_____
_____	Cracked Corn - once cleaned	50 lb	\$ 11.00	_____
_____	Cracked Corn - once cleaned	25 lb	\$ 7.00	_____
_____	Nyjer Seed	50 lb	\$ 42.00	_____
_____	Nyjer Seed	25 lb	\$ 22.00	_____
_____	Suet Cakes		\$ 1.25	_____

Make checks payable to: _____ Subtotal _____

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society

Note NO TAX

Donation to Seneca Rocks Audubon _____

Total _____

Dates to Remember:

- Feb. 8 - Texas Birding Trail Program
- Feb. 10 - Last Day to order Seed
- Feb. 14 - Valentine's Day
- Feb. 17 thru 20 - Great Backyard Bird Count
(<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>)
- Feb. 27 thru Mar. 3 - Pick up Seed
- March 14 - Birding in Ecuador Program
- April 11 - Program on Bats
- May 9 - Program to be announced

Some Spring Events:

- Warbler Walk
- Wildflower Walk
- May - Trip to Eastern Shore, led by Mike Leahy



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

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of the birds, the ebb and flow of the tides, the folded bud ready for the spring. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature - the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter. The lasting pleasures of contact with the natural world are not reserved for scientists but are available to anyone who will place himself under the influence of earth, sea, and sky and their amazing life.

-- Rachel Carson

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