



# THE DRUMMER



[www.senecarocksaudubon.org](http://www.senecarocksaudubon.org)

February, 2009

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**Next Meeting – February 9  
Room 150, Becker Hall  
Social – 6:30 p.m. Program – 7:00 p.m.**



## **Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program by Dr. Andrew Keth**

**T**he Biology Department at Clarion University, in collaboration with the Anthropology, Geography and Earth Sciences Department, the County Commissioners Office, and numerous state agencies, non-profits, and community volunteers is gathering data on the flora and fauna of Clarion County. This work is being funded through a grant from the DCNR Wild Resource Conservation Fund and will become part of the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP) database.

The PNHP was established in 1982 and is part of a network of similar programs that have been established in all US states, Canada, and Latin America. This large database provides a record of the rich natural history of Pennsylvania and provides information to the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI), which is used in state and local

permit reviews. Clarion County is one of the last counties in Pennsylvania to undertake PNHP surveys.

Project Leader, Dr. Andrew Keth of Clarion University, will present our February 9 program to tell us more about this on-going project. Come and find out about previously unknown populations that were discovered during field work last summer.

Anyone in the community who has knowledge of interesting species or habitats in the county is asked to call Clarion's PNHP "tip-line" at (814) 393-1734 or email Keth at [aketh@clarion.edu](mailto:aketh@clarion.edu). These tips will allow the team to focus their fieldwork in the coming months and through summer of 2009. The team is interested in current or historical knowledge of rare species including recent sightings of interesting organisms. A few examples might include the sighting of a fisher, a rattlesnake, large numbers of bats, or any lizard. Keth states that "we not only want to find out where these organisms are but also where they are not. We would like to know where they were seen historically so that we can perform habitat assessments to see if they are still there and if not, why. So, hearing stories like 'when I was a kid we used to...' can still be useful." Tips like this have already resulted in important data so the public's involvement is always greatly appreciated.

(continued on p. 2)

Seneca Rocks Spring Bird Seed Sale -  
Order form on page 7

Dr. Keth earned his PhD in Entomology at The Pennsylvania State University. He states that he is an entomologist by training but a herpetologist at heart. His primary passion involves landscape-level conservation biology. He is consulted as a Forensic Entomologist and regularly provides his services to law enforcement and wildlife agencies. Research interests include biodiversity studies and decomposition ecology.

### Note: PNDI is now PNHP

Recently the name was changed from the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) to the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP). The name PNDI will be reserved for the project-screening tool with which it is generally associated. PNHP will refer to the entire range of efforts undertaken by the program.

The Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program is a partnership between The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, The PA Fish and Boat Commission and The PA Game Commission.

## Upcoming Field Trips/Events

*If winter comes, can spring be far behind?*

These outings are in the planning stages:

- Conneaut Marsh, April 4.
- Warbler Walk at Oil Creek - date TBA.
- Presque Isle, Joint outing with Todd Bird Club of Indiana, PA - May 2.

On May 16, Fran Williams will be leading "Birding at Riverstone Farm" in Foxburg. There is a fee for this event, which includes lunch.

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](http://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](mailto:fmcguire1@verizon.net).

## Cook Forest Program

by Dale Luthringer

Saturday, February 21 – ‘*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. ☔☔



Janice Horn with a Pine Siskin, photo by Deb Freed.

## Spring Bird Seed Sale

*Are the Pine Siskins devouring all of your birdseed?*

**Something new this time** – When you pick up your order, Agway is offering a 10% discount on all bird items in the store!



*Yellow-crowned Night-heron*  
by Daniel Kilby, Audubon Chapter Resources

## PA GAME COMMISSION REPORT

Contributed by Pete Dalby -- *From a quarterly report covering activities from July through September 2008*

A total of 27 peregrine falcon nest sites were monitored in 2008, with assistance from 45 volunteers. Sixty-four young were produced, of which 51 were banded. PA had 3 cliff sites this year. Three nestlings were successfully transferred from bridge nests in the Delaware River to a cliff reintroduction site in West Virginia.

The Barn Owl Conservation Initiative had a very active summer. Over 130 young were banded at 80 sites; the SC Region diversity biologist participated in banding half of those owlets. The NC Region wildlife diversity biologist responded to a report of an injured barn owl at a Jersey Shore mill, transferred 2 owlets and an egg from the mill to a rehabilitator. He later retrieved and banded the three 8-week-old mill owlets from the rehabilitator to be fostered by adults at another location, and installed a nest box at the mill for future use. By early September, one of the fostered owlets had fledged and the other two were capable of modest flight. At a new Lebanon Refuse Authority site, an impromptu audience of 40 formed to watch the SE Region wildlife diversity biologist band owlets. However, a pair that nested successfully at a Somerset County site in 2007 did not return this year.

During June and July, the Nighthawk Conservation Initiative monitored 54 rooftops in Erie, Meadville,

Oil City and Warren. Four active nests were documented in Meadville and Warren; unfortunately none were successful. It is suspected that avian predators found the nestlings soon after hatching. Although the sample is small, it suggests that predation may be as large a factor, or possibly a larger factor, than availability of gravel substrate suitable for nesting. The NW Region diversity biologist coordinates this conservation initiative.

Surveys at 10 black-crowned night-heron colonies indicate declines at several colonies, including the second largest located at Kiwanis Lake, York County. Surveys of two nearby lakes are recommended in 2009, to attempt to detect nesting black-crowned night-herons disbursed from Kiwanis Lake. Volunteers found two yellow-crowned night-heron nests in Harrisburg. Both of these night-heron species are state endangered.

A statewide survey of great blue heron colonies was completed, with a total count of 2,208 active nests across 52 counties. Seventy-six great blue heron sites were added to the survey databases since the last statewide survey in 2002. Colonial waterbird surveys were more effective and comprehensive than previous efforts because of the increased network of bird observers who participate in citizen science projects like the Breeding Bird Atlas.

After 5 years, collection of field data has been completed for the Second PA Breeding Bird Atlas. Evaluation continues, producing population estimates such as 352,000 scarlet tanagers statewide. Surveys identified thousands of point locations for species of concern, including new locations for least and American bitterns, yellow-crowned night-heron, upland sandpiper, sedge wren, osprey and merlin, but no black tern or short-eared owl locations. Despite new sites, American bittern and upland sandpiper populations declined overall, as did aerial insectivores (swallows and flycatchers). In 5 years, Atlas volunteers contributed nearly 97,000 block hours and logged over 800,000 miles while generating over 690,000 bird records. PGC Wildlife Diversity staff provides both supervision and survey effort to this project.



## The Eagle Watchers

Reprinted with permission from *birdcalls*, the newsletter of the National Aviary. Contributed by Pete Dalby

*A new book that puts readers on the trail of eagles around the world offers rare insights into the experiences of biologists working to study and save these elusive raptors.*

**The Eagle Watchers**, co-edited by Dr. Todd Katzner, National Aviary Director of Conservation and Field Research, and Ruth Tingay, Senior Research Coordinator at Natural Research Ltd. in Scotland, is a compilation of anecdotal stories told by 30 of the world's leading eagle researchers. The sometimes harrowing, sometimes humorous tales take readers of conservation and research journals to the far reaches of the globe, from studying serpent eagles in Madagascar, and spotted eagles in India, to snake eagles in Africa, and sea eagles in Russia.

"The book captures in a very personal way what it's like to do field research, the challenges faced in working in foreign lands and cultures, and the emotional connection that is almost inevitably felt with the subjects being studied," says Dr. Katzner.

One contributing author tells of trapping Steller's sea eagles to study the effect of lead poisoning in northern Japan, while another describes the experience of studying one of the world's most impressive tropical forest eagles – the Philippine eagle – and the sense of sadness and loss he felt when the forest where he studied eagles was destroyed by habitat loss from clearcut logging.

Yet another author describes the intimacy and sadness felt when the massive South American harpy eagle she was studying killed a baby deer just a few feet from her. Other stories take a lighter approach, relating some of the follies of field research and near-death experiences that, at the time, were likely to not have been so humorous. Still, other stories tell of the knowledge gained through the study of eagles and the process by which field science progresses.

Scheduled for publication in 2009, **The Eagle Watchers** is a must-read for anyone who has wondered what it's like to follow the flight path of these magnificent raptors as they hunt, breed, and in some cases, struggle to survive in habitats that are ever shrinking.

"This project has been a work of the heart, done because all of us believe in the importance of these majestic animals and the important need we share to connect humans to wildlife, to further our common conservation goals," adds Dr. Katzner. The authors who contributed their personal stories have donated their time and effort at no cost to make this work possible, and profits from the book will be donated equally between the following raptor conservation funds: **Hawk Mountain Project Soar/Hawk Mountain Sanctuary**, and the **National Birds of Prey Trust**.

See [www.aviary.org](http://www.aviary.org) for more information.



Canada Warbler by Steven D'Amato  
Audubon Chapter Resources

## New York Atlas Results

**A** new atlas on the birds of New York reveals that during the past two decades over half of New York State's bird populations have seen dramatic changes in their distributions, with 70 species experiencing significant increases, 58 species experiencing serious declines, and 125 species maintaining relative stability. Among the birds showing the largest increases in New York State are Canada Goose, Wild Turkey, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Common Raven, Turkey Vulture, and Merlin. Those showing the largest decreases are Henslow's Sparrow, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown Thrasher, Common Nighthawk, Purple Martin, and Canada Warbler. Resident woodland birds showed

the greatest increases as a group, and grassland birds showed the greatest declines.

These new findings, published this month by Cornell University Press in *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State*, are the result of over 140,000 hours in the field by nearly 1,200 volunteers across New York State. The atlas, edited by two prominent figures in the field, ornithologist Kevin J. McGowan of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and wildlife biologist Kimberley Corwin of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), was initiated by the New York State Ornithological Association and implemented by the NYSDEC, which provided the funding, management personnel, oversight, direction, and data capture and management. The majority of the funding came from the state tax check-off program, "Return a Gift to Wildlife."

"This new atlas was truly an incredible team effort by the citizens of New York," said Kevin J. McGowan. "From those who funded it with small donations via their tax returns to the impressive volunteers who collected the data, the atlas is an inspired monument to the dedication and love New Yorkers have for their wildlife."

The *Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State* will be an invaluable resource for the DEC and other state agencies involved in land management and conservation, as well as counties and towns who make management decisions on smaller scales. Data will also be used at the national level by federal agencies, non-governmental agencies such as the NY Natural Heritage Program and Audubon, as well as universities across the country.

I came as a tenderfoot, as green  
as any wife of a hundred years before,  
as innocent of struggle with the earth.  
And then the mountains spoke. Some  
shadow or coyote's howling cried out  
and was understood, and I began to change... The red  
rock of the mountains was in me, and the honesty,  
for the land is honest. Mountains cannot hide  
themselves. The rain does not lie, nor the drought.

~From *Mountain Time* by Jane Candia Coleman



## Top National Ornithological Groups Meet in Pittsburgh in '09

The 2009 joint scientific meeting of The Wilson Ornithological Society and the Association of Field Ornithologists will be held 09-12 April 2009, in Pittsburgh, hosted by the National Aviary and Powdermill Nature Reserve and many Pennsylvania organizational partners. Todd Katzner, Ph.D., the aviary's Director of Conservation and Field Research, chairs the Local Organizing Committee.

Todd said to be sure "to let birders know that people who volunteer to work the meeting get free admission to the conference. We can't provide free banquet food, but admission to other events (with snacks, etc.) will be available. This will be a collection of some of the world's leading ornithologists."

The Association of Field Ornithologists (AFO) is one of the world's major societies of professional and amateur ornithologists dedicated to the scientific study and dissemination of information about birds in their natural habitats. Founded in 1922, AFO emphasizes bird banding, field techniques, and conservation biology. It publishes the *Journal of Field Ornithology*. The Wilson Ornithological Society (WOS) founded in 1888 and named in honor of Alexander Wilson, is a world-wide organization of nearly 2500. It is one of the leading scholarly organizations of professional ornithologists, publishes the prestigious *Wilson Journal of Ornithology*, and holds annual meetings.

For more information:

<http://www.wosafo2009.org/jointConf.php>

<http://www.wilsonsociety.org/>

<http://www.afonet.org/meetings/index.html> .

Anyone willing to help with local arrangements for the meeting should contact Jack Solomon [snaggle719@yahoo.com](mailto:snaggle719@yahoo.com).

Jack E. Solomon  
Phone (voice): (412) 521 3365  
2230 Shady Avenue 2d Fl.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217 - 2114

## Allegheny Valley Trails Association Fundraiser

*Jim Holden presented a program about the AVTA at our Feb. 2008 meeting.*

The “First Annual” Allegheny Valley Trails Association (AVTA) Fund Raiser will be held Saturday, February 28, 2009, at the Franklin Knights of Columbus (K of C) located at 1436 Liberty St., Franklin, PA.

AVTA is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization that currently manages and oversees 50+ miles of paved, non-motorized recreational trails in our area.

The fund raising event of February 28 will commence at 6 p.m. with a variety of activities, including a silent auction, raffles, door prizes and a brief overview of AVTA’s progress. Ticket prices are \$15.00 a person or \$25.00 a couple and can be secured using the form below. Your ticket price includes your admission to this event and light refreshments. Additionally, a cash bar will be available.

Please note for those who purchase their tickets prior to February 14, 2009, a special drawing will be held (Early Bird Drawing) the night of the event. Tickets will NOT be sold at the door and must be purchased in advance. Many prizes will be available at the event, including a bicycle and a kayak.

Sincerely,

Jim Holden, AVTA President

Larry Puleo, Event Chairman

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\_\_\_ (1) Please send me \_\_\_ tickets at \$15.00 or \$25.00 per couple. A check payable to AVTA must be included with your request and mailed to AVTA, PO Box 264, Franklin, PA 16323. Include an address where your ticket(s) can be mailed.

\_\_\_ (2) I would like to donate cash or merchandise for the event and can be contacted at the following phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ (3) I would like to volunteer and help the committee and can be reached at the following phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT



Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird

Count (GBBC), February 13-16, 2009.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). Participants can also explore what birds others are finding in their backyards. Additional online resources include tips to help identify birds, a photo gallery, and special materials for educators.

The data these “citizen scientists” collect helps researchers understand bird population trends, information that is critical for effective conservation. Their efforts enable everyone to see what would otherwise be impossible: a comprehensive picture of where birds are in late winter and how their numbers and distribution compare with previous years. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists including 635 species.

“The GBBC has become a vital link in the arsenal of continent-wide bird-monitoring projects,” said Cornell Lab of Ornithology director, John Fitzpatrick. “With more than a decade of data now in hand, the GBBC has documented the fine-grained details of late-winter bird distributions better than any project in history, including some truly striking changes just over the past decade.”

## SRAS Bird Seed Sale

This is your opportunity to purchase quality bird seed from our local Agway dealer and support the conservation, education and environmental activities of the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society. For your convenience, you will have several days to pick up your order. Be sure to check your SRAS order in the store and receive a 10% discount on all bird items! If there is any question about your order, please contact Janice Horn.

ORDER BY TUESDAY FEB 17, 2009
PICK-UP from TUESDAY MAR 10 to SATURDAY MAR 14

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

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ SRAS member Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Quantity	Seed Type	Lbs	Unit Price	Total
	Classic Blend 50% sunflower	40 lb	\$ 23.00	
	Premium Blend 30% sunflower	50 lb	\$ 20.00	
	Premium Blend	25 lb	\$ 11.00	
	Deluxe Blend 25% sunflower	50 lb	\$ 18.00	
	Deluxe Blend	25 lb	\$ 9.00	
	Econo Mix 12% sunflower	50 lb	\$15.00	
	Econo Mix	25 lb	\$11.00	
	Black Oil Sunflower	50 lb	\$24.00	
	Black Oil Sunflower	25 lb	\$15.00	
	Sunflower Meats	50 lb	\$ 59.00	
	Sunflower Meats	10 lb	\$ 14.00	
	Cracked Corn	50 lb	\$ 11.00	
	Cracked Corn	per lb	\$ .40	
	Nyjer Seed	50 lb	\$ 63.00	
	Nyjer Seed	25 lb	\$ 33.00	
	Nyjer Seed	per lb	\$ 1.69	
	Beef Suet Cake	12 oz	\$ .90	
	Peanut Butter Suet Cake	12 oz	\$ .90	

**Make checks payable to:**  
**Seneca Rocks Audubon Society**

Subtotal \_\_\_\_\_  
 6% tax \_\_\_\_\_  
 Donation to Seneca Rocks Audubon \_\_\_\_\_  
**Total** \_\_\_\_\_

Hosting upcoming meetings...

February 9 - Hendrika Bohlen and Mary Emerick

Mar 9 - OPEN

April 13 - Ruth Schurr and (looking for another volunteer)

**Christmas Bird Count**



The full report will be in the March Drummer. We enjoyed a good time at the count dinner, where notables included high counts of Pine Siskins and hundreds of

Cedar Waxwings. Some unusual species were Bald Eagle, Short-eared Owl, Northern Shrike, Common Raven, Eastern Towhee, Snow Buntings, Lincoln's Sparrow and White-winged Crossbills!

Consider the environment and sign up for e-Drummer today! Call or email Deb Freed at [dfreed208@comcast.net](mailto:dfreed208@comcast.net)

**SRAS Board Members**

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Beaver Creek -	Walter Fye	797-1019

**Future Programs...**

On March 9th Pete Dalby will present "NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat".

On April 13th we welcome friend and well-known nature writer Marcia Bonta and her show "Coming Home". Marcia is the author of nine books and the popular "Naturalist's Eye" column in *Pennsylvania Game News*.

*Clarion, PA 16214*

*P.O. Box 148*

*Seneca Rocks Audubon Society*