



THE DRUMMER



www.senecarocksaudubon.org

September, 2008

Volume 25, No. 1

Next Meeting – September 8
Room 150, Becker Hall
Social – 6:30 p.m. Program – 7:00 p.m.

Common Nighthawk Watch
August 17th – September 10th
6:30 – 8:30 P.M.



Chuck Tague presents: Butterflies of Western Pennsylvania

To many birders, butterflies are the next challenge. Some, like the Monarch, are familiar yet fascinating. Others, like the skippers and duskywings, are as frustrating to identify as “confusing fall warblers”.

To gardeners, butterflies are the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of insects. The adults are gentle, colorful creatures, flying flowers that bask in the sunlight and flit gracefully on gentle breezes. Not only do they add joy, beauty and whimsy to gardens, they are crucial pollinators to many plants. However, their voracious larvae, the caterpillars, pillage leaves and blossoms.

(continued on p. 2)

Come join us any of these evenings at the Oil City Marina for the nighthawk watch. Bring a lawn chair and refreshments and join us (rain or shine) for our night hawk count.



Common Nighthawk
by Steven D'Amato

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.

See you there.
~Jim and Gary

I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.
~John Muir

Butterflies by Chuck Tague, continued

Naturalist Chuck Tague will present a photo essay on the complex life histories of the beautiful and diverse butterflies of western Pennsylvania, and discuss their evil and beneficial relationship to plants, both wild and cultivated.

Chuck notes that many of his butterfly photos were taken at Buzzard Swamp.

Chuck Tague has been a naturalist, educator, writer and nature photographer for twenty-five years. From 1992 to 2004 he published the Nature Observer News. He currently writes the Bird Watch column for the "Peregrine", the journal of the Three Rivers Birding Club. Chuck is the president of the Wissahickon Nature Club and leads monthly outings for the group. He also conducts Nature Journalling workshops for elementary school children.

In 2002 The Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania presented Chuck with the W.E. Clyde Todd Award for significant contributions to Environmental Conservation.

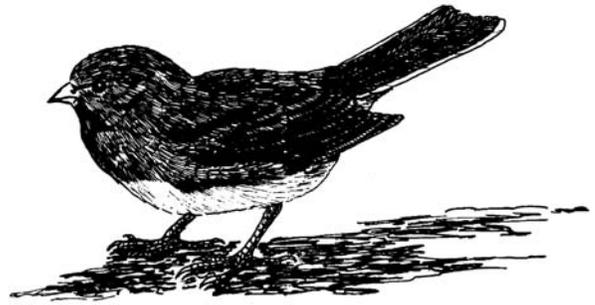
In the colder months, Chuck and his wife Joan migrate to Volusia County, Florida so they can enjoy birds, butterflies and wildflowers all year.



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, HC 1 Box 6A, Tionesta, PA 16353 (814 755-3672) or email at fmguire1@verizon.net.



Dark-eyed Junco by Steven D'Amato

Ontario Moves to Protect Boreal Forest

(from a July 15, 2008 article in the Toronto Star and a PABIRDS listserv posting by Scott Weidensaul)

Ontario has made the largest conservation commitment in Canadian history, setting aside at least half the Northern Boreal region – 225,000 square kilometres (55.6 million acres) – for permanent protection from development, Premier Dalton McGuinty announced yesterday. This is an area almost the size of the United Kingdom.

"It is, in a word, immense. It's also unique and precious. It's home to the largest untouched forest in Canada and the third largest wetland in the world," McGuinty said.

The announcement is globally significant in the fight against climate change, advocates say. Nearly 100 billion tonnes of carbon are stored in the Northern Boreal region and another 12.5 million tonnes are absorbed each year. (*Tonne is a metric ton, equal to 2204.62 avoirdupois pounds*).

These lands remain, for the most part, untouched by development. But with increasing world demand for resources, it was just a matter of time before mining and logging inched up from the south.

Scott Weidensaul calls the boreal forest the "great bird factory of North America", and says that this is "arguably the single biggest win in history for bird conservation". This land is home to 5 million juncos, 4 million magnolia warblers, 3 million palm warblers and 2 million Tennessee warblers, just to name a few species.





photo by Deb Freed

August Picnic

~Deb Freed

Thank you Fran and Jack Williams for another annual gathering at your home. Members and guests enjoyed seasonal dishes and beautiful wooded surroundings all in good company. Melanie Cheers surprised all of us, including her mother Georgann Kovakovsky, with a visit. Melanie was the secretary for SRAS when she was a high school student of John Fedak at Redbank Valley. Her sister Stephanie was also secretary. Melanie is a fourth year medical student.

Audubon PA Chapter Assembly October 17 – 19 in Harrisburg

The Chapter Assembly is a wonderful opportunity for Chapter representatives to share information and ideas and to establish a resource and support base within the Pennsylvania Audubon Community. Presentations will focus on these topics:

1) Conservation Action, 2) Education and Outreach, 3) Strengthening Chapters, 4) Audubon at Home, and 5) Policy.

In addition to organizational matters the state staff has planned visits to area venues. A Saturday morning bird walk is planned at the Wildwood Sanctuary. Saturday's evening dinner will be at the National Civil War Museum with private access to the museum exhibition. On Sunday another bird walk will be planned and a field trip to Waggoner's Gap.

Each chapter may send four representatives. Lodging will be at the Days Inn Harrisburg for \$65 per night. A \$10 donation is being requested for each dinner attendee. Reservations are due September 10, 2008.

The leadership of Seneca Rocks is encouraging members to experience the fun, camaraderie and energy of this event. The future of SRAS depends upon people who will take leadership roles. This is an excellent way to see what successful chapters are doing and bring back ideas to keep SRAS innovative, interesting, and focused on our mission.

If you are interested to attend or want more information, please contact Deb Freed at 226-4719 or dfreed208@comcast.net.

PA CleanWays project in Clarion County needs your help...

PA CleanWays is planning a survey of Clarion County roads for illegal dumpsites. Their goal is to identify and map every visible illegal dumpsite from the public right-of-way within the county. The data will be summarized into a final report, which will be distributed in Spring 2009. This data will be useful for cleanup and abatement strategies, solid waste and recycling planning and public education programs.

In the past year, PA CleanWays completed surveys in nine Pennsylvania counties and identified 891 illegal dumpsites containing an estimated 3,069 tons of trash that is spoiling Pennsylvania's lands and waters. You can view these reports on the website www.pacleanways.org

You can be a part of the project by: 1) Supply PA CleanWays with information about the location of sites, 2) Link PA CleanWays with contacts that might be interested in helping the surveyors gather data or 3) Meet with surveyors directly to give them information concerning any problem areas .

Please contact the PA CleanWays coordinator, Becky Bellows by September 15, if you have any questions or want to participate at toll free number 1-877-772-3673 ext 28.



photo taken at Piney Tract during our Grasslands Conference, by Gary Edwards

A Visit to the Piney Tract

Henslow's Sparrows are known to be skulkers, and this one had apparently been well-briefed. His ventriloquist call seemed almost to taunt us: neither here nor there and always a step ahead in the tall grass. Yet I was thrilled to hear each subdued hiccup. Tsi-lick! A life bird! One I'd searched for unsuccessfully many times. And here it was right at my feet... somewhere...

Fortunately, I'd come to the Piney Tract (aka Mount Zion, SGL 330 and IBA 21) prepared. And not just with binoculars, spotting scope, BirdPod and Rising's *The Sparrows of the US and Canada* -- I'd also brought Deb Freed. Or rather, she brought me, all the way from my motel in Clarion. I'm not sure I'd even have found the Piney Tract, let alone The Bird, without Deb's kind support and companionship.

Not that I wasn't determined. After all, this morning of birding was a dream come true and several years in the making. I'd first read a cryptic entry about the "Mount Zion strips" in Paula Ford's *Birder's Guide to Pennsylvania*. Though I live in Maine I grew up in Pittsburgh and still have family to visit there. A plan began to hatch in my bird-obsessed brain as soon as my eyes saw the magic words "Henslow's Sparrow." Then a few years later my father happened to send me Marcia Bonta's column in the *Pennsylvania Game News* describing the site and its exceptional litany of grassland breeding birds, including Clay-colored, Vesper, Grasshopper, and Savannah Sparrows, Upland

Sandpiper, Northern Harrier, and Short-eared Owl in addition to my own quarry.

When circumstances finally conspired to permit me to visit western PA in June, I began scouring the Internet and PABIRDS (where I, too, am a skulker) for more information on the Piney Tract. I quickly found the SRAS website and its informative page on the area. Straightaway I e-mailed Deb, and everything came together on a beautiful morning in late June. It doesn't get any better, birding friends! Except we still had to find the bird.

Meanwhile, back at the grassland, Deb suggested we try another spot. Walking up a gated dirt road she knew to be productive, we immediately heard several Henslow's Sparrows vocalizing. There were a couple of decent song perches near the top of a shallow rise and there, sure enough, perched the singers. Distant and backlit, we could nevertheless see them well enough to confirm the ID. Yes!

But, of course, I wanted a better look, so on we strolled. A few yards up the road we met the Mel Tormé of Henslow's Sparrows. Perched atop bluebird box #24, he vocalized energetically for some time in response to various pishes, sporting a blue color band in addition to his silver USF&W band. *Now* I felt like I'd really seen this delightful and elusive grassland sparrow. It was worth the wait.

In fact, I'm glad I didn't have to wait even longer to find this increasingly rare and declining species. Henslow's Sparrow has all but disappeared from New England and New York, showing up rarely in migration. Finding Henslow's Sparrows in their wintering areas, such as the Florida panhandle, is likewise a sketchy proposition. New England birders basically have to travel to see this bird, and SGL 330 is probably one of the closest and most convenient locations for us to reliably find it. (And speaking of which, are there any spots in the vicinity of IBA 21 for Golden-winged Warbler, likewise a very rare migrant in most of New England?)

Unfortunately, time was short for Deb and me during our morning of birding, and we left most of the

Mount Zion area unexplored. Clay-colored Sparrow, which I'd never heard or seen in the breeding season, eluded us. Guess I'll have to make it back down there sometime. In the meantime I look forward to sharing my entirely positive experience with my fellow birders and hopefully attracting more than a few of them to this invaluable IBA. Thank you, Deb Freed and SRAS for a wonderful day and an awesome life bird!

Peace and good birding,
Scott Cronenweth
South Portland, ME

Scott Cronenweth is a Maine-based writer, naturalist, and birding tour guide with a particular love of grasslands and their critters. Visit Scott's website at www.naturalpathwalks.com.

Audubon Pennsylvania Hires New Executive Director

Phil Wallis is a Leader in Environmental Conservation

Audubon Pennsylvania, one of the state's leading conservation organizations, is proud to announce the selection of one of the Commonwealth's best-known conservation leaders as its new Executive Director. Phil Wallis, former head of Natural Lands Trust and founder of Keystone Conservation Trust, will lead Audubon Pennsylvania as it embarks upon a bold new vision to protect birds and habitat across the state through science, education, and policy. Audubon Pennsylvania is a division of National Audubon Society, America's oldest conservation organization, whose mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. In Pennsylvania, Audubon works with 21 local Audubon Society chapters, oversees 85 Important Bird Areas (IBAs), connects children with the wonder of nature, and engages citizen scientists in the monitoring of bird species and projects that protect habitat.

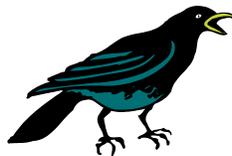
Mr. Wallis will be based at the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove located in Audubon, Pennsylvania. He will also spend considerable time working in Audubon's Harrisburg office as he shapes the organization's conservation policies and priorities while

building partnerships with other organizations throughout the state.

"Connecting people to nature is one of my primary lifetime goals," Mr. Wallis states. "Together with its conservation partners, Audubon can help to define a bold, new course for conservation as we all tackle the daunting and daily issues of energy, responsible stewardship of our resources, and basic costs of living."

A native of southeastern Pennsylvania, Phil has led several conservation organizations over the past 20 years. Directing land protection for The Nature Conservancy and managing Natural Lands Trust as its President, Phil brings solid experience as a conservation leader. As a board member, he has engaged a variety of conservation organizations across Pennsylvania – the PA Land Trust Association, GreenSpace Alliance, the PA Governor's 21st Century Environmental Commission, and the Radnor Conservancy. Phil comes to Audubon Pennsylvania from Keystone Conservation Trust, where as President and CEO, he created the innovative and very successful Legacy Property Fund, which (through gifts of real estate and tax incentives) has distributed \$1.8 million in capital for critical projects of 30 conservation organizations.

Phil will lead Audubon Pennsylvania as it focuses on conserving high priority bird species and habitats within the Commonwealth's 85 IBAs; restoring and reinterpreting the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove; creating bird sanctuaries within the City of Philadelphia at Fairmount Park and at the Audubon Hawk Watch at Waggoner's Gap near Carlisle; and advancing the connections of children and families to nature through its award winning Audubon at Home program.



A study of the University of Washington is leading researchers to believe that crows can recognize human faces. Researchers wore rubber masks, using a caveman mask when trapping and banding seven crows, but a "neutral" Dick Cheney mask (in "a deliberate gesture of civic generosity").

Crows repeatedly scold anyone on campus wearing the caveman mask. Researchers also hypothesize that there is communication among the crow flock, because almost all the crows, not only the banded ones, become raucous when encountering the caveman mask.

PROGRAMS AT COOK FOREST STATE PARK

~Dale Luthringer



Saturday, 9/13 at 9:00am - 'Searching for the Giants'

Join the park naturalist at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom for a challenging off-trail interpretive hike as we comb the woods to document tall and exceptional trees of Cook Forest. The Forest Cathedral holds the most

remarkable white pine stand in the Northeastern U.S., but don't forget about the monster Eastern hemlock, black cherry, Northern red and white oak in Cook Forest's eight other old growth forest areas. We will be documenting very seldom seen areas of the park, which may include the following areas: Cook Trail, Deer Meadows, Seneca Forest, Ridge Camp, Maple Drive, Swamp Natural Area. We have the potential to break current height records for a number of Northeastern U.S. trees. We will car-pool to study areas. (2.5hrs)

Saturday, 9/13 at 1:00pm - 'Fire Tower/Seneca Point Historical Tour' Please bring your binoculars and meet at the Fire Tower Parking Lot for a 45 minute historical interpretive tour of the Fire Tower and Seneca Point. Learn about local logging history, observe Indian sign, and take a breathtaking view from the box at the very top of the Fire Tower which will be open until 300pm. (2 hrs)

Saturday, 9/20 at 8:00am - 'Cook Forest River Ride'
This one-day bike ride takes cyclists on a gently rolling route along the Clarion River. It's a fun, fitness filled day for cyclists of all levels with all monies going to support multiple sclerosis. This year, there are two route options: 35 miles and 60 miles. This is a fully supported ride. There are rest stops with snacks, water, and a festive lunch to celebrate

your finish. Participants must pre-register. Registration and brochures are available at www.cookforest.com. Event is sponsored by Cook Forest online and New Dominion, LLC. For more information contact (412)261-6347.

Bald Eagles in PA

Pete Dalby reports that a new Bald Eagle nest has been confirmed in Clarion County, along the river below the Piney Dam. Information has been sent to the Breeding Bird Atlas at Powdermill. If you think you are more likely to see a Bald Eagle in PA than you were in the 1980's, you are correct! Looking at the Breeding Bird Atlas data for the 2 atlases, we find that there were 112 confirmed Bald Eagles in PA in 2004-2008, and only 12 in 1984-1989. They are making a wonderful comeback.

Good News for California Coast

The ocean off California's coast is suddenly rich with nutrients this summer, and birds, fish and marine mammals are flourishing. There was a change in two features of the ocean: the California current, flowing down the Pacific coast from Canada to Mexico, is colder than it has been in years, and strong northwest winds have increased the upwelling of cold water from just above the sea floor to the surface. This is bringing more food up into levels of the ocean where fish can feed better than they have in years. The bounty translates all the way up the food chain as good news to many species. There are reportedly new highs of humpback whales, Brown Pelicans, and Cassin's Auklets.

Do you know the most abundant breeding warbler in Pennsylvania, and the least common?

According to the BBA, the Common Yellowthroat was reported in 4,743 blocks as of late August, 2008, while the Blackpoll Warbler was reported in only 4 blocks.

Project Safe Passage

Detroit Audubon Society, Michigan Audubon and local chapters appealed to building owners to turn off the lights or draw blinds 11:00pm-6:00am during fall migratory season August 15 through October 31. Michigan Governor Granholm signed a proclamation supporting the effort as Safe Passage Great Lakes Days in Michigan. Chicago, New York, and Toronto have similar programs.

More info:

<http://www.detroitaudubon.org/safe%20passage.html>

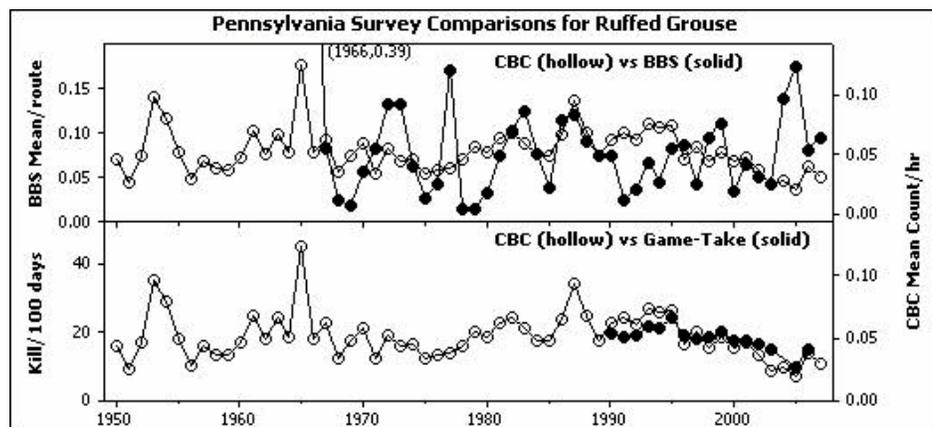


Canada Warbler by Steven D'Amato, Audubon Chapter Resources

Ruffed Grouse Numbers Down

~Nick Bolgiano, from a posting to the Regional Coordinators' listserv

In our February coordinator meeting, Bob Mulvihill speculated that Pennsylvania grouse numbers are down, as suggested by atlas comparisons. Christmas Bird Count (CBC) data and the PA game commission's game-take survey support this. The below graph shows comparisons of the CBC vs. Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) (top panel) and the CBC vs. the game-take survey (bottom panel). The BBS data are from only 1-14 birds/year, meaning that there are not enough grouse detected on the BBS for the data to be meaningful. Meanwhile, the CBC and the PGC's game-take survey are in close agreement (correlation=0.874) that the trend since the mid-1990s is downward. Therefore, I think that the CBC data are fairly trustworthy during the displayed time span, which suggests that PA grouse numbers are roughly half what they were during the first atlas.



2008 Birdathon

~Janice Horn

Birders Paulette Colantonio, Flo and Jim McGuire, Ruth Schurr, Pete Dalby and Janice Horn with help from their supporters brought in \$1,364.80 for the chapter in the 2008 Birdathon. This effort has been a major resource for SRAS for most of its history. Unfortunately, the interest and involvement has been declining. Last year the amount received was \$2,080.30 which was down from over \$4,000 when Margaret Buckwalter was leading it in 2003. The Board has been talking about other ways of bringing in the support we need and your ideas are very welcome.

The chapter has just received the very generous donation of \$400 from the Clarion County Garden Club to support educational activities such as Audubon Adventures.

I believe that there is a subtle magnetism in Nature, which, if we unconsciously yield to it, will direct us aright.
~Henry David Thoreau

For more information about our chapter and current updates, please check our website at www.senecarocksaudubon.org

Consider the environment and save postage for SRAS!
Read and/or print the Drummer from the website.
Please send your e-mail address to :
dfreed208@comcast.net to request an e-Drummer.



Hosting upcoming meetings...

Sept - Janice Horn and Deb Freed
Oct - Joann Rowe and Kathy Pokrifka
Nov - Judy Montgomery

SRAS Board Members

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------|
| President -- | None | |
| Vice-president, Programs - | Pete Dalby | 782-3227 |
| Treasurer, Birdseed, Birdathon - | Janice Horn | 226-7367 |
| Website, Drummer Editor - | Flo McGuire | 755-3672 |
| Field Trips, Events - | Jim Wilson | 676-5455 |
| Secretary, Membership - | Deb Freed | 226-4719 |
| Community Programs - | Ron Montgomery | 764-6088 |
| Education - | Paulette Colantonio | 797-2031 |
| History - | Pat Conway | 849-6315 |
| Mill Creek Coalition - | | |
| Beaver Creek - | Walter Fye | 797-1019 |

Future Programs...

October -

Clarion County Natural Heritage Survey

November -

Venezuelan Adventure by Scott Stoleson

Clarion, PA 16214

P.O. Box 148

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society