



THE DRUMMER



www.senecarocksaudubon.org

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September 13 Program

A Bird in the Hand: Perspectives from Bird Banding *Scott Stoleson*

On September 13 we welcomed back Scott Stoleson of the U.S. Forest Service, who presented a variety of photos from his years of banding birds. He highlighted new and different perspectives that bird netting and banding can provide on birds in general and on specific species. We saw some fascinating close-up photos and heard of his research, including ground-breaking research on breeding Cerulean Warblers.

Scott H. Stoleson is a Research Wildlife Biologist with the Forest Service's Northern Research Station in Warren, PA, and a Research Associate of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Jamestown, NY. His current research focuses on sustaining healthy bird populations in managed forests. 



The Pantanal is the world's largest wetland

October 11 Program

Birds of the Eastern Coastal Mountains and the Pantanal of Brazil *Gil Twiest*

Early in 2010 we made a five week trip to Brazil to visit our Brazilian families. While we were there I spent some time in the Pantanal in Western Brazil as well as a week in the coastal mountains north of Rio. The Pantanal is a region of flat plains that are flooded several months of the year. It hosts a large number of wading birds as well as others that live in the vegetation along the rivers and streams.

The eastern coastal mountains are separated from the forests of the Amazon basin by an area of dry

landscape so many of the birds of these mountains are not found in other areas of South America. I spent a week at a Bird Lodge where their day trips as well as the grounds were set up to see a wide variety of birds. I was able to photograph many of them.

~ Gil Twiest

Gil has been a student of natural history for over 55 years and a photographer for 45. His photographs have been published in numerous textbooks, filmstrips and magazines. Gil is a freelance nature photographer, a founding board member of the North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA) and Professor Emeritus of Clarion University's Biology Department.

Gil is a long-time Seneca Rocks member who served as the *Drummer* editor for many years. He is also an award-winning photographer who has photographed birds all over the world. Come and enjoy what is sure to be a delightful program.

Shenango Reservoir Field Trip

September 26, 2010
Directions from Clarion, PA

Take I-80 west to route 18 north. Travel north to Hermitage, PA, where you will cross route 62. Continue north on route 18 approximately 3 miles to a Sheetz station on the right. I will be there at 8:30 a.m. We will bird until noon.

~ Jim Wilson

Jim reports that he had about 30 species of birds. This should be a good spot to re-visit.

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 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.



Photo by Deb Freed

SRAS Annual Picnic

Judy Montgomery and Fran Williams check out the gorgeous color of the gladiolus growing by the porch. The gardens and hospitality of Jack and Fran Williams greeted about 20 members to the annual picnic. The potluck dishes provided a delicious meal with a spectacular assortment of desserts. Though the sky threatened with some dark clouds and spat a few light showers, the late afternoon yielded comfortable picnic weather. Programs and projects for the year were announced.

~ Deb Freed

Charley Harper Exhibit at RTPi

Entitled "I Count the Wings, Not the Feathers!", this exhibit will be featured at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute in nearby Jamestown, NY, until December 30th.

Charley Harper is beloved by fans of nature and the graphic arts for his highly stylized wildlife prints, posters and book illustrations that he often accompanied with puns and prose. More than 28 delightful works showcase the evolution of the post-modernist's style from the 1950s to 1990s. Harper possessed a masterful skill in distilling the essence of his subject and creating bold, colorful and whimsical designs that are both clever and elegant. Harper posters, notecards, calendars and prints are available for purchase.

RTPi is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 AM to 4 PM and Sundays from 1 PM to 5 PM. Admission is \$5 per adult, \$3 per student, \$12 per family, and free or reduced for RTPi members. Go to <http://www.rtpi.org/> for more info.



Margaret Buckwalter 1920 – 2010

Margaret Buckwalter was among the group of people who saw the need for an Audubon chapter in Clarion County and helped organize the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society in the early 1980s. She served on the Board for most of the years that we've been in existence and at one time or another held each officer post – president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer – besides working on a variety of committees.

For years she led the Birdathon for Seneca Rocks and achieved 1st place in the Regional and State competitions from 1988 through 1999. In 1998 she attended the National Audubon Convention and, in her words, “was totally surprised” when SRAS won 2nd place nationally for chapters of under 300 members. We won again in 2002. Margaret enjoyed the competition for most species seen, most money raised, and most sponsors signed on. The highest total amount pledged was in 2003 when \$5220 was raised, the last year that she led the Birdathon for us. We often won prizes for regional or national competitions which added to funds raised through the Birdathon.

Margaret and Walter Fye led the Christmas Bird Count from 1987 through the mid 2000s. She was diligent in reporting the results and became adept at sending the reports electronically.

She was an enthusiastic participant in field trips and in developing an interest in birding in others, especially the elementary school students she talked to about birds. Margaret was one of a group who

worked for many years to establish State Game Lands 330 (Piney Tract), and she was proud of this achievement. The Beaver Creek project was also one that she participated in and enjoyed. Margaret led many field trips to Cook Forest State Park, gathering and entering data for the creation of the Bird Checklist for the park. She served as a coordinator for the first PA Breeding Bird Atlas, and also as the Clarion County compiler for *Pennsylvania Birds* until a few years ago. In 2005, Margaret was presented with the Earl Poole Award by the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology for her contributions to ornithology and conservation.

SRAS members always looked forward to the slides that Margaret shared at the annual Members' Night. She was an award winning photographer and often had exceptional photos for us to enjoy.

Browsing through over two decades of issues of *The Drummer* I found articles that she has written in almost every issue. In addition to articles about the CBC and Birdathon there are those on field trips, both Breeding Bird Atlas counts, and bird sightings and identification. Margaret has also contributed to our website.

Margaret's numerous talents and contributions to Seneca Rocks Audubon Society will be difficult to replicate. We will keep her memory alive through conservation and education projects.

~ Janice Horn

Margaret Buckwalter Birdsong Learning Center

The idea for a Birdsong Learning Center at the Clarion Library honoring Margaret arose from informal conversations among some of her friends following her 90th birthday. Pertinent considerations included her career as a librarian, her love of birding and her enthusiasm for teaching novices of all ages about birds. The Center is funded by contributions directly to the library from her many friends. Although the project was well underway before her untimely death, it has now become for her memory rather than her birthday.

As of this writing approximately \$400 have been spent for a few books, quite a number of CDs (some in multiple copies), and two pairs of better earphones than are otherwise available at the library. Several modern books that the library already has will be added, along with laminated copies of supporting material (quizzes, web site, etc.). The Center itself will be at a specific location near the back of the library and will include an appropriate plaque. It may consist of just a special bookshelf or a library carrel with a computer or a CD player. Of course users can also use the computers located elsewhere in the library to listen to CDs or visit web sites. Most of the collection will be available for normal library checkout.

Activities are being considered to make the public aware of the existence of the Learning Center and to stimulate interest. For example, we could offer neighborhood walks as a way for folks to enhance their regular morning stroll by recognizing the birds that faithfully sing to them. Letters to the editor could be written by any of us concerning the joys and hows of learning bird songs. Ernie Aharrah has agreed to devote one of his columns to the subject. There is room for further thought and participation here.

~ Ron Montgomery

Common Nighthawk Migration Count

Oil City Marina, Wyllis Street, Oil City

For the past seven years Russ States, Jim Wilson, & I have been recording migrating nighthawks at the Oil City Marina. The count begins around the middle of August and lasts until the second week in September. We count from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. early in the count season but by mid-September we count from 6 to 8. 2009 was our best year, with a total of 1246 birds between August 15 and September 9. 2010 holds second place with a total of 805 from August 15 to September 11. One peculiar aspect of the 2010 count was that over 90% of the birds were seen in the second hour. That's an increase of 30% from last year when just over 60% were counted during the same period. August 30 produced the high daily count of 265. Interestingly, we also had merlin flybys on seven nights.

We're always glad to have visitors and this year we were pleased to see Deb Freed, Flo and Jim McGuire, Joanne and Carl Rowe, and Mike Leahy. See you all next year.

~ Gary Edwards



Photo by Regis Senko, PGC.

The sprayer was donated on August 4 with representatives from SRAS, PA Audubon, and PGC in attendance. Left to right: Flo McGuire, Sarah Sargent (Audubon PA), George Miller (PGC), Ron Montgomery, Gary Maxwell (PGC) and Deb Freed.

Piney Tract Donation

~ Regis Senko, PGC

The Seneca Rocks Audubon Society (SRAS) recently donated a 3-point hitch mounted HARDI herbicide sprayer to the PGC's Food and Cover Corps for use in controlling invasive, woody plant species at State Games Lands (SGL) 330 in Clarion County. SGL 330, known locally as "The Piney Tract" or more properly "Mt. Zion", is designated as a Global Important Bird Area, which means that it meets the internationally set standards for supporting a certain portion of a rare bird population. Unusually large numbers of birds found there include Henslow's Sparrow, Savannah Sparrows, Grasshopper Sparrows, Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Northern Harriers and Clay-colored sparrows. Henslow's Sparrows, in particular, are rare and are sought after by bird watchers who have come to SGL 330 from other countries to see them.

SRAS has been involved in protecting this area since the 1980s. Over the last two years, Audubon

Pennsylvania received funding from several sources to help implement management for grassland birds at the site, including the removal of woody vegetation in the larger grassland areas. Specifically, funding from the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) administered in PA by the PGC, helped to purchase this sprayer for use in keeping the grassland areas open by preventing encroachment by woody species. During the donation ceremony, PGC Land Management Group Supervisor George Miller stated that "The Commission is grateful for the donation of this much-needed herbicide sprayer and for the cooperative relationship that the PGC has with SRAS and Audubon Pennsylvania in protecting this valuable grassland habitat".

SGL 330 Grassland Management

This is an unofficial update on PGC's approach to grassland management at SGL 330 this past two summers. When PGC took over the property they were willing to manage for grassland birds but had no funds to do so. Sarah Sargent of Audubon PA succeeded in landing some grant money and, at the invitation of PGC, sponsored a January 2009 meeting to discuss how to use it. Attendees were from Audubon PA, PGC, Penn State, Clarion University, Alliance for Wetlands and 6 members of SRAS. No official meeting notes were issued to my knowledge, but I received a draft set for comment. Subsequent management actions have been in accord with that meeting and a follow-up meeting held last January.

While I cannot summarize the entire content of the meeting (or its follow-up) here, a pivotal outcome was the management objective. From the draft notes: "Henslow's Sparrows are the only grassland bird species for which we will manage at SGL 330. We agreed that other species of concern would follow, or be included without specific actions being directed at them, if we simply focus on Henslow's Sparrows. This species is the most threatened and does not have large populations elsewhere, such as in the Midwest, as do other grassland bird species." I proposed replacing the last two sentences with: "This simple goal will allow a crisp focus for management planning,

without reducing the value of the area to other grassland species of concern. Henslow's Sparrow was chosen because it is by far the most threatened of the grassland species breeding on SGL 330." I had no disagreement with the stated objective but wanted to emphasize the reason for the agreed upon narrow focus.

~ Ron Montgomery

PGC Offers Tour of SGL 330

As part of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's efforts to highlight its ongoing habitat improvement initiatives, the public is invited to take part in upcoming tours of several State Game Lands between Sept. 25 and Oct. 17. All tours are free.

"State Game Land tours provide the opportunity for those who enjoy nature to come out and talk with our employees – the people who are directly responsible for managing and protecting these lands," said Carl G. Roe, Game Commission executive director. "With autumn nearly here, these tours will provide a chance to see some of the best scenery the Commonwealth has to offer."

The Game Land 330 Tour is described below. Several other tours in PA are described on the PGC website:

<http://www.pgc.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pgc/9106> Click on "News Releases", then Release #092-10

Clarion County: Wednesday, Oct. 6, State Game Land 330, which encompasses 2,254 acres. At 10 a.m., rain or shine, tour participants will meet at the parking area at the intersection of Mt. Zion Road and Limestone Flat Road northwest of Sligo off Route 58. This will be a driving tour with short walks at planned stops to view habitat management practices, projects and to learn about grassland birds. Although cars can be driven to most of the sites, four-wheel drive vehicles with high ground clearance are preferred for those stops inside the SGL on the gated, interior roadways. This tour will take about three to four hours.

NOTE - We have a nice selection of 2011 Audubon calendars available for order at our meetings.

Annual Mid-winter Bald Eagle Surveys

Summary of Results of Surveys Conducted in the Pittsburgh District between 1979 and 2010

The following article by Mike Fowles was reprinted from the Todd Bird Club newsletter with permission.

Over the 32 years that the Pittsburgh District of the US Army Corps of Engineers has participated in the Annual Mid-Winter Bald Eagle Survey, wintering Bald Eagle populations have dramatically increased in the Allegheny, Monongahela, and upper Ohio River basins (including western Maryland, southwestern New York, northeastern Ohio, western Pennsylvania, and northern West Virginia). The Pittsburgh District's survey results for the period 1979-2010 clearly document the regional recovery of this "special status species." For the first 16 years of the survey (1979-94) the total numbers of Bald Eagles recorded annually in the Pittsburgh District numbered in single digits, ranging from no eagles observed in 1979, to a high of six in 1987. The numbers increased significantly in 1995 when a total of 15 were reported. During the period 1995-2001, totals ranged from 11 to 17 eagles recorded annually. The numbers increased even more dramatically in 2002 when 30 eagles were observed, followed by totals ranging from 36 in 2004, to as many as 70 in 2008 (the high count for the Pittsburgh District). A total of 60 eagles was recorded in 2010.

Another trend documented over the period of record is the increased distribution of wintering eagles around the Pittsburgh District from 1979 to 2010. This trend is reflected in the increased numbers of facilities in the Pittsburgh District recording eagles over this time period. During the first 16 years of the survey (1979-1994), Bald Eagles were recorded at only one to three projects in any given year. Eagles were recorded at five to seven projects per year during the period 1995-2001. Since 2002, eagles have been recorded at 10-17 projects per year.

– Mike Fowles, Fish and Wildlife Specialist

It was kind of solemn, drifting down the big, still river, laying on our backs, looking up at stars, and we didn't even feel like talking aloud.

~ Mark Twain, from *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

As you must have noticed by now, we have NOT discontinued the *Drummer*. We have too much news! It will continue as an on-line newsletter, and Deb Freed will mail a copy to anyone who requests it.

In the past we have said to contact Deb to be on the e-*Drummer* list. Now please contact Deb if you wish to be on the *mailing* list.

News from Project Puffin

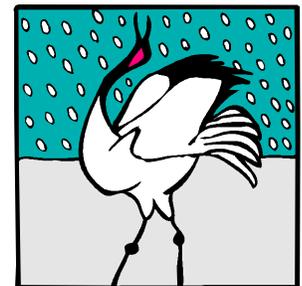
~ from National Audubon

Eastern Egg Rock – Interns discovered 123 active puffin burrows this year, a 15% increase over the 107 pairs that nested here last year. Among this year's pairs were ten first time breeding pairs. Among the long established nesting puffins was Y33, a 33 year old female who successfully raised a chick- her 25th in 26 years of nesting in the same burrow! She is now the oldest puffin in North America. Unfortunately, several of our other oldest puffins did not return this year.

In June, fifteen geolocators were placed on bands of breeding Arctic Terns to learn more about their migration route – all of these birds successfully raised young and are now on their way to the Southern Hemisphere. Previous band recoveries have shown that some Maine Arctic terns fly to or offshore of Ghana and Cameroon in West Africa for the winter; but this is probably just the first stop on a migration that takes them to the waters north of Antarctica. If we recover the devices in 2011, we will learn more about the migration path of the birds. Learning where birds go in the winter is the first step in protecting their complete migration path.



Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in part, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language. The quality of cranes lies, I think, in this higher gamut, as yet beyond the reach of words.



-- Aldo Leopold

Feed the Birds & Support our Chapter!

Our Fall Bird Seed Sale form is on page 7. Order by October 22, pickup November 15 through 20.



SRAS meetings are held on the second Monday of each month on the Clarion campus
Room 123, Science Technology Center
Social & Snacks – 6:30 p.m.
Program – 7:00 p.m.

Upcoming meetings -

- ❖ Gil Twiest, Birding South America, October 11
- ❖ Bert Nemcik, Hiking the Appalachian Trail, November 8
- ❖ Members' Night, December 13.



Thanks to September Hostesses
Deb Freed and Janice Horn.
October goodies will be provided
by Judy Montgomery and
Mary Swanger.

SRAS Board Members

Vice-president - 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
Beaver Creek - Walter Fye	797-1019

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