

Seneca Rocks Drummer



March 2004

Newsletter of the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society

Volume 20, No. 6

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

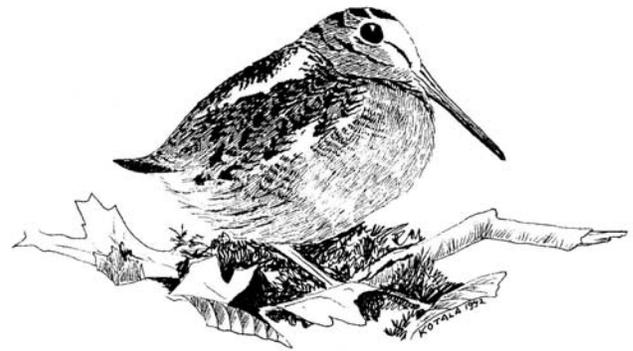
www.senecarocksaudubon.org

Next Meeting – March 8
Room 249, Peirce Science Center
Refreshments & conversation at 7:00 p.m.
Program begins at 7:30 p.m.

Mike Fialkovich – The Natural World Through the Seasons

by Gary Edwards

The March program features Mike Fialkovich, a member of Three Rivers Birding Club who is an excellent birder and amateur photographer. His slide presentation will be a glimpse of the natural world through the seasons. Beginning in January with interesting winter birds and nature signs and continuing through spring migration, the dog days of summer, and polychromed autumn, Mike will show and describe a host of interesting birds and much more. Plan to join us, we'll provide the snacks, the scintillating conversation, and the slide program. All you need to bring is your smile. Satisfaction is guaranteed. If you find a better deal than this we'll refund your smile 110%.



Woodcock by Stan Kotala

Field Trips

by Ron Montgomery

Our spring field trip schedule starts off with a bang after the March meeting. But **please note that I have changed the dates for the Woodcock Watch.** Bob Mulvihill, the Atlas Coordinator, has informed us that the safe date for Woodcock begins April 15. Only observations made within the safe dates are used in compiling the Atlas. Since I want your data to count, I have delayed the Woodcock Watch by about a month.

Saturday March 27; Conneaut Marsh. Mike has agreed to lead this trip as he has done so ably in the past. The caravan will leave Shelly's

Restaurant parking lot at 7:30AM; Hirsch Meats at 7:45; and Cranberry Mall at 8:00. Our first stop will be at the bridge just north of Custards off Rt. 285 so you can also join us there. This will be an all day affair with lunch in a restaurant. This is always an exciting outing and great for visitors; but remind them to dress appropriately.

Saturday April 3; Presque Isle. We will meet inside Presque Isle Park in Erie at 9:00 (it is 100 miles and 2 hours from Clarion by way of Custards, Rt. 79, Rt. 20 and Peninsula Drive). Our meeting place is the first parking lot, on the right about a mile inside the Park. It is the first obvious place to scope the Lake and you cannot miss it. Mike, our intrepid duck guide, will meet us there and lead the outing. We will have lunch in a restaurant and bird until late afternoon, but folks can leave anytime they wish. On our exploratory trip there last year, we had a red-headed woodpecker! Please arrange appropriate carpooling.

April 15 - 25; Woodcock Watch. This outing is partly to launch our new Atlas Project. It is unusual in being an individualized activity. The idea is for each person to go anywhere they wish on pages 44 and 45 of the PA Gazetteer at dawn or dusk (I think the best time will be a half hour before sunrise or after sunset) to collect data on Woodcock displays for the Atlas.

To report your findings, you will need to know in which Atlas block you are observing. The methodology for identifying an area using the DeLorme Gazetteer is described on page 3 in the Newsletter. We will review this at the March meeting, so bring a Gazetteer if you have one. I will also have data forms for distribution at our March meeting.

Observations in blocks on page 44 of the Gazetteer will be collected by Mike and those on page 45 will be collected by Pat. Mike and Pat will summarize the findings in a future Newsletter.



Crow's Nest

by President Deb Freed

Seneca Rocks 20th Anniversary Celebration

Plans are coming along for a fine celebration on May 10 at Timberwolf Lodge on the Clarion River. A detailed map will be printed in the April Drummer. It is easily accessed from Route 322 on River Hill or Route 66 between Interstate 80 Exit 60 (old exit 8) and Marianne Corners. The facility is a rustic lodge with all the comforts of home. Arrive early in the day to enjoy the view of the river from the deck. Paddle a canoe to the dock and tie-up. Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. catered by Sara Jane's Deli. Our program will include a look back at our chapter's beginning. We will have an assortment of Seneca Rocks items that have accumulated over the years to be given as prizes. I expect some other surprises are in the works too. We will need to have a count for the dinner. Please use the reservation form printed in the Drummer. For further information, contact Deb Freed at 226-4719 or dhfreed@csonline.net.

SRAS Officers

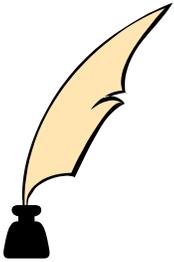
President	Deb Freed	226-4719
Vice-President	Gary Edwards	676-3011
Secretary	OPEN	
Treasurer	Janice Horn	226-7367

Committee Chairs

Armchair Activist ...	Kathy Janik	275-2058
Beaver Ck Maint.	Walter Fye	797-1019
Conservation	Margaret Buckwalter	782-3925
Education	Paulette Colantonio	797-2031
Field Trips	Ron Montgomery	764-6088
Hospitality	Janice Horn	226-7367
Membership	Sherry Vowinckel	782-3294
Mill Ck/Piney Tract ..	Pete Dalby	782-3227
Newsletter	Flo McGuire	755-3672
Programs	Gary Edwards	676-3011

Letter to the Editor

19 Jan 2004



Yesterday I downloaded and printed the February Drummer. It took a while because I have a 1997 computer and printer. It was worth it because it came out just like the ones I used to get in the mail except that the print was sharper and the photos were better. Congratulations

to you and Sherry Vowinckel for an excellent way to deliver the SRAS Newsletter.

I would also like to comment on two articles in the Newsletter. First, the one on House Sparrows by Hendrika Bohlen which I found to be delightful. House Sparrows are very cheerful and they always seem to be present no matter where we travel in the world. They remind me of home. The second article is the one on Screech Owls by Pat Conway. I feel strongly that one home grown article is worth 10 imported from state or national Audubon. In the case of Pat's Column "Bird of the Month" the writing is so descriptive that it allows the reader to feel that he or she is with Pat viewing or hearing the bird she is describing. Keep up the good work.

In other matters, I was surprised that about 50 of the people who buy birdseed from Audubon are not members. If we do not already do it, perhaps we should give each one a copy of the Drummer and an invitation to join up when they pick up their seed.

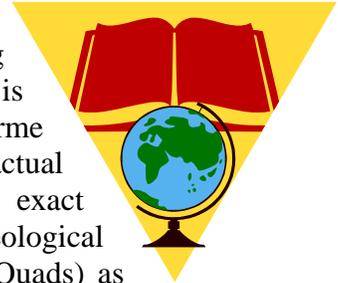
By the time you read this I hope to be in Florida or Texas. Stay warm and keep up the good work on the Drummer.

Gil Tweist



*Hosting our March meeting:
Carl & Joan Rowe*

Atlas Project & the PA Gazetteer by Ron Montgomery



While the current Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Project is based upon the DeLorme PA Gazetteer, the actual field work uses the exact same 7.5-minute Geological Survey Maps (called Quads) as it did last time. The difference is that the Clarion Quad is now called 44C3 (for page 44, location C3). Pages 44 and 45 (together) represent exactly twenty-eight of these Quads.

Before attempting to draw a grid to outline the 28 Quads, notice that the locations for the grid lines are already marked for you. See the tiny lines that stick out from the map all the way around? These are minutes of longitude and latitude. From the upper left corner of page 44, count 7.5 of those minutes to the right and notice that the spot is already marked (at the r of Plumer)! The same thing happens when you count down 7.5 minutes!

Before you draw the vertical line from the first mark and the horizontal line from the second, see the small + near Tippery where the two lines will cross. This is too easy! Using this methodology outline the 28 Quads by drawing 6 vertical and 3 horizontal lines. Since the Gazetteer was designed to be divided in this way, each Quad has a distinct address, like 44A1.

You could further divide each Quad into the required 6 Blocks (one vertical line and 2 horizontal lines) but I hope to have less messy option for you at the March meeting. The 6 Blocks are numbered with 1 and 2 in the upper left and right respectively; so the town of Clarion is in Block 44C32.

You may wish to bring your PA Gazetteer to the March Meeting.



A DAY OF BIRDING ON THE SAVAGE RIVER IN ALASKA

by Gil Tweist

Editor's note:

To see Gil's fine photographs and hear more about his trip to Alaska, mark your calendar for our April 12 meeting in Peirce Auditorium.

Got up and everything done by about 6:30 AM and left for the Park. Got into Savage River parking lot about 7 AM. Talked to the smiling ranger who seemed to be a Native American. Got some shots of mew gulls with their chicks by walking over the river and down the other side. Got better shots of the chicks after getting back up on the bridge. Along the trail I got some shots of white-crowned sparrows and saw Wilson's warblers as well as tree and Savannah sparrows. Seemed odd to see the Wilson's and white-crowned sparrows, which we only see in Clarion during migration, with tree sparrows, which we only see in winter, and Savannah sparrows, which we only see in summer. On the way back I saw a redpoll and a dark-eyed junco in the same bushes. Another winter visitor and a Clarion resident together.

Took a walk down the gravel bar trail, which is very short. Out on the gravel bar there were mew gulls nesting. Got some shots of them. While shooting the gulls, two ptarmigan flew over and landed about 100 yards down stream from me. Finished with the gulls and went to look for the ptarmigan. It didn't take long before I looked to

my left and saw one standing next to a bush on the gravel bar. I believe he thought that he was hidden as he stayed very still, but he stood out like a sore thumb. First I identified the bird as a male willow ptarmigan and then I took a shot. Kept working closer and shooting as I went. Finally took off the telextender and just used the 500. At the end I was too close for that and had to back up. He did not get alarmed until I got about 20 feet from him and then he just erected his combs and walked slowly away making various noises. When I started to get too close at one point he stopped and let out with a long cackling call that sounded like nothing else I have ever heard.

After pursuing him across a little puddle, he crossed back over it walking through the water and pushed the female out from under a bush. Got a number of shots of the female too. About this time my camera batteries were running low so I went back to the car to get more.

I started down the gravel bar trail but barely got out of the parking lot before I came to some young arctic ground squirrels. Got a lot of shots of them because they were playing with each other and their mother. After a while they just ignored me and played their rough and tumble games.

Down at the gravel bar I found a mew gull nest with 5 eggs. Set up and got several pictures before I left. Adult bird was harassing me so I did not take long. Set up with 500mm to shoot adult on nest. It took a while because the sun would go under a cloud. During the time I wasn't getting the gull in the sun, I shot some close ups of the flowers around the area. After the gull was on the nest for some time, I went back to the camera I left on the tripod and got some shots of the gull on the nest.

On the way back to the car I got some good shots of Savannah sparrows including one that was spread out with one leg on each side of a crotch of a willow. I also got some shots of tree sparrows and some of white-crowns.

Back at the parking lot I noticed several people looking off across the road. There was a big bull caribou walking across the gravel bar toward the edge of the river. Set up and got some good shots of this beautiful animal. It was a fitting way to end the trip to the Savage River.



Armchair Activist

by Kathy Janik

A New Year, A New Fight to Protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from Oil and Gas Drilling

The National Audubon Society has worked tirelessly for more than 20 years to protect the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from gas and oil drilling. The Refuge, including its coastal plain, has great value as an intact ecosystem, with the full complement of native Arctic birdlife. Millions of birds nest and migrate through the Refuge. Keeping the Arctic refuge safe is critical to protecting these millions of birds, as well as polar bears, and caribou.

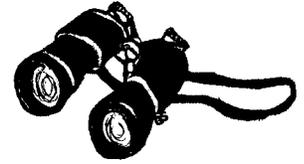
Once again pro-drilling lawmakers are hard at work trying to open ANWR to drilling. The 2005 fight will begin in the U.S. House of Representatives, so please contact your representative and urge your lawmaker to oppose any and all efforts to open ANWR to drilling. A sample letter to lawmakers follows, or visit the NAS website at www.audubon.org and select the TAKE ACTION option key in the upper right hand corner.

SAMPLE LETTER:

As a constituent concerned with conservation, I stand with the National Audubon Society in urging you to oppose efforts to open the Arctic

Field Ornithology Class

Dr. Pete Dalby will teach a three-credit, undergraduate and graduate course, Biology 432/532 and Science Education 532 from March 6 to



June 5 of 2004. The course will explore the natural history of birds in western Pennsylvania. Classes will be held at Clarion University on eleven Thursday evenings, supplemented with five Saturday morning and three all day Saturday field trips. For further information contact Dr. Dalby on campus at 814-393-2164 or home 814-782-3227.

(binos by Georgette Syster)

National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil and gas drilling. In particular, I urge you to oppose efforts to include provisions opening the refuge to drilling in the budget resolution for the fiscal year 2005.

The budget is the wrong place to be settling issues of such profound national importance. It is an abuse of power to use the budget to ram through the Congress a policy proposal as controversial as drilling in the Arctic Refuge. Putting this issue in the budget stifles a fair and open debate.

Government experts have found that the Refuge could supply only a six-month supply of oil that will not even be available for another ten years. It makes more sense to invest in America's technological know-how to make our cars, homes, and appliances more energy efficient. Please consider these more sensible alternatives and oppose drilling in our national treasure so that it may be saved for future generations of Americans.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am looking forward to the favor of your reply.

Sincerely,

104th CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

by Margaret Buckwalter

On December 27, 2003, SRAS members and friends participated in the annual Christmas Bird Count sponsored by National Audubon. The weather was relatively friendly with temperatures ranging from 23F to 49F, warmer than usual; cloudy in the morning but clear in the afternoon. Moving water was open but still water was frozen from the recent cold spell so that waterfowl were mostly absent from the count. Participants in the field numbered 29, feeder watchers added 11, so a total of 40 birders were counting. The total number of species found was 52. Altogether it was mostly an average count compared to other years.

What was new this year was that Ernie Aharrah added a new species to the list: Indigo Bunting – a very unexpected migrant that should really not have been here at all. He had a good look at it so he didn't question his ID.

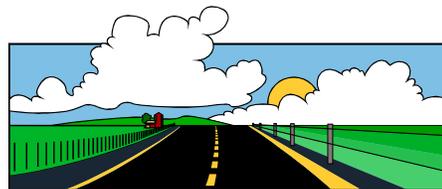
Analysis of total and team statistics await further inspection by this compiler and will run at a later date.

SRAS BIRDATHON MAY 8-16

by Janice Horn

It's not too soon to begin thinking about the Birdathon, our fun fundraiser. It will be held May 8-16. You get to pick the 24 hour period during those 9 days to participate in this event.

More information about the Birdathon will be in the April Drummer and kits will be available at the March and April meetings.



Notes from our travels

Flo & Jim McGuire

January 26. Camping at Cave Creek Canyon, near Portal, Arizona. Wake up to a dusting of snow! Hike about 4 miles to Ash Spring. Our sightings include Yellow-eyed Junco, Bridled Titmouse, Red-naped Sapsucker, Bushtits, and Acorn Woodpeckers. Habitat is mostly oaks in grasslands above 5000' elevation, perfect for Montezuma Quail, but where are they?

January 27. Hike a few miles near the Research Station at Cave Creek. We watch a flock of Mexican Jays with color bands, and have our first Strickland's Woodpecker for the trip. This is also Montezuma Quail habitat, and they have been reported here, but where are they?

January 28. Drive up through Montezuma Pass, visit Coronado National Monument - a scary ride in the camper, but beautiful views. Take a walk in more oaks in grasslands, above 5000'. See more Mexican Jays, Eastern Bluebirds, a Loggerhead Shrike. But where are the Montezuma Quail?

Later that day - camp at a campground in Sierra Vista and start talking to our neighbor, who had been hunting that morning. In fact, he'd gotten 2 Montezuma Quail that morning! We did get to see some of their colorful feathers floating around the campsite.

Our neighbor turned out to be an interesting man and a naturalist. He told us that it was very difficult to find Montezuma Quail, even with good bird dogs. He was the retired manager of National Elk Wildlife Refuge in Wyoming, and even offered to take us out after hunting season, with the bird dogs, to help us in our quest, but we had moved on.

February 10. Camping at Cottonwood Campground in Big Bend National Park. We hear two Great Horned Owls hooting that evening, sounding very close. The signs say "Camp on high ground due to irrigation", which is a bonus, because the ponds between the campsites in the morning attract a lot of birds.

February 11. We see 15 different species from the camper while drinking our morning

coffee, including a Vermilion Flycatcher. We walk around the campground and meet a couple from Ontario, also birders. We all watch a Gray Hawk in one of the tall Cottonwoods. They had also heard hooting the night before, and heard rustling on the roof of their camper. There were no low tree branches nearby. An owl must have been on their roof!



SNOW FLEAS DON'T BITE

by Margaret Buckwalter

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!

Not a Member?

Join Seneca Rocks Audubon Society and

- Enjoy the world of birds
- Protect wildlife & its habitat
- Promote education that fosters appreciation of the natural environment.

To join, please see the membership form on our website at

www.senecarocksaudubon.org, or contact

Membership Chair

Sherry Vowinckel at 814-782-3294 or svo@mail.usachoice.net

All meetings are open to the public.

Conversation at 7 p.m.

Program begins at 7:30 p.m.

Rm. 249, Peirce Science Center

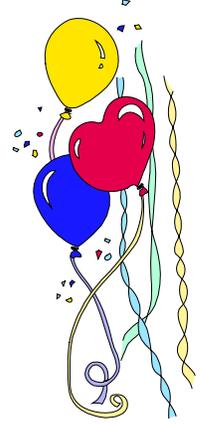
Clarion University Campus

On the second Monday of each month

Seneca Rocks 20 Year Anniversary Celebration May 10, 2004 Timberwolf Lodge

Dinner at 6 p.m. Stuffed Chicken Breast or Stuffed Pork Chop
Includes: Potato, Vegetable, Salad, Roll, Pie, Punch & Coffee

Cost: \$10 per person 13 and older; \$5 per child 6 to 12; no charge 5 and under



_____ Chicken @ \$10 Sub total \$ _____

_____ Chicken @ \$5 Sub total \$ _____

_____ Pork @ \$10 Sub total \$ _____

_____ Pork @ \$5 Sub total \$ _____

Make check payable to Seneca Rocks Audubon for \$ _____

Name

Phone

Send to: Deb Freed, 208 Briar Hill Drive, Clarion, PA 16214