



THE DRUMMER



www.senecarocksaudubon.org

April/May, 2009

Volume 25, No. 6

Next Meeting – April 13
Room 150, Becker Hall
Social – 6:30 p.m. Program – 7:00 p.m.



Marcia with a Golden Eagle
Photo by Todd Katzner

Marcia Bonta “Coming Home”

~Deb Freed

Seneca Rocks is pleased to have Marcia and Bruce Bonta return to share their unique perspectives and images on the land they know so well. “Coming Home” is an invitation by the Bontas to look at the cultural and natural history of the Ridge-and-Valley Province of central Pennsylvania. Marcia

uses the human and natural history of Brush Mountain to illuminate the land-use patterns and conservation issues of this distinct geography. The aerial view of these long even ridges and the long continuous valleys in between has been described as looking like corduroy. Marcia, Bruce and their family have documented life on Brush Mountain for 38 years. You can peer into their world by visiting their family website at www.plummershollow.wordpress.com.

Marcia is the author of nine books and hundreds of magazine articles. Her first book, Escape to the Mountain, has been reprinted in an expanded edition. Marcia will have books for sale following the presentation. Many Pennsylvanians are familiar with Marcia’s popular “Naturalist’s Eye” column in *Pennsylvania Game News*. Her website is loaded with good reading at www.marciabonta.wordpress.com

Conneaut Marsh Field Trip

Saturday, April 4, 2009

~ Jim Wilson, Field Trip Chair

We begin this outing at the spillway bridge at Custards, off Route 285 at 9:00 a.m. Follow Route 322 west from Clarion, through Franklin, to Route 173 near Cochranon. Turn left and follow Route 173 south about 1 mile, through Cochranon and across French Creek, to Route 285. Follow Route 285 about 6 miles to Custards and turn right on Mercer Pike Road. Follow Mercer Pike Road

about a half mile to the bridge. The drive from the Clarion area is as long as to Meadville.

Oil Creek State Park Warbler Walk

Saturday, April 25, 2009 at 8:30 A.M.

Leader – Gary Edwards

~ Jim Wilson, Field Trip Chair

We meet inside Oil Creek Park. Go north on Route 8 out of Oil City, through Rouseville. The park entrance is on the right about a mile north of Rouseville, immediately after you cross Oil Creek. The park entrance sign is about thirty-two miles or fifty minutes from the Court House in Clarion. We meet in the Blood Farm day use area parking lot, on the right less than a mile into the park.

Restrooms are available in the day use area and at the park office approximately three miles away. Food is available in Oil City and near the Cranberry Mall.

Presque Isle State Park

Saturday, May 2, 8 A.M.

This will be a joint outing with the Todd Bird Club of Indiana, PA. Meet at the first parking lot on Presque Isle at 8:00 a.m. The Todd Bird Club has birded Presque Isle regularly for many years – spokesperson Margaret Higbee says “We usually take food—lots of food! After we’re finished birding, we usually stop to eat.” Contact Flo and Jim McGuire at 814-755-3672 with any questions.

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, 609 Ponderosa Lane, Tionesta, PA 16353 (814 755-3672) or email at fmcguire1@verizon.net.



Pennywort - photo by Deb Freed

Wildflower Wednesday

5/6/09 10 a.m. – Return to Wolf Creek

Wolf Creek Narrows Natural Area is owned and managed by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and is located just outside of Slippery Rock.

In early May of 2006, on the recommendation of Hendrika Bohlen, several SRAS members visited this natural area and were greeted with a display of early wildflowers, including the unusual Pennywort. There is one major trail, which follows the creek and loops up into the higher woods.

Deb Freed will be the contact for this field trip. Anyone wishing to join the outing should e-mail or call Deb so that carpooling can be arranged. A likely meeting spot could be BJ's at Exit 53 on I -80 at 9 a.m. Deb's e-mail is dfreed208@comcast.net and her phone is 814-226-4719.

We will begin the walk at 10 a.m. Bring a snack or lunch. There are no facilities.

Anyone wanting to meet the group at Wolf Creek can use these directions:

1. From SR exit I 79 proceed east on PA 108 to SR. At the light turn left on Rt 258. OR From Route 8, take PA 108 to SR and turn right at the light onto Rt 258.
2. Go one block, turn left on Water St and follow for 2 miles. It will cross Wolf Creek over an iron bridge. Cross the bridge and look for a small parking area at the head of the dirt lane

on the left. Don't block lane and don't park on paved road. Walk back across the iron bridge. The trailhead is on the left side of the road just past the bridge. There are no facilities at this location.

ARCA BIRD WATCHING DAY

~ Fran Williams

ARCA (Allegheny RiverStone Center for the Arts) will have a bird watching day on May 16, 2009, at Riverstone Farm in Foxburg, PA. This very large property sits between the Allegheny and Clarion Rivers and is home to many species of birds and other wildlife.

Fran and Jack Williams of SRAS and members of ARCA will lead the walk which will run from 9:00 a.m. till 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. There will be a lunch-break at noon for a home-cooked meal on the patio.

Tickets are \$15.00 per person. Pre-registration is required with a check made out to ARCA, due by May 9. Number of reservations is limited.

For more information and tickets, call Sue at 724-659-2546.



Many small chapters are completely discontinuing mailed copies of their newsletter, using the internet to save postage, paper, and time. Our board has decided to start bi-monthly newsletters. Beginning with this *Drummer*, they will be issued in

September, November, February, and April.

We are encouraging anyone who prefers not to receive a *Drummer* in the mail to notify Deb Freed (814-226-4719). Also let Deb know if you would like to be on the "e-Drummer" list – Deb will notify you by email when each new issue is ready.

The *Drummer* is always available on-line and in color at www.senecarocksaudubon.org. Click on newsletters, and the most recent issue is on top. These may be read on-line or printed.

Birdathon 2009

~Janice Horn

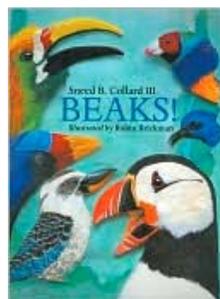
The Birdathon, on the calendar for May 2 to 10, 2009, is our largest source of funding and supports our programs, educational activities, and membership events.

The chapter needs you to participate by spending a day (and night) sighting birds and getting people to make pledges or donations for your efforts. If you aren't able to spend time finding species, then you can help by donating to one of the people who will be going out. Every "Birdathoner" is anxious to get more pledgers.

If you plan to participate and haven't received materials let me know. Also, if you have any questions please contact me. This project provides funds for so much that we do.

Schools to Receive Library Books

~Janice Horn



Thirteen schools in Clarion, Forest, Jefferson, and Venango Counties have chosen books from the list that Paulette Colantonio compiled and which includes:

- ◆ *Beaks!* by Sneed B. Collard & Robin Brickman (gr. K-3)
- ◆ *A New Duck: My First Look at the Life Cycle of a Bird* by Pamela Hickman & Heather Collins (gr. K-3)
- ◆ *United Tweets of America* by Hudson Talbott (gr. 3-6)
- ◆ *Vulture View* by April Pulley Sayre & Steve Jenkins (gr. K-3)
- ◆ *Who's at the Seashore?* By John Himmelman (gr. K-3)

A sixth title was no longer available when the order was placed and another book will be selected to replace it.

The schools are receiving these books through donations to Seneca Rocks Audubon Society by the Clarion County Garden Club.



“Before” photo by Gary Edwards, March 9, ‘09



“After” photo by Ron Montgomery, March 14, ‘09

Bulldozers Clear the Top of Mt. Zion!

By Sarah Sargent, NW IBA Coordinator, Audubon PA

During the first two weeks of March, several habitat management projects were undertaken at Mt. Zion/Piney Tract IBA. This followed planning work that began last year and continued with a day-long meeting in Clarion in January to discuss what the Game Commission should do to improve habitat for grassland breeding birds within State Gameland 330. This area was designated as an IBA because of the high numbers of Henslow’s Sparrows, Grasshopper Sparrows and other species found only in large grasslands. Henslow’s Sparrows are on Audubon’s Red List and have declined dramatically over the last 40 years. As a reclaimed surface mine, the site has been dominated by grasses for several decades and has been very slow to undergo succession. However, encroachment by woody plants is occurring and can be expected to speed up as soil quality slowly improves over time.

The January meeting included a number of Game Commission personnel as well as members of SRAS and others with a history of involvement in the acquisition of the land, plus researchers from Penn State and Clarion University. The group agreed that the goal should be to focus habitat restoration and management efforts on the Henslow’s Sparrow because it is the most

imperiled of the species present and because managing for it will automatically provide habitat for other desired species because they share very similar habitat needs. The goal set by the group was to work up to having 300 acres of useable habitat available every year. This means that a larger area would be under management because Henslow’s Sparrows do not use recently mowed or burned fields; they require standing dead grass stems (“duff”) from previous years.

The highest priority project was agreed to be the removal of a 10-acre patch of scrubby black locusts on the top of Mt. Zion, directly adjacent to the highest density breeding area for Henslow’s Sparrows. This patch is surrounded by grassland, and is on the top of a hill, so it has a disproportionately large negative effect on the quality of the surrounding habitat for these birds, because they avoid areas near trees and prefer an open horizon. As of March 14th that patch has been scraped clear and the area will be treated with herbicide to kill the root sprouts of the locusts, probably in late summer. Lime will be applied and it is expected that fescue will fill in from the seed bank.

The second priority was to try a method to break up solid stands of fescue in the second best nesting area, “the bowl” on Limestone Flats Road. Henslow’s Sparrows like to have some bare ground exposed and are known to run along the ground when approaching or leaving the nest. So, bare dirt strips were put in at this site with a bulldozer. The strips are about 100 yards apart and about 18 feet wide.



Bare dirt strips being created in "the bowl"
– photo by Gary Edwards

Breeding efforts will be monitored carefully over the next two summers to see how the birds respond to these management efforts.

Editor's note: Many thanks to Sarah Sargent, who obtained grant funding for the project planning and implementation, and facilitated the successful work meeting in January. We are grateful also to George Miller, PA Game Commission land manager, for his cooperation and his efforts in completing these enhancement projects.

I myself am quite absorbed by the delicate yellow, delicate soft green, delicate violet of a ploughed and weeded piece of soil.

- Vincent van Gogh

Bartramian Audubon Wins PSO 2009 Conservation Award

We are pleased to report that our friends and neighbors at Bartramian Audubon are the winners of the Conservation Award from the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. They are being honored specifically for their Wildlife Sanctuary Program and their Bird and Butterfly Sanctuary Program. These programs qualify larger and small sites respectively as sanctuaries, and commit the landowners to maintain their land as a nature preserve. More than 100 sites, totaling 338 acres, have been qualified. Read more about this program in Gene Wilhelm's new book, [Bartramian Audubon Society Sanctuaries, Including Important Bird Areas in the Eco-Region.](#)*

The award will be presented at the May 16th banquet of the PSO annual meeting in Morgantown, southern Berks County. Check the PSO website at www.pabirds.org or contact any PSO member for a registration form.

Congratulations to the folks at Bartramian Audubon for a job well done!

*This 64 page book includes information on the sanctuaries and 8 IBAs in this area, with color photographs and maps. It is available for \$13.95 payable to Bartramian Audubon Society, c/o Dr. Gene Wilhelm, 513 Kelly Blvd., Slippery Rock, PA 16057-1145.



RTP Birding Festival

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute in Jamestown, NY will honor Dr. Peterson's legacy by a 2009 inauguration of an annual birding festival on June 4, 5, 6 & 7, 2009.

This festival will provide an entertaining and educational experience through activities including the showing of re-mastered Peterson films, keynote speakers Kenn Kaufman and Pete Dunne, workshops with Kaufman, Dunne, Lang Elliott and John Rappole, and field trips to area birding hotspots led by knowledgeable local birders. The focus of the Festival will be Eastern North American Warblers.

Field trips will be from early morning until noon with afternoons spent in bird related workshops. Workshops, meals and keynote addresses will be held at Jamestown Community College whose campus is contiguous with the RTPI.

Mark your calendars and plan on participating in this exciting festival celebrating Roger Tory Peterson and his many contributions to birding, and the appreciation of natural history.

See the complete schedule here http://www.rtpi.org/index.php/rtpibf?task=view_detail&agid=8&year=2009&month=06&day=04&catids=55 or contact Jim Berry at 716-665-2473 x225.

Oil Region Birds & Nature Festival

The Oil Region Birds and Nature Festival will be held May 1-3, 2009. Workshops will be held at the Quality Inn & Conference Center in Franklin.

This year's festival has been expanded to cover additional nature topics in addition to birds. Friday evening will feature an Owl Prowl at Two Mile Run County Park led by Gary Edwards. Bird walks will be at Two Mile Run, Buttermilk Hill Nature Sanctuary and Oil Creek State Park on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Visit the Oil Region Alliance's webpage for more information.



Great Blue Heron by Flo McGuire

PA Migration Count

The 18th annual Pennsylvania Migration Count (PAMC) will take place on May 9, 2009. It is always held on the second Saturday in May. This is a county-based tally, attempting to get a snapshot of the variety and numbers of birds migrating through the state. Any observations may be sent to your county compiler: Carole Winslow in Clarion, Gary Edwards in Venango, and Flo McGuire in Forest.

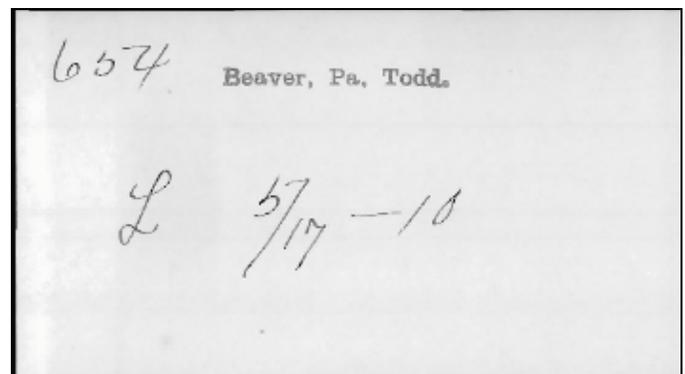
Summer afternoon . . . summer afternoon
- the two most beautiful
words in the English language.
- Henry James

Historical Birding Data Going Online- North American Bird Phenology Program

In the 1880s, educator Wells W. Cooke founded the Bird Phenology Program (BPP), encouraging professional as well as amateur ornithologists to record their bird sightings. Sighting cards were sent to the U.S. Geological Survey building in Laurel, Maryland. These 2 x 5 cards sent in by over 3,000 individuals accumulated over the years to total about 6 million records before the program was discontinued in the 1970s.

Volunteers are now scanning the paper records, and a program has been set up where citizen scientists, working from home, can enter the data into a template to create digital records. Over 140,000 cards have been scanned so far, and volunteers have transcribed more than 17,000 of them.

This data will provide a treasure trove of information about the historical abundance and distribution of birds in North America. For more information or to help, see <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bpp/index.cfm>



A sample card showing AOU # 654, a Black-throated Blue Warbler. L indicates the Last sighting of spring 1910, on May 17 at Beaver, PA, by Todd, presumably W.E. Clyde Todd, author of Birds of Western Pennsylvania.



PGC Offering Nest Boxes for Sale

While news about the housing market can be found in just about every newspaper, or seen or heard on the radio and television news, you don't hear much about the concerns in the wildlife housing market. However, the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Howard Nursery has a way that wildlife enthusiasts can help without applying for a mortgage.

This year, for the first time, the Game Commission is offering for sale a variety of wildlife nesting structures for several species of birds – from bluebirds to flickers, from ducks to owls – as well as bats and squirrels.

“For years, our Howard Nursery has been constructing a number of different wildlife nesting structures for placement on State Game Lands and to provide to private landowners enrolled in the agency's three cooperative public access programs. This year, we decided to expand the types of nesting boxes that we offer for sale to the general public, beyond the popular bluebird boxes.”

Homeowners – the human kind, that is – can view the entire selection of nesting structures for sale on the Game Commission's website www.pgc.state.pa.us or click here for an order form: http://www.pgc.state.pa.us/pgc/lib/pgc/pdf/wildlife_homes.pdf

McKeever Opportunities

McKeever Environmental Center in Sandy Lake, PA, offers many education and fun-filled programs for children during the school year. Did you know that they also offer Summer Camps for kids? There are various programs, both day and overnight camps, for children ages 5 through 14.

Their facilities are also available for rent, for a day, a weekend, or a week. They offer a private, natural atmosphere with modern conveniences, nestled amidst 205 wooded acres, for groups large and small. Call 724.376.1000 or visit their website at www.mckeever.org for more information.



Pied-billed Grebe
by Kirsten Munson, Audubon Resources

Festival of the Birds at Presque Isle

May 8 - 10, 2009

Enjoy the height of spring bird migration at Presque Isle State Park, a natural concentration point along the Atlantic flyway where 320 species of birds have been recorded. Take part in workshops and field trips geared for the beginner and the seasoned naturalist led by experts in the field. Experience the rich variety of Presque Isle's six distinct ecological zones including beaches, cattail islands, shrublands, aquatic habitats, and deciduous and pine tree forests. Share the joy of nature and conservation with your family with fun and educational activities for children.

Learn more about the park and the environment at the state-of-the-art Tom Ridge Environmental Center, www.trecpi.org. For more information about the festival and a registration form:

<http://www.presqueisleaudubon.org/festival.html>



April comes like an idiot,
babbling and strewing
flowers.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Outings Recap -

- April 4 - Conneaut Marsh
- April 25 - Oil Creek S. P. Warbler Walk
- May 2 - Presque Isle
- May 6 - Wildflower Walk

Other Upcoming Events -

- Third Annual Oil Region Bird & Nature Festival - May 1-3
- Birdathon - May 2 through May 9
- PAMC-Pennsylvania Migration Count -May 9
- Presque Isle Festival of the Birds - May 8-10.
- ARCA Bird Watching Day, Foxburg-May 16
- PSO meeting in Morgantown, southern Berks County, May 15-17.
- Roger Tory Peterson Birding Festival - June 4-7

Hosting April meeting...
Ruth Schurr and Barb Songer

Consider the environment and sign up for e-Drummer today! Call or email Deb Freed at dfreed208@comcast.net



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

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
P.O. Box 148
Clarion, PA 16214