



THE DRUMMER

www.senecarocksaudubon.org



November/December 2013

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Rough-legged Hawk by Steven D'Amato

Winter Raptor Surveys in Pennsylvania, 2001-2013

Greg Grove

November 12 Program

Pennsylvania's winter raptors have been surveyed along auto routes since 2001. The focus has been on open country raptors - Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks, American Kestrels, and Northern Harriers, as well as vultures - but all species are recorded. For the more common species, maps of winter distribution in the state have been created. A second important goal is to detect trends, if any, for the common species.

Greg Grove lives in Huntingdon County, PA and works in the DNA analysis lab at Penn State. He and his wife Deb started birding as graduate students at Ohio State University in 1979. After the initial exciting years of learning birds and finding new birds, his interest moved to the dynamics of

bird populations and ways of surveying populations. He founded the Stone Mt. Hawk Watch, the Lake Raystown Christmas Bird Count, the Pennsylvania Winter Raptor Survey, and three Breeding Bird Survey routes in Rothrock State Forest. He is past president of the State College Bird Club and the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology and was a Regional Coordinator during the Breeding Bird Atlas.

Members' Night & CBC Planning

December 10 Program

Members' night is your chance to share any photos, experiences, books, etc., with our group. Our members always seem to be up to something interesting, and you can count on this to be a fun evening. Please bring any digital photos on a thumb drive.

We will also have Christmas Bird Count maps, review each team's area, and do our planning for our 27th Christmas Bird Count, scheduled for Saturday, December 28. You may remember that the past two years' counts were our lowest ever, with 42 and 43 species, so we have nowhere to go but up! The CBC is the longest running citizen science project in the world, and the Clarion CBC

Our programs are held at the Clarion Free Library. Come early to socialize - program begins at 6:30 pm.

continues to be the Short-eared Owl capital of Pennsylvania, so our count circle is significant. Plan either to feeder-watch (if you live in the circle) or to bundle up and bird in the field. We will meet at Cozumel's Restaurant at 5:30 to share good food, good stories, and tally the birds.



A Long-tailed Duck is a possibility on this outing.
(credit Steven D'Amato)

Field Trip to Roderick Reserve

~ Jim Wilson

We will have a Field Trip to Roderick Reserve (SGL 314) on Sunday, October 20.

Jim Wilson will lead this field trip to Erie County. The site is listed on the website of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. The Ohio state line is the western border, and the Lake Erie shoreline forms the northern border for about 1.5 miles. This is one of the longest undeveloped beaches of Lake Erie's south shore.

The overlook spot, the site of the David M. Roderick Monument, offers a nearly unspoiled view of the lake and its natural shoreline, a major north-south migration route for birds, including raptors, waterfowl, and over one hundred songbird species. The overlook is a cleared, grassy area. There are also a number of crisscrossing roads through a variety of habitats.

Driving time from Clarion is approximately 2 hours. Directions:

Take I-80 West to I-79

I-79 North to the Edinboro Exit (Rte 6N)

6N north to West Springfield (Rte. 20)

Rte. 20 west to Rudd Road on the right.

Drive 2.6 miles north on Rudd Road to its end at Lake Road.

Jim will meet us here between 9:00 and 9:30. At 9:30 we will proceed to the monument until approximately 11:00. Dress appropriately for the weather. Bring something to drink and a lunch.

SRAS Membership

~ Deb Freed

As a local chapter of the National Audubon Society, Seneca Rocks benefits from individuals who join the National Audubon Society. National Audubon assigns their members to local chapters by zip code. We receive a financial share of each membership assigned to Seneca Rocks. These members are both National and local members and receive the Audubon Magazine.

Seneca Rocks Audubon offers a local membership. The fee of \$10 for an individual or \$15 for a family goes directly to Seneca Rocks. This local membership is due from September to October of each year. Checks for either \$10 or \$15 can be made to Seneca Rocks Audubon.

Both membership forms are posted on our website at www.senecarocksaudubon.org.

SRAS Donates Atlas to Clarion and Oil City Libraries

~ Deb Freed

The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds of Pennsylvania is now available for patrons at the Clarion Free Library and the Oil City Library. Seneca Rocks donated copies of "The Atlas" to both libraries. These libraries have hosted programs sponsored by Seneca Rocks.

Seneca Rocks Audubon wants to continue to share the world of birds with the local communities. This outstanding resource will add interesting information about the populations of breeding birds that residents of our area see in their yards, parks and travels around Pennsylvania.

The *Drummer* is the 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 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.

2014 Calendars

~ Ron Montgomery

Our home-grown 2014 SRAS calendars are ready for sale. Using what we learned from last year, we have incorporated several upgrades. Key improvements include: larger and more uniformly-sized photographs, a change in design that allowed us to include several more pictures, and much heavier paper with a glossy finish. We continued our basic philosophy of focusing on pictures of local birds taken by Group members. The price this year is \$12 each or \$10 each for three or more when picked up personally at our meeting or at 512 Main Printing in Knox. To order one by mail, please send a check for \$14.50 (to cover postage) payable to "SRAS" and mail to SRAS, P.O. Box 148, Clarion, PA 16214.

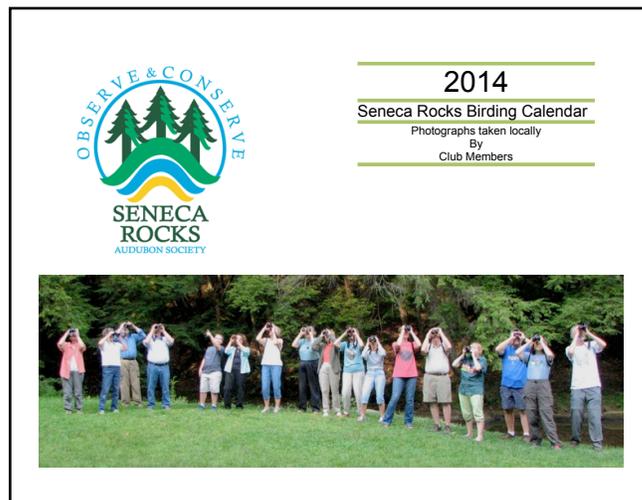
Since this is a fund-raising project for SRAS and since we can have an unlimited supply this year, we encourage members to consider the calendar as a possible stocking-stuffer for friends and family. We also want to begin getting calendars to more people outside the group. We think many local people would be surprised to learn that such beautiful birds can be found close to their home. They might even decide to go looking for them!

2015 Calendar: Photographer Guidelines

~ Ron Montgomery

As the SRAS calendar creeps into the community, we are anxious that we show local people that there are amazing birds close to their homes. We want the calendar to encourage them to search out such spectacular creatures themselves. We therefore are emphasizing that candidate photos be taken locally or on SRAS field trips. We define "local" loosely as Northwestern Pennsylvania, but we will choose a preponderance of the pictures from the area served by SRAS (Clarion and contiguous counties). This also allows us to differentiate our calendar from similar products with a national or international perspective.

1. Pictures (digital) must be taken **locally** by members of SRAS or their immediate family.
2. Tell us where the photo was taken. We plan to include the location next year to demonstrate that these birds are readily available to anyone.



3. Please do not crop or date-stamp your photograph.
4. Keep enhancements to a minimum. We will enhance them to fit our purpose.
5. Take pictures with as much resolution as your camera will deliver. Be sure resolution is not lost while down-loading or sending the pictures to us.
6. Please identify the bird in the photo if there is more than one interpretation of the single photograph (Downy/Hairy or Sharpie/Cooper's).
7. You may send pictures to us at any time. We will retain them in your file.
8. Feel free to submit a group picture for the front cover that can be cropped to 3 units wide by 1 high.

Keep your camera active this fall and winter! We match pictures to specific months and this is the only October between now and when we put the 2015 calendar to bed next September. We are looking for more contributors!

Hummingbird Contest!

Last fall birders in Pennsylvania documented 94 western hummingbirds of four species, including a Rufous Hummingbird which was caught and banded near Sligo. Look for chestnut color on the rump or tail. Researchers are eager to study these birds to learn more about their migration. If you have a hummingbird coming to your feeder between October 15 and November 30, contact Gary Edwards at 814-671-2731 or Mike Leahy at 814-229-1648. You will receive a free SRAS 2014 calendar and be eligible for a \$25 Gift Certificate to J&J Feeds or Oil City Agway.



The Name Game #2

~ Gary Edwards

Before moving on to bird monikers honoring men, let's take a couple of columns to look at why a few women impressed the male-dominated early ornithologists' clique to the extent they were memorialized with species named in their honor. Consider, for instance, Virginia's Warbler, Lucy's Warbler, Grace's Warbler, and Anna's Hummingbird. Who were Virginia, Lucy, Grace and Anna?

Virginia Childs Anderson was the wife of Dr. William Wallace Anderson, a surgeon in the U.S. Army from 1849 to 1861, and a Confederate Army surgeon from 1861-1864. The 22-year-old Virginia, daughter of General Thomas Childs of Pittsfield, MA, married the 31-year-old Anderson in December 1855, at Wilmington NC. Dr. Anderson was soon ordered to Fort Burgwyn, NM, ten miles south of Taos, where the couple remained for several years.

While in New Mexico, Dr. Anderson collected plants and birds and shipped them to Spencer Fullerton Baird at the Smithsonian. One specimen, a new warbler, was described by Baird in *Birds of North America* (1860). Anderson asked that the bird be named after his wife and Baird complied, naming the bird *Helminthophaga virginiae*. The genus name is now *Setophaga* but the species name and the common name, Virginia's Warbler, remain.

After the Civil War, the couple returned to Statesboro, SC, Dr. Anderson's childhood home. Virginia was instrumental in founding the Statesboro Literary and Musical Society and was the organist at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross for over 30 years. The couple had nine children, seven of whom reached adulthood. She died in 1912, a year after William.

Lucy Hunter Baird had an unusual childhood. Born in 1848, the only child of Spencer Fullerton Baird, secretary of the Smithsonian Institute, Lucy received strange gifts from her father and his friends, including a pet squirrel when she was four-years-old, and harmless snakes to play with so she wouldn't develop herpetophobia (fear of

reptiles and/or amphibians). When she was 13, Dr. James G. Cooper, working with the Whitney Geological Survey, discovered and collected two new birds, one a warbler. He reported them in the *Proceedings of the California Academy of Sciences* (1861). After describing the Elf Owl, Cooper continued: "the next, which is undoubtedly a new bird, I have dedicated to the interesting little daughter of my friend, Prof. S.F. Baird." He named the bird *Helminthophaga* (now *Oreothlypis*) *luciae*, Lucy's Warbler.

Lucy never married. By the time she was in her early twenties, her mother was not well and soon both parents required attention. Spencer Baird died in 1887, when Lucy was 39. Her mother passed away four years later. After the death of her parents, Lucy began collecting material to write a biography of her father. Due to the death of her co-writer and her own poor health, the work was never finished. Before she died on June 19, 1913, she instructed the executor of the estate to ensure the memoir was completed by a suitable person. That person, William H. Dall, published the work in 1915 and dedicated it "To the memory of a devoted daughter, Lucy Hunter Baird."

(We will learn about Grace and Anna in the next *Drummer*)

Chimney Swifts in Emlenton

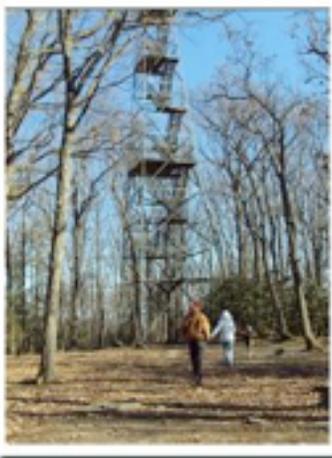
~ Gary Edwards

The nationwide annual "Swift Night Out" weekend was September 6-8. I visited the Crawford Center in Emlenton on Friday, the 6th and counted just over 1,000 chimney swifts entering the chimney between 7:15 and 8:00 p.m. On September 15, club members Lee Ann Reiners and Charlie Houpt, along with two friends, counted over 1,700 birds at the same location. The birds begin to congregate about an hour before sunset. As sunset approaches, more and more birds join the party until there are several hundred circling at any one time with so many entering the chimney at once that exact counting is impossible. The show is over about 20 minutes after sunset. If you've never watched it, it's a sight worth seeing. Next year we should plan a field trip.

Programs at Cook Forest State Park

~Dale Luthringer

Friday, October 25 at 7:00pm - **'The Park After Dark'** During this program Dr. David Hurd, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, will highlight some of the current NASA missions at the Moon and Mars. Participants will also construct their own star chart and learn how to use it! Weather permitting, we will be doing some star observing as well. Dr. Hurd is planetarium director and professor of geosciences at Edinboro University and has worked with several NASA missions in Education and Public Outreach. Please bring your chairs and blankets and join us at the Ridge Camp Park Amphitheater. (3 hrs)



Cook Forest Fire Tower,
photo by Pat Conway

Sunday, October 27 at 1:00pm - **'Fire Tower Historical Tour'** Please bring your binoculars to the Fire Tower for an historical tour of Fire Tower #9 conducted by park volunteers, Kelley & Al Bilotto. Take a breathtaking view from the box at the very top of the Fire Tower and learn how it operated. The tower will be open from 100-300pm. (2 hrs)

Thursday, October 31 at 7:00pm - **'Cathedral by Candlelight'** Want to experience something different this year for Halloween instead of the standard "trick-or-treaters"? Come walk back in time with us into the depths of the Forest Cathedral with an historical character from the past. Come view the ancient forest as we walk beneath the giants by candlelight. Either a French Marine from the 1750's who saw these massive trees 250 years ago, or a lumberman from the 1800's will be there to guide us. Candy and hot chocolate will be served at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom. Bring your flashlights! (2 hrs)

November 7 at 7:30pm - **'Spotting Pennsylvania's Elusive White-tail Deer'** Please bring your spotlights and meet at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom for an evening driving tour as we car-pool to Cook Forest's white-tail

hotspots. Come learn about the natural history of our Commonwealth's state mammal, as we cruise the park searching for this elusive animal. (3 hrs)

Nighthawk Migration

~ Gary Edwards

The annual Common Nighthawk migration count was held at the Oil City Marina from August 17 to September 14. The results were less than spectacular. After last year's promising total of 991, the final count this year was just 416. Our high daily count was 66 birds compared to four days of over 100 last year including the record high of 323 on August 24, 2012. As usual, we had good weather and a good time despite the low numbers. Other species seen during the period included Wood Ducks, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Sharpie, Coop, Merlin, Cormorant, and various passerines. My core group of assistants included Jim Wilson, Nick and Meg Kolodick, and Russ States. Flo & Jim McGuire, and Carl & Joan Rowe also dropped by to enjoy the weather and good companionship, even if there weren't many birds.

More about Nighthawks, from the Pennsylvania eBird site...

The American Birding Association has named the Common Nighthawk as its "Bird of the Year" for 2013. The Common Nighthawk certainly is a misnamed bird — not a hawk but a Caprimulgid, not nocturnal but crepuscular, and not as common as it used to be. A colloquial name of "bullbat" has been used to describe its bat-like flight. The Common Nighthawk has declined so much in Pennsylvania that it now is considered "Near Threatened" by the Ornithological Technical Committee of the PA Biological Survey. This status change was based on declines recorded from the 1st Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas to the 2nd PBBA. For decades, state birders have witnessed the declines of nighthawks on breeding grounds and in migration. These declines have been even more dramatic in Canada where the species now is considered nationally Threatened. Pennsylvania also has witnessed a dramatically declining passage migration of the "bullbat."

Clarion County Summer 2013 Report

~ Carole Winslow

Locations: Curllsville strips (CV), Mount Airy (MA), Mount Zion (Piney Tract IBA/SGL 330)(MZ), Sarah Furnace (SF).

Northern Harrier is the first species for the summer season report, with the usual grassland areas of CV and MZ once again having regular sightings of these birds throughout June and July. At MZ, three reports were received, with the first being a single bird 6/22 (BH), an agitated adult female 7/2 (AF), and the last sighting 7/16, also just a single bird (NH). At CV there were eight different sightings from 6/11 through 7/13 (MM, SC, JB, SG, DI, et al.). On 6/12 the sighting was noted as a worn female (JB), and the report from 7/13 was also that of an adult female (JH).

The Cherry Run area of Rimersburg continues to produce some records for the county with a new early date for southbound **Solitary Sandpiper**, after a report received for a single bird on Summerville Rd 7/26 (MM). Sadly this year was not one for any good records of **Upland Sandpiper** in Clarion. Only a single sighting was reported for the season, and that of just a single bird at MA 6/15, with a possibility of a second bird present, but not confirmed (DM). After confirmed breeding last year, it was hoped that some positive indications of this would be found again. This species continues to be at high risk even at this regular location due to varying land use practices, including the early haying season.



As noted in some other regions of the state, with the increased presence of gypsy moths in some areas this year, cuckoos were seen in increased numbers. At a property near Strattanville, **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** were reported as numerous and were confirmed nesting on the property in June with two young found in an active nest. On the same property **Black-billed Cuckoos** were also present, with a single bird found dead from a window strike in early June and an adult calling with a likely fledgling present as well 7/11 (RM). At SGL 63 near Shippenville black-billed cuckoos were present 6/19 and a yellow-billed cuckoo was gathering nesting material (MF), while a total of 6 yellow-billed cuckoos were seen here several days later 6/22 (CW). This area was heavily infested with gypsy moths this year, while south of I-80 little evidence of the moths were seen and consequently cuckoo numbers were not nearly as high.

On 7/6 at a property near Limestone, a pair of **Red-eyed Vireos** caring for week old nestlings was seen defending their nest and young against a pair of Baltimore orioles (F&JW). This report is of interest for the behavior involved

more so than the rarity of the species. It was unclear what prompted the incident, but always a learning experience to witness interaction between species sharing habitat.

Warbler sightings of interest were in short supply for the season. **Cerulean Warblers** were only noted in two locations, with one bird reported singing at SF 6/10 (CW), and 2 singing 6/11 on nearby Phillipston Rd. on the hillside above the Allegheny River (CW). A single bird was also noted here 6/14 (MM). **Worm-eating Warblers** continue to be seen at SF but with fewer reports this year. A single bird was seen 6/10 (CW) and 2 birds were also reported here 6/22 (BH). No breeding evidence was reported for the year although that may well have been due to lack of observers rather than change in breeding status. **Kentucky Warblers** were noted for the season but at only one location, on Phillipston Rd near East Brady. A single bird was heard singing 6/11 (CW) and two birds were found at this same location counter-singing 6/14 (MM).

The best sighting for the season was the return of **Dickcissels** to the same area they frequented last year at the CV strips site. The first report of the return of these birds was 6/19, with 2 birds present and singing (MM). They continued to be reported regularly through the end of the season with up to three birds present, two singing males and a female (JM, SC, TN, SG, DI, et al.). They were seen frequently using small trees at the roads edge and further into the fields as singing perches, as well as large forbs. Unfortunately, no direct breeding confirmation was obtained this year other than the presence of territorial males and a female. It will be interesting to see if these birds return to attempt nesting for a third season at this site. This reclaimed strip mine field that was replanted several years ago with switchgrass and wildflowers has remained unmowed for the past two summers, and has shown improved numbers of all grassland birds, as well as attracting this new species.

Clay-colored Sparrows continue to be regular at two locations in the county, MZ and CV. Each year there are records of a brief appearance of birds at scattered nearby areas with appropriate habitat, but so far they have not expanded to be regular at any other locations. This year there was a report of a singing male 6/15 on McEwen Rd., not far from the MZ site and with similar appropriate habitat (DM). At MZ itself, where they had returned to their former site on Mt. Zion Rd, only one report was had for the season, that of a single bird 6/15 (BH). They had been present and singing during the spring season so their breeding status for the year remains uncertain. At the CV site where they have been more numerous for the past 5 years, numbers were fairly steady at 2 to 4 birds through the season, an apparent decrease that was also noted last year (SG, MM, JB, JF, SC, et al.). Sightings were from the beginning of the season through the last date of 7/13 but disappointingly, no breeding evidence was recorded for the year other than the presence of territorial males.

Grasshopper Sparrows were noted in typical numbers for the season from grassland habitat in the southern part of

the county, and **Henslow's Sparrows** were also noted in good numbers for the year, with up to 20 singing males reported at CV (SG, RN, MM, JB, AP, et al.) and up to 16 singing males at MZ (BH, AF, RN, NH, AP, et al.). Henslow's sparrows continue to be present in many scattered reclaimed strip mine grasslands throughout the southern part of Clarion, but are mostly missed, with the focus on the well known areas that are frequented by visiting and local birders alike. As usual, the least common sparrow reported is **Vesper Sparrow**, with only three sightings noted for the summer and all at the CV strips site. Two birds were noted 6/23 (SC) and again 6/24 (JF), with at least one bird reported also 6/29 (SI). There is some appropriate habitat in spots at this location but no further sightings were noted after 6/29 and no other breeding evidence was noted for this declining species.

Observers: **Carole Winslow, 159 Moggey Rd, Sligo, PA 16255, 814-745-3818, cjal@windstream.net**, Justin Bosler, Babs Buck, Shawn Collins, Anna Fasoli, Mike Fialkovich, James Fletcher, James Flynn, Steve Gosser, Jeff Hall, James Hausman, Neil Heinekamp, Brian Henderson, Dave Inman, Sally Isaaco, Wayne Laubscher, Jeff McDonald, David McNaughton, Ron Montgomery, Mark Moore, Thomas Nicolls, Richard Nugent, Kevin and Kelly Parsons, Aidan Place, Art Schiavo, Fran and Jack Williams.

Native Berries for Fall Migrants

A synopsis of a column by Edie Parnum in "Backyards for Nature", a blog of the Valley Forge Audubon Society, printed with permission. See <http://backyardsfornature.org> for the entire column.



Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)
-Flo McGuire

"Birds were dropping out of the sky into the trees and shrubs around me. It was daybreak on a fall morning in my backyard. Though I could see only silhouettes, I recognized the chips of robins and Swainson's Thrushes. In the dim light I couldn't identify the other numerous birds but knew these were migrants that had

flown non-stop from the north during the night." Migrant songbirds migrate at night and must stop to refuel, where they look for nutrient-rich berries. "Prior to migration, songbirds must increase their weight by 50 - 100%. Thrushes, grosbeaks, waxwings, orioles, tanagers and other songbirds switch from a diet of insects to mostly berries. Finding berries consumes less energy than pursuing insects." According to new research at the University of Rhode Island, birds preparing for migration select

deeply-pigmented berries that are high in antioxidants and fat. Antioxidants help birds (as well as humans) handle stress, and migration is certainly a stress. Even small patches of native plants can provide food and shelter for migrants. It is thought that birds prefer native berries because of their high fat content and extra antioxidants. Plus, the strongly-colored berries, leaves, or stems make them easy to find, and the native berries ripen at the right time. Many migrants, especially warblers, continue to eat insects as well, which are found primarily on native plants. "We can help migrating birds survive their perilous and crucial journeys by growing the plants they need and love."

TOP NATIVE BERRY PLANTS FOR FALL MIGRANTS	
Latin Name	Common Name
Trees	
<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	Hackberry
<i>Cornus florida</i>	Flowering Dogwood
<i>Ilex opaca</i>	American Holly
<i>Malus coronaria</i>	Crabapple
<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	Black Gum/Tupelo
<i>Sassafras albidum</i>	Sassafras
Shrubs	
<i>Aronia arbutifolia</i> , A. <i>Melanocarpa</i>	Red Chokeberry, Black Chokeberry
<i>Cornus racemosa</i> , C. <i>Amonum</i>	Gray Dogwood, Silky Dogwood
<i>Ilex verticillata</i>	Winterberry Holly
<i>Lindera benzoin</i>	Spicebush
<i>Myrica pensylvanica</i>	Bayberry
<i>Viburnum acerfolium</i> , V. <i>dentatum</i> , V. <i>lentago</i> , V. <i>nudum</i> , V. <i>prunifolium</i>	Mapleleaf Viburnum, Arrowwood Viburnum, Nannyberry, Possumhaw, Black Haw
Vines and Herbaceous Plants	
<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	Virginia Creeper Vine
<i>Phytolacca americana</i>	Pokeweed*

* The author states that she allows Pokeweed to grow in a few spots in her garden because the beautiful dark purple berries are irresistible to birds.

Upcoming Dates & Events

October 20 Outing - Roderick Reserve

November 13 Program - Winter Raptor Survey

December 11 Program - Members' Night & CBC

Christmas Bird Count - December 28



Golden-crowned Kinglet

*There are no words that can tell the
hidden spirit of the wilderness,
that can reveal its mysteries,
its melancholy and its chorus.*

Teddy Roosevelt

SRAS Leadership Team

Deb Freed	226-4719
Paulette Colantonio	797-2031
Pete Dalby	782-3227
Gary Edwards	676-3011
Janice Horn	226-7367
Mike Leahy	229-1648
Flo McGuire	755-3672
Ron Montgomery	764-6088
Jim Wilson	676-5455

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