

Seneca Rocks Drummer



September, 2006
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Newsletter of the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society

Volume 23, No. 1
www.senecarocksaudubon.org



NOTE – NEW TIME & PLACE FOR MEETINGS

Next Meeting – September 11
Room 150, Becker Hall

Social – 6:30 p.m. Program begins at 7:00 p.m.

Scott Stoleson – “Mushroom Madness”

Did you always wish you were knowledgeable enough to go into the woods and pick some delicious (and safe!) mushrooms? For our September program, Scott Stoleson will share his knowledge of fungi. Scott is a Research Wildlife Biologist with the Forest Service’s Northeastern Research Station in Warren, PA., and you may remember his excellent program on “Birds of New Mexico” in March, ’05.

Scott’s program will be an introduction to local mushroom biology, identification, and mycophagy (eating of mushrooms), and he hopes to have a lot of specimens for examination. Scott also plans to lead us on a mushroom field trip on the following Saturday, September 16, at a location to be announced at the meeting and on the website.

Field Trips

by Jim Wilson

Common Nighthawk Watch August 20th through September 15th 6:15 – 8:15 P.M.

Come join us at the Oil City Marina to count Common Nighthawks as they migrate. Bring a lawn chair and refreshments and join us (rain or shine) for our nighthawk count. This has been done for several years and last year’s count was over eight hundred.

Directions: From the Cranberry Mall take route 257 into Oil City to the point where route 257 meets route 62. Follow route 62 to the second bridge (also the second stop light). Make a left turn at this light (Petroleum Street) go one block to West First Street. Turn

right on West First Street go to Wyllis Street. Turn right on Wyllis Street, at the bottom of the hill is the Oil City Marina. Parking is in the parking lot on the right.

Other field trips and activities:
 September 16 Mushroom Field Trip
 October 26 & 27 Thursday/Friday
 Allegheny Front Hawk Watch



Crow's Nest

by President Deb Freed

Blockbusters, "Thank You"

Thanks to everyone who participated in blockbusting for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. This season was the best ever. Special thanks to Ron Montgomery for coordinating all of the events (not a small task) and notifying participants on a weekly basis.

We appreciate your help and hope that next year we can improve our methods even more and have even more fun blockbusting than we did this year.

~Pat Conway (Region 45) and
 Carole Willenpart (Region 44)

It is quiet now compared to the blockbusting days in June and July. The board managed to squeeze in a productive planning session in July where we mapped out the coming year. Our top three goals are:

1. To hold a successful conference on June 1 & 2 for **Bird Conservation on Non-native Grasslands**.
2. Increase our membership by increasing public awareness of our chapter events and offering new opportunities for public participation.
3. Continue to publicize the Breeding Bird Atlas Project, recruit help and schedule block busting again next summer.

Other goals are to increase the number of on-line Drummer subscribers, promote our bird seed sales to non-members, sponsor Audubon Adventures in area classrooms, identify potential sponsors for the conference and continue to be involved in and support grassland habitat at the Piney Tract IBA.

In the spring, new officers will be elected to lead Seneca Rocks. We always find the right mix of people to keep the chapter active, interesting and contributing to our mission of enjoying the world of birds, protecting wildlife and its habitat and promoting education that fosters appreciation of the natural environment. Along the way, we have a good time too.



SRAS Board Members

<u>Deb Freed</u> , President, Membership	226-4719
<u>Gary Edwards</u> , Vice-president, Programs	676-3011
<u>Dennis Beaver</u> , Secretary/Publicity	676-6564
<u>Janice Horn</u> , Treasurer, Birseed, Birdathon	226-7367
<u>Flo McGuire</u> , Website, Drummer Editor	755-3672
<u>Ron Montgomery</u> , Community Programs	764-6088
<u>Jim Wilson</u> , Events, Field Trips	676-5455
<u>Paulette Colantonio</u> , Education	797-2031
<u>Pat Conway</u> , History	849-6315
<u>Margaret Buckwalter</u> , Mill Creek Coalition	782-3925
<u>Walter Fye</u> , Beaver Creek	797-1019

BBA Regional Coordinators

Gary Edwards, Region 43	676-3011
Carole Willenpart, Region 44	745-3818
Pat Conway, Region 45	849-6315
Flo McGuire, Region 30	755-3672

Ruffed Grouse artwork in masthead
 by George Miksch Sutton.



Photo by Pat Conway

Annual SRAS Picnic

by Deb Freed

Fran and Jack Williams hosted our annual picnic on August 22. Their country home nestled in the woods provided a picturesque location for socializing and enjoying the last blooms of summer. Fran and Jack have cultivated a variety of native plants in their yard. Throughout the year bird life is abundant here. Janice Horn displayed the chapter's Birdathon award from Audubon PA. The logo committee presented the four choices for the chapter's new image. (see logo) The spread of food reflected the bounty of local gardens and favorite dishes of our members. Some gentle guitar music could be heard on the deck. Attending: Kathy & Pokey Pokrifka, Aatis & Aeros Lillstrom, Ron & Judy Montgomery with granddaughter Sarah Lavey, Ann Hunt, Pat Conway, Linda & Gil Twiest, Flo & Jim McGuire, Deb & Ben Freed, Andy & Greg (guitar player) Goodman, Georgann Kovakovsky with two visiting farm volunteers Nicole Reynolds (guitar player) & Alyssa Siegel, Janice Horn, Patty Laswick, Barb Songer with friend Ed Fegert, Gary Edwards, Jim Wilson and Dennis Beaver.

LOGO

Members' choice will be announced at the September meeting.

Many members viewed the four logo choices at the picnic and placed their votes. You have the opportunity to see the logos on the ballot attached to this newsletter (page 9) or view them on-line at the website www.senecarocksaudubon.org. Cast your vote

by mailing the ballot to Deb Freed, 208 Briar Hill Drive, Clarion, PA 16214 or by voting at the September meeting. Votes will be counted at the meeting and the winning logo announced.

Many thanks go to the committee members Dennis Beaver, Jim Wilson, Fran Williams and Jan Meyer. They used the member input from our brainstorming session at the May meeting to identify our audience, objectives, applications and design criteria. Jan then met with the graphic artist, Lynn Pacior-Malys of **Fine Line Designs** in Oil City who captured our messages into masterful images. Now it's our turn to choose.

Blockbusting

by Deb Freed

The summer of 2006 concentrated on Carole Willenpart's region 44 and Pat Conway's region 45 and went something like this. Ron Montgomery organized the schedule for coordinators with 4 June dates and 4 July dates. We had from 8 to 12 participants for 7 of the dates. You'll find photos of some of the "busters" on the website. The regional coordinators prepared maps and routes for whoever showed up at the announced meeting spot. From there, "busters" took off to count species and more importantly, to observe behavior for the all-important breeding confirmation codes.

It was lots of fun and a great learning experience. We generally gathered for lunch to report our findings. The coordinators introduced us to some absolutely outstanding habitat areas and natural beauty we otherwise could never have accessed. This was in part due to the coordinators' preparation in scouting the routes and making contact with landowners for access.

I highly recommend you join us next summer for another round. The data we collected is valuable for the Breeding Bird Atlas. Kudos to all four of our regional coordinators who have been working hard to complete blocks and cover their territories. Thanks to Ron for getting us organized and all who participated in the summer '06 blockbusting.

Armchair Activist

Save Teshekpuk Lake!

Teshekpuk Lake in northern Alaska is a natural treasure with a unique and fragile wetlands wilderness that is home to an incredibly diverse variety of migratory birds and wildlife.

The wetlands surrounding Teshekpuk Lake provide prime nesting or molting grounds for waterfowl from three nations, nesting birds from six continents, and the rare Yellow-billed Loon. Several Alaska Native communities depend on the 45,000 head caribou herd that still roams the area for their subsistence.

Teshekpuk Lake needs your help. Though protected since 1977, the Bush Administration announced in January that Teshekpuk Lake would be offered for bid for oil and gas development. This fragile habitat and the wildlife that depend on it cannot withstand pipelines, roads, airstrips, landing fields and all the other trappings of industrial development.

Please send a letter today to Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240 – or email at webteam@ios.doi.gov. Let him know you oppose oil and gas development in Teshekpuk Lake.



Don't Just Throw it Away...Recycle.

Jefferson County has 21 drop off recycling sites scattered throughout the county. You can

recycle aluminum cans, tin cans, plastic bottles and jugs, glass bottles and jars, newspapers and magazines at these sites.

Last year Jefferson County recycled over 360 tons at these sites. Contact the Jefferson County Solid Waste Authority at 849-1521 for the drop off site closest to you or visit www.jeffersoncountypa.com.

2005 Christmas Bird Count

by Ron Montgomery

The Pennsylvania Society of Ornithology (PSO) recently published the results of the PA Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in their Journal, *Pennsylvania Birds*, issued July 2006. There were 68 CBC counts in Pennsylvania last year. While we in Clarion do not come close to getting the total birds or total species as those with more varied habitat and more birders, we accomplished some neat things.

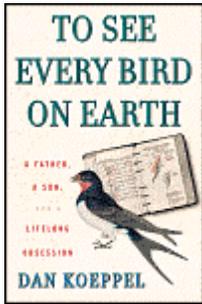
We were tied with Lewisburg for the most Rough-legged Hawks (6) and we had the most Blue Jays (954) in the state. We also led the state in Northern Shrikes, Red Crossbills and Snowy Owls by having 2 of the 6 Shrikes, 83 of the 84 Crossbills, and the only Snowy. There were over 10,000 Brown-headed Cowbirds found in the state and we were one of twenty counts that had none.

The Clarion CBC has been going on since 1987 so I looked up the master data base on line to see if the data is showing any trends. It is! While there are lots of year to year variations, some trends are obvious. For example, Red-bellied Woodpecker has been increasing by some 15%/year and Ruffed Grouse has been declining by about 9%/year. Wild Turkeys are also increasing rapidly and Cowbirds are declining strongly. You'll be pleased to know the chickadee population has been stable! There are other obvious trends, but I am pleased to see that the data is actually usable.

And speaking of PSO, guess who the new Vice President is. Our own Flo McGuire! Flo joined the PSO board only two years ago, so it did not take long for her ability and dedication to be recognized. Congratulations Flo! In her new role, Flo will serve as chair of the Awards Committee.



How Many Birds?



How many birds on your life list? How many on your yard list? County list? State list? Richard Koepfel's life list is over 7,000 species and he is among the top ten Big Listers in the world. His obsession began at the age of twelve, when he first spotted a Brown Thrasher, and has only been limited by failing health in his later years of life. In an attempt to understand his father's obsessive compulsive need to list birds, Dan Koepfel wrote *To See Every Bird on Earth, A Father, A Son, and a Lifelong Obsession*, A Plume Book, Published by Penguin Group (USA), New York, New York, 2005, ISBN 1-59463-001-1 (hardcover) and ISBN 0-452-28539-9 (paperback).

This is a book about the relationship between a father and his son, within a dysfunctional family. It is a book about birding in the United States and in the exotic places of the world. This book is about the important people who have made Big Lists possible. Dan Koepfel has done extensive research about the world of birding and listing, about the hobby of birding, and the passion of listing. It is about Audubon, and Peterson, and Clements, Coues and Cruickshank. It is about Kaufman and Sibley. Most importantly it is about the Big Listers like Phoebe Snetsinger and Peter Kaestner who will exceed her life list of 8,450 birds. It is about Rich Koepfel's fifty-nine birding trips in seventeen years.

Arnold Small was the first to have the notion that seeing every bird might be possible. Previously, Stuart Keith and Small believed that "Half" (about 4,500 species) was all that was possible. The attempt to reach stratospheric numbers has been facilitated and codified by the American Birding Association and the American Ornithological Union. As Dan Koepfel makes

sense of his father's passion for listing he begins to make sense of the underlying process when he says, "...the global lister reflects a sense of wandering – almost homelessness – but also a conquer-it-all majesty."

To See Every Bird on Earth is most importantly about birds, sometimes exotic birds, such as the Inaccessible Island Flightless Rail, and sometimes about a nemesis bird, like the Mountain Quail, that is not necessarily uncommon, but which a birder has not seen because of bad luck. Each chapter begins with an excerpt from Rich Koepfel's extensive records and lists. Just reading the beginning of each chapter makes this a book worth reading. The book is about birds that have become extinct, such as the Dusky Seaside Sparrow, the last one of which died in 1987. It is about families of unusual tropical birds, like the antbird family, with at least 207 species, many of which can only be differentiated by their vocalizations and subtle differences in topography. It is about species being lumped together and subsequently split into separate categories. Dan Koepfel says, "After six thousand, the Big List gets tougher to expand...The chase becomes more artful, the individual sightings more satisfying. In the Philippines, he (Rich Koepfel) saw what many believe to be the world's most spectacular avian species, the Philippine Monkey-eating Eagle. The bird is over three feet tall, with blue eyes, an oversized, sharp beak, and a war bonnet of head feathers."

How do your friends, co-workers and relatives see your birding behavior? Do you still consider yourself a "normal" person, or has the list become a compulsive driver in your life? How many birds on your list? What is the best or most unusual bird you have seen, and why? What is your favorite common bird? Send your information to Flo McGuire for "Bird Tails." And be certain to read *To See Every Bird on Earth*.

--The Old Curmudgeon



Birdathon!

by Janice Horn

Our very successful Birdathon! was recognized with a plaque that states that SRAS is the Pennsylvania champion for both funds raised and species counted! This contest was held by PA Audubon for chapters of ALL sizes. To quote from the letter that came with it: "We are pleased to announce that Seneca Rocks is the 2006 BIRDATHON! Champion for both funds raised and species counted. Your award plaque is enclosed, and your optics prize will be on its way shortly."

As in past years we contributed half of the funds raised to Audubon Pennsylvania and Tim Schaeffer expressed their gratitude with these comments:

"Your support of state office activities means a great deal to all of us. We are committed to solidifying the relationships with Chapters and members and lending our support for successful conservation outcomes across the state. Your greatly appreciated donation adds to our collective ability to achieve the Audubon mission in Pennsylvania.

"Again, from all of us at Audubon Pennsylvania, thank you for this generous gift from the members of Seneca Rocks.

"Warmest regards, Timothy D. Schaeffer"

Many of you saw the plaque at our picnic. The optics prize arrived two days after that and now we

have an Eagle Optics 78 mm. angled spotting scope with a tripod. These awards will be on display at the September meeting where we will begin our discussion on how best to put them to use.

Twenty nine people spent up to 24 hours each identifying birds for a combined total of 160 species. The amount contributed by all the donors was \$3881.64.

Congratulations to everyone who participated in any way to the 2006 Birdathon!



Bird Tails

The Brown Thrasher



"This was the bird that really got me interested. My friend Mike Fitzgerald and I spent a lot of time wandering around the scrubby and swampy

areas of Kew Gardens Hills, Queens. In May, we found several Brown Thrasher nests. They all had two eggs in them. The books said four eggs were usual. So we called the Department of Ornithology at the American Museum of Natural History in Manhattan. Of course, they didn't know why there were only two eggs, but whoever we spoke to asked where we lived and then suggested we check out the Queens County Bird Club. We did, and that was the beginning."

-- Brown Thrasher (*Taxostoma rufum*), summer 1947, Flushing, New York, #24. From the detailed records of Richard Koepfel.

-- Submitted by *The Old Curmudgeon*.

Have an interesting tidbit about birds? Please send to fmcquire1@verizon.net for this column.

PROGRAMS AT COOK FOREST STATE PARK

by Dale Luthringer



Friday, September 1 at 8:00pm – *'Animal Calls'* Please bring your chairs, blankets, and your best animal call imitation to the Ridge Camp Park Amphitheater for an evening of animal calls.

Join the park naturalist as he demonstrates how and why animals of Pennsylvania talk to each other. (1 hr)

Saturday, September 2 at 10:30am - *'A Walk Through the Forest Cathedral'* Please meet at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom for an interpretive hike into the finest stand of old growth E. white pine in the entire Northeastern U.S. Don't miss this unique opportunity to observe the Longfellow Pine, tallest known tree in the entire Northeastern U.S! Learn how to identify old growth forest characteristics, and observe different types of environmental disturbance that are an integral part of old growth forest ecosystems. (2 hrs)

Saturday, September 2 at 3:00pm – *'Cooksburg Petroglyphs'* Please meet at the Park Office to join Ken Burkett, field associate with the Carnegie Museum, as we take a challenging hike to view historic petroglyphs that were carved by the Indians centuries ago. Come help us as we attempt to possibly identify more petroglyphs in the area. This is a very challenging hike in slippery, wet, and steep terrain. Small children and those with physical ailments are encouraged not to attend. (2 hrs)

Saturday, September 2 at 8:00pm - *'Petroglyphs of the Middle Allegheny Valley'* Ken Burkett, Field Associate with the Carnegie Museum, will present a slide program on his recent work on American Indian petroglyph sites located in Venango and Clarion counties. In addition to discussing the various petroglyph forms and location settings, he will present recent theories on their origin, cultural affiliations, and overall relationship to other rock art sites in the Upper Ohio Valley. (1 hr)

Sunday, September 3 at 11:30am – *'Fire Tower/Seneca Point Historical Tour'* Please bring your binoculars and meet at the Fire Tower Parking Lot for a 45-minute historical interpretive

hike of the Seneca Point and Fire Tower. Learn about local logging history, observe Indian sign, and take a breathtaking view from the box at the very top of the Fire Tower which will be open until 2:30pm. (3 hrs)

*** IN CASE OF RAIN, ALL EVENING PROGRAMS SCHEDULED FOR THE RIDGE CAMP PARK AMPHITHEATER WILL BE HELD AT THE NUTHOLE PAVILION LOCATED AT THE ENTRANCE TO RIDGE CAMP ***

Borrowing Fishing Tackle Is as Easy as Borrowing a Book!

Cook Forest State Park is pleased to announce their involvement in the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's Fishing Tackle Loaner Program. The public can come to the Park Office in Cooksburg and borrow rods, reels, and a tackle box with hooks and other basic tackle. This equipment is borrowed in much the same way books are borrowed from a library. Those wanting to borrow the equipment complete a form and the loan is made. At the end of the loan period the equipment is returned to the site.

This program is a partnership between the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the American Sportfishing Association, and Cook Forest State Park. The program is designed to make it easy for anyone to access fishing tackle. Whether you are giving fishing a try for the first time, or returning to a childhood activity, these sites provide free tackle for loan. We hope that those making the loans will enjoy fishing so much that they are 'hooked for life'. This equipment may also be loaned to groups conducting angler education programs in the community.

For additional information about this program, contact Cook Forest State Park –

Dale J. Luthringer
Environmental Education Specialist
Cook Forest State Park
(814)744-8475

or visit the Fish and Boat Commission's web site at www.fish.state.pa.us or call (717)705-7800

You may visit the Cook Forest web site at http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/cook_forest.aspx

Crow Roosts Survey

The following request was received from Grant Stokke, Graduate Student at Penn State.

As you are probably well aware, crows tend to gather in large roosts during fall and winter. Historically, these roosts were found in rural areas, but in recent years they have become more common in urban areas where they can cause a host of nuisance and damage problems.

We are initiating a study to gain a better understanding of communal roosting in crows. As part of this study, we are attempting to locate crow roosts throughout the state. Roosts that are identified by this survey will be incorporated into a study on crow roost characteristics and crow roosting behavior.

One of our hopes is to learn enough about what habitat characteristics crows select for roosting so that we might be able to create substitute roost sites in locations where they are likely to be less problematic. In general, we want to better understand crow roosting so that we can develop management techniques that are acceptable to all parties involved.

Thank you for your help with this project.

(Surveys will be available at the September meeting. They are due September 15.)



Art by Steven D'Amato

Must be out-of-doors enough to get experience of wholesome reality, as a ballast to thought and sentiment. Health requires this relaxation, this aimless life.

~ Henry David Thoreau



Photo by Flo McGuire

Maine Audubon Camp

I had the opportunity to attend a special week, "Audubon Leadership Workshop" at Maine Audubon Camp at Hog Island this August. There were several presenters from National Audubon, helpful workshops, great field trips, and I met Auduboners from around the country. Maine Audubon offered a \$250 tuition reduction, and National Audubon offered \$200 with a matching scholarship from the chapter – thus SRAS paid \$200 and I paid the remaining \$300. It was quite a bargain.

After comparing notes with folks from other chapters, I'm proud to say that Seneca Rocks seems to be doing very well for a chapter of our size, in terms of program attendance, involvement in IBA's and other conservation issues, fund-raising, and education. I returned with some new ideas to share with the board, some new contacts, one new life bird (the Great Cormorant), and a good look at an Atlantic Puffin! I am grateful for having had this opportunity.

Maine Audubon Camp provides a unique vacation for nature-lovers of all ages and walks of life – the leaders are world-class, the meals are excellent, and you will be surrounded by the beauty and serenity of Hog Island. Several different programs are offered throughout the summer and fall.

For more information, please see their web site at <http://www.maineaudubon.org/explore/camp/index.shtml> or the Friends of Hog Island web site at <http://www.naturecompass.org/fohi/>.

- Flo McGuire

Sibley Art Exhibit in Millersburg, PA

*From a posting to the PABIRDS listserv by author **Scott Weidensaul***

For every birder who's ever cracked open a field guide, there's an unprecedented opportunity to revel in the artistry behind the birds at the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art in Millersburg, Dauphin County -- the largest exhibition ever of the artwork of David Allen Sibley, author of this generation's best field guide.

The show, which runs now through the end of the year, features 80 of Sibley's original field sketches, drawings and paintings, ranging from pencil sketches of shorebirds and Arizona hummingbirds to dozens of plates from his groundbreaking field guides, along with ink drawings, scratchboards, and examples of his most recent work, including a painting of a saw-whet owl Sibley created especially for this exhibition. One remarkable aspect of the exhibit is the way it traces Sibley's struggle to come up with a new way to design a field guide, tracking his changes in style and approach through the 1980s and '90s. Starting with samples of his childhood work, it's the first retrospective ever of Sibley's life and work, and shouldn't be missed.

The weekend of Nov. 3-4, Sibley himself will be down from his home in Concord, Mass., for a series of events, including an evening dinner and lecture, an art class and gallery talk, and a booksigning. Information about the show, the November events, directions to the center and gallery hours are at www.nedsmithcenter.org.

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society

National Audubon Society Membership Application Includes Seneca Rocks Audubon Society and Audubon Pennsylvania

Name _____

(Please print)

Address _____

Street

City _____

State _____

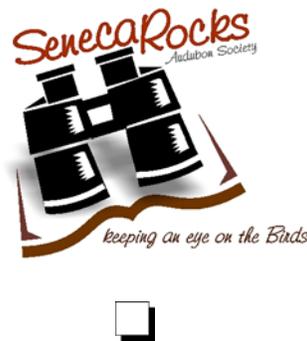
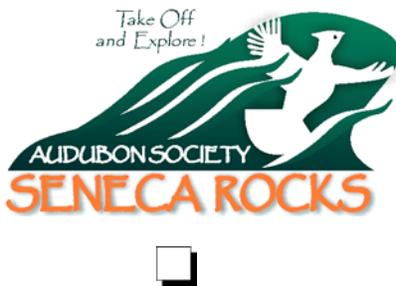
Zip _____

Chapter U217XCH

One Year new membership - \$20.00

Annual renewal membership - \$30.00

Please make your check payable to
National Audubon Society and mail to:
National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data
P.O. Box 51001
Boulder, CO 80322-1001



Dear Member:

Here are the four alternatives for the new Seneca Rocks Audubon Society logo that were selected by the steering committee. Now it's up to you. Please enter your name, and put an X in the box below your favorite.

Name _____

Coming Up -

Join us for our October program, when "Birds of Pennsylvania" author Frank Haas will present "Adak - Gambling on Birds", about his birding trip to this Aleutian island.

In November, SRAS member and award-winning photographer Gil Twiest will present a program on his birding trip to Mexico.

December will be Members' Night - bring your favorite slides, digital photos, or anything you would like to share, and join the fun!



New this year - Meetings will begin at 6:30, In Room 150, Becker Hall.

Also, we have included a membership form on page 9 - please share it with anyone who may be interested in joining SRAS.



Hosts for Upcoming Meetings:

Sept 11 - Deb Freed

Oct 9 - Kathy Pokrifka

Nov 13 - Linda and Gil Twiest

Dec 11 - Shirley Monrean and Walt Fye

Join the growing e-Drummer subscribers and get your Drummer on-line, earlier than the mailed copy, and in Color! Send your e-mail address to :

dfreed208@adelphia.net



Mission of Seneca Rocks Audubon Society:

To enjoy the world of birds, protect wildlife and its habitat, and promote education that

fosters appreciation of the natural environment.

Seneca Rocks Audubon Society
c/o Deb Freed
208 Briar Hill Drive
Clarion, PA 16214