

THE GNATCATCHER

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

BLUES
GRANV
GUYER-DEWEELE

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Crackle and flash almost in the kitchen sink -- the
thunderclap follows even as I
jump back frightened,
afraid to touch metal --

The Singer

The roofgutters pouring down
whole rivers, making holes in the earth --
The electric bulbs fade and go out,
another thin crackling lights the window
and in the instant before the next onslaught of kettledrums,
a small bird, I don't know its name,
among the seagreen tossed leaves
begins its song.

- Dennis Levortov

The Wild Foods Banquet

TIME: 2:30 p.m.

PLACE: Visitor's Center - Prince Gallitzin
State Park

DATE: June 20th - Sunday

This will be the second year for our wild foods outing. 2:30 should give everyone plenty of time to get away for an afternoon at Glendale. The visitor's center has shelter as well as stores for cooking. It will be possible to get hot dishes ready there and we should be ready to eat at 3:30 p.m. Last year's dinner was full of surprises. We had a lot to choose from. This year will be no different, so plan to be there. If you feel a meal of wild edibles might not be 100% appealing or filling for your family - bring along some other sort of picnic fare. If you can not think up something that is truly a wild, edible food, it matters not in the least - just come. There will be plenty to taste (sample), lots to fill up on - enough for all! This outing was a real treat last year and you can learn a lot about out of doors menu! Don't miss this one. In fact, get some of your friends to go with you. No problems with a crowd.

Call Al Burd at 943-0586 if you have any questions about the dinner. He will be glad to give you advice or fine details - or directions - not covered here. Euell Gibbons' book Stalking the Wild Asparagus is the classic guide but he has others in a series on edible foods, medicinal herbs, etc. Also, the Public Library has a number of other books that are quite informative. It's possible, too, that we may have our own recipes and ideas for preparing foods. These might come under the category of folk tradition cooking and some of them are not even written down. Anyone who has their own recipe or knows of dishes or drinks that come from local sources, please try to (if possible) prepare them - or at least get a written recipe into us. It would be great to eventually publish a booklet or cookbook guide on these dishes.

Note on Wild Bird Eggs

How long can eggs last/incubation? This question was asked in the May Gnatcatcher and Ron Garback, our advisor on animal problems, says that it depends on weather conditions. A rule of thumb is 24 hours without the mother on the nest. Embryos cannot take temperature changes for too long without incubation. Eggs that do hatch after 24 hours seldom live. Let the Gnatcatcher know of your experiences with wildlife. We would like to report them and to answer questions you might have. (Remember that Ron will give free advice and services if you have wildlife in need of care. Call him at 814-839-2246.

The May Meeting: An Afternote

The program on endangered species gave us a chance to share information on a subject that is of vital interest to our group. As an on-going concern our attention will remain closely fixed on threatened wildlife and plants. Please keep studying and if you come across a good book, a helpful listing, an informative film, or whatever, pass on the information to Bill Rosevear. The Pennsylvania Audubon Council is now working to get lists of endangered species - flora and fauna - in our own state. Hopefully these lists will be available soon. This is a complex subject and needs some constant definitions for the basic terms used. A species might be very uncommon in our area but be abundant several counties away. There is, too, a certain variable relationship between species and their environments. A certain animal might be an indicator or barometer of how healthy a certain habitat is. (It could just as well be a plant). So, even if a species is not rare or even uncommon over most of the state or country it might be quite wise and worthwhile to protect it and its locale.

A Report on Recent Bird Counts in State College Area

The State College Bird Club does a tremendous job in coordinating its bird sightings. Besides the Christmas Count, the club has two spring counts: The Big Day on May 9th this year and the Bald Eagle State Park Count on April 25th. This was the 4th or 5th Bald Eagle St. Pk. outing and the 35th "Big Day" count! For both of these they take a strict 15 mile radius: The Big Day from Old Main on campus and the other from the state park. Their group reporting is a 25 mile radius for the circle centered on Old Main. This group counting date is compiled on a 2-week basis year round.

On the April 25th count this year the club saw 119 different species. On the May 9th Big Day they saw 141 species! These are large circles compared to our 7 1/2 mile radius Christmas circle but the totals are remarkable. On May 9th they saw some good birds: a raven, long-billed marsh wren, winter wren, 5 different swallows, 24 different warblers, a water pipit, 5 vireos, Savannah sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, an orchard oriole and a red-crossbill! (The vireos were: (1) white-eyed (2) yellow-throated (3) solitary (4) red-eyed (5) Philadelphia.)

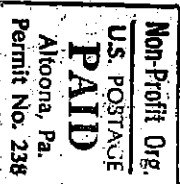
The club puts out a printed checklist of everything seen in Pennsylvania since 1900. They sell these lists and we will have a supply in the fall for members.

Miscellaneous Notes The bluebird houses are not hosting any bluebirds in Sinking Valley. They do have a lot of house wrens, though. A number of people have asked about our houses and we be getting a packet of plans and directions together to give out and send to all who want them.

A reminder to all: keep your sightings recorded and report to Don Wharton using the printed lists he sent out in May.

If you want to be on a small birdchain - a telephone link-up for passing on the word about unusual birds - and haven't been contacted yet, call John Orr at 943-5629. We would like to use the newsletter as a means of getting out to the readers the locales that offer rewarding sights. Keep us informed so we may in turn let the group know about good places for birds.

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