

SMITH AND HARRIS

 JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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"When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence, that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality. This is always exhilarating and sublime."
 - Henry David Thoreau from Walden

 The November Meeting

TIME: 7:00 p.m.
 DATE: November 24th
 PLACE: Childrens' Theater, Altoona Area Public Library

This last Tuesday of the month comes early. It was suggested by Dallas Webb at our last meeting that we take time to assess our aims as a group. This can be done next Tuesday. We will not have a program, just a free session of comments and evaluation. We need it. The programs have been a wonderful part of our regular meetings and all have enjoyed them - the photographic presentations of Harold Yoder, Al Richardson, Al Burd, all our own members, as well as programs on Hawk Mountain, pollution (Alan Miller) and the like. Reps. Bixler and Wilt spoke to our group. This sort of program is great and we will have much of the same and more. But right now - next Tuesday - let us give forth with ideas, especially ideas for practical, realizable projects or endeavors. Perhaps members and friends alike can jot down mentally or on paper some possible projects to work on. It has been suggested, for example, that we take an area of our territory for a pollution survey and follow-up action correction of that area's problems. Another idea put out was that we get behind the younger people who are interested in conservation, backing them in their work and - possibly - as sponsor of an Audubon Youth Group. The recycling of waste could be looked into. We might set up and then turn over pick-up points for cans, bottles, etc.

 Report on the Film-Lecture Series

Our crowd was small for the second film "Land of the Giant Cactus". Some-where around 200 attended. We should have 400 at least to make it financially. At present it is not too good - slightly less than break-even. The first two films received many good comments. The executive committee is working to come up with better publicity. Let everyone keep up the advertising. Our next film is January 8th so we have time to work on publicity. The value of the programs seems to be there - and if we are breaking even it will be no problem. For tickets, flyers, posters and information call John Hunter Orr, 943-5629 after 6:00 p.m. Also call there with suggestions.

 Christmas Bird Count: 1970

This delightful outing is a sure thing each year. The challenge of it all and the excitement of discovery are there. Also - oatmeal cookies, cold spring water, aching muscles, long winter underwear, toy binoculars and country driving Fuller Brush style. The big evening meal - a hot covered dish dinner and gettogether is also planned. Anyone is welcome to sign up for the actual count. The fee is \$1.00 per person. Our groups' copy of the 1969 Christmas Bird Count issue of Audubon Field Notes is available now and can be borrowed at the meeting, or by calling John McCall. The big dinner last year at the Skelp Grange Hall was a success. So, come out for the dinner or for any part of the day's work. Groups will be formed and areas mapped out for coverage. Culp, a little known town (?) in Sinking Valley is the center of our count area which takes in a 15 mile radius circle. Some of the territory last year was not covered due to heavy snow and the number of observers. For more details see John McCall or call 943-5629. Last year the parties turned up red bellied woodpeckers, redpolls and pine skinks - what will it be this year?

A Migration of Monarchs

It was on October 3rd that I first noticed a steady stream of monarch butterflies coursing over the roof, over the yard, up over the trees beyond and out of sight, headed slightly west of south, almost parallel with mountain ranges stretching away toward Bodford, toward Cumberland, toward what unknown destination on the Gulf Coast.

I had seen them occasionally drifting along singly since mid-August. But now the milkweed flowers were gone, their seed pods waiting for the cool nights, to rip apart, and drift their air born seed to a new life in the next field. So with this harbinger of freezing weather, and the nectar of their favorite flowers to be found only in warmer climes, they were following their ancient instinct to survive the cold which would freeze and prevent their return. Their brilliant colors faded, their wings battered and frayed, they would return next spring to lay their eggs on milkweed plants and die.

But now this horde, the late generation of the summer was coursing by in ever increasing numbers. In twos or threes up to six at a time they fluttered by, occasionally flapping their wings to keep a heading against the light westerly-crossing breeze. The day was bright and clear yet they had no time to stop on the fading heads of the purple fall asters which only a week before had been their favorite dallying spot. Now their course was set, over the house between the same two trees, over the yard, off again through the same opening between the box elders, a stream never wider than 100 ft., sailing along at 11 miles an hour (I've learned since). I watched them for half an hour and at their maximum density, counted about 40-50 in ten minutes. Even 3 per minute in a five hour period this would be almost 1,000 butterflies.

When I finally tore myself away and went off on an errand I saw no other such aggregation in the area. Was this a particular flyway? On a particularly good day in a particularly good year? It seems unlikely. The monarch's eyesight is too poor to suggest that he flies by landmarks. Then what mysterious instinct leads him to a 2,000 mile journey to the warm Gulf breezes, and guides him by what devious path over how many millions of obstacles?

It is not likely I shall see them again. Though many are tagged yearly on the southern migration, very few are retrieved coming back. But I know that they will, and that next fall new generations who never went the way before will be here to grace the milkweed flowers and the fall asters.

- Al Richardson

Phosphate Free Detergents

A number of new detergents have been announced. One of the first was a Sears, Roebuck product advertised to be phosphate-free, non polluting, heavy duty, super concentrated, good for clothes in hot or cold water. "Clean wash for you ... clean water for everyone!" It might be worth trying. The Gnatcatcher would like to hear some reports on its effectiveness. Also - anyone knowing of a new dishwasher phosphate free detergent let the editors know.

"The Vanishing Sea"

January 8th Robert W. Davison Altoona Area High School Auditorium
Friday 8:00 Doors open at 7:30 \$1.25 adult .50 student