

SNAGGALTSR

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Vol. 2 No. 9

December 1970

The Christmas Bird Count

December is the month of the Christmas Bird Count. Our Gnatcatcher is out earlier than usual to bring the particulars of this annual event to the members in time for planning. The date will be December 27th - two days after Christmas which comes on a Friday this year. We have reserved the Skelp Grange Hall on that Sunday for our meeting place and evening covered dish dinner. The group will be taking part in its second count. Across North America north of Mexico 15,000 or more observers will be out recording total species seen and individual listings. Last year - our first attempt at counting - our group did real well - 31 different species on the count day itself plus 10 more different birds in the two week count period. It is surprising just how many birds can be found in winter. The data from each group goes in to National Audubon where it is edited and published as the special "Christmas Bird Count" issue of the Audubon Field Notes. Such data is of use to scientists of various disciplines. Anyone is welcome to come out on Sunday, the 27th. Some may want to actively participate in counting; others may want to get out for a drive or walk, possibly ending up for the dinner. This operation with its evening meeting for totaling numbers serves well as our December meeting.

Those actively counting are required by the editors to pay a fee of \$1.00 to us and we in turn pass it on to National. This fee is to cover some of the great expense in publishing the journal. (Fees may be paid on count day.)

The area covered is quite large for our small group to handle completely. The area is a circle 15 miles in diameter. Going from a center at Culp, a small crossroads in Sinking Valley, out in various directions $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles we take in Water Street and a bit beyond, Yellow Spring, Point View, A good stretch of the Frankstown branch of the Juniata, Canoe Creek, the Beaver Dam area, the Kettle Reservoir, Greenwood, the Bellwood Reservoir (just inside the circle) Bellwood, itself, Tipton, a tip of the Tipton reservoir, Tyrone and one part of the Tyrone Reservoir, Birmingham, Grier School, the little Juniata for a long stretch and Spruce Creek (at the bridge and town). Of course, Sinking Valley itself is the focal point of attention - especially for the large horned lark population to be found there. All of these locales, however can be covered if there are enough parties and time. Dawn to dusk is possible if one wants to do it. (Jack Hancock, John McCall, Dallas Webb and John Orr put in that time last year) A large field map has been prepared for over-all planning and assigning of parties' territories. This map is the product of Al Richardson and John Orr and represents 6 man hours work. It measures 4'8" x 6' (!). Members living in this area or knowing people in the circle can count at feeders or call in one of the parties for a count. Feeders can be real "hot" spots of activity.

Those interested in counting should call John Orr at 943-5629 or write him at 54 Duff Drive, Altoona, Pa. 16602. Parties will be formed with someone qualified in charge. Territories will be given out and time periods agreed upon. The key concern is positive identification. When in doubt don't count. This is imperative for accuracy's sake. Groups may go over their assigned areas by car, stopping and starting - or may want to go by foot in a more leisurely manner.....or both. The weather might be so bad as to postpone the count. The alternate day will be Sunday, January 3rd. A heavy snow storm cutting off easy access - closing roads, etc. would be reason for changing the date. Also - a very heavy, driving rain would make a change desirable. Dress warmly, take light sustaining refreshments and be ready for any sort of surprise.

This year we have decided to work early in covering the area, mainly to get to know it better but also to get the parties organized and the members informed as to what they might possibly be seeing. This Sunday - the 13th - as well as the next - the 20th - anyone wishing to go for a field trip inside the circle should call John Orr at 943-5629. It is hoped we can spend a few (or couple) hours in the field and then retire to have a cup of brew (choco-late or the like) as we go over some guides and charts showing the expected - to-counted birds. This would be in the early afternoon.

The covered fish dinner, now a traditional affair, will begin at dark. Parties and individuals will be reporting in to the Skelp Grange Hall from dusk to dark. Those in charge of arranging the kitchen work will be there earlier. We have the hall for the whole day, so it can be used as a meeting place, resting place, etc. Come anytime. It is nice to sit down after eating and tally the days results. To find this hall going from Altoona on Rt #220, go just past Bellwood and turn off left over the mountain and down to Skelp, a very small town in Sinking Valley. It sits close against the mountain. Going from Altoona by way of Sinking Valley, go up Kettle St. past the reservoir, on through the pass into the open valley to the intersection of Gulp (Black's farm). Turn left there and continue on past the Sinking Valley Country Club (golf course) until you come to Skelp.

Mona Hancock and Olga Orr will be handling the dinner. Call Mona at 942-2020 (after 6:00) if you can bring a dish. Bring your favorite covered dish, of course, if you wish. Call if you're not sure what is needed.

Note: if it is not possible to reach John Orr at the number given above, call John McCall at 942-1227 for bird count details, etc.

The Vanishing Sea

The third film of the series. January 8th at 8:00 p.m. in the auditorium of the Altoona Area High School. Let's try hard to make this film a 400 + affair. Talk it up. Mr. Robert Davison is the lecturer. His film shows the area of the Great Salt Lake in Utah.

List of Officers and Committee Chairmen:

President:	John Hunter Orr	Conservation Committee:	Ed McConnell
Vice-president:	Al Richardson	Field Trip Committee:	John McCall
Secretary:	Gladys Glisson	Membership Committee:	Al Richardson
Treasurer:	Jack Hancock	Social Committee:	Jane Webb
		Publications Committee:	Dallas Webb

Gnatcatcher Contributions

Please support the newsletter with items of interest. News articles, anything. Share your experiences or projects. Send any materials to Dallas Webb, editor of the Gnatcatcher - Box #188, RD #3, Altoona, Pa. 16601. (For example, let him know what the new phosphate free detergents are like. It would be nice to hear some comments on them.)

The Internal Revenue Service Ruling Leaves National Audubon Free to Carry on Law Suits Without Endangering Tax Status

The Internal Revenue Service has announced its new guidelines for tax exemption for organizations that file public interest law suits. The ruling lays to rest the fears that had been raised by the I.R.S. study; the National Audubon Society is free to continue engaging in public interest law suits without jeopardizing the exemption under which its contributors can list their contributions as deductions on their own income tax returns.

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