

THE
SNAPE AND ASHBR

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
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1969 Christmas Bird Count

Our first annual Christmas bird census was in all ways a real success. At least a dozen observers got out into Stinking Valley for the count and there were about twenty or so adults plus children at the follow-up covered dish dinner. Dallas Webb, John McCall, Jack Hancock and John Orr were out at day-break - that is, 7:00 A.M. - struggling in vain in deep snow around the Kettle Reservoir. Some deer were seen there but no grouse or turkey. A bitter wind, in effect, blew us back to our cars and on up into the valley. Dallas sighted the first birds - crows they were - at Raven Rocks, his home. Ravens are not seen in our area any more although there are still rocks for them at Dallas! If ever they should return. Getting back on our feet after the wind lashing, we immediately ran into a flock of redpolls - a species of finch - and were able to count 27 of these small birds by the end of the day. The redpoll is very unusual in this area coming down from Canada at times in winter. This could well be the most unusual bird seen the entire day. It is a good one.

The wind died down considerably and stayed down, thus increasing the chances for seeing birds. Our prime target - the bird of emphasis in our count day planning - the horned lark, was everywhere in the wider part of the lower valley. We saw them feeding in manure strips and by end of day had counted 285, top in number of all species seen. We are eager to compare counts from other areas with ours in order to learn more about this fascinating ground bird.

Our total number of species for the day was 32. Total individuals seen: 1,400. An additional 9 species of birds were seen in the two week count period and were listed separately on the report sheets sent to National Audubon. The following is a listing of all birds seen December 28: hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker, flicker, crow, tufted titmouse, black-capped chickadee, blue jay, starling, robin, house sparrow, junco, redpoll, pine siskin, goldfinch, tree sparrow, cardinal, white breasted nuthatch, horned lark, meadow lark, evening grosbeak, cowbird, mourning dove, mockingbird, ring-necked pheasant, killdeer, song sparrow, sparrow hawk, red-tail hawk, wild turkey, white throated sparrow.

The other species recorded are: carolina wren, yellow-bellied sapsucker, cedar waxwing, brown creeper, golden crowned kinglet, house wren, black duck, ruffed grouse and snow bunting. The last bird is especially noteworthy as it is not seen too often or in great numbers in Blair County. Two buntings were seen among a flock of horned larks on a manure strip.

Later in the day others joined in the count - Ed McConnell, Gladys Glisson, Harold Yoder, Al Richardson and Mr. and Mrs. Savage. Paul Luckner, Bill Anslinger and Katherine DeWuth also contributed data. It is hoped that next year our efforts will extend in number of observers and area of territory. It has proven to be an exciting way to spend a day. Next year we will try to have parties set-up to include anyone desiring to get out - whether experienced in bird identification or not. Some groups schedule a "Big Day" count for the peak of spring migration. We would like to try it, time permitting, this spring. Audubon Field Notes, the journal publishing the Christmas bird count data from across the continent, will be available to the group at a future meeting. Anyone wishing to study it may do so by contacting John McCall, our field trip committee chairman. The count should be out by April 1st. Anyone wanting to subscribe to this journal may do so for \$5.00 a year payable to National Audubon.

First Meeting of the Year

The first meeting of 1970 will be Tuesday, January 27th, at 7:30 P.M. in the Childrens' Theater of the Altoona Public Library. John James Audubon and his paintings will be the subject of a filmstrip program in which we may all take part, commenting or asking questions. The filmstrips are of excellent quality being produced by Encyclopaedia Britannica in beautiful color. There should also be a display of natural history books set up in the theater at this time. The library has agreed to make available for our examination some of their collection. This will be a great time to learn more about our namesake.

Our Unique Water Wilderness - the Everglades

March 31st is the date of William A. Anderson's film-lecture on the Everglades. This will be the society's first attempt at sponsoring such a public lecture and all of us must do all that we can to make it a success. The reception of this program by the public and the group will determine whether or not a full five feature series can be held in 1970-71. Planning has begun and literature, tickets, etc. will be available at the February meeting. If everyone tries to publicize the film in their own way, we as a group should be able to sell many tickets to friends and acquaintances. The Altoona High School auditorium has been rented for the evening of the 31st. Program begins at 8:00 P.M. Watch the paper for more news and information on ticket purchasing. Those who have ideas on publicity please make them known to the film-lecture committee. Now is the time to collect our energies in working on this worthwhile project.

Television Programs

Discovery - Sunday, February 8: "The Changing Face of the Desert."
Sunday, February 15: "Nature's Strangest Monuments."
(Both on ABC-TV, 11:30 A.M.)

The World of the Beaver - Friday, January 30, NBC-TV, 7:30 P.M.

Wild River - Tuesday, February 10, CBS-TV, 7:30 P.M. A Natl. Geographic Society color special dealing with imperative need for conservation of the Salmon River in Idaho.

Survival on the Prairie - Friday, February 13, NBC-TV 7:30 P.M. A study of the vast area of America's rolling plains.

Membership Appeal

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society welcomes as local members all those within our territory belonging to National Audubon. Primarily this includes members who joined prior to January 1969. Write to the Gnatcatcher for more information or indicate on your renewal form the name of our branch if so desiring to affiliate. We need your support in our local conservation efforts.

State College Film Series

Wednesday, February 18, "The Untamed Olympics", presented by Walter H. Berlet. A film-lecture on the wilderness Olympic area of Washington State. The rocky, surf-battered beaches, snow-capped peaks, glaciers and dense rain forests provide homes for elk, mountain beaver, marmot, osprey, mountain goat and others. In color at the State College High School Auditorium, Westerly Parkway, St. College.

Student Memberships

Our society should want to have young people attending our programs and in other ways taking part. The Key Club of Altoona High School, for example, has offered their services if needed. Perhaps a tree planting program might be a good project to sponsor in conjunction with that group. National has just informed us that a new student membership is now available. The rate is \$6 per year and accords full voting privileges in branch affairs. This would be a nice gift to a young person - high school or college, and for \$6 it is well worth it just for the Audubon magazine alone.

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