

G N A T C A T C H E R

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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The Snow

It sifts from leaden sieves,
It powders all the wood,
It fills with alabaster wool
The wrinkles of the road

It makes an even face
Of mountains and of plain,
Unbroken forehead from the east
Unto the east again.

It reaches to the fence,
It wraps it, rail by rail,
Till it is lost in fleeces;
It flings a crystal veil.

On stump and stack and stem, --
The summer's empty room,
Acres of seams where harvests were,
Recordless, but for them.

It ruffles wrists of posts,
As ankles of a queen, --
Then it stills its artisans like ghosts,
Denying they have been.

- Emily Dickinson

The First Meeting of the New Year - Williamsburg Restored

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

DATE: January 28th - last Tuesday of the month.

PLACE: Twenty-Eighth Church of the Brethren - Union Avenue and Twenty-Eighth Street
Altoona, Pa.

PROGRAM: An all-color film from Williamsburg, Va. entitled "Williamsburg Restored"

This film comes to us through the Public Library on special order. It is one of a series of such productions created by the people of that great historical site. We all gave a high rating to Mark Catesby - Colonial Naturalist which was shown at a program last year. Bring a guest for this fine film! As always, all are welcome.

Board Meetings - Open Meetings

Who knows for sure if its covered by the "Sunshine Laws" ? - that is - a board meeting" of our branch. Mike Chonko, our president, has felt that these meetings are worthwhile for anyone. Of course the officers and committee chairmen (or chairpersons) are expected to attend them but anyone is welcome and Mike feels that members should come with their ideas and suggestions. (As long as there aren't over a 100 at his house) Here is a calendar of future open board meetings:

- Feb. 14th - Don Wharton's - Frankmont Rd. off Maple Hollow Rd. (Ducansville)
- Mar. 14th - Margaret and Mike Chonkos - 2316 11th St. (Altoona)
- Apr. 18th - Mary Slippey's - Ducansville - Call for directions: 695-5200
- May 16th - John Orr's - 3001 4th Ave. (Altoona)
- Jun 13th - Chonkos (See above)

Annual Banquet - February 25th

The annual banquet of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society will be held on Tuesday, February 25th at the Twenty-Eighth St. Church of the Brethren. Wayne Harpster will be our guest speaker. He will share with us his experiences as a naturalist in a slide-talk presentation. Mr. Harpster lives in Port Matilda and many people in Altoona know his wife - she was Helen Cherry as a biology teacher at Altoona High School. This is

a special event for us and has been a well attended affair. The programs are interesting and the meal is very good. This year we urge all to send or call in their reservations to Margaret Chonko as soon as possible. The meal is \$3.50. The time is 6:30 P.M. As for all of our get-togethers anyone may come. Bring a special guest for a fine time

PENNSYLVANIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Mike Chonko and the other officers are going to Harrisburg on February 22nd for a meeting of groups interested in creating a state Audubon organization. Other states have them - but not too many. We will learn the pros and cons of such a group and will then decide as a group here whether to support it.

Odds and Ends of Important Business

Some members are hoping we will have a "Big Day" in May - in the first week of that month - for birds. It would be an all day dawn to dusk outing, possibly within our Christmas Bird Count Circle, for total species.

Future Programs:

1. March. Organic Gardening
2. April: Open at this time
3. May: Mount Etna (slide program)

The constitution of our branch will be reviewed by a special committee with the aim of proposing amendments to be acted upon by the group as a whole. This is a top priority matter and in short time we will hopefully have a more useful and sensible governing document.

Earth Day Helpful Hints

It wasn't too long ago that the first Earth Day was held and from it came many ideas and lists of suggestions as to how to save energy and preserve our environment. We would like to revive that clearing house concept used by some periodicals to help each other with little (or big) energy savers. Roxanne Shank sent in a few: Cut your paper napkins in half to make them go further; take your own bags to the grocery store. The editor of the Gnatcatcher suggests bricks in the toilet tanks to conserve volume of water lost with flushing? Delightful subject! Would it work though? Let us know if you experiment with this idea. Send your lists of suggestions in to the Gnatcatcher or pass them on to John Orr at the meetings. We will publish them.

The Sixth Annual Bird Count

The day was overcast but not really too cold December 15th when nearly 20 members and friends went afield for the count. It was a bit frustrating without the hoped for light snow cover and the bright sun. Still, it turned out to be the best ever for us. A record breaker in every way. Most people to go out counting; most different species seen on one count day: 43; most total different species in the 7 day count period: 50; And the most total birds ever seen on one count day: 3,137.

Some of the more unusual species sighted December 15th were: rough-legged hawk, turkey, screech owl, pileated wood-pecker, brown creeper, winter wren, ruby-crowned kinglet, common grackle, robin, and fox sparrow. Also of note in the count week was a white-crowned sparrow seen by Don Wharton and John Orr at Janet Deluth's farm, and a long-billed marsh wren seen by Don near Canoe Ck. Lake. Bill Murray heard great-horned owls at Point View and he and Charley Walton spotted the count's only turkeys there.

Look for a full report in the Altoona Mirror.

The Gnatcatcher
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