

The GNATCATCHER

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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MAY 1969

A Gathering of Birds

If you measure success in a venture by the richly rewarding experiences shared by a large number of the group, then our first field trip to Kiwanis Camp in Sinking Valley was a success. We had about thirty members for most of the morning. The group was extremely prompt, a remarkable occurrence for most adults, and very soon got into the spirit of sharing and enriching our store of nature lore. The Juneberry shrub, one of the early blooming plants, the rich fragrance of skunk cabbage, the toads belly leaf that can actually be blown up like a little balloon, and on and on through the evening grosbeaks and natural landscape of the local area. Many thanks to those who helped make our first trip a memorable experience, with especial thanks to Mr. Jim Samuels.

Bear Meadows and Alan Seeger

May

The group has planned to visit Bear Meadows first on ~~May~~ 17, at 8:00 A.M. then proceed to Alan Seeger Park for a look at the virgin forest and perhaps lunch. Directions to Bear Meadows are: Follow Rt #322 from State College through and past Boalsburg one mile. Upon reaching a large sign for Skimont, the skiing area, take a right toward that resort. Follow the signs to Skimont and when past pick up the Bear Meadows signs. The road off Rt 322 will ~~alternate dirt and paved~~ alternate dirt and paved. Meet in the parking area by the Bear Meadows stone monument. From there we will lead you on down the road to Alan Seeger Park. We can take the loop walk past the big trees and hopefully see some hooded and Canadian warblers in the rhododendron thickets. It should be a rare experience, "leave the horses" and join us.

Next Meeting - May 28th Peoples Natural Gas Co.

Same place as last meeting, same good refreshments, and a presentation of ornithological wonder by Mr. Harold Yoder. Mr. Yoder has been at work on this for many years and brings with it a wealth of scientific and practical information. Also at this meeting we should elect officers and set up whatever administrative structures we need to function as a group. This may be the last meeting of the summer so plan to attend. (7:45 P.M. Lloyd St. & 6th Ave)

Are You -----?

---interested in wild flowers, fossils, colored rock formations, polished stones made into wearable jewelry, small tables made to reveal and preserve the beauty of a colorful hobby, hollow geodes that hold water for the birds meeting your eye while investigating the new shoot of plant appearing for another year of growth?

If you follow the directions, "Turn up at the first lane on the right, after passing the 3rd barn beyond the "campus" on the Juniata Gap backroad", you will arrive in an area that will supply you with information concerning all that has been mentioned and more, too!

We had ventured to the house of Mr. and Mrs. James Samuels to see, for real, many of the wild plants and flowers that had been preserved on colored slides and shown to us by Mr. Al Burd at our April Audubon meeting.

Mr. Samuels and his wife (his "ears and eyes") live in the midst of these possessions from nature. This lifetime hobby has so filled Mr. Samuels with unlimited information that it tumbles forth with an urgency and eagerness that compels you to return for more.

Voicing your interest and curiosity almost becomes an on the spot appointment with Mr. Samuels who will be eagerly awaiting your arrival.

A Visit to Corkscrew Swamp

Mr. Albert Richardson reports that he had the happy opportunity of spending two half days in Corkscrew Swamp - the Audubon Sanctuary near Naples - on a recent trip to visit relatives in St. Petersburg, Florida. He also spent one day "birding" with an active member of the St. Petersburg Audubon Society on the Mullet Keys which are themselves a bird sanctuary of Pinellas County.

In addition to the fascinating plant life of the swamp, including the largest forest of bald cypress left in America, bird life was abundantly evident, including the common American egret, great blue and little blue herons, the black crowned night heron, the green heron, the anhinga or water turkey and the limpkin. The pileated ~~woodpecker~~ and red bellied woodpeckers abound as does the red shouldered hawk and the barred owl. The sanctuary is most noted as the nesting site for the huge wood ibis, many of which were seen making their great wheeling flights over the swamp.

In and around the Mullet Keys a great variety of shore birds were evident - including the brown pelican, laughing gulls, cormorants, common egrets, snowy and cattle egrets, white ibis, common coot, American oystercatcher, semi-palmated plovers and killdeer, ruddy turnstones, whimbrels and willet; Forster's, least and royal terns.

Mr. Richardson claims to have added eighteen birds to his life list.

Let's Get Concerned About Conservation

If we are to instill into humans a sense of value for our natural resources we must understand the characteristics of ²value when it is held by any individual.

- 1 - It must be freely chosen from alternatives available after careful consideration of the consequences of the alternative.
- 2 - It must be prized by the person holding it so that he is willing to publicly defend it.
- 3 - A value must be acted upon repeatedly over a period of time.

Audubon has an obligation now to move into number three and find in our immediate community projects that will allow us to publicly defend our value of nature and to allow us to act repeatedly. Let us begin to gather ideas for our projects that we can share and then let's decide upon several. Send your ideas to the editors of Gnatcatcher or bring them with you to the meeting.

Early Spring Bird Watching Notes

On March 29th two great blue herons were seen at the lower Horseshoe Curve reservoir. Also there that day were scaups, whistling swans, red-breasted mergansers, canvasbacks, ring-necks, Canadian geese, and ring-billed gulls. Mallards and wood ducks were seen on April 3rd.

On April 6th there were mallards, wood ducks, buffleheads at the upper Mill Run reservoir; at the lower a pair of hooded mergansers and numerous horned grebes.

An osprey was seen perched upon a dead limb at the upper end of the lower Horseshoe Curve reservoir on April 8th.

Bluebirds on the Wane

The popular and beneficial eastern bluebird is rapidly disappearing almost everywhere east of the Rockies and may become extinct unless bird lovers step in to help stop the downward trend, according to the Purple Martin and Bluebird Association.

Headquartered in Crawfordsville, Indiana, the Association says the eastern bluebird, like the wood duck, is a cavity nester. With natural nesting sites rapidly disappearing and foreigners such as house sparrows and starlings taking over many of the remaining sites, the little bluebird has a severe housing problem.

The eastern bluebird is one of America's favorite songbirds, and his voracious appetite for insects makes him a valuable ally of agriculture.

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The Association believes the bluebird can be saved from disaster if enough people will construct the proper kind of houses and situate them in rural areas. Detailed plans for the houses and tips on locating them are available at Association cost of .10¢ from Gerald R. Dreyer, Secretary, Purple Martins and Bluebirds of America, P.O. Box 132, Crawfordsville, Indiana 47933. (Conservation News 2-15-69:13)