

THE

# Gnatcatcher

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Vol 11 No 8

December 1979

## Famous Oatmeal Cookies

$\frac{2}{4}$ cup shortening, soft	1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup firmly packed brown sugar	1 cup sifted all-purpose flour
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar	1 teaspoon salt
1 egg	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon soda
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup water	3 cups oats, uncooked

Beat shortening, sugars, egg, water and vanilla together until creamy. Sift together flour, salt and soda, add to creamed mixture; blend well. Stir in oats. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto greased cookie sheets. Bake in preheated moderate oven (350°F.) 12 to 15 mins. (For variety add chopped nutmeats, raisins, chocolate chips or coconut.) Makes 5 dozen.

- Quaker Oats Recipe

## Christmas Bird Count

December 16th - All Day

The Big Day. John Orr (943-5629) is working out final details for the Sunday count. He has handouts with many of the finer points listed. Anyone who has not contacted John for this year's outing should do so right away. The teams are being set up and there is still time to get on one or be a one person team yourself. The count circle, centered on the Culp intersection in Sinking Valley, has over 700 square miles of territory. Many stretches and pockets go uncovered each year. It is an understatement to say that we need more counters. Please consider taking part. Basically, there is no hard driving seriousness or formality about the census. Nor is there any sort of mystery regarding just what to do. The count is a modest attempt to attain totals of all birds in the circle and all different species seen. The main prerequisite for success on a count is to first have fun and second to see it all as an adventure, a challenge. And - on both of these elements it helps a lot to have some fresh baked oatmeal cookies. True, one could have some other kind - but: each to his or her own taste.

Besides cookies, one needs binoculars, guides, warm books, long underwear, a thermos of something hot, gasoline in the tank, topographical map or Blair County map (See John), pencils, pad, ice scrapers, paper towels for windshields, snacks or bag lunch, unusual species report form, and the Audubon Bird Count Guide (put out by us.)

Areas that need covered now are: Bellwood, Beaver Dams, Homer's and Rigle's Gaps, Tyrone, and many smaller points such as Greenwood, East End, Juniata (in part) but not Juniata Gap, Pinecroft and Bellemead. Those who live in the circle should be getting out now. If members know anyone who lives in the 15 mile diameter count area, please contact us. We need feeder counters - those who give a close watch to their home feeding stations. Some of the best lists come from them. For an idea of total land area, these are the outer points of the circle: Water St., Mt. Etna, Short Mt., Point View, Canoe Creek Lake, Kettle Reservoir, East End, Juniata, Homer's Gap ( $\frac{1}{2}$ -way up), Riggles Gap ( $\frac{1}{2}$ -way up), Bellwood Reservoir (all of it is in), Tipton Reservoir (breastwork is in), Tyrone Reservoir (just the lower one), Tyrone, and Eton Hill (northeast of Birmingham).

This year the Juniata Valley Audubon Society decided at the November meeting to pay the count fees (\$1.50/person) for all participants. The Christmas Count issue may be bought separately from John Orr, the compiler, and, of course, one may subscribe to the bi-monthly Audubon magazine that handles the census: American Birds. Our group has a large (huge) topo map of the area for anyone who wants the total picture. We also have copies of the counts going back 10 years for study. It helps to read our results and to make comparisons with other groups' yearly efforts.

Problems that might make for inaccuracies are: counting birds twice through poor notetaking on sites of observation, overlapping another's territory, claiming a sighting when there was even a little doubt. (When in doubt, don't count!)

Covered Dish Supper

When: Sunday, December 16th, 5:00 /5:30 on to 7:30/8:00.

Who: All of you. Any and all members and friends and kids. This is an informal gathering - a lot of fun. If you can't get out for actual counting, try to attend the supper.

What: Good food. Lots of it. We supply the ham (baked) / You bring any favorite dish: dessert, vegetable casserole, meat dish, salad, breads/rolls, or surprises.

where: Skelp Grange Hall - located just over the mountain from Bellwood in Skelp (a very small community) in Sinking Valley. Approachable from the Valley via Kettle-Culp-S/Valley Golf Course or from B/Wood via mountain road that starts up at Jack's Restaurant. There is a nice kitchen and eating area in the hall.

Why: This takes the place of our December meeting. It is a time to meet and talk and tally counts. The food is too good to miss.

The atmosphere - rustic and plain - enjoyable.

A chance to learn a thing or two about birds.

Plan to attend!

Bring some friends!

Share the excitement of the final tallies.

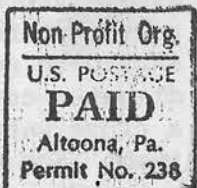
Troublesome Winter Species

The current confusing pair of note is: house finch vs. purple finch. The newly arrived house finches like urban life and are now more likely to be seen than the purple finches in our count area. They have a red-brick color on head, breast and lower back. The males have brown streakings along the sides which is the distinguishing mark. Purple finches do not have streakings - on the male. Also: the female purple finch has a white eye-stripe. We need these birds - both of them - for the count.

Other confusing pairs: accipiters (Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks) size alone is best. (See guides on these and the ones to follow); nuthatches - white breasted and red-breasted; sparrows (tree/field, and song.) - the field has never been seen on a Christmas Bird Count but might appear at a feeder; white-throated and white-crowned sparrows; golden-crowned and ruby-crowned kinglets; mockingbird vs. shrikes; hairy vs. downey woodpeckers; black duck vs. mallard. Your bird guides are a must before calling these. Shrikes are very seldom seen. Another pair: wrens - Carolina and winter (the house wren has gone and would be rare).

Notes: January Meeting - NO MEETING! Next regular meeting is February. The Banquet is in April. Elections are in March. Give nominations to Nominating Committee (John Orr is head) for president and secretary. Ethics I, II, III: are overall titled CODE OF BIRDING ETHICS.

The Gnatcatcher  
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Membership Drive: We need 15 members more by June 30th 1980 if we are to qualify in the contest or drive now underway. Please give a gift membership or get a friend to join! Call Fran Burgoon for brochures and any and all membership details: 695-5857.

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Patton, Pa. 16668



### Ethic I: Thoughtfulness of Birds

- Be stealthy, quiet. Try to observe birds so they are unaware of your presence, thus providing an opportunity to learn their normal habits. Avoid quick movements, discordant noises, running, continuous chasing of the same birds, throwing things, and "thrashing about". The quiet observer sees more.
- Approaching a nest too closely or repeated flushing may cause abandonment of the eggs and young by the parents and expose the nest to predation. Do not handle eggs or young.
- When photographing a nest or parents at the nest, don't keep it unduly exposed to sun, cold or rain, causing destruction of eggs or young or desertion by parents. Instead of cutting branches or grass near the nest, tie them back. Leave the habitat as you found it.
- Use tape recorders with discretion to prevent driving birds from their territories. Never play recorders in heavily birded areas.
- Divide larger groups of people; individuals or small groups cause less disturbance.
- Avoid "tree-whacking" to arouse cavity dwellers. Undue disturbance may lead to abandonment.

### Ethic II: Thoughtfulness of Habitat

- Avoid trampling fragile habitats, especially marshes, grasslands, wildflowers and tangles. Stay on established pathways. Damage to the habitat affects all species in the ecosystem.
- When practical, pool transportation to birding areas to save energy and reduce environmental impact.
- Keep motor vehicles on established roads and parking areas. One set of tracks invites others. In fragile ecosystems tracks may last for decades and severely degrade the habitat value.
- Obtain permission for entry to private lands and when necessary on government lands. Respect the occupant's privacy and property. Don't block rights-of-way; leave gates as you found them.
- Walk single file in fragile areas. Small groups reduce adverse impact on the habitat and require narrower paths and roads, and smaller parking areas.
- Leave no litter.
- Plan restroom stops to avoid pollution of the habitat.
- Be extremely careful with fire. Avoid smoking while walking; press out cigarettes on rocks or mineral soil. Carry butts with you.
- Use discretion in divulging information on nests and rare and endangered birds, especially in fragile habitats.

### Ethic III: Thoughtfulness of Birders

- Keep down unnecessary talk, noise and disturbance so that all birders in a group have the opportunity to exercise their full facilities of sight and hearing.
- Put the interests of the group before your own. Keep the birding group together so that interesting and rare or unusual sightings can be shared until all interests are addressed.
- When with a group of mixed birding abilities the leader or better birders should assist others in identification and should point out field marks, habits and ecological relationships.
- Avoid excessive use of squeakers and "pishing"; it may reduce their effectiveness and may annoy other birders.
- Drive lawfully and use common sense and consideration for other drivers.
- Be sensitive to the efforts and energies of fellow birders. In identifying and reporting the rare and unusual, always err on the side of "over-identification" so there is less chance of wrong identity. Be prepared to justify identifications adequately with good descriptions or photographs to minimize perpetuation of errors in the literature.  
Do not put undue weight on published geographic distributions in making identifications, but consider all similar species. When possible take notes in the field, including not only diagnostic markings, but voice and habits to validate identification.  
When possible prior to reporting a rare or unusual sighting, have another birder or better or equal ability locate and verify your identification.
- When birding at a private home be considerate of your host's time and property.