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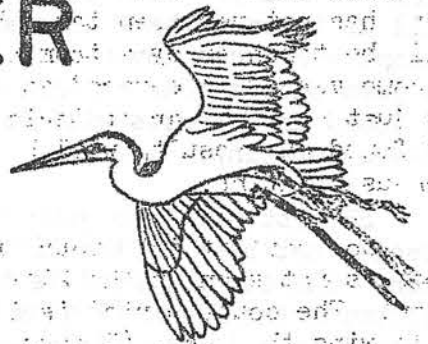
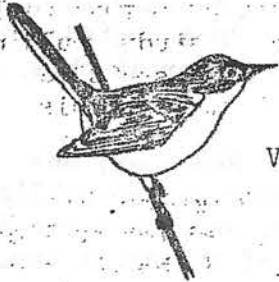
# GNATCATCHER

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

ALTOONA, PENNSYLVANIA

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December 1975



Winter Field

Sorrow on the acres,  
Wind in the thorn,  
And an old man ploughing  
Through the frosty morn.

A flock of the dark birds,  
Rooks and their wives,  
Follow the plough team  
The old man drives;  
And troops of starlings,  
A-tittle-tat and prim,  
Follow the rooks  
That follow him.

A.E. Coppard

## Christmas Sky Show: December 30th

TIME: 7:30 pm DATE: Tuesday/December 30th

PLACE: Planetarium - Hollidaysburg Sr. High School, Hollidaysburg, Pa.

Fred Marschak, the director of the planetarium, will present for our group a special Christmas sky show. He has been highly praised for the fine shows and talks that he has given to the public and to students. Since this is an evening reserved just for our group we may bring anyone we want - friends, family, relatives - anyone. Perhaps there are some young people whom you might invite - students or neighbor kids. We will have a short business meeting (very short) and refreshments.

Our normal last Tuesday of the month holds for this event. Normally, we do not have a meeting in December since the Bird Count takes place then, but this will be an exception. Admittance is free, so please feel free to come and bring a crowd! To get to the high school coming from Altoona and Lakemont, you turn right one block before the first Hollidaysburg stop light - onto Hart St. Take Hart St. past the Jr. High for a total of two blocks to Montgomery St. where you turn right again and proceed right on down to the Sr. High. (on Montgomery St.) When you get to the school turn in to your right and park.

## Christmas Bird Count

The Seventh Annual Christmas Bird Count will take place December 21st - a Sunday - within the count circle centered in Culp, a crossroads in Sinking Valley. This year promises to bring better than ever results. A lot of people have signed up already for it and more will be contacted soon. Call John Orr if you want to take part. He is the count compiler - the one who coordinates the whole thing, writes it up and submits the results to National for publication in American Birds. Call him for anything at 943-5629 or stop by his place evenings at 3001 4th Avenue, Altoona.

Who would go out on a day when snow and ice might combine with cold to get you? Each year more and more people step out for a thrilling adventure with nature. Armed with binoculars, lots of sleep the night before, fresh baked oatmeal cookies, long underwear, good guides and warm socks, the counters drive and hike about for hours from daybreak to dusk. At dusk the teams come into Skelp for the traditional covered dish dinner and meeting at the Grange Hall. Some don't go for the entire day. Plan what you want and John Orr will set up a territory for you. Those who are not too sure about all the winter species that might turn up should get in with a team that has an experienced leader. It is possible to go out for as few as 2 or 3 hours. Don Wharton will head the team in the Canoe Ck. Dam area. Earl Higgins will take Spruce Ck., Ft. Hill and Tyrone. Bill Rosevear will handle Tipton and 220 to Bellwood. Madge Quick has Bellwood. Paul Luckner has a special section in Sinking Valley. Bill Murray heads up the team at Point View. Kurt Gansauer takes the high trails into mountainous areas: this year to the power-line near Rt 220 and Bellwood - up and over to the St. Game Lands and the Sinking Valley side. John Orr and John McCall take Sinking Valley proper. Don Wharton also is in charge

of Canoe Valley from Yellow Springs to Water St. The Greenwood/East End/Juniata territory has not yet been taken by a team. It is hoped that the different spots or areas will be taken on by a team as their own to be worked up. An area adopted by a team would become very well covered as each bit and piece of it was observed. Such a study would not be just once a year at Christmas time but rather a year around affair. "Hot spots" can be found and results will be certainly much better. We get better and better at this census counting.

So: get out into your areas for a preview prior to the count day. Remember, any species not seen on the 21st but sighted in the count period may be reported for publication. The count period is three days before the 21st, the 21st itself, and the three days following the 21st. (7 days total). Pay fees to John Orr the evening of the count day. Participants in the field and feeder watchers should pay the \$1.00 fee as soon as possible. It is essential that fees be collected since the Count couldn't continue without them. They cover costly organizing, mailings, editing, and the giant 448 page publication at National. Present non-subscribers of American Birds may order from John Orr a copy of the bird count issue for \$3.50 (reduced price from \$4.50) Yearly subscriptions to this journal are \$8.00.

In addition to your records or tallies for the day, please give to the compiler on a sheet of paper the following: (a) condition of ground - dry, snow-covered, water frozen or not; (b) number of hours spent in field, including starting and finishing times (list separately for car and on foot); (c) number of miles covered (list separately for car and on foot); (d) full details on all unusual birds reported. This last item is very important. If you come upon an unusual bird you must jot down all details - that is, all identifying characteristics. Remember, rock doves and house sparrows - and starlings - are counted.

Pay close attention to where roads go out of the 15 mile diameter circle. It is not permitted to count outside the circle. Try to get people living in the circle to help you. Make contacts to develop feeder counters and other watchers. Owls are of special concern and some people will be out late trying to see or hear them. Two small birds missed in the count workshop presentation by John Orr at the November meeting were the purple finch and the house finch. The latter is now in our area but has not been picked up yet on a count. It is a small bird often seen at feeders with purple finches. Its color is brick-red in part while the purple finch is a raspberry. The male house finch has less red on the sides of the head and has brown streakings along the sides. Consult carefully your bird guides before calling these two.

For the covered dish dinner bring your favorite - a main dish, salad, dessert or other speciality. Call Olga Orr to tell her what you plan to bring. Each dish should serve about 8 or so people. The Grange has nice facilities: warm rooms, stoves, utensils, tables, etc. Olga will coordinate the dishes so as to avoid too many of one sort. (Too many desserts would not be bad for some! Especially if they were oatmeal cookies).

Anyone may come to this dinner. If you do not want to bring a dish, perhaps a small cash contribution would help pay for cups, napkins, coffee, etc. Even if you don't take part as a counter feel welcome to join in at this dinner because you will certainly have a nice time and a nice filling meal. You will also learn a lot as the tallies come in and the Mexican eagles are described.

#### Telechain

A telephone chain has been set up for a good number of those people who are working on committees or attending meetings. Please note that a breakdown can be avoided if you "jump the chain" - that is, call past your own people if the latter don't answer. Looking at the sheet, find your name which might appear twice. Call those listed under it. This chain will only be used for important affairs and emergencies. If you did not get a copy of this chain and you wish to be on it, call Olga Orr at 943-5629 or write the Gnatcatcher. People who are toll calls from Altoona can be on it.

Christmas Gift Give a subscription to Audubon - including a membership. This might be just the right gift for someone who loves nature and is sensitive to the environmental problems. The student rate is a bargain at \$7.00/yr. Individual membership is \$15.00 and family membership is \$18.00. Send your check in to National Audubon/ 950 Third Ave./ New York, N.Y. 10022. Ask for a special gift card to be sent to the person getting the gift. It is not too late to do this!

Recycling Project The Blair Ecology Council is continuing its recycling drive: the dates are Dec. 13th and 27th at 9th Ave. & 12th St. - 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Elections The January meeting is election time: the offices of secretary and vice-president are to be filled. The Nominating Committee has set-up and offers the following slate of officers:

Secretary: Claire White

Vice-President: Bill Rosevear



## NEWS FROM AUDUBON LEADER

### SENATE GOVT. OPERATIONS COMMITTEE CONSIDERING LOBBYING BILL SIMILAR TO INJURIOUS HOUSE BILL OPPOSED BY MANY NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS; LETTERS TO CONGRESSMEN URGED

The Senate Government Operations Committee is considering S. 2477, the Lobbying Act of 1975, which attempts to set regulations for public disclosure of so-called "lobbying" activities and contains practically all the extremely serious implications of H.R. 15, the House bill opposed by the National Audubon Society. H.R. 15 is also opposed by numerous other non-profit organizations from health and welfare organizations to other environmental groups.

Both bills would establish an elaborate system of requirements for written reports covering contacts of every kind, not only with Congress and Congressional employees but with officials of all the scores of departments and agencies of the executive branch of the federal government all over the country. The time lost and paper-work involved, and the resultant expense, would preclude or discourage citizen organizations from seeking information or expressing viewpoints on issues with which they are concerned.

There are some non-profit organizations which feel these bills are so ridiculous there is no need to worry about them. However, support for the bills is growing because they make a good surface impression. Therefore, they should be taken seriously enough to justify dropping a short note to your senators and congressman, stating that H.R. 15 and S. 2477 are on the wrong track. A fresh and more rational approach to disclosure of lobbying should be developed, and these bills simply dropped. They are too unfair to not-for-profit organizations to be cured by patchwork.

### TWO RESOUNDING CONSERVATIONIST VICTORIES THIS MONTH:

In a conservationist's victory over the nation's boondoggle water resource programs, voters in central Nebraska chose 8,826 to 6,935 to kill the Bureau of Reclamation's Mid-State project to channelize and divert the Platte River. The matter came to a test at the local level because Nebraska state law requires a referendum by voters in the districts affected on renewing the charter of the local sponsoring organization. "It is too bad more of these costly and ill-advised projects pushed by federal engineering agencies could not be decided by the people, instead of by pork-minded politicians," commented Audubon President Elvis J. Stahr.

The \$178-million project, long opposed by National Audubon and its Nebraska chapters, would have dried up most of the Platte, diverting it for irrigation purposes. However, farmers' benefits would have been minimal because most farms already have their own pump irrigation systems. Further, diverting the river would lower the water table which the present irrigation pumps depend upon. The project would also have destroyed environmentally valuable river lands, including a 1074-acre National Audubon sanctuary, which are the heart of the historic area of the Platte used as a staging area each spring by two thirds of North America's sandhill cranes.

### A VICTORY FOR WILDLIFE REFUGES:

In a conservationist's victory on Capitol Hill, the House of Representatives by 341-10 passed H.R. 5512, the bill to protect the National Wildlife Refuge System from land-grabbers and halt the jurisdictional transfer of three game ranges to the Bureau of Land Management. The House shouted down an amendment offered by Rep. Sam Steiger (Ariz.) intended to "gut" the entire purpose of the bill by killing the provision to have all National Wildlife Refuge units administered by the Fish & Wildlife Service. Particular credit goes to Representatives R.L. Leggett (Cal.); E.B. Rorsythe (N.J.); and also to J.D. Dingell (Mich.)

### CONGRESS WEAKENS PESTICIDE LAW. ADDS TO USDA ROLE:

Conservationists were briefly heartened when the Senate Agriculture Committee made several important improvements in the House-passed pesticides amendments bill, including an extended authorization for the pesticide program from one to two years, a tightened up self-certification section, and several other technical changes. The Senate passed the bill with the improvements intact, but in conference most of these gains were lost.

The act has now been extended only until April 1, 1977, and

self-certification will still be possible although EPA won the authority to require training of applicators. Overall, the final version of the pesticide bill weakens the present law and gives the Dept. of Agriculture more say in the regulation of pesticides, which is bad news for the environment.

#### PROPOSALS WOULD UNDERCUT FLOOD PLAIN CONTROL:

Proposals have been offered in the House and Senate that would undercut the National Flood Insurance Programs. As presently written, the Program has effective powers for setting requirements and safety standards for sound use of flood plains which, in turn, means less "need" for channelization, dams and other flood control projects to protect improperly developed flood plains. The Program as originally instituted was a voluntary one and it proved ineffective. After five years the Congress added sanctions for communities which failed to participate; participation

then increased tenfold. Now there's an effort to weaken key sanctions, which would in effect make the program voluntary again. The proposals are being considered in the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee and in the House Banking, Currency and Housing Committee.

#### WHOOPIING CRANE BULLETIN:

All eight of the new whooping cranes fledged this year in Canada have arrived safely at their wintering grounds at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, in Texas. It was the largest number of young to be added since 1969, and with 48 adults, this brings the flock's total to 56. Last year 49 whoopers returned, of which two were newly fledged young.

And of the nine chicks born this spring from whooping crane eggs transplanted to sandhill crane nests at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho, in an experimental attempt to start a second wild flock of whoopers, six have arrived safely with the sandhills at their wintering grounds at Bosque del Apache National Refuge, New Mexico.

#### VALUE OF DEAD TREES:

Regional U.S. Forester Theodore A. Schlapier, of Region 6 (based in Portland, Ore.) has set a policy that merits the thanks of conservationists. He has ordered that in timbering operations in his Region adequate numbers of dead and defective trees be left standing for cavity-nesting birds and animals; he notes that at least 43 such species are found in Region 6.

#### ATTEMPT TO REVIVE STRIP MINE BILL DEFEATED IN HOUSE:

An attempt to resurrect the twice-vetoed strip mine control bill failed by one vote Nov. 12 in the House Interior Committee. The backers were trying to add the measure as an amendment to a pending bill on the leasing of Federal lands for coal production, but the effort ran afoul of some procedural disagreement and misunderstanding, and was beaten 20-21. Meanwhile, the Senate has passed a coal-leasing bill with a milder strip mine control provision that would apply only to federally owned coal lands.

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