

THE

GNATCATCHER



JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Desert Places

Snow falling and night falling fast, oh, fast
 In a field I looked into going past,
 And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,
 But a few weeds and stubble showing last.

The woods around it have it -- it is theirs:
 All animals are smothered in their lairs.
 I am too absent-spirited to count;
 The loneliness includes me unawares.

And lonely as it is that loneliness
 Will be more lonely ere it will be less --
 A blanker whiteness of benighted snow
 With no expression, nothing to express.

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
 Between stars -- on stars where no human race is.
 I have it in me so much nearer home
 To scare myself with my own desert places.

—Robert Frost

First Meeting of the New Year!

TIME: 7:30 p.m.
 DATE: January 25th
 PLACE: 28th Street Church of
 the Brethren - Union Ave.
 & 28th St., Altoona, Pa.

PROGRAM:

"Elk Herds in Pennsylvania"

A very special sort of program awaits us at the January meeting - Jerry Hassinger, a wildlife specialist with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, will present a slide-talk on the elk living in our state. He is traveling in from Harrisburg for the evening program. His role is one of observing the management plan of forest lands so as to figure how the elk herd can be best maintained.

Jerry has a B.S. degree from Montana State in wildlife techniques and a M.S. from Penn State in zoology. He was a park ranger in four National Parks - Glacier, McKinley, Yellowstone and the Everglades. While working at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, he wrote a book titled Mammals of Afghanistan. Also - he spent two years in Iran doing research in biology.

Spend an evening out next week. Come out for the first meeting. The program is sure to be most interesting and informative. And - the refreshments are always good. Call a friend or two who might be interested in this fine program. All are most welcome!

Results of Eighth Christmas Bird Count

21 people got out the count. 12 went afield while 9 counted at feeders. This coverage resulted in 45 different species being seen. It's not a new record but quite good - second best ever in fact. (Last year we spotted 48 species) New counters this year were Ken Tanquay, Ron Wilson and John Kudasill. Conditions were most mild compared with what we have now. Over the 8 years nearly 65 different species have been sighted. More people concentrating more will up our 24 hour total - that is a certainty. We miss some birds that are in the circle. This year we missed the pheasant, turkey, wood duck, screech owl, snow bunting, red-winged blackbird, purple finch, pine siskin, meadowlark, cedar waxwing, winter wren and great horned owl, to name those most common and expected by us.

The following are the 45 species seen in the 1976 count:

great blue heron	1	hairy w-pecker	4 (low)	water pipit	1
mallard duck	82	downey w-pecker	57	starling	751
red-tailed hawk	3	horned lark	92	house sparrow	252
rough-legged hawk	1	blue jay	70	Common grackle	1
marsh hawk	2	common crow	80	brown-headed	
American kestrel	9	black-capped		cowbird	15
American coot	1	chicadee	112	cardinal	59
killdeer	1	tufted titmouse	77	evening gros-	
rock dove	141	white-breasted		beak	7
mourning dove	12	nuthatch	53	house finch	6
belted kingfisher	9	brown creeper	2	American	
pileated woodpecker	5	Carolina wren	9	goldfinch	86
red-bellied w-pecker	2	mockingbird	6	dark-eyed	
red-headed w-pecker	7	American robin	2	junco	215
yellow-bellied		golden-crowned		tree sparrow	141
sapsucker	1	kinglet	6	white-throated	
		ruby-crowned		sparrow	18
		kinglet	1	song sparrow	11
common snipe	3				
ruffed grouse	3	bufflehead duck	1		

No birds were seen in the other 6 days of the count period. Species never before spotted on a count were: yellow-bellied sapsucker, water pipit, and bufflehead duck.

It is hoped for that next year many more counters will take part. It is not as hard to do as some might think. With more coverage we'll get better results. Specific areas need to be blanketed by groups or teams who will keep up with their territory all year. Particularly good habitats can be searched out, records kept, and an ever increasing efficiency accomplished. Bellwood, for example, is a great area to set up as a specific territory for coverage and this year as last Collette Heller, Madge Quick and Dorothy and Laura Irwin have begun this work. They got the house finches and grackle.

A wonderful dinner was had at the Skelp Grange Hall. Very informal but most enjoyable. Tallies were made and a nice covered dish dinner was served. Over 20 people were there. Next year let's have 40 or more!

January Elections Martha Sullivan is the only candidate for election. Martha is now our treasurer and is up for re-election to that position. The president-elect spot will be filled in October of 1977. Nominations should be made any time up to September. The president-elect helps the president until taking over the office in February of 1978.

Winter Sightings Call in or keep for our records any good sightings this winter. We've had 5 reports of hawks coming in to get birds at feeders.

Don Wharton and John Orr saw a sharp-shinned hawk (immature) at Demuth's in Sinking Valley. They also saw a Lapland longspur in a flock of 150+ horned larks at Hileman's Farm. The longspur acts like larks and is found usually with them. Two rough-legged hawks were sighted separately in the valley.

Collette Heller has a rockbird at a suet bag in Bellwood and Fran Burgoon has a kestrel coming in to a pine-cone filled with suet. The kestrel stays up to 10 minutes at a time eating the fat.

The Gnatcatcher
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Annual Banquet: February 22nd!
Make reservations now - 695-6959