

THE

# GNATCATCHER



JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

February 1977

## The Frozen Earth

Everywhere snow, gathered into sloping drifts about the walls and fences, and, beneath the snow, the frozen ground, and men are compelled to deposit the summer's provision in burrows in the earth like the ground squirrel. Many creatures, daunted by the prospect, migrated in the fall, but man remains and walks over the frozen snow-crust and over the stiffened rivers and ponds, and draws now upon his summer stores. Life is reduced to its lowest terms. There is no home for you now, in this freezing wind, but in that shelter which you prepared in the summer. You steer straight across the fields to that in season. I can with difficulty tell when I am over the river. There is a similar crust over my heart. Where I rambled in the summer and gathered flowers and rested on the grass by the brook-side in the shade, now no grass nor flowers, no brook nor shade, but cold, unvaried snow, stretching mile after mile, and no place to sit.

- From Vol III of Henry David Thoreau's Journal  
Dated 18 Feb. 1852

### The Annual Banquet - February 22nd

TIME: 6:30 p.m. DATE: Feb. 22nd.  
DAY: Tuesday

PLACE: 28th Street Church of the Brethren  
Union Ave. & 28th St. / Altoona, Pa.

PROGRAM: "A Thoreau Sampler"

Our president, Don Wharton, will present the evening's program at our annual banquet. Don is an Associate Professor of Literature at the Altoona Campus of the Pennsylvania State University. His special field is early American literature and many members will remember his talk several years ago on poets of that era. Writers who have worked their images of humans interacting with nature give us great pleasure - that is to say, they hold a special place in our world of entertainment. We share with them deep thoughts and a sensitive awareness of the natural order. So, this is the sort of special joy that awaits us at our meeting with Henry David Thoreau.

Have a nice evening out - treat yourselves to a fine meal and a fine program. As always, we are informal. Martha Sullivan has made little name tags and as the newsletter has said many times - don't feel unwelcome! Your friends are most welcome. If you have not gotten to monthly meetings try to make it for this one. You don't have to know anyone. (But with the name tags you will!)

The menu: Swiss steak  
Scalloped potatoes  
Tomato juice  
Vegetable  
Relish tray  
Assorted jell<sub>o</sub>  
Homemade bread and butter  
Coffee or tea  
Homemade pie!

All of this for only \$3.50

Call Martha Sullivan with your reservations as soon as possible. The deadline is Feb. 16th for making them. You may mail your checks to her at 1008 Allegheny St., Hollidaysburg, Pa. 16648 - or make other arrangements with her for paying.

For reservations call Martha at 695-0052  
or call Don Wharton at 695-6959

## Winter sightings

Bill Rosevear reports 6 bluebirds wintering over near Prince Gallitzin State Park: 3 males and 3 females.

The Brumbaugh's in Saxton have a female rufous-sided towhee at their feeder (near it).

Bernice Levinson has house finches, pine siskins and evening grosbeaks. And, a number of goldfinches at a new thistle feeder. The specially designed thistle feeders accomodate only small beaked birds - seed eaters like the goldfinch. It seems to have a great appeal for this species.

John Orr has been out on the Little Juniata River looking for ducks. This is an excellent place for river ducks now. From Tyrone to Spruce Creek he sighted on Jan. 31st 5 female American goldeneyes, 10 mallards (3 males) and 7 black ducks. Also seen on that outing: 1 Canada goose at Spruce Creek, 3 flocks of robins - the largest group had 12 (Spruce Creek) and the others 5 each. Robins are now appearing along streams and rivers. They might be migrating birds (?) or they might be coming from wooded areas for food. John saw 3 snow buntings on the 31st in Sinking Valley with 30 horned larks. On Feb 2nd he sighted 25 robins at Arch Springs.

Submit lists of any and all sightings to Don Wharton so he can compile them for the regional study done by American Birds. Small or large, send them in to Don.

Keep records of birds seen and the dates. Please call John Orr with information on any unusual species or unusual numbers, behavior, etc. With this unusual weather many birds are feeding in the cities or are southward from their normal ranges. Look for hawks near houses and feeders. Try to get as many details as possible for identification. The Lehman's in Juniata Gap had a dead sparrow hawk. It struck their large window. An accipiter was killed the same way in Altoona. Unfortunately positive i.d. was not made since the bird disappeared (predator?) before we could get to it. 5 or 6 people have called in reporting hawks making moves on small birds near feeders. This is expected behavior but we need all the data we can get. Submit (or call in) your reports. Get reports you've heard from others.

Watch for the unusual winter visitors: redpolls, pine grosbeaks, red crossbills, white-winged crossbills, boreal chickadees, northern shrike, snowy owls, cedar waxwings, and others. Few pine siskins have been sighted the past few years. Crossbills might be seen in conifers feeding on cones.

The Gnatcatcher hopes to print as many of the sightings as it can get from members. Call 943-5629 (John Orr) with reports - no matter what they might be!

### Miscellaneous Notes

Collette Heller will be our new Alaska Issues Chairperson. If you are interested in the Alaska lands please get in touch with Collette and get on this important committee.

Jerry Hassinger, our speaker at January's meeting told us a lot about the Pa. elk herd and might be a future speaker with a program of slides on his experiences in four national parks. His talk and slide presentation was enjoyed by over 30 people.

The Gnatcatcher  
3001 4th Ave.  
Altoona, Pa. 16602  
943-5629

Banquet tickets: Reserve now!  
Call Martha Sullivan at 695-0052  
\$3.50 per person. See inside.