

THE

GNATCATCHER



JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Vol 9 No 3

March 1977

A Man Said To The Universe

A man said to the universe:
'Sir, I exist!'
'However,' replied the universe,
'The fact has not created in me
A sense of obligation.'

- Stephen Crane (1871-1900)

The March Meeting

TIME: 7:30 p.m.

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

DATE: Tuesday, March 29th

PROGRAM: "One Day at Teton Marsh"

This month we have the beautiful color film on the Teton Marsh - a study of wildlife in a swamp on a typical day. The activities of an otter provide highlights in the day's events which include shots of beavers, porcupines, and wildfowl such as ospreys and trumpeter swans. Moose are also shown! Come for the first meeting of the spring this Tuesday.

We hope to discuss briefly a few very important items of concern to your society: the Fort Roberdeau Nature Center, the bluebird house projects, and some other items of current import. Please become involved - even if in an advisory way. Our goal is to work on conservation problems and part of that must be a constant striving to get the issues down pat. We have to get a feel for what is happening. There is a lot that now can be done - the Alaska lands issue, for one, needs our continuing attention.

Regional Waterfowl Census

TIME: Any part of or all day Sunday, March 27th

PLACE: Anywhere within 50 miles or so of Altoona.

We do not restrict ourselves to the Christmas Count circle for this census. Anyone may watch for shorebirds, waterfowl - or anything else notable. Various sandpipers migrate through our area as do occasionally other similar birds - Wilson's snipe, woodcock, etc. Terns and gulls can be sighted and, of course, many species of ducks. Whistling swans are coming through right now. Many news photographers misidentify this bird calling them "snow geese". It just happened in the Altoona Mirror and the Clearfield Herald. "Waterfowl" usually means ducks but we want the other similar type birds.

To take part call John Orr (943-5629 or Don Wharton (6956959) anytime before Sunday morning. They will give you details and directions - and you may wish to link up with them in the count. No matter how you arrange your day it is alright. Just see what's out there and record the species and numbers. Call them in to either John or Don and if you need help in identifying birds try to get as many details as possible so the coordinators can help you. Prince Gallitzin is a very good place to count. Bill Rosevear will be there and members might want to look for him. Other spots: reservoirs at Horseshoe Curve, Mill Run (Lower and Upper), Bellwood, Tyrone, Pottsgrove (Greenwood) and Kettle; rivers - especially the Juniata; Dams - most notably Canoe Creek State Park; and ponds such as the one at Yellow Spring. Terns and gulls will possibly be at Lakemont Park or flat open areas such as parking lots, ballfields, etc. Some flocks of geese or swans could be seen going overhead. Be careful not to confuse the calls of the whistling swan and the Canada goose.

Fort Roberdeau Nature Center

We have been asked by the Blair County Soil Conservation Office to help in setting up an outdoor ed lab at the fort. It will lie on the old Kiwanis lands - roughly 30 acres or so of woodland and a few clearings. Our role right now is to offer input, that is, ideas that will possibly work in such a laboratory. Outdoor education within a nature center sounds like a truly wonderful addition to the Fort Roberdeau complex and it will come about if we can get working on the idea end of it and then the practical end -- the trails, identification of flowers, trees, etc.

Anyone who wishes to contribute ideas, materials, plans, or actual work in the labor sense, please speak up at the meeting this Tuesday. Time is essential and our Society must get going. Help is needed. This sort of project is just the thing Audubon can do well, so let's sign up for the work ahead!

The Annual Banquet Don Wharton, our president, gave a great talk on Thoreau giving many of his thoughts in his own words. This was the sort of meeting that ranks highest in appeal and value. We all learned a lot about Thoreau and ourselves! Thanks to Don for a fine program. And - thanks to the church group for another good meal.

Bluebird Trails Those with bird houses should have them cleaned out in a week at the latest. We now have strings of bluebird houses at Prince Gallitzin and in Sinking Valley. Call Ed Burt or John Orr if you want to get the locations and also if you want to take charge of checking them. This is a lot of fun and is a worthwhile project.

Letters Needed in Support of Section 404 of Federal Water Pollution Control Act

Acts with numbers - Federal legislation - sometimes sound formal and removed from us in Altoona. It is important, though, and letters should be written to get support for the retention of the existing Section 404 of the Act. This Section authorizes the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers to regulate dredge-fill activities in all of the nation's waters. If Section 404 is modified to apply only to classically defined navigable waters, approximately 75% of our nation's wetlands would be entirely unprotected.

Therefore, it is important that conservationists strongly support the regulation of dredge-fill operations in all of our nation's wetlands by urging their Congressmen and Senators not to modify the existing Section 404.

Section 404 does not halt development, it simply requires us to stop and weigh the alternatives. This year the Corp of Engineers will implement the final phase of Section 404. It should be allowed to become fully operational before any changes are considered.

Richard Martyr, our Regional Representative tells us that our Congressman - Bud Shuster - is a member of the important Committee on Public Works and Transportation in the U.S. House of Representatives. It is this committee which will initially decide whether the existing Section 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act will be allowed to stand.

Write to Bud Shuster and our two Senators as soon as possible. Simply ask them not to change the section described above. (Address letters to Representative _____, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20510.)

The Graticatcher
3001 4th Avenue
Altoona, Pa. 16602
943-5629