



The Norman Bird Flyer

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 2 NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY, THIRD BEACH ROAD, MIDDLETOWN, RHODE ISLAND 02840 PHONE: 401/846-2577

FARMS AND WILDLIFE

This spring a number of Aquidneck Islanders will learn they are sharing their homes with skunks. It is usually not a problem until the cat or dog finds out too, and the skunk decides to perfume its lair.

Similarly the island resident of 1630 had wild animals to contend with. In that year a Portsmouth man complained to the general court that he had been attacked and bitten by a wolf. Whether or not he was attacked would be difficult to verify (very few wolf attacks on man have been substantiated), but wolves did live here.

In 1633 wolves killed many sheep on Aquidneck Island, and Roger Williams, who called the wolf, "A fierce, bloodsucking persecutor," was sent as special envoy to the Narragansett tribes to see if they had any ideas on wolf control. They most likely didn't, and given Roger's extreme and hateful attitude toward wolves, which was probably typical of the immigrants, the Indians must have had a hard time mollifying him.

European migrants were farmers by necessity, but by no means were they the first to farm this island. The explorer Verrazano, who was the first European to drop anchor in the part of Narragansett Bay we know as Newport Harbor noted open treeless plains and a great number of fires burning on the night. He also noted great stands of oak, maple, and a tree he called cypress, unknown in Europe. He wrote of great numbers of stag and deer, lynxes, and rabbit.

Local Indian tribes had been burning clearings out of the mixed hardwood forest for nearly 1000 years. Into the opening went seeds of maize and beans, whose origins go back to the southwest. Jerusalem artichokes were also a cultivated staple.

But the European farmers brought a new element to the island homestead farm - farm stock. Whereas the Indians relied on deer, grouse, and turkey, as well as fish and clams for animal protein, the settlers relied on



stock. Wild game had always belonged to the king, so settlers were not skillful hunters, nor were their muskets accurate. For the first fifty years they husbanded their small numbers of hogs, goats, and sheep, and trained their muskets on the relatively easy targets turkey and pigeon made. Unfortunately sheep and hogs made an easy target for wolves and bear. They too prospered for a while

Open lands expanded rapidly in the 1700's. New markets had begun opening up in Boston, Plymouth, and Newport, and farmers were eager to supply them with wheat, vegetables, tobacco, and firewood. Towns everywhere put bounties on predators. It was the first move in the effort to eradicate the wolf. They were destined to be persecuted right into the 20th century.

In the 1800's a sheep farming rage swept across all of New England. Combined with the fervent transformation of forests into potash and cordwood, sheep farming opened up the last forested lands. During the decade of the civil war it is likely that nearly 100% of Aquidneck Island was open.

Many forest loving species not under direct persecution were lost with the loss of forests, but some forms of wildlife flourished under the new rage of land opening. A host of small bird species came to populate the open pastures and orchards of homesteads. Bluebirds, swallows, bobolinks, and upland plovers nested in and around this farm at the turn of the century. Many are with us today.

Mink, otter, and other small carnivores suffered perhaps because of trapping rather than loss of habitat. Some of the small carnivores probably did quite well.

The forest eventually returned. With the advent of coal for heating, and a drastic decline in sheep herding, three quarters of RI was reforested by the turn of the century.

In the late 1800's and early 1900's wetlands became the focus of farmers attention. The fertile soil of the wetland areas tempted many a farmer to drain and level the

wet area and plow it to hay crops for forage, or plant it in potatoes. It would be difficult to estimate the impact these actions had on local fauna. Whole landscapes were reshaped.

This century has seen some return of the forest dwellers to western parts of the state. Turkeys in the oak forest and the wolf-like eastern coyote have made recent debuts.

Aquidneck Island still has much open land which supports a fauna quite different from other parts of the state. Our farming heritage has kept us and will continue to keep us, if we allow it to, unique; Still plagued with skunks, but unique.

DOCENTS!

Do you have an hour and a half a week you can give to the sanctuary public school tours program?

How about an hour or two to give on an upcoming spring weekend as a sanctuary receptionist?

No experience is necessary. All training is provided. Other opportunities too! Please call Cathy Moore 847-3580.



WHALE WATCH!

Join us on the New England Aquarium's Spring Whale Watch! Experienced guides will answer our bird and whale questions as we cruise out to Stellwagen Banks, a rich feeding ground and resting place for whales on their long migration north. Our car pools will leave from the Sanctuary at 7:00 AM, May 16 for Long Wharf in Boston. Our ship will return to Boston at 4:30. Children should be at least 10 and accompanied by an adult.

Please return this form by April 10 to the Sanctuary. Questions: 846-2577

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Home _____

Work _____

Number in Party _____

Amount Enclosed _____

Special Group Rate
\$19/person



IT'S NOT JUST DIRT

The types of soil on a piece of land determine what can grow or be placed there. Different plants and animals need different soil types to live on. Often times you can tell the characteristics of the soil by looking at what lives on top of it.

As part of my internship at the Sanctuary, I completed a soil-type map for the Sanctuary's property. This map should help in future land management decisions. An example is the Woodcock Singing Grounds. Here the soil is very wet and poorly drained. It can satisfy all of the woodcock's requirements by providing the diversity they need. They need open areas in order to fly and do their courtship dances, and brush and tree areas for cover from predators. A moist soil also provides the earthworms that make up 60-70% of their diet.

The woodcock is just one species that is greatly dependent upon the soil for its life. Literally everything living is influenced and depends on the soil for its survival.

Karen Comstock

DONATIONS

There are many creative ways to do it!

Our sincere thanks to John Sullivan for his gift subscription to Organic Gardening, to Roger Gilman for his superbly crafted closet doors, to David Slipp for the new hawk carrying cage, to Elizabeth Thurston for her membership secretary work, and the fine collection of old natural history books, to the Trail Clearing Group!, to the woman who brings mice, to the Newport Garden Club and Newport Lions Club for their donations to our education programs, to Bob Keough and Diane Ignieri for their help with the animals, to Doctor Munafò and Doctor Kates for their medical advice and work, and to Lucia Delieris and Bob Barry and his art students for wonderful newsletter graphics.

For all of the generous people who have offered their assistance and not yet heard from the sanctuary, we are currently working on a volunteer handbook and hope to soon contact all of you. Thanks for your patience.

The Norman Bird Flyer is published by the Norman Bird Sanctuary, a non-profit nature preserve established under the will of Mabel Norman Cerio.

Trustees: RI Hospital Trust National Bank, Louis Lorillard
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Co-Directors: Timothy Traver, Deborah Clark



Directors' Notes

BOTTLE BILL?

An Ethic Behind The Facts

One recent Saturday the NBS 4-H club went foraging. The American beer can and Aluminum soda can: Americanus budweiseri and Canus aluminus, respectively, were prime targets.

Besides the facts, which speak quite positively for a bottle bill, besides the overwhelming response of Rhode Islanders for a bottle bill, there is a kind of psychological justification for returning bottles. It lets us feel as if we're doing something to break out of the selfish throw-it-away ethic we have adopted and into a new recycle it ethic.

Passing a bottle bill will prove that Rhode Islanders are willing to spend a bit more personal time for a cleaner countryside and lower resource abuse.

Prices will probably go up. But in every state where a bottle bill has passed prices have come down after a year to reflect the true costs of handling and storage.

All told, it is cheaper to refill a can of recycled material than to build a can from scratch. Besides cleaner highways and conservation of resources, it's a lot more conscionable.

We have information of a more factual nature in the sanctuary office.

Write or call your representative or senator:

Senate

Middletown: Joseph Chaves 847-8723
Portsmouth: Gardner Seveney 683-2740
Newport: David Carlin 849-7989
Robert McKenna 846 9296

House

Newport:

Chris Boyle 846- 0132
Paul Crowley 849-4626
Jeanne O'rourke 847-5480
Jeffery Teitz 847-5282

Middletown:

Steve Erickson 846-0664
Bruce Long 846-0455

Portsmouth:

Jesse Ferreira 683-2538

MUSEUM

A museum committee has been actively laying out the groundwork for the restoration of a trailside natural history museum in the sanctuary barn.

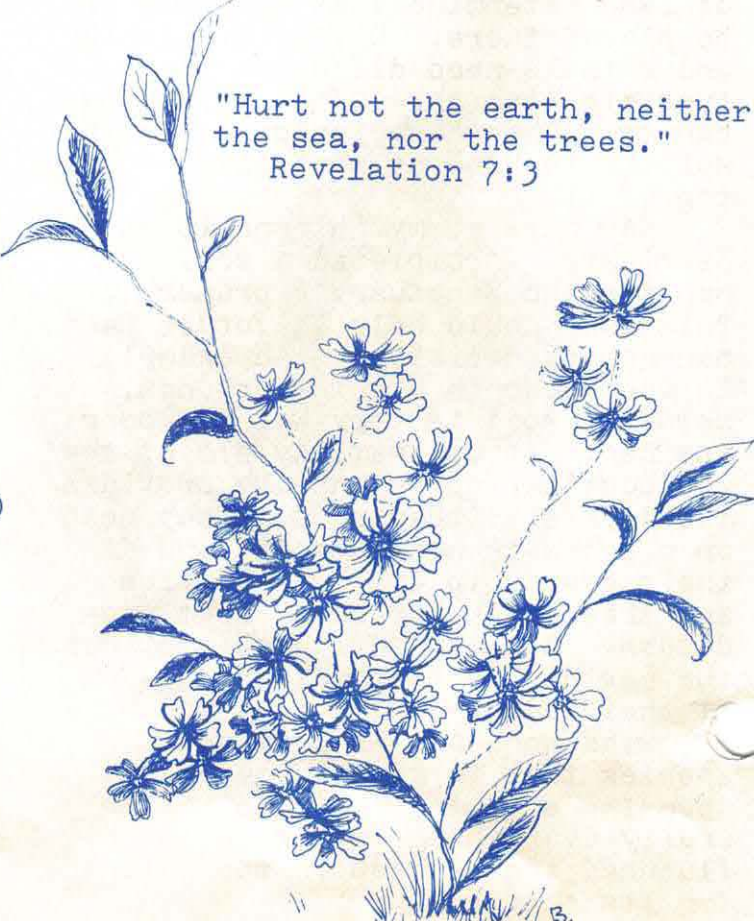
The goal of the museum committee is to develop a museum that will inspire visitors to gain more from a walk on sanctuary trails. Displays will be on local natural history topics, drawing heavily from materials on hand.

In the meantime new front and back doors have been added to the barn. These beautiful, rugged doors shed light and give easy access to the entrance and exit to the barn.

Kitchen cabinets, sink, and counter will be added before summer camp begins in July.


Finally, plans have been approved for the installation of a fire alarm system.

Key to the natural history theme is preservation of the grandeur and simplicity of the 17th century barn itself. The history of the barn, the old farm, the sanctuary, and the people who came before are natural history too!



"Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees."
Revelation 7:3

Norman Bird Sanctuary Events



BIRDS OF THE FAR NORTH - ELLESMERE ISLAND Chris Rimmer of Manomet Bird Observatory will present a slide lecture on his research this past summer with the Canadian Fish and Wildlife Service on the birds of this large, uninhabited arctic island. March 31 7:30
Donation: Members \$1 Non-Members \$2

THE GYPSY MOTH QUESTION What is the best way to cope with gypsy moths? A panel of people experienced with the issue will present their views. RI State Forestry Dept and URI Cooperative Extension. April 28 7:30 Donation: Members \$1 Non-Members \$2

BIRDS AND BREAKFAST Rise early for the spring migration then join us for a home-made breakfast! All welcome! Breakfast donation \$5. All proceeds will go toward improving the Sanctuary's Animal House.

CANOE TRIPS! We'll paddle in quietly to those natural places you can only see by water. All levels of experience welcome. All day. Limited canoe rentals are available, but register early - 846-2577.
May 2 - Paskamansett River June 13 - Big River

MANOMET BIRD OBSERVATORY FIELD TRIP With fifty 10'x50' active mist nets, Manomet has the most extensive bird banding program in the area. We'll tour their cliff-side nets and banding facility and get a close up look at some hand-held warblers. Fee \$3. Registration deadline May 19 - 846-2577. May 22 12:30

SUNRISE CELEBRATION A celebration of Spring on Easter morning. Join us! 6:00

WHY BIRDS DO WHAT THEY DO A look at the special adaptations of birds. 4/4 2:00

SKUNKS AND YOU Plagued by skunks or merely interested? Come learn more. 4/18 2

HERPBIKE/POND WALK We'll search out the frogs, toads and salamanders. Wear rubber boots! April 25 2:00

HOW TO CARE FOR BABY WILD ANIMALS AND BIRDS Program will cover the appropriate action to take when you find an abandoned or injured wild creature. 5/9 2:00

CREATING AN HERB GARDEN Hap Morgan will demonstrate how to create a useful herb garden in your yard. May 23 2:00

SPRING WILDFLOWERS A stroll through these ephemeral beauties. 5/30 2:00

WILD EDIBLES An introduction to nature's culinary treats. Bring a plastic bag for collecting. June 6 2:00

BIRD WALKS Spring is the time for migrating warblers and nesting songbirds. Join us for a leisurely stroll each Sunday at 8:00 AM to study these birds. Beginners and experts alike are welcomed.

STAR WALKS We'll explore the myths and legends behind the night sky. Please call 846-2577 early so we can arrange for rain dates. Dress warmly.
April 24 8:00 and May 20 8:00

SPRING WEEK Vacation program for children. April 12 - 16 9:00-12:00

Norman Bird Sanctuary Events

MARCH 1982	21 BIRDS 8:00	22	23	24	25	26	27
BIRD WALK 8:00 AM	28	29	30	BIRDS OF THE FAR NORTH - ELESMEARE ISLAND 7:30	31 APRIL	2	3
BIRD WALK 8AM 4 WHY BIRDS DO WHAT THEY DO 2:00	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
SUNRISE CELEBRATION 6:00 AM EASTER	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
BIRD WALK 8AM SKUNKS & YOU 2:00	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
BIRD WALK 8AM HERB HIKE/POND WALK 2:00	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
CANOE TRIP PASKAMANSETT RIVER MEET 8 AM	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
BIRD WALK 8AM HOW TO CARE FOR BABY WILD ANIMALS AND BIRDS 2:00	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
WHALE WATCH 7:00 AM	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
BIRDS & BREAKFAST 8:00 CREATING AN HERB GARDEN 2:00	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
BIRD WALK 8AM SPRING WILDFLOWERS 2:00	31	1	2	3	4	5	6
BIRD WALK 8AM WILD EDIBLES 2:00	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
CANOE TRIP BIG RIVER MEET 8AM	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY
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