

Hi! Blizzard warnings were flying in the West while the Sanctuary sweltered in the January thaw. We never really had frozen hard anyway. Some early mornings the ground was hard underfoot along the trails. Sometimes grasses were silver with frost in the shadows, (gold for a few seconds as the sun touched them, then dark in colour as they became merely wet with dew). The morning of the thaw fog rose from the ground like wraiths and the ocean steamed as the temperature pushed 70 degrees. One couldn't help but look for the daffodils. Yup,--up! Bees buzzed all day long. Practically no one ate the seeds or peanut butter. Bags of suet hung lonely, abandoned in their trees. But within the week, water had frozen, then flowed again. Old timers say the ice must go out three times before its Spring. So perhaps we shall be frozen stiff until March 21st! But February is the month to keep one's eyes open. With the lengthening hours of sun light the birds begin to get ready to start their courting! Few of us will be aware of the romances among the owls, or know that the stone fly nymphs are hatching under the ice where turtles are still snuggled cozily in the mud. But we can see the grey fuzz on English sparrows disappear (it was grown for warmth) and we can see their colours sharpen up. If you live where there are only starlings you will see them change from dull to glossy creatures with definite polka dots. Even their beaks, dark now, will turn to yellow, all to attract the ladies! Sap miller moths will lay their eggs in pine tree buds. The caterpillars that will hatch are called Geometridae. Their early mission in life is to measure the Earth, tiny inch by tiny inch--so we call them inch worms! In February everything seems to be asleep, but a heck of a lot is going on!

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Wisteria Mood Indigo is gone. She lived 14 years--a goodly life for a snake. She was petted, & studied, by thousands of school children, never once losing her amiability. In an earlier "Bird" you read of a boy, perhaps 8 yrs. old, who wore her like a cape around his shoulders. As her head waved out in front of him, he reached for it and kissed her on the forehead! She was the best possible example of a snake, carrying the message that her kind are good and necessary in the cycles of life. They are not to be hit on the head by rocks, only by soft things like kisses.

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Roger Caras who broadcasts on the care of pets and on wildlife (over WCBS) warns that the use of spray deoderants and disinfectants in cages, beds and litterboxes can be lethal to pets. To disinfect, use soap and water and put them in the sun to dry. Air, wind and sun are excellent deoderants.

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Of the 160 Canada geese that died on Easton's Pond--50 bodies went to U of Conn. There was found to be sufficient lead to have caused death. It seems that when the water levels are low, as Big Pond was at the end of a drought summer,-- the geese dig deep to haul up food long growing in lead rich mud. Everytime we chug by the beaches we contribute to the pollution of the waters there. Every drought summer more geese & swans will die.

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More bad news. Mr. Bloomerton was shot by a thoughtless boy. Our beautiful owl had made his place near a favorite teen-age hangout. He had no fear of man. No one at the Sanct. had ever harmed him! So when young people came near he was unafraid and an easy target. A guy with a gun had an ego trip, and a gorgeous owl died needlessly. Now we have a dilemma-- Ms. Bloomerton wants to GO. The fellas are hanging around and she is young! Should we release her for a possible fate similar to her brother's? Even a wise young owl cannot know that humans every once in a while, are stinkers!

Forty two people turned up for the first Owl Walk. They did hear an owl! But when they got back to Ed Shed there was the guaranteed sight of an owl--three in fact. Hooter, Ms. Bloomerton and a tiny screech owl named Archimedes! Amid gusts up to 80 m.p.h. 26 people walked to Neck and Beach area. They sighted an Elder Duck and a murre. A murre is a sea bird that does occasionally get blown ashore. He was blown in that day all right.

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The Auxiliary met and decided to call themselves "Hooter's Friends" instead of the suggested RENS (Reserve Energy Nucleus/Nuts of the Sanctuary). Programs for the next six months now have workers signed up to see them through. The most ambitious plan is to run a Nature Study class for grades 1-5 at Underwood Annex (old St. Augustine's). The classes will be held for one hour a week for 18 weeks. Some of the studies will be at Murphy's Quarry which has a pond in sad need of being cleaned up. It is hoped that older brothers, sisters, and parents will help with the cleaning up as it is too much of a job for the students (whose ages are between 6 and 11.) If and when it is cleared it will be a lovely asset to the neighbourhood. (This project should be of particular interest to the Newport Garden Club whose gift finances it.)

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Did you notice the early arrival of seed catalogues this year? Right in with the Christmas cards! That is because of the tremendous interest in gardening in USA. Seed companies say that never have orders been so heavy. A word to the wise--if you plan to order, do so now.

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In March each year the harp seals end their southward migration and stop on the ice packs in the Gulf of St. Lawrence where the females give birth to their young. In years passed, and it still continues illegally, the natives turn out to slaughter the new borne seals by clubbing them to death and skinning off their snow white fur. It was hoped that public opinion and laws would stop this ghastly slaughter, but money is money. In an effort to show the natives that there are other ways of making money for local commerce, conservationists have arranged flights out of Montreal, three times during the month. Helicopters leave with 35 people plus guide, and land on the ice floes. One stays for six days at a charming hotel in the village of Iles de la Madeleine. The food is good, the village quaint and the seals unforgettable as is the spectacular ice scenery. If you are interested in this unusual trip, call 847-4967 for information as to reservations. If enough interest is generated, Canada will make a National Sea Mammal Park to preserve the baby seals.

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This is seal counting time in R.I. If you see any along the coast, on beaches or on the rocks, call URI, Marine Department.

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The coyote has held his own despite man, his cities, guns, traps and poisons. They have been able to adjust to everything and to triumph over their terrible enemy, man. There are not more coyotes now than ever, but they have spread to areas where they have not been before. Mostly they have taken over areas abandoned by wolves. Although in some places wolves seem to be making a comeback too. In Minn. they are thinking of removing the wolf from the endangered species list. Since he ban on DDT things are looking up in the world of ospreys! We only wish that they would find their way back to the Sanctuary!

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The Atomic Energy Commission proposes to allow the nuclear power industry to use recycled plutonium in commercial reactors. This would mean the creation of a large civilian plutonium industry and a step up in the risks posed by nuclear power. Plutonium barely exists in Nature--what we have is all man made. The main element is

Plutonium 239. It has a half-life cycle of 24,000 years and is one of the most toxic substances known to man. It is dangerous even to inhale! Yet it is figured that by the year 2000--not so far away--there will be 1,700 tons of the stuff around! Just think of a half a teaspoon of that, in the care of a terrorist!

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Do you realize that the 12 million starlings that are creating problems in the Kentucky-Tenn. area are descended from the 70 that were released in Central Park less than 100 years ago? They were imported to combat English sparrows! A perfect example of man messing around with nature! The trouble with starlings is that they eat absolutely everything, seeds, insects; human food, fruit, meat. Old cabbage leaves and waxy berries of the bayberry--things that no body else will eat! They seem to have no natural enemy either.

Over heard in a school corridor: "Wow, Man. I'd give my right arm to be ambidextrous"

#### COMING EVENTS

March 8 and 15, 2:00 PM Children's Nature program. Hiking and crafts.

March 15, at dusk. Our Annual Woodcock Walk-- Rain, snow or shine!

March 22, 10:00 AM Gardening Workshop for all families planning to use the Sanctuary for gardens this summer. Assigning garden plots, some regulation of use, and other information will be discussed.

March 24, 25, 26, 10:00 AM For all people interested in assisting with our school field trip program. Review of trail systems, curricula for different age levels and study areas, etc.

WE NEED: A large braided rug to go on the floor of our bookstore. Our floor is red.

We Need: Some carpentry help on week-ends to finish up the work on the book store. Give us a call before you come. Most of the work that needs to be done is book shelf building.

We Need: All those "chicken inards" for our growing population of injured birds of prey. Put them in your freezer and bring them out when you get a chance.

We need: more dances like the last one