

Hi! The morning of Feb. 23 the redwings came back--just in time to find seeds on the snow covered ground. Drifts on the trails were over one's boot tops. Tracks of creatures were everywhere--rabbits and pheasants mostly. Later in the day skiers and snowshoe-ers were out. Before the week was over the snow was gone and blackbirds were back, as were swans, on Grey Craig Pond. In the sun's warmth birds try out their spring songs in throats not used for singing since last year--tentative & unsure of themselves. Only the cardinals' whistle and the "Spring's Here" song of the chickadees are strong and positive. Skunk cabbages and pussywillows are everywhere. Muskrats are busy where the ice is broken. The waterfall pounds out billows of foam that all get caught in the rocks. Below the rushing stream, in quiet places, the watercress is tender green. Spring is here! It was the mildest winter in 22 years.

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At the Sanct. there are more injured birds than one can count--mostly broken wings and beaks. Most of them will fly again--or eat alone allright when beaks are healed, but in the meantime feeding and caging are problems. One barred owl has the entire run of the rafters in the Ed Shed. Two 7-week old lambs arrived (hand feed 4 times a day!). They look soft and woolly but they're not. They are hard with not enough wool to make them soft as yet. Still they are adorable in their smallness. Mr. Kohoutek and his bantam brides are back, as tiny and handsome as ever. As Spring progresses more animals will be arriving to turn the place into a veritable farm. Bits and pieces of our "new" barn are being stacked up for now in a heap, behind the Barn-Museum. (We'll have to get a name for the new barn or we shall get all mixed up) It will house our tractor, tiller and mowers; provide better caging for injured animals and birds, and contain also a warm room where the Freeze-Dry unit will be. Not that the unit requires heat, but it takes hours to prepare a specimen for freeze-drying & our artist-arranger must not perish from the cold. If we run the new barn west to east it will create another courtyard!

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A raptor count is being held on our Island. If any of you see an owl, a hawk or an osprey, please call 847-4967 and tell what bird you've seen, where and if it was hunting or roosting. The entire State had only 7 ospreys in '74. (No seals have been seen for several years--are our winters too mild?)

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The Birders in Salisbury Massachusetts have been excited by the visit of a Ross's Gull there. This gull breeds in the delta of the Kulima River in NE Siberia. It might be wise for us to keep our eyes peeled as Salisbury is not so far away! Ross's Gull has a wedge shaped tail, rosy blush on breast feathers, slim even grey wings and bright red legs.

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The "back to the earth" movement really is sizable. In NY State alone in the last 4 years, the number of small working farms has gone from 1000 to 57,000. With the movement has come a lot of home canning or "putting food by" as old timers used to call it. And with that has come an outbreak of food borne botulism. Of 16 known sources of botulism, 15 have been home canned foods and only one of commercially canned beef stew (1974).

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Campers will not be able to make reservations in National Parks this year. The Park Service is abandoning this service to campers as it proved to be an awful headache, what with "no-shows" and people staying longer than they intended. It will be First Come, First Served as it used to be. New parks opening up this year will be Voyageurs, Minn., Lake Meredith, Texas., and St. Croix, Wisconsin. This

ups the total of parks open to campers to 99 in the USA.

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The drought in Ghana, which supplies much of the world with chocolate, has caused the use of a substitute "chocolate". If you find that the "chocolate" you are eating doesn't even melt in your mouth, you're not eating the real thing. The new brown stuff is waxy, overly sweet altho' it leaves a bitter after taste, is flat in flavour and is non-meltable. Most consumers to date haven't even noticed the difference! So much for habit! The domestic chocolate market amounts to 1.3 billion dollars a year.

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Dendrochronology is a word based on the Greek for "Tree" and "Time". It is the science of studying tree rings. Each ring can be dated to the absolute calendar year in which it was formed. This new science (1906) has already forced a revision in the carbon-14 dating method and a re-evaluation of ancient civilizations. In our country alone it has charted climatic changes since before the conquistadors. It has mapped the ebb and flow of glaciers and tells a lot about environment, earthquakes, mudslides and avalanches. A living tree need not be cut down to obtain its information. A corer is used and extracts a slim sample of wood without damaging the tree at all.

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Rats have had an unrequited love affair with man ever since they found people in Asia. Because our trash and garbage makes life easy for them, we tend to think of them as dirty animals. As individuals! they spend several hours a day in personal grooming. But they do carry diseases. Twenty kinds of germs, in fact. This re-confirms our ideas of their being dirty creatures! Rats, like their cousins the squirrels, have to gnaw continuously to keep their incisors worn down, or their own teeth will kill them. In NYC rats have been controlled with the use of warfarin. Now a rat, immune to that blood-thinning drug, has emerged--Super Rat! The new approach to rat control is to fill bait with a drug called "alpha chlorhydrin. It makes the males sterile. There have been good results with this drug in four major US cities as rats seldom live more than a year anyway. Not everyone in the world hates rats. In W. Africa they are a source of protein. And in India, where the Hindu religion forbids the killing of animals, there is a temple dedicated to the worship of rats. In Calcutta there's a park with a vendor selling peanuts for visitors to feed to rats. In a country where the people are undernourished, this seems incomprehensible to us!

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Washington is shifting Fish and Wildlife wilderness around to allow mining! Going to the un-tender care of The Bureau of Land Management are well over 2 million acres of land. The BLM has never been interested in wildlife, altho' these acres were set aside for wildlife under FDR. Among the species whose habitats will be destroyed by this shifting of control are peregrin & prairie falcons, big horned sheep, sage grouse and antelope. Beside mining, cheap cattle grazing will be allowed. Where ever pastures are made on public lands the cattle men over graze and ruin the vegetation, as they do not on their own lands! Would that the people of Arizona, Montana and Nevada (where this land mis-use is) could do as the people of Wisconsin have done---they have bought huge tracts of land for the use of eagles! There is still hope that Congress will block these transfers of wilderness lands. Letters to your congressmen and to Pres. Ford will help.

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The public school system of Tacoma, Wash., has just spent 2 million dollars to purchase 400 acres of land. Now they are beating the bushes for money to get Ed Sheds, Barns et al. They realize the importance of studies such as the NBS

offers. Yet here is our Sanct. with 450 acres, all of Narragansett Bay, our Ed Shed, Barns and marvelous faculty. Sometimes one wonders if our school systems fully appreciate the jewels available to them. (particularly when a few schools renege on the agreed upon price of \$1.00 per pupil!) Perhaps if one is born with fists full of diamonds, one doesn't think too much about diamonds! Yet if we close our gates to the failing schools, the pupils are the losers, and eventually the Sanct. itself.

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You and I have known for sometime that  $1/3$  wood alcohol and  $2/3$  gasoline will power a car nicely. Now in Maine a plant is opening that will make wood alky (methanol) from the wind felled timber of their forests. They expect to power all State owned vehicles and heat all State owned buildings with the mixture. Methanol can also be made from garbage. If the Environmental Protection Agency bans landfills as means of garbage disposal (as it is expected to do with in 5 years) we shall all be forced to be sensible. It simply seems absurd to pay good money to rid ourselves of trash when energy is scarce. With every sack of trash thrown out we are throwing away Watts and British Thermal Units, and paying for the privilege.

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The attitude towards snow varies according to one's age. Small children chortle happily as they try to catch flakes flying by. Older ones will throw themselves into drifts with shrieks of delight. Their parents will spend small fortunes on ski-ing weekends. While their parents are frustrated when the snowplows are late. And their parents refuse to go out in the horrible stuff at all.

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#### COMING EVENTS :

Saturday, April 5th, will be a historical moment for the Sanctuary!

You are cordially invited to the  
Grand Opening  
of

The Norman Bird  
A Book and Nature Shop

Come and browse and have some punch. We will be open from noon to five. We have educational books and games for the kids. For the adults there are books on gardening, geology, and nature crafts. We also have bird houses, bird baths, and bird books. & Hand-made jewelry by Ruth Edwards and wildflower arrangements by Glorian Hanlon. Do come and see our new shop, we are very proud of it.

March 31 and April 28 Classes in drying and arranging wildflowers. Call and register with Gloria Hanlon, 846-9726.

April 17, Amphibian Walk - Wear boots, and bring a flash light. We will go down to the marsh and look for frogs. See you at 7:30 P.M.

April 19-20 Clean-Up Day at the Sanctuary. This is the time when the whole family can come out and help at the Sanctuary. Bring a sack lunch and picnic in the orchard. For more information call Art Maringas, 683-3484. Bring rake, hammer and saw. See you at 9:00 A.M.

May 25, June 1, and June 8. This year for our Membership Drive, we will have an Open House at the Sanctuary. We need members to man the Membership Booth, Court Yard, Barn, and also guides for the trails. If you are interested in helping, please contact Leona Tripp, 849-5766.

April 30 The Helpers of the Sanctuary - anyone (man or woman) interested in helping with activities at the Sanctuary - will have a meeting. 7:30 P.M.

ARE YOU INTERESTED

IN

ADULT NATURE CLASSES AT THE NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY???

We are trying to set up a schedule of classes, but need to know what topics you would be interested in studying. The following is a list of subjects that could be taught if there is sufficient interest; if there is anything else that you would like to add to the list we are open to more ideas. Please check the topics you would like to learn. There is no obligation whatsoever to sign up for a class if it is offered. Please fill out and return this form to the Sanctuary or call Kathy Maringas, 683-3484 or Marilyn Parker, 683-4322.

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<input type="checkbox"/> General Natural History (4 different topics)	<input type="checkbox"/> Wildflowers
<input type="checkbox"/> Birds	<input type="checkbox"/> Nature Photography
<input type="checkbox"/> General Geology and Geology of Rhode Island	<input type="checkbox"/> Organic Gardening
<input type="checkbox"/> Preserving foods (2 sessions, half price)	<input type="checkbox"/> Beach Study

Suggestions \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

4 - 2 hour classes; College level; \$10 for members; \$15 for non-members.