

The Norman Bird Flyer

VOLUME NO. 5 ISSUE 1

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

COMMUTER GEESE

It was cold that Sunday morning on Hanging Rock, but the sun shone, and we had made ourselves comfortable by hunkering down the lee side of the ridge. We could hear the faint, high honks of the geese coming our way and we anticipated a good show.

Gardeners Pond, the large reservoir just east of the Rock, lay below us. The dark silhouettes of many diving ducks floated over the bright surface. This pond and the croplands north and west of the Sanctuary are the winter territory of this goose flock.

We soon saw the flock--actually many little flocks--coming in from all points north of us. From the northeast came a large, noisy, ragtag band of geese. Their flock had not formed into those neat vees. These geese were, after all, commuter geese making a short hop from field to pond. From the northwest came smaller sub-flocks, composed of several family units. These had had more time to organize, so some were in vee formation led by the largest gander.

As they converged over the water, their honking filled the sky. They seemed eager to splash down for their morning dunk and bath. The eastern phalanx had come in high and into the wind. As they arrived over the pond, some birds turned a wing to the wind and dropped abruptly to lower elevations. Some actually tumbled 360 degrees, righting themselves in time to skim, feet outstretched into the water. It was a pretty sight. We guessed there were close to 1300 geese that morning.

The goose flock is actually a fairly new addition, mostly a winter addition, to the avifauna of Aquidneck Island and to the region. "Urban" goose flocks, such as ours, have sprung up up and down the eastern coast and, in some localities, are actually considered a public nuisance.

The success of these flocks has to do with the nature of the goose itself, changing climate, changing land use patterns,

and wildlife management. Conservationists speak of the recent goose population boom as one of the most spectacular accomplishments of wildlife management.

Historically, our Eastern seaboard goose made up a separate race, the Atlantic race, *Branta canadensis canadensis*, one of up to eleven races generally agreed upon. Our local wintering and resident flock had its beginnings in the decoy flocks market hunters released when the Migratory Bird Act passed in 1917, in the tame flocks built up by bird fanciers, and in propagation programs. To attract migrating geese, many refuges, some of which had been formed by local hunt clubs and municipalities, used pinioned geese to bring in wild stock. The offspring of these geese, imprinted by their natal area, returned to their places of birth in the spring. These seed geese may have come from one or several midwestern races, from the largest race, *maxima*, down to smaller races not much larger than mallards. Our winter flock is actually a combination of birds living year-round on the island, and birds stopping here from points north (goslings have become a familiar summer sight in Newport harbor, in the wetlands along Ocean Drive, and on some of the outlying islands).

Up until Christmas, the living is usually easy for our winter flock. Cover crops of rye and winter wheat are still green in the potato fields--still plentiful on the island. Canadas at this time of year have several fares to choose from. Cow pastures and fallow fields offer a variety of grasses, forbs, and fruits. Geese will eat just about anything green. Corn fields, especially if the corn has been picked rather than chopped, offer fat potential early in the season. Winter rye and wheat fields planted as winter cover over corn and potato fields are a kind of food mecca the geese can count on.

There is hunting on the island (daily bag limit is 3 geese), but only on private

CONT

Commuter Geese, cont.

lands, so hunting pressure is relatively light. Perhaps the greatest hazard to local geese is the potential for lead poisoning found on Easton's Pond early in the fall if water levels are low. Lead shot is picked up by geese and swans foraging for aquatic plants and feeding around pond edges. In studies conducted by the R.I. Fish and Game, dead geese have been found with heavy concentrations of lead in the liver (in some birds over 60,000 ppm) and pellets in the gizzard.

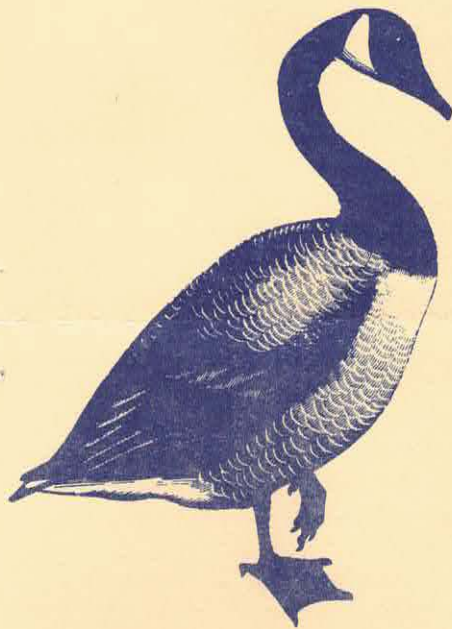
After Christmas, as winter begins to set in, survival becomes more of a problem. Some early January days when Gardeners Pond is frozen over, you look out across the ice to dark lumps of geese you can barely see through the glare and blowing snow and you wonder how they can possibly survive. Most do. Their secret lies in energy conservation. Geese become much less active as winter cold snaps increase in length. Flights over the Sanctuary barn are less numerous. Even their honking seems conservative. On the pond, with their bills tucked back under a wing, the birds become almost impermeable to heat loss. Layer upon layer of interlocking feathers serve them well here. The inner downy layers capture heat; the outer layer with feather barbs tightly interlocked and oiled serves as water-proofing. Canada Geese can survive for months on frozen ponds as long as the food supply is readily available. The geese can get moisture from the food they eat. When snow and ice cover over the fields though, the geese are forced to move on. South County geese commute back and forth to Long Island where life may be a bit more balmy, but hunting pressures more intense.

So what's the problem with these graceful "black-stocking headed and necked birds with white cheek patches"? Well, for most of us there is no problem. Local golfers may find the goose's presence irritating. Big geese leave big droppings and many of them. Greenskeepers might find reason to complain because these droppings may burn their fairways to a shade of yellow. Our island farmers, too, might lose a bit of their cover crop, but, in general, we do not experience the problems of overpopulation some cities experience.

In the Midwest, goose depredation of soybean and wheat fields justify farmers' concern. In cities with dense concentrations of geese in a city park on on a water supply, pollution can be a concern. It is very unlikely that our goose population

will ever create this kind of a problem.

The Canada Goose is welcomed here and will probably stay that way for a long time. He's not the mysterious stranger he used to be either. In fact, on some mornings, his traffic jams seem to rival ours. He's a commuter goose and, more than any other animal in winter, gives us a nearly daily reminder of the wild world.



JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Applications are now being accepted for summer season employment at the Sanctuary. Positions include full and half time teacher/naturalist jobs with our summer camp programs and supervisor for our youth conservation group.

Responsibilities for the naturalist positions include planning and carrying out a well-rounded program in natural history study, nature crafts, outdoor living skills, sensory awareness, problem solving, and adventure activities for groups of approximately 10 children per week. Applicants should be over 18 years old and should have experience working with children and a strong interest in natural history.

Responsibilities for the youth supervisor include leadership in trail maintenance, wildlife habitat management, buildings and grounds maintenance, and gardening projects. Some background in the biological sciences or natural resource management is preferred. Must have experience or real interest in working with young people.

To apply, send resume and letter of interest to the Norman Bird Sanctuary by 31 March. Please feel free to call for more information.

BIRD WALKS

8:00AM A brisk way to start a winter Sunday! Guided by Sanctuary staff, our winter walks focus on wintering land birds and coastal life, including waterfowl and seals. The walks are free of charge and open to everyone. Dress warmly!

NATURE FILM SERIES

Enjoy a cozy winter Sunday afternoon munching popcorn by a crackling fire and watching nature movies! Programs are suitable for any age and are about an hour long. Admission is free. 2:00PM

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- January 22 John Muir's High Sierra, Wild Dog Family, At Your Fingertips: Grasses
- January 29 New Friends, Dinosaur Hunters, River: An Allegory
- February 5 Anansi The Spider, Dolphins and Men, The Spider
- February 12 So Little Time, Nature in a Top Hat, Elsa and Her Cubs
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EVENING PROGRAMS

- January 31 STAR WALK - Orion, the mighty hunter! Taurus, the fierce bull! Enjoy these and other legends as you observe the northern winter sky - the biggest showing of bright stars of any visible from earth! Dress warmly. In case of clouds, call 846-2577. 7:30 pm. M/\$2; NM/\$3; no registration required.
- February 10 OWL PROWL - Join us for a night walk into the refuge to hear the calls of the Great-Horned and Eastern Screech Owls. Learn of the specialized haunts and habits of these refuge dwellers. Bring a flashlight for owl spotting and dress warmly! 8:00 pm. M/\$2; NM/\$3; no registration required.
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Saturday mornings 9:00-12:00

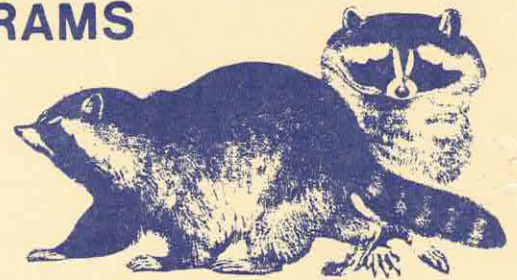
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Session #2 MAR 3-31

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February 20-24, 9:00-12:00

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Explore the outer limits of the natural world and of your own abilities. Join us for any or all of these special topic programs. For children in grades 5-8. All programs run from 1:00-4:00 pm.

Single program: M/\$5; NM/\$7

Group of any 4 programs: M/\$18; NM\$26

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SEAWEED ART

Create beautiful pictures and cards using the ocean's gift to the world of art: seaweed! Then snack on some tasty seaweed dishes. Learn mounting and pressing techniques and bring home some delicious recipes. February 11.

EARLY LIFE ON SANCTUARY LANDS

Visit sites in the Sanctuary where Native American Indians used to live and work, then try your hand at such local Native American crafts as making a bone fish hook or a quartz arrowhead or tanning an animal skin. February 18.

BLUEBIRD BOXES

Help the rare bluebirds to return to our island by making a bluebird nesting box. These houses are specially designed to suit a bluebird's exact requirements, and can be erected in your yard. Include \$3 extra to cover materials. February 25.

NATURAL DYEING

Extract a rainbow of hidden colors from the plants found outside and inside your own home. We will go through each step of this fascinating process and finish with a sample of dyed cotton to take home. March 3.

TERRARIUM CONSTRUCTION

Create a mini-climate inside a bottle and grow your own indoor garden of small wild plants. Tools, plants, and bottle will be provided by the Sanctuary. March 10.

SWEAT LODGE

Help construct a modern version of the old Indian innapee, or sweat lodge, then bake yourself! The Sanctuary's teepee will serve as cool down area and refreshment center. Bring bathing suit or shorts and tee shirt. March 24.

WEED WEAVING

Create a wall tapestry using natural materials such as shells, feathers, plants, and driftwood, and beautiful yarns. Weaver, Judy Edson, will instruct in special techniques. March 31.

FLY A KITE!

Explore the winds and weather through the construction of your own Japanese fish kite. Decorate the skies with your own art work! All materials provided. April 28.

NATURE'S TOYBOX

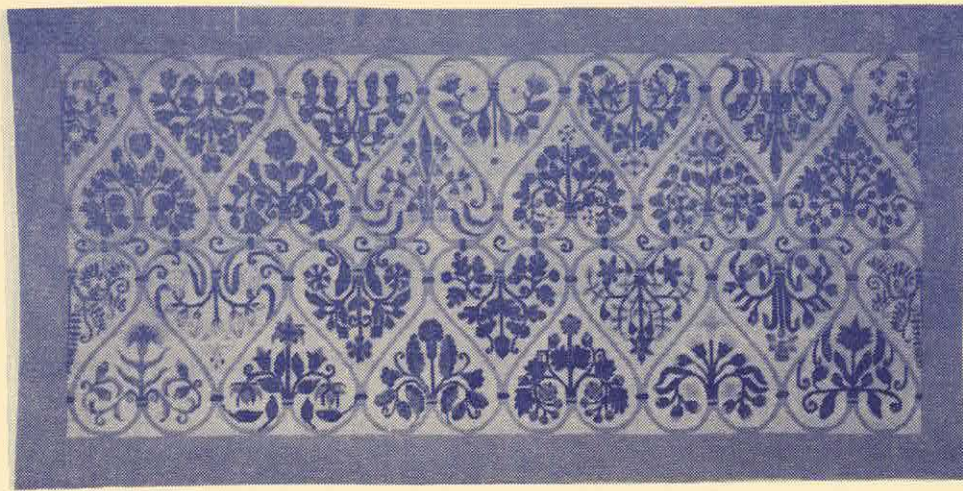
Make toys, games, and musical instruments using pioneer and Native American designs. Perfect your skill with a jack-knife and paintbrush while you watch natural materials turn into exciting toys before your eyes. May 5

ROCK-CLIMBING

Learn the basic rock-climbing knots, the communication system used by the climber and the belayer, and the safe use of rock-climbing equipment, then explore a very different environment as you scale one of the Sanctuary's ledges. May 12.

ORIENTEERING

Learn to measure distance and direction using pacing and a compass, then join a group in following a tough course that challenges many of your outdoor skills as it ranges through the refuge. May 26.



DIRECTORS' NOTES

In September 1977, the Newport Garden Club undertook a project--the scale of which probably evaded most garden club members at first. The project--a needlepoint tapestry--involved 13 of the club's members directly and took over five years to complete. Last spring, the garden club decided to donate all funds from the sale of tapestry raffle tickets to a Norman Bird Sanctuary special project.

These notes of Garden Club President Mrs. Richard Plotkin give a brief description of the tapestry and history of the project.

"The Newport Garden Club 'Tapestry of Flowers' rug is an adaptation of the design on an Elizabethan pillow cover. The original was made of red satin and the design worked in gold and silver thread.

"Our adaptation was part of a collection of needlework designs owned by our late member, Dagmar Wood. The 24 flowers in the rug were identified and proper colors for the period noted by a former member, Eleanor Henry.

"Work was started on the rug in September 1977 and finished in November 1982. Members who worked on the rug include the following: Mrs. Richard G. Alexander, Mrs. Henry Eccles, Mrs. Neil C. Porter, Mrs. Poyntel Staley, Mrs. Richard D. Stengel, Mrs. Richard B. Sheffield, Mrs. A.K. Sherman, Mrs. William S. Thomas, Mrs. Archbold Van Beuren, Mrs. George W. Wheeler, Mrs. William W. Yardley.

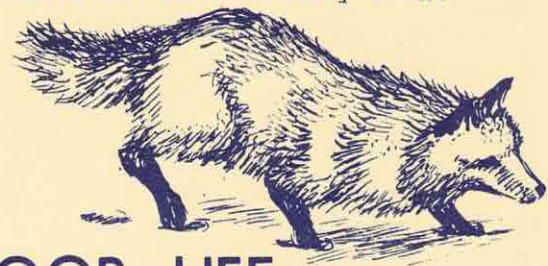
"The rug, mounted on a quilting frame, was set up in the Yardley's guest room. Wednesday was 'rug day' and members usually worked for an hour or two. It was a long, slow process, at times very discouraging. High standards of workmanship were necessary to achieve uniformity. Perhaps the greatest reward came from the workers'

enjoyment of their task and their pleasure in each other's company.

"Painting of the rug canvas, selection of wools, blocking, and finishing was done by Newport Needleworks.

"We will be selling chances on the rug at a cost of \$5.00 a ticket or 6 for \$25.00. The money collected will go to a named project at the Bird Sanctuary."

The Sanctuary will announce a time for general viewing of the tapestry. This is a gorgeous piece of workmanship! Many thanks to all Garden Club members. Raffle tickets are on sale in the Sanctuary front office.



OUTDOOR LIFE

It's winter, and, baby, it's cold out there! Some mammals survive the cold by avoiding it.

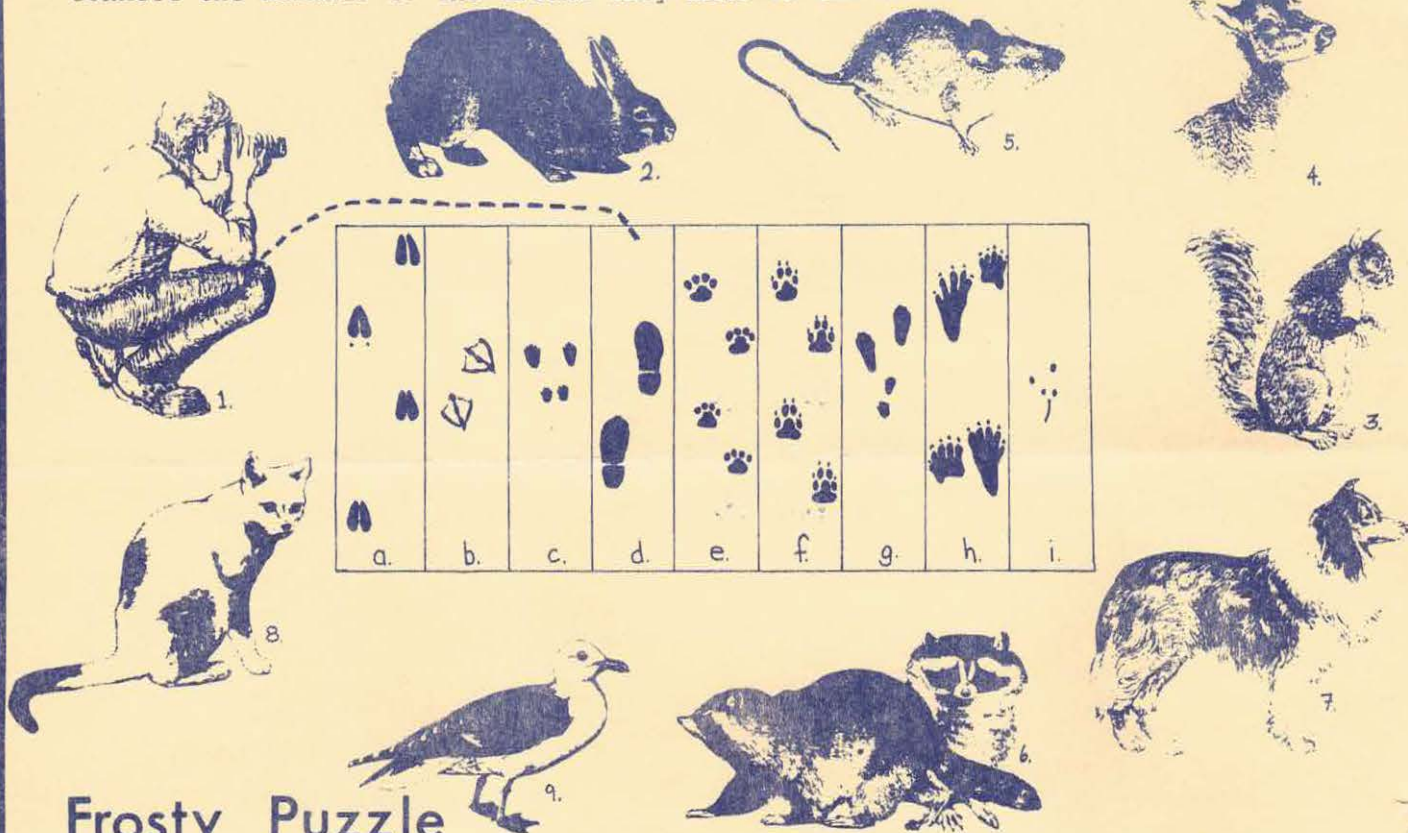
The little brown bat, the woodchuck, and chipmunk are winter hibernators. They will store enough fat to carry them through the winter by gorging on the fruits, nuts, and insects of the fall. Safe inside their den or cave, their heartbeat and breathing will slow way down. Even their body temperatures will drop. Only when the spring arrives do these hibernators wake up.

Other mammals, such as the bear, skunk, and racoon are winter sleepers. They remain in their dens several weeks without waking. Their breathing, heartbeat, and temperature remain normal. A warm winter's day will bring them out in search of food only to return to their dens later for more sleeping.

KID'S CONNECTION...WITH WINTER

Making Tracks

Connect the animals to the tracks they make in the snow.

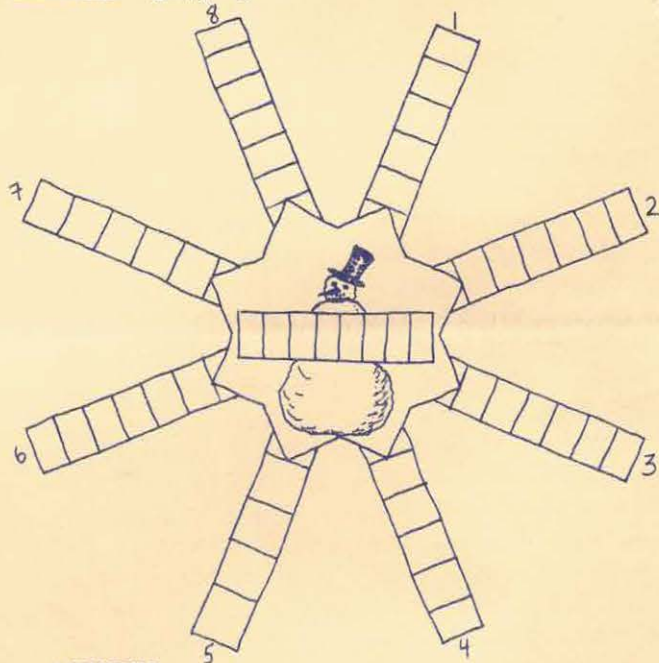


Frosty Puzzle

Find the word that fits each space.

- The birds that fly in a "V" formation are _____.
- In winter the days are short and the _____ are long.
- You can tell what animals have passed by by looking in the snow for their _____.
- Some _____ lose their leaves in the fall and rest in the winter.
- Six inches of snow is the same as one inch of _____.
- Our winter _____ come from the north or west.
- If you build a bird _____ in the winter, the birds will have it to use in the spring.
- When people keep their homes cool and wear sweaters inside, they save _____.

Now combine the first letter of each word and unscramble to find the thing you need when you are lifting the last ball onto a huge snowman!



ANSWERS

1-d (human); 2-g (rabbit); 3-c (squirrel)
 4-a (deer); 5-l (mouse); 6-h (raccoon);
 7-f (dog); 8-e (cat); 9-b (gull)
 You need STRENGTH;
 5-rain; 6-storms; 7-house; 8-energy
 1-geese; 2-nights; 3-tracks; 4-trees
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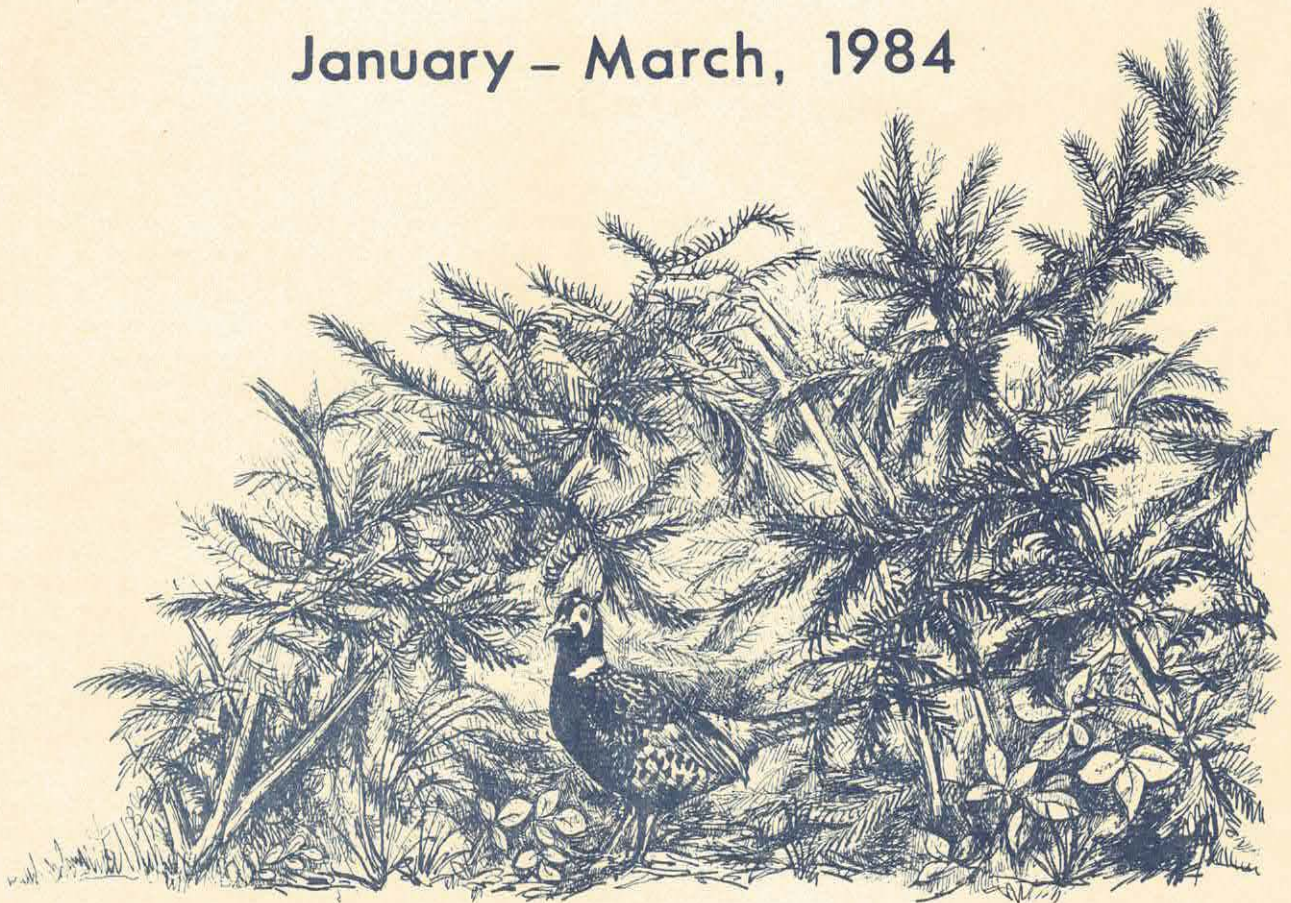


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583 Third Beach Road • Middletown, Rhode Island 02840 • Telephone (401) 846-2577

WINTER PROGRAMS

January – March, 1984



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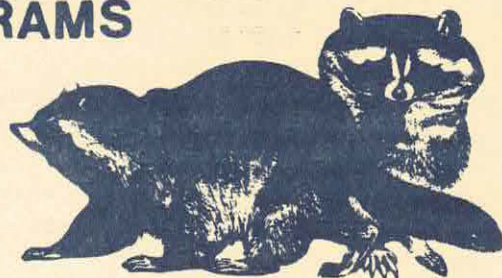
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Cross Country Ski

Learn about this exciting winter recreational form which has grown so popular during the past ten years. Workshop includes tips on equipment selection and care, waxing, clothing, and items to include on a winter outing, where to ski, and what to look for along the winter trail.

February 1, 7:00-9:30 pm

M/\$4, NM/\$6, registration required

Grain Weaving

The art of weaving grain heads and stems of freshly harvested wheat, barley, oats and rye is a craft practiced by many agricultural communities. These delicate and attractive ornaments provide a home for the grain spirit and provide a seed storage mechanism for the next planting season. Suzanne Williams and Carol Entin, from Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, will teach the construction of five traditional weaving styles, using a variety of easy flat and round braid techniques.

February 4, 10:00-3:30 pm

M/\$15, NM/\$18, registration required

Wooden Decoy Carving

Bird carving is high craft and art form combined. Learn the history of wooden bird and decoy carving, the basics of carv-

ing and the tools required. Participants will work on their own carving throughout the course under the tutelage of an experienced carver. Instructed by Jim Williams and Barry Murphy.

Wednesdays, March 21-April 11, 7:00-9:30 pm
M/\$26, NM/\$32, registration required

Beekeeping

Learn the basics in this three session workshop. Presentations will focus on the social behavior of bees, beekeeping equipment, and beekeeping literature. Participants will have a chance to talk with experienced beekeepers and the State Bee Inspector, and may elect to order starter hives to be assembled during the third session.

Tuesdays, April 10-24, 7:30-9:30 pm

M/\$21, NM/\$25, registration required

Landscaping for Wildlife

Develop a landscape plan for your yard designed to attract and provide for native birds and wildlife while looking beautiful throughout the seasons. Workshop will teach how to identify plants and shrubs that are beneficial to wildlife, how to select those appropriate to your site, and how to plan an overall landscaping scheme. Bring a bag lunch; beverage is provided.

April 14, 9:00-3:00 pm

M/\$15, NM/\$18, registration required

PROGRAM REGISTRATION FORM

NAME _____ TELEPHONE # _____

ADDRESS _____

SANCTUARY MEMBER _____ NON-MEMBER _____ PLEASE SEND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION _____
Attending _____ Fee _____

Nature Club Session #1	JAN 28-FEB 25	_____	_____
Session #2	MAR 3-31	_____	_____
Session #3	APR 7-MAY 5	_____	_____
Session #4	MAY 12-JUN 9	_____	_____
Winter Week	FEB 20-24	_____	_____
Saturday Afternoon Adventures			
Seaweed Art	FEB 11	_____	_____
Early Life on Sanct. Lands	FEB 18	_____	_____
Bluebird Boxes	FEB 25	_____	_____
Natural Dyeing	MAR 3	_____	_____
Terrarium Construction	MAR 10	_____	_____
Sweat Lodge	MAR 24	_____	_____
Weed Weaving	MAR 31	_____	_____
Fly a Kite	APR 28	_____	_____
Nature's Toybox	MAY 5	_____	_____
Rock-Climbing	MAY 12	_____	_____
Orienteering	MAY 26	_____	_____
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Or, call: **846-2577**

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

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M/\$26, NM/\$32, registration required

Beekeeping

Learn the basics in this three session workshop. Presentations will focus on the social behavior of bees, beekeeping equipment, and beekeeping literature. Participants will have a chance to talk with experienced beekeepers and the State Bee Inspector, and may elect to order starter hives to be assembled during the third session.

Tuesdays, April 10-24, 7:30-9:30 pm

M/\$21, NM/\$25, registration required

Landscaping for Wildlife

Develop a landscape plan for your yard designed to attract and provide for native birds and wildlife while looking beautiful throughout the seasons. Workshop will teach how to identify plants and shrubs that are beneficial to wildlife, how to select those appropriate to your site, and how to plan an overall landscaping scheme. Bring a bag lunch; beverage is provided.

April 14, 9:00-3:00 pm

M/\$15, NM/\$18, registration required

PROGRAM REGISTRATION FORM

NAME _____

TELEPHONE # _____

ADDRESS _____

SANCTUARY MEMBER _____ NON-MEMBER _____ PLEASE SEND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION _____

Attending _____ Fee _____

Nature Club Session #1 JAN 28-FEB 25

Session #2 MAR 3-31

Session #3 APR 7-MAY 5

Session #4 MAY 12-JUN 9

Winter Week FEB 20-24

Saturday Afternoon Adventures

Seaweed Art FEB 11

Early Life on Sanct. Lands FEB 18

Bluebird Boxes FEB 25

Natural Dyeing MAR 3

Terrarium Construction MAR 10

Sweat Lodge MAR 24

Weed Weaving MAR 31

Fly a Kite APR 28

Nature's Toybox MAY 5

Rock-Climbing MAY 12

Orienteering MAY 26

Cross Country Ski FEB 1

Grain Weaving FEB 4

Wooden Decoy Carving MAR 21-APR 11

Beekeeping APR 10-24

Landscaping for Wildlife APR 14

Or, call: 846-2577

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

SYNERGY

There isn't enough space to thank all of you who have, in ways big and small, assisted in Sanctuary operations and fund-raising this fall. The Harvest Fair was a 100% success this year due in full to volunteers of all shapes and sizes who ran it, baked for it, took pictures during it, parked cars throughout it, painted faces, cooked hamburgers, roasted lambs, sold raffle tickets, filled mud pits, stacked snow fences, fed animals, sang and played music, picked up coconut shells, created signs, made puppet shows, threw firewood . . . think of all you have done!

Halloween was another busy volunteer fundraiser. Close to 300 came to visit the enchanted forest, play games and masquerade. Special thanks to the talking tree trunk and pumpkin, and to Rosie Lippman.

Volunteers were busy with school programs again this fall. Well done, tour guides!

The new masthead on this newsletter is a Laura Atwell design. She spent hours working over ideas before this one was settled on. Many thanks for the exquisite final product!

Our trailmaster, Mark Vissman, was here in full furious form most weekends this fall. Mark spent his mornings moving large rocks, erecting new field gates, and cutting a temporary trail around the pond. He'll need lots of help this spring.

And to the many others who have helped with mailings, Sanctuary clean-up, and the work down at the pond -- our thanks. We look forward to working with you all in 1984.



NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY
THIRD BEACH ROAD
MIDDLETOWN, R. I. 02840



VOLUNTEER NOTES

In our renewal period this fall, many members expressed an interest in more active involvement by returning volunteer forms to us. To better organize our volunteers, we have set up several volunteer committees. Please join us in these ongoing Sanctuary activities:

Trails: Chairperson - Mark Vissman

Gardening: Chairperson - Mrs. Norman Hall

Hospitality: Chairperson - ?

Mailings: Chairperson - ?

As you can see, we're looking for folks to chair the Hospitality and Mailings Committees. Don't be shy! We know you're out there.

The Hospitality Committee would help provide healthful refreshments for seasonal parties, receptions, and special evening programs. The Mailings Committee would meet probably six times a year to help us get the quarterly newsletter and various special mailings out to the membership.

We look forward to your participation.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Our Newsletter this winter has a new masthead. After reviewing several ideas over the past few months, we settled on the Canada Goose. Although not a year-round representative, the goose has bold graphic qualities and . . . it just looks so good!

Should we keep it? Should the bird change with the season or should we do something entirely different? Tell us what you think.

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A check next to your name indicates that your membership has expired. Please renew!