

As the kids would say, temperatures at The Sanct. in February were gross. It seemed warmer to talk in Fahrenheit rather than Celsius. Just as in August it seems cooler to say "It's 28" rather than "It's 82". The Sanctuary land was covered with snow that bore signs of animal, vegetable and mineral. Animal from man, beast and bird: vegetable from wooden skis; and mineral from runners of childrens sleds. For the first time since the Blizzard of '78 the pheasants ate from treetop berries. Our animals were moved indoors before the wind-chill factor hit 25 below. Piping voices of the very young rose up from Cerio Pond, sheltered from the wind. God's in His heaven--all's right with the Sanct--except a pipe froze in The Barn--no damage. For the Feb 7th movie on mountain climbing, 10 showed up--8 from So. County! But for the Owl Walk 36 hardy souls turned out on a cold moonlit night! A few came out for the Feb. 21 movie on sailing. As there is no way to cancel these announced programs, they go on as scheduled!

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When everything else on the Island is closed because of snow, the Sanct is open for cross-country skiing. One skier crossed the Alfalfa Field leaving tracks like satin ribbons in the snow. Later, after a light blowing snow, a fox used those ribbons as a path to cross the field. A rabbit crossed the field the other way. Whether the rabbit's death came from fox jaws or from talons above, we don't know. But the motives that moved these creatures are interesting. The man skied for pleasure. Owl/fox and rabbit were driven by hunger. Man, the greatest predator of all, went home to eat anything from apple, beef, chicken thru to veal, walnuts--what no zebra steaks?

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It's silly to look for signs of spring. But one can see them without looking! Goldfinches are getting a little yellowish. Male house finches pop choice tidbits into their lady's beaks. Squirrels raid in pairs. Raccoons forage the feeders for seeds the squirrels missed. Song sparrows, in the sun, try out their voices, unused since last nesting season. Chickadees sing their "Spring's Here" songs. In sheltered spots the grass is greening and one brave dandelion blooms. One can't get excited about the flock of 18 robins--they wintered over in The Sanct--never have we seen so large a flock in winter! But we did miss the the redwings that usually arrive first week in February. Spring is not a possibility until we hear their swelling call. It happened on

March 1st at eventide! Just 24 hours after the first flight of Canadas flew north over our land. Seems only yesterday the last flight flew over our iced reservoirs, but that was in late January.

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Those of you who walk dogs at The Sanct., for Pete's sake, and sake of all the others, do take your dog, on leash, to the Alfalfa Field and then on across to the old sheep fold before you do the trails. In this way your dog can relieve itself without soiling the footpaths that others walk. At the moment there are 13 monuments near The Barn and Ed Shed. Its' revolting! Soon busloads of children will be arriving to study The Sanct. It would be most unpleasant if a child stepped, slipped or fell into a monument. Do be thoughtful of others. It will be difficult for all of us were we requested to leave our pets at home! It may come to that, unless dog owners shape up. We don't ask you to "poop scoop" but we do request that you walk your dogs away from the beaten tracks. (Someone has a dog infected with tape worm. Get pet to Vet P.D.Q. These days the treatment is naught but a pill--available thru a vet only. Remember, a tape worm is a parasite, and all parasites kill their host sooner or later. In this case, soon--your dog is not getting the food it eats--the worm is!)

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So we have had the last eclipse of the sun visible from The Sanct. until 2017. Rain spoiled our view, but the skies darken--not dark enough to send birds to bed! The ancient Chinese thought that a dragon ate the sun--from time to time. Two scientists, named Hi and Lo, were engaged to figure out when the dragon would be hungry again. They missed their calculations and lost their heads. Maybe they forgot Leap Year! The dragon ate the sun the very next day. Poor Hi. Poor Lo.

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Don't you love to catch a TV commercial in error? There's a "Mrs. Olsen" who sells coffee--"Grown in the fresh mountain air & sunshine." Wrong, Mrs. O.! Coffee trees must grow in shade, under trees that top them, so that the berries ripen all 'round. (And it does take a year's growth from one coffee tree to produce one pound of coffee in the state that you use it. After all you don't use the coffee berry, all you use is the bean within the berry.

NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY

ACTIVITIES

SATURDAY, April 28 - 10:00-12:00 Noon - THREE-PART INTRODUCTION
TO BIRDS AND BIRDING FOR ADULTS

Covers a wide range of topics and field experience.

SATURDAY, May 5 - 10:00-12:00 Noon - Part II - INTRODUCTION
TO BIRDS AND BIRDING FOR ADULTS

SUNDAY, May 6 - 1:30PM - SPRING WILDFLOWERS

Join naturalist, Lisa Lofland Gould, for one of her fascinating guided tours of the wild spring plants of the Sanctuary.

SATURDAY, MAY 12 - 10:00-12:00 Noon - Part III - INTRODUCTION
TO BIRDS AND BIRDING FOR ADULTS

SUNDAY, May 20 - 11:00-3:00 PM - SHEEP TO SHAWL

A special treat for all! The Rhode Island Weavers Guild will be with us to present sheep sheering, wool carding, spinning, hand dyeing with native dyeing materials and, of course, weaving.

SATURDAY and SUNDAY, June 2 and 3 - All Day

Open House for all members and non-members. Lots of special walks and things - come and bring a neighbor or two.

SATURDAY, June 9 - 10:00-12:00 Noon - NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY, Part I

Bring your equipment. We'll take photos today and view the results next Saturday.

SATURDAY, June 16 - 10:00-12:00 Noon - NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY, Part II

We'll view last week's efforts and perhaps try some new things too.

JULY 2 - AUGUST 10 - 9:00-12:00 Noon - SUMMER DAY CAMP

Six weeks of Day Camp for campers K-6. Lots of exiting activities weaving in and out of the world of nature. Campers may attend any or all weeks.

PLEASE POST

Many of you must remember Sue Jacobsen, the young Brown University graduate who ran our Day Camp last summer. She is now in East Malaysia employed by the National Park System. The following letter tells of her adventures while preparing to write a guidebook to the parks.

"I'm now back in Kota Kinabalu, the capital of Salah where I am living. I am very glad to be back. The people were particularly unfriendly in Sipitang and Klias Peninsula where I was working. I was constantly being warned of headhunters. It seems it is customary to bury a head at the foundation of newly built bridges. This serves as both a sacrifice and a protective device - if there's no head, the bridge will collapse. They're building a new road through the whole area and this results in lots of new bridges, hence alot of paranoid people. The chief of police was quoted in the paper saying that there is no longer any headhunting going on, however I spent a rather harrowing half hour being chased by a boatful of men with a gun and I don't think their intentions were very noble. At any rate my head is still attached to my torso (as loosely as ever) and I spent a very interesting week exploring the mangrove swamp and nipah palm forests of Klias Peninsula.

I saw surprisingly little animal life. The most exciting find was a half dozen silver leaf monkeys munching on leaves in the tops of fig trees. The bird life (which I had anticipated would be abundant) was also a disappointment, though I did get to see several Chinese Egrets which are supposedly very rare."

As always, folks should remember that the Sanctuary can always use books on natural history, or old nature magazines of any kind. Any donations would be greatly appreciated.

NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY

Since the beginning of this year, the Advisory Committee has been meeting on a frequent basis, considering the needs of our Sanctuary, new programs, improvements of existing programs, methods of enhancing Sanctuary services, etc. There are new programs in the offing, as well as many changes and improvements to existing programs. There is so much to be done in so many areas, and the Advisory Committee and Bob Hinckley need your support and assistance.

If you or other members of your family, or if you know of others who would like to help out, please fill out and return the form below.

NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY
583 Third Beach Road
Middletown, R.I.

Names

Address

Tel. No.

We would like to help in the following areas: (please circle)

Harvest Fair

Membership

Publicity

Fund Raising

New Programs

Tour Guide

Children's Programs

Educational Programs Maintenance

Other areas

Buildings
Trails

We welcome your suggestions and comments on the back of the form.