



The Norman Bird Flyer

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

THE TIMBERDOODLE

On an evening in early March I was walking across an old field below the barn and heard a familiar and reassuring sound. It was dusk, and a mist made it impossible to see the source of the sound, but it was like that of a cricket chirping. It seemed to spiral above me and then grew very faint. At one point the sound stopped altogether, and a different sound started. This was a liquid chirping and it grew louder and seemed to be swooping down. This, too, soon stopped and was followed by a nasal, insect-like "peent" that was repeated every 20 seconds or so. With this sound I knew for sure that the woodcock was back in town.

The woodcock is a fist-sized russet and brown speckled bird with a bill almost as long as the rest of its body. Its eyes are large and set far back on its head so that it can see behind and above as well as forward. The woodcock is a hunter of worms, staying in the bottom land where the soil is moist and temperatures are cool. He finds worms by poking his bill into the mud and sensing their tiny vibrations. He rarely comes up empty three times in a row. Once he finds a worm, the woodcock secures it by opening just the tip of his flexible bill.

Woodcock are secretive. Once their spring courtship is over, they disappear into the cover of thick shrubs and are rarely seen during the summer and even during their fall migration.

Prior to the intensive settlement of the east, woodcock relied heavily on openings created by beaver in the valleys of streams and swamps. By the 1850's most of New England was farmed and every family knew the woodcock, commonly calling it the "timberdoodle". By the turn of the century many small farms had been abandoned and the fields had turned back to young forest. Woodcock became scarce. Market hunters, too, took their toll on the woodcock. Two market hunters could take sixty birds in one day before the turn of the century. Woodcock sold for \$1.50 a pair in New York City at that time. After 1920, woodcock hunting was legal

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NEW DIRECTORS!

The Trustees and the Advisory Committee of the Norman Bird Sanctuary are pleased to announce the selection of Timothy Traver and Deborah Clark as co-directors of the sanctuary. Tim and Delia have been managing the sanctuary since last August, while the search for a director has been in progress.

Tim is originally from Barrington, and has worked as a sanctuary volunteer in the past. He holds a degree in Wildlife Biology from the University of Vermont, with a special interest in ornithology. He is also interested in writing - you might have noticed his articles in the Newport Daily News.

Delia is a native of Vermont. She graduated from the University of Vermont with a self-designed major in Environmental Education. She is especially interested in botany and astronomy.

HATS OFF TO ROB BESTOSO!

The first major phase of the barn renovation and museum development is nearly completed. The new office overlooks the bird feeders and front Harvest Fair field. All is insulated, painted and wired. Brand new stairs lead up to the mezzanine.

General contractor Rob Bestoso brought to bear many of his extraordinary talents to see that the work was done well. From thawing pipes and wiring junction boxes to plastering ceilings (not to mention fine carpentry work in a barn not always plumb) Bestoso showed himself competent, affable and meticulous. Thanks.

THE TIMBERDOODLE (cont.) only in the fall.

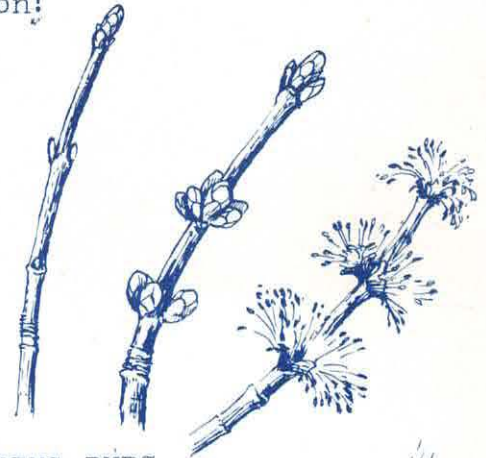
To hear the magical sound of the woodcock, walk along an abandoned field at dusk some evening this spring and listen for the twittering and peenting of the courting male. If it is not too dark you will be able to make out the male in flight, and you may even get a look at the female. The sanctuary will also hold two guided woodcock walks this spring, which you are welcome to attend; one on March 28 at 6:30 and one on April 4 at 7:00. Bring a friend!

NATURE CLUB

We're just coming into the end of our two pilot sessions of the Nature Club, and we feel that the club has been a great success. Both sessions ran nearly full of boys and girls aged 10 - 13. As 11 year old Jonathan Davis reports:

"We have been doing such activities as making a brush pile for wild rabbits, making a study skin of a Canada goose, compass reading skills, various games to gain each others' trust, and taking care of the sanctuary's animals. This term we are doing survival skills. It sure beats sitting around watching TV!"

We will be running two more sessions of the club this spring for 10-13 year olds. See the enclosed application!



BURSTING BUDS

Red Maple trees look dead in winter, but they're really only resting. Each of their tiny buds is an embryonic branch containing a number of miniature leaves or flowers. In late February of early March the flower buds begin to swell, pushing the protective covering scales apart. Soon the countless thousands of buds burst into flowers, covering the tree with a fine reddish mist.

The flowers develop into fruits which, by late spring, have matured into the familiar "helicopters" or double samaras. If released high on a tree in a strong wind, these winged seeds can travel 100 yards or more, hopefully dropping into the moist springtime soil that the red maples grow so well in.

Just after the flowers fade, the leaf buds swell and burst open, revealing the leaves that have been ready formed in miniature and waiting in them since the beginning of the previous August.

FROG

What a wonderful bird the frog are.
When he sit, he stand almost;
When he hop, he fly almost.
He ain't got no sense hardly.
He ain't got no tail hardly either.
When he sit, he sit on what he
ain't got almost.

Anonymous



THE CRAWLING AND HOPPING KIND

It's called "herping", (like "birding") and it's fun. You may never have paid much attention to our frog, toad and salamander species before (North America has a greater diversity of amphibians than any other continent!), but don't worry, not even the experts know which ones inhabit RI and where they live. That's why they have organized "HERP WATCH '81".

The Department of Environmental Management's State Heritage Program and the RI Audubon Society have organized the Herp Watch. Chris Raithel of the State Heritage Program sees a real need to determine the specialized haunts of these creatures so that protection can be afforded them. Salamanders congregate around specific temporary pools (fish free) to mate and lay eggs. Filling or contaminating one pool could knock out an entire local population.

Amphibians, though not economically important, are incredible animals just in their ability to survive in an environment where everything larger preys on them. They must develop the abilities necessary to survive in the least wanted of all places. They do very well against great odds.

Hob Calhoun of RI Audubon points out another reason for watching out for herps. As they are low on the food chain, they are quite sensitive to changes in the chemistry of our soil, air and water. They are barometers of environmental quality. In that way, it is more significant if the frogs aren't singing in a place they have sung before, than if they are singing.

On Tuesday, March 31 at 7:30 in the Sanctuary Ed Shed Chris Raithel will provide an introduction to the herps through slides and sound tapes. Come learn how to go about spotting them on your own!

EASTERN SPADEFOOT TOAD - This animal has only been spotted in Rhode Island a few times but experts feel that there could be quite a number living here. We'll be looking out for these as the Herp Watch progresses. Let us know if you spot any!

SPRING IS NEAR

The skunk cabbage says that Spring is near,
And not any other time of year.

The crocuses have come out to say,
That Spring is really here to stay.

The delicate work of the spider
Shows up better when it's brighter.

Bees come in the Spring
To tell the flowers what Spring
will bring.

The buds will bloom
Until the month of June.

Bees buzz, yes they do,
Unless they're busy stinging you.

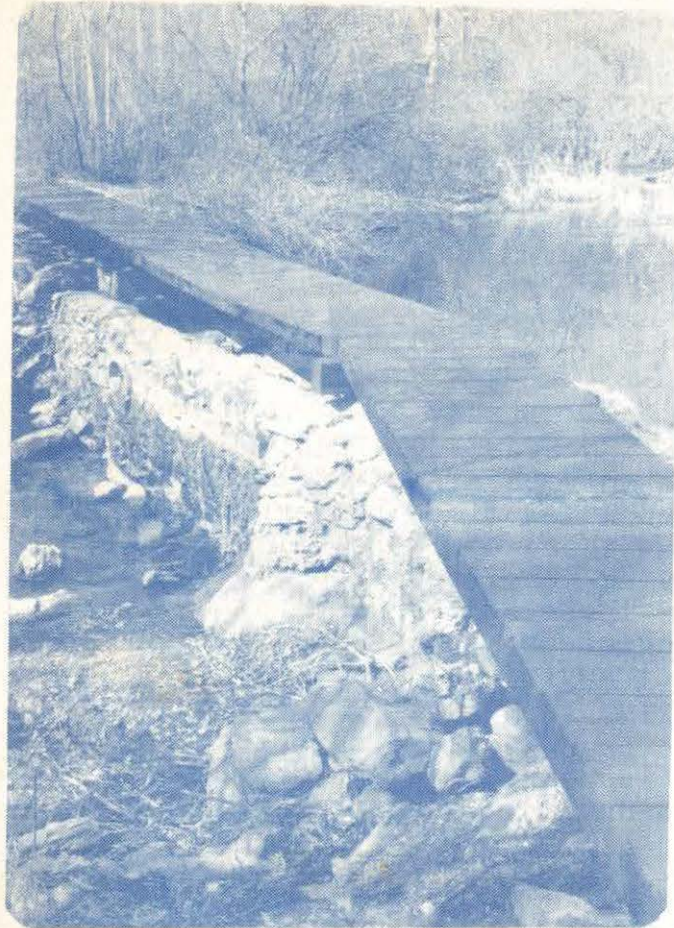
So get away from the cars' beep, beep,
And come to the Bird Sanctuary to hear
the marsh peepers' peep.

Summer will soon be drawing near,
And Spring will disappear,
Until next year!

This Spring poem was written by Polly Wessick, a 12 year old member of the Norman Bird Sanctuary Nature Club.

NATURE DAY CAMP

Plans are under way for this summer's Nature Day Camp, and excitement is rising. We're planning on running the regular morning sessions for children entering grades K - 6, and adding to that with an afternoon Summer Challenge session for boys and girls entering grades 7 - 9. If you're interested in the camp, call or write the sanctuary and we'll send you a flyer soon.



Synergy

When two people work together, they can produce more than twice what each could have done alone. that's called synergy, and that's volunteer power!

Lincoln Barber has used his great organizational skills to advantage helping to move our staff office and rearrange the barn interior. Jill Hall is using her gardening know-how to landscape the front entrance and the ed shed courtyard. Teddi Shur has contributed her energy and boundless enthusiasm every Saturday this winter. Guthrie Nicholson has continued to put his electrical genius to the test. The sanctuary office has not had to be left empty of school trip days, thanks to Kate Elshant and Jan Goodland. Jeff Hall has helped open up the woodcock singing grounds. Don Lemmens has taken on tasks great and small, including, as seen in the photograph, lengthening the life of the Maple Swamp Pond bridge with a coat of creosote. To all of you, and to everyone else who has given some of their time to the sanctuary this winter, we offer our thanks.

Directors' Notes

Who has the time these days for the study of nature? In many families both parents work. A housewoman raising a family least of all has the time for the slow, thoughtful, and repeated process of learning about the natural world through observation. Even the sanctuary staff has difficulty getting out as much as they would like. All the small things add up and consume our time. Reading seems like one partial solution but most of us could pave our way to the moon with books and magazines we want to read but haven't.

One way to stay involved and keep learning is to listen to others talk about their work, their travels, or their special hobbies. We would like to form a group of those people interested in natural history who can meet as a group once a month for refreshments and a speaker on some natural history topic. We can engage speakers but would hope members of the group could define their interests and maybe even come up with ideas for speakers. Guided walks are a definite possibility, too. If you are interested, call the sanctuary (846-2577) and we'll get a list going.

Spring has arrived. Three wood-duck flew onto Maple Swamp Pond, and a pair of blue-winged teal up from wintering in Guyana or some place in Central America showed up on Cerio Duck pond this week. They joined the ducks and the Canada goose who are swimming free there after spending the winter near the animal house. Volunteers have built a small floating island to keep them safe from hungry foxes. Skunk cabbages, pussy willows, red-winged black birds and new grass shoots are all cheering us on through the last few cold days of March.

ILLUSTRATIONS

You have probably been wondering who is responsible for the beautiful natural history illustrations you see in the Flyer. Lucia deLeiris has been drawing for the sanctuary for a number of years, recently taking time t out of her busy professional career. Her drawings this time include the woodcock, skunk cabbage, jack-in-the-pulpit spring scene on the front page, the spadefoot toad, the red maple buds, and the hawthorn flower.

What's Happening at the Bird Sanctuary?

EVERY SUNDAY

Sunday Morning Bird Walks - 8:00 AM
Come join us in our new spring hours!
Everyone welcome from first-timers
to experts! Meet in the parking lot.

Family Nature Program - 2:00 Designed
for children of all ages. Guided na-
ture walks, crafts, animal demonstra-
tions - something different each week.
(Adults welcome, too!)

BIRDING SPECIALS

Early birders - March 18, 25 and
April 2, 9 at 6:00 AM. Birds and
breakfast! We'll bone up on our
spring birds together. \$2.00 charge
per session to cover the cost of the
breakfast. Call 846-2577 to reserve
a spot.

Bird Banding Demonstration - May 10
at 8:00. You'll get to see some birds
in the hand as Chris Rimmer of the
Manomet Bird Observatory sets up his
mist nets and banding operation.

GARDENING

Gardeners' Meeting - April 5 at 1:00
Meeting for everyone interested in
having a garden plot in the sanctuary
community gardens this summer.

Organic Gardening Workshop - April 11
from 10:00 to noon. Lee Gardner of
the Agricultural Extension Service
will cover the basics of organic gar-
dening theory and techniques.

New Alchemy Trip - June 6, all day.
We'll take a field trip to the New
Alchemy Institute to take part in
one of their Farm Saturday programs.
Call the sanctuary for details.

EVENING PROGRAMS

Turtles, Toads, Salamanders - March
31 at 7:30. An introduction by Chris
Raithel through slides and sound
tapes, including how to spot them in
the wild!

Star Walks - April 2 at 7:30 and May
2 at 8:00. We'll study some of the
beautiful stars and constellations of
the spring sky and learn the myths
behind them. If cloudy we'll be inside.

Buffalo - April 23 at 7:30. An even-
ing of reflection of these great ani-
mals, so important to our heritage,
including film, slides and speaker.

Fly Tying Demonstration - May 14 at
7:30. A discussion of the natural
history and habits of trout will ac-
company this presentation on the art
of fly tying.

FESTIVITIES

Volunteers Pot Luck Supper - April 17
at 6:30. Past volunteers, present vol-
unteers, future volunteers, Harvest
Fair volunteers, school group volun-
teers... Anyone who has or is interes-
ted in giving time to the sanctuary
is welcome to come join us for supper!
Bring your favorite dish, and your
friends or family. Call to let us
know how many are coming.

Earth Day Celebrations - Earth Day
is a celebration of gifts and a
recognition of responsibilities.
April 22 from 3:30 to 5:00 - a pro-
gram for children including sanc-
tuary clean-up and earth games.
April 26 - join the Conservation
Commission's Sachuest Point clean-up,
at 9:00, then regroup in the sanc-
tuary parking lot for an attack on
Hanging Rock Road.

FIELD TRIPS

Canoe Trip - May 3 leaving at 8:00.
We'll spend the day canoeing either
the Wood or the Mooseup River, which-
ever has better birding on that day.
Picnic lunch. Call us at 846-2577
for details and to reserve a spot.

SPRING

Woodcock Walks - March 28 at 6:30 and
April 4 at 7:00. Listen to Spring come
in as we observe the woodcock's
Spring mating ritual.

Spring Wildflowers - April 25, May 9,
and May 16 at 2:00. The woods are filled
with flowers for the brief few weeks
when the soil is warm, but the trees
haven't leafed out. Learn each as it
first appears!

Conservation Workshop Day - May 2
from 9:00 to noon, followed by a
picnic lunch. For teachers and fami-
lies interested in new ways to
teach conservation:

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George Warren, Charlotte Van Hof, Christine
Callahan, Stephen Erickson, Harriett Phelps,
Peter Randall, Albert Sherman, Patty Vaillancourt
Co-Directors: Timothy Traver, Deborah Clark

NATURE CLUB RESERVATION FORM

Saturday mornings - 9:00-12:00

Two four-week sessions:

April 4 - 25

May 2 - 30 (except May 23)

Members: \$16.00/4-week session

Non-members: \$20.00/4-week session

Yes, I would like to enroll my child
in the Norman Bird Sanctuary's Nature
Club.

Name _____

Street _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Age _____

Interests _____

Session: _____ April 4, 11, 18, 25

_____ May 2, 9, 16, 30

Member _____ Non-member _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

We will cut off enrollment at
ten participants.

WHALE WATCH

Join us this May 17 on the New
England Aquarium's guided whale
cruise aboard the Motor Vessel
"Provincetown". We'll meet at
the sanctuary at 7:00 for a 9:00
departure from Long Wharf, Bos-
ton, returning to the wharf at
4:30. Cost is reduced to \$17.00
per person for this all day trip,
if we can gather a group of 20
or more, so tell your friends!
Please return this form with a
a check by April 15.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Number of people _____

Amount Enclosed _____

Children must be 10 or older and
accompanied by an adult.

THE NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY

THIRD BEACH ROAD

MIDDLETOWN, RHODE ISLAND 02840

PHONE: 846-2577

Norman Bird Sanctuary Events



MARCH 22 BIRD WALK 8:00 FAMILY PROGRAM 2:00	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
BIRD WALK 8:00 FAMILY PROGRAM 2:00	30	31	APRIL 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
BIRD WALK 8:00 GARDENERS' MEETING 1:00 FAMILY PROGRAM 2:00	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
BIRD WALK 8:00 FAMILY PROGRAM 2:00	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
EASTER BIRD WALK 8:00 O	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
BIRD WALK 8:00 SACHVEST CLEAN-UP FAMILY PROGRAM 2:00	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5
BIRD WALK 8:00 CANOE TRIP 8:00 FAMILY PROGRAM 2:00	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
BIRD BANDING DEMONSTRATION 8:00 FAMILY PROGRAM 2:00	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
BIRD WALK 8:00 FAMILY PROGRAM 2:00 WHALE WATCH 7:00	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
MEMORIAL DAY	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2

NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY
Third Beach Road
Middletown, Rhode Island

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