

Hi!

Seems
Most
Everyone
Wonders

how it came to our waters. We'll never know for sure. Probably on a Russian Trawler rather than by wing. Nevertheless we are awfully glad to welcome so handsome a stranger to our ponds. News of the smew was on the front page of "Le Matin" as well as N.E.S and West in US print, and all over via national radio. Nat'l TV ignored this happy item--too busy broadcasting "les horreurs".

When F.L. first spotted the smew, he said not a word, but got on the phone. At least 4 distinguished authorized bird identifiers were summoned. The bird was officially pronounced to be a smew, cousin to a merganser (which is a sea going, fish eating duck, sort of). A smew is from the coast of Russia, summers in the Mediterranean, is white and has a black eye patch. All in all -- très distingué (All that comes from reading Le Matin!). Then, F.L. called to Associated Press--and then the people started to come. There was something just great about it all. So many people traveled miles--one came from Cal--to see a bird! They stood in the coldest wind of winter, spent goodly sums for tripods, binoculars and lodgings, to see a smew! A caravan of two cars and one big car with 7 passengers came from Maine and NYC. They met with their tripods at Easton's Beach, checked in to a local hotel, saw the sights of Newport, dined together. Next day on their way out of town they stopped to see the smew again and heard that a pigmy whale had washed up at Little Compton. They checked back into their hotel and spent the day at L.C. Next day they heard about a seal floating down Sakonnet on an ice floe, so hi-ho to Tagget's Ferry to see the seal. "Gosh" said one gal from NYC, "This is the most marvelous place to live!" "Yes" said local citizen, "It is"--as if we served up smews, whales and seals everyday--but it is the most marvelous place to live!!!

It was heartening to have politicians squabbling over a bird! This arose from the fact that Easton's Pond is in Newport and Green End Pond is in Middletown and the smew went wherever the ice wasn't. Now the ice is gone, it may be harder to spot the smew as he has two huge open bodies of water to fish in. He was named the official bird of both Newport and Middletown. An artist in Maine is making a nice sculpture of the visitor, but our local artists blew it--only comic figures. A tile maker has made a tile of Middletown with the traditional windmill. Over it he has added the words "Home of the Smew." We'd like to see a p.c. with his picture on it--everyone would buy a p.c., if not to mail at least to tuck into their copy of Peterson's guide, dated for future memories. And what of the future of our smew? That problem inspired one of our members to verse:-

Thoughts Of The Smew

"Come spring, what to do,"
Said the smew on the ice;
When the time comes to woo,
I'd like some advice.
One can see I've made friends,
Many ducks I do know,
With merganzers I blend,
As I glide to and fro.
To mate with that kind
Is really taboo. ---

Oh where can I find
A pretty girl smew?
Much too far to go back
To Siberia's coast,
So I'll just sit and quack
And declare this my post.
I'll swim and I'll fish
And take some cold shower
I'll forget my Spring wis
And admire the flowers!"
Rachel Squire

The national weather bureau says that the weather for the next 6 weeks will be warmer than usual which is OK. with most of us! It seems the groundhog in Puxatawney blew it again. Vicious gossip says that the Chamber of Commerce in Pux. dug two slots in the ground alongside the groundhog's tunnel and slipped in hot water bottles to get him to come out at all. So it's not his fault! Anyway our daffodils are up an inch. Early croci are in flower, bees are buzzing around pusseywillows. The chickadees' call, "Spring's Here" make the Sanct. a merry place. Robins are no longer fat with cold-they're chipping their familiar chips. Redwing scouts are north scouting the turf for future nests. Owls are mating. Watercress is abundant. Could it be that the goldfinch are changing colour? could be,-the days are noticeably longer. Swans are flying. Raccoons and squirrels hunt in pairs.(And you probably plowed your way through snow to get your mail today!)(And it was mostly seed catalogs!)

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Hen pheasants seem to be among the missing. There are lots of roosters but the hens are almost not at all. Fear suggests that people are luring hens into traps and eating them. If you see some hens, more than one or two, will you call 847-4967 afternoon, and tell where, when and how many hens you've seen? In one favourite nesting place, where pheasants have slept for over 30 years, it used to be that the cocks, some 3 or 4 would wait gallantly until the girls, some 10 or 12, would hop up into the brush and work their ways inward before the boys would hop up and seek security for the night. Now the roosters go to bed alone. Not a single hen to escort in the twilight--not one! Something dreadful is happening to the hens!

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Adam Apple, our deer, is living it up with prize cattle at one of the super-duper farms on the Island! Can you imagine it? He was supposed to to be on his own. Instead he has mooched a full winter of feed and warmth, in style! At least he didn't need a vicuna blanket, with the beautiful coat he grew, thanks to the care the hairless one got at the Sanct. last summer.

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Some weeks go someone threw a rock at Poe Crow, and broke his wing feathers. Subsequently he had to be confined to the loft in the Barn until his feathers grew enough for him to fly again. He was absolutely bored to death in the Barn. He knows every nut, bolt and knot of wood therein. After he was airborne some of the children, waiting for the school bus, taught him how to open mailboxes and they taught him the joy of tearing up paper. So after the schoolbuses left, he, bored with loneliness, opened mailboxes and tore up the mail therein. One day the police arrived to arrest one Poe Crow! He was incarcerated. But it is a terrible thing for a healthy bird to be caged. (It is contrary to the Will of Mabel Cerio) so either we would have to put him away or take him far far away into a wilderness--and try to lose him (he loves to ride the top of a car) OR we can ask you, our neighbours, to treat him as a wild crow. Crows are busy from sun up to sun set, hunting for food. They have no time to get bored and then to get into mischief. So we most respectfully ask you not to feed Poe. And to put your mail into your box and close it firmly. If it is closed tightly it is impossible for him to open. He will be a pest for a few days but his stomach will dictate to him--that he must hunt for food. What a lousy husband and father he will be if he can't provide for his family like other self-respectable crow. Soon, in a matter of days, some pretty little sloe-eyed crow will take him from us anyhow. So, no handouts--huh? When he's hunting for food he wont be in your mailboxes!

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If you know of any children who play around Green End Pond, or who wait for the school bus there, urge them not to kill the ducks that live on the Pond! Several have been killed by rocks. And you, as you drive across that bridge, don't speed to catch the light at Valley Rd! Ducks fly across the bridge. One Sunday 16 ducks were killed in that manner. Red lights turn to green in 30 seconds. But a dead duck is dead forever.

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Speaking of driving--6 out of 10 traffic deaths this year so far are teen agers! Alcohol and gasoline don't mix at any age! A poll shows that parents are relieved that their kids are using alcohol instead of drugs.

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Poison ivy is being used to study cancer. A doctor on Martha's Vineyard last summer floundered in a bed of the three-leafed shiny stuff. When he got back to Mass. General., he had a full blown case of P.I. He found that the human body attacks poison ivy exactly as it attacks cancers. Only we all seem to get over P.I. don't we?

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The Hackensack River, which, not so long ago was so foul that it caught fire and burned! is now flowing with sweet water. In the river are fresh water shrimp, crabs and small fish that are edible! Now, that's the way a river should be!

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In Alaska time is running out for the wolves that will be killed to "save the moose that the wolves are killing". It would be so much wiser if the right of humans to hunt moose was withheld for a few years. A human hunter will always kill the finest specimen--it looks so great stuffed! A wolf will kill only the sick and old specimens. If it should get a calf, it is because the calf is not strong enough to outrun the wolf. It is nature's way. And it is the best.

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As St Paddy's Day is coming along--here is an old Irish wish ---May you be an hour in Heaven before the Devil knows you're dead.

Coming Events

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| Woodcock Walk | March 15th at sunset. Gather at The Ed Shed for the fascinating courtship of the woodcocks. |
| Bird Ball | March 20. Invites will go out, but start now to plan your party. \$25.00 per couple includes dinner, dancing (Johnny Moiteza's Band) Skit, Door Prize. Call The Sanct 846-2577 846-9740 or 847-4967 for reservations. It's a fun affair! |

If you see someone without a smile---give him one of yours.

At the Sanctuary, just arrived--two darling new born spring lambs! Go & see before they grow into stupid sheep.