

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 1 NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY , THIRD BEACH ROAD , MIDDLETOWN, RHODE ISLAND 02840 PHONE 401-846-2577 X

OOKPIKJUAK, THE OWL

Visitors from another world, snowy owls always look out of place. Big and white, their bold arctic wildness juxtaposed against a carnival roof, a sign post, or billboard, they never fail to quicken the pulse of their startled observer.

"I was watching geese and ducks early in the morning. They were fidgety I noticed, more so than just my presence warranted. I saw it out of the corner of my eye, about 30 or 40 feet away. It glided by, 10 or 15 feet above the water and landed on a reed island in the center of the pond. The gulls took off, squawking and crying, and hovered around for a long time, while the snowy owl just sat there on the reeds as if resting.

"We saw a very large bird sitting up in one of the dead snags. From far away it looked dark because of the way the sun was hitting it, but as we crept slowly forward, we knew. We got a fantastic look through the scope - we could see every feather, the whiskers, yellow eyes. It blinked, didn't pay much attention to us. It finally flew and from a distance we saw it cough up a pellet. We ran up and grabbed it. It wasn't white. I don't know why I thought it would be. It was brown, filled with meadow mouse remains."

Normally at home on the flat tundra of the far arctic north, the snowy owl is known by the Eskimos as "Ookpikjuak." ground there, it favors small frost heaves called pingaluks. Though usually a silent bird, in the May mating season its voice can be heard booming and echoing across the barren tundra. He can even direct it high above him, ventriloquist-like.

Equally comfortable in the constant sunlight of an Arctic summer and in the long darkness of the Arctic winter, the snowy owl's strong eyes allow him to hunt both diurnally, in the daytime, and occasionally nocturnally, at night, making him a formidable predator.

Common dinners include such large prey as waterfowl, ptarmigan and full-grown snowshoe hares, in addition to mammals, fish, and all manner of birds including smaller owls and fledgling gyrfalcons. It has been known to kill and feed on Arctic foxes which had been caught in leg snares and has even been reported to attack juvenile wolverines. CONT



The snowy owl favors a diet of lemmings and other small rodents, however, because of their abundance in the Arctic; but these rodents, as we all know, are unreliable. Their capacity for production is higher than the tundra's capacity of sustain them, so periodically, usually every 4-8 years, their populations must take a drastic fall. The snowy owl's search for food during these occasional winters is what brings him down to our strange lands.

Here, even the wildlife don't know what to make of this strange owl. Its diurnal habits, among other things, provide it with a very unique niche. As T. Gilbert Pearson reported in 1917:

"This fact has been discovered too late by many a crow engaged with his brethren in the pleasing diversion of mobbing the big white spectre sitting on a limb motionless, and presumably blind, because obviously an owl. For, let one of the black tormentors come near enough and the ghost suddenly launches out on strong, silent wings, the great talons strike and close, and there is a crow who would have been wiser but for the circumstance that he is very dead."

This combination of cyclic southern migrations and diurnal habits make the odds quite good that we coastal Rhode Islanders will some time see the largest North American owl and one of the most strikingly beautiful owls in the world. This year has the potential for being quite an exciting year for snowy owl watchers, as by early December, owls had already been reported twice from the Easton's Beach area in Newport, on Admiralty Road in Portsmouth, at the Emily Ruecker Wildlife Refuge in Tiverton, at Ninnigret Conservation Area in Charlestown, and at Napatree Point in Westerly.

Used to the treeless tundra, the snowy owl often perches on the ground even here in the south, where it is easily mistaken for somebody's discarded MacDonald's lunch bag, although a quick look usually dispels that notion. Unfamiliar with the perils of civilization, they are also very often seen on buildings, fences, billboards and the like.

winter, keep your eyes open for that dense, luxurious, tightly contoured plumage, startlingly white on the males, grey ented on the females, and dusky grey on the immatures. You might catch sight of those bold yellow eyes in a large, rounded, almost tuftless head, or of legs and feet covered with long, white plumage, strikingly black talons barely peeking through the tips.

As one observer said this fall, "It was mystical, eery, uplifting, like seeing something that connected me to where I was, almost like seeing a friend."



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Trustees: Louis Lorillard, RI Hospital Trust National Bary, Advisory Committee: Norman Hall - Chair, Patty Vaillang Happy Van Beuren, George Warren, Barbie Sturtevant, Christallahan, Fran Holmes, William Horton, Ginny Laughlin, Harriet Phelps, Peter Randall, Barry J. Murphy, Charles, E. Levy, William Rogers, Ginny Purviance
Co-Directors: Deborah Clark, Timothy Traver

So, as you stroll or ski around this

SANCTUARY MUSEUM

The museum is underway, thanks to the work of a museum committee and museum designer Fred Moore. A good museum designer has a little of the Houdini in him and perhaps some Freud, too! Fred Moore's years with the Museum of Science in Boston and his recent redesign of the Blue Hills Interpretive Center, among other things, have proven that he has both and plenty of common sense, too. The sanctuary museum committee has enjoyed working with him through the fall weeks and looks forward to the winter.

From the barn, the winter refuge resembles a still picture on a television screen. The wind moving through the tops of the red-hued trees is barely discernible. But down on the trails, it is very different. There are sounds—bird voices reduced to brief musical notes and chips, clattering black locust seed pods; and smells—hints of juniper and sharp fire cherry; and sensations—boots breaking through frozen crust. This is a living museum, even in winter.

One might venture to ask why we, given be the awe-inspiring living museum at our back doorstep, need to create another less natural museum inside the barn? The answer is really four-fold.

If the Sanctuary were a book, the barn would be the introduction to the story. And, in a natural historical sense, the barn is the threshhold of a long and interesting tale of country and the people, plants, and animals living on it. The barn is a jumping-off place, a reference point that gives context and added meaning to the experience of the refuge.

The barn will also act as a translator, helping us to interpret what we see, hear, touch, and smell, though not necessarily interpreting it for us. Museums are increasingly multi-sensory in their approach to teaching and attempt to actively teach through experience rather than through static artifact display and cataloguing. Today's museums attempt to break down the barrier between the display and the viewer.

The barn will be an invitation and not an end in itself, inspiring the visitor to get out for a look on his own: an invitation to look with new eyes.

Perhaps most importantly, the museum will be linked with the sanctuary's educational programming. In every way possible and practical, the museum will afford the opportunity for teaching. Teaching aid storage, seasonal display areas which lend themselves to personalized interpretation CONT



KID'S CONNECTION...WITH BIRDS

BIRD PUNS - WHAT BIRD -

1.)..is what thieves are doing?

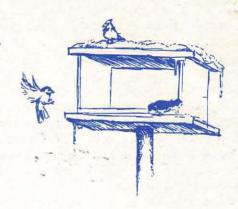
2.)..is what you are doing when you climb a hill?

3.).. is a sad letter?

4.)..is a famous magician?

5.)..is a nocturnal

windstorm?



6.)..has 144 bills?



a bird? Sounds silly, but you can RTISPARROWSNYK if you open up a bird restaurant EMOYSMDEOLGGRS this winter. Follow these simple MTHSTOSIDVISII directions and watch the birds flock to your breakfast table! You will need: several pine cones - collect those that are brown and without seeds, 1 pound PWICEASSELTKTK of suet (animal fat) found at the meat counters of grocery stores, 1 - 2 cups of bird seed and string. In a bowl, soften the suet until it feels like peanut butter. Add the seed and mix. Stuff the pine cone until it cannot be stuffed anymore. Tie a string around the tip of the cone and hang from a tree that is out of the wind but can be seen from a window. The leftover mixture can be frozen and used when needed. Restuff the cone when empty because the birds will come every day to feast. Birds, like us, need to eat fats and proteins to stay warm in the winter and the combination of suet and seeds provides this

energy. HAPPY WATCHING!!!!! CIRCLE THE WINTER BIRDS* HIDING BELOW

TOMYOBIRDSEENS IAMCHICKADEEBI TINACHSTMASNIT MOURNINGDOVEAG OLODCTFIHANSNR UVEIHRRNAVENCO SWINEEIFINCHES ETHAMEEEREWOTB CYBLUEJAYNEWRE Have you ever had breakfast with KIUOISNSWOSNIA IYPTRUHMPOAKNS ODWEYNISEENIGT WYNUTHATCHDNHR KERRSTPTKEISVE

ANTRAILARTOAMI OERABNDAMIWTED HAIRY WOODPECKER PLCOLDTLISSIST RISCHSEICHBOBS

* These birds you may see at your feeder!

BLUE JAY

- CARDINAL

CHICKADEE

- FINCHES .

GROSBEAKS

- NUTHATCH

-SPARROWS

STARLING

TITMOUSE

- MOURNING DOVE



1981-1982 has been an exemplary year in many ways for the Norman Bird Sanctuary. Educational programming has increased along with our membership; work on the trails and in the fields was greater than ever before, and our facilities received much critical attention.

Here is a report of an exciting year, a year of increased public participation, policy development, and organizational growth.

Membership.

The Sanctuary has experienced a net gain of 115 memberships, putting our membership at 878.

Land Management and Research

This year, we have been learning more about the Sanctuary land and the kinds of animal and plant populations it supports.

Surveys of wildflowers, mouse populations, the plants of Maple Swamp Pond, sanctuary tree species, breeding birds, and native amphibians and reptiles have been undertaken. A new map, professionally rendered from aerial photographs, will serve the survey work and visitors in many ways.

To encourage habitat diversity, we have reestablished a meadow of approximately 3 acres through mowing, fertilizing, and seeding (costs shared with Soil Conservation Service), planted demonstration wildlife feed plots, cleared a woodlands cedar release area, expanded clearings in the woodcock singing grounds and, as an offshoot of this work, created brushpiles used by mice, rabbits, and small birds for winter cover and food.

New rocked-in areas of the trail and boardwalk sections help slow down trail erosion and keep sneakers dry in wet seasons. Moving a trail conjunction spreads out use and decreases visitor confusion.

A planting of shrubs and nut trees (with a grant from the Newport Garden Club) demonstrates how the visitor can plant for wildlife and supplement local wild animal diets.

Hawk watching, participation in an island stream survey, and participation in the Rhode Island Breeding Bird Atlas have been added to our research activities this year.

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Our principal responsibility continues to be the care of the refuge habitats and the plants and animals found in them. This year has seen increasing attempts to combine management with public education.

Facility Development

The development of the sanctuary museum is the year's most exciting project. A museum committee has been working with an exhibit design consultant for abbut eight weeks now. At this point, the committee is working on the design concept phase for the museum. Our next step will be a more specific planning scheme for displays.

In anticipation of museum displays: New barn doors have been added to the front and rear entrances; a fire alarm system has been installed; new kitchen cabinets have been added.

In addition to barn interior changes, a landscape planner is developing a grounds plan. The plan locates all buildings, courtyards, shrubs, and trees in the vicinity of the barn. The buildings, and grounds committee nears the completion of its first landscaping priority -- the grading and landscaping of the land around the animal house.

The animal house has new cages to provide roomy housing for resident animals recovering from injuries, and animals used in edicational programs. Outside, new shingles on the animal house spruce up the back courtyard, and new windows provide light and ventilation to inside inhabitants.



Interns and Volunteers

St. George's School again provided the Sanctuary with a spring work crew of 5 graduating seniors for a month of trail and garden work.

New Visions for Newport County, a CETA grant agency which provides work experience for eligible young adults, supplied us with 8 workers for a 6 week period.

Volunteer naturalists were active in spring and fall with our school walks program.

Receptionists logged over 105 hours of volunteer time this summer.

Youth volunteers in a summer program gave a total of 333 hours of their time to the Sanctuary.

Boy Scouts from Newport and Middletown troops conducted wildlife management projects. Girl Scouts helped construct temporary summer museum displays.

A special prize for the volunteer who the staff felt made the greatest contribution this year was awarded to Roger Gilman.

Over 150 volunteers assisted in this year's harvest fair, and many more than that have worked at various times throughout the year for the Sanctuary.

Thanks to all!

Special Capital Expenditures

Purchase of a Sanctuary vehicle in August of this year has made transportation into town and to schools much easier, and has greatly facilitated refuge management.



Education and Programming

This year, our programs served schools, in Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth, Briston Barrington, Warren, Narragansett, Cambridge, and Attleboro, MA. The number of school children served totalled 2,489 here at the refuge, and 3,921 in the schools.

In addition, the Sanctuary hosted a Project Learning Tree workshop for teachers, and a teacher training workshop in the Mammals curriculum developed by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management.

A Sanctuary sponsored 4-H group with 21 members centered on conservation issues. This group held a Conservation Field Day which was open to all 4-H groups on Aquidneck Island.

The Sanctuary also conducted natural history tours for 156 Boy Scouts and Girl-Scouts, and helped them develop several volunteer projects. These included an Eagle Scout project which provided a new laboratory/work room for the Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary provided 395 camper weeks through Nature Day Camp and 132 camper weeks through Summer Challenge for a total of 527 camper weeks. The camps were operated by 5 full time staff and one half time staff person who all received one week of staff training.

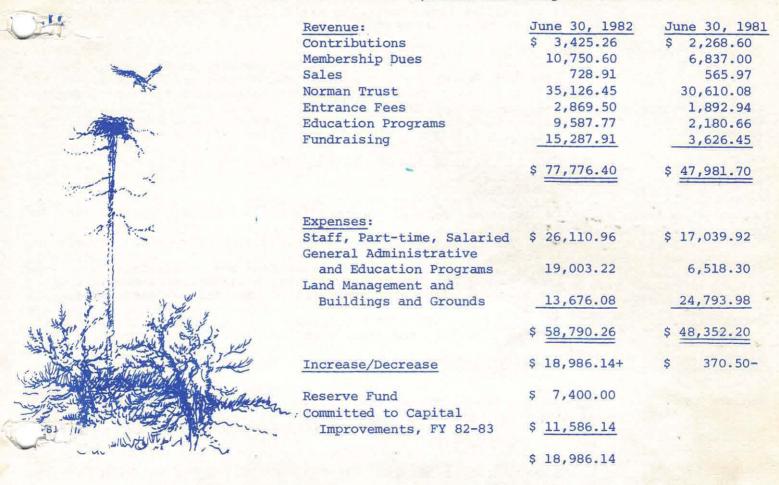
Nature Club, a nature study program for elementary age children, has been quite successful throughout the year.

Public Programs

This year the Sanctuary has offered 88 field walks on a variety of topics emphasizing birds and including stars, trees, plants, mammals, and herbs. 24 indoor programs have included nature crafts, natural history films, and wildlife presentations.

A Natural History Lecture Series was instituted during the winter and has offered 5 monthly lectures on such topics as Owls of Rhode Island, Birds of the Far North, Frogs, Toads and Salamanders, and Acid Rain.

Many, many thanks to all of our members who have supported the Sanctuary throughout the past year. And welcome to all new members. We look forward to another activity-filled year.



VOLUNTEER NOTES

Many thanks to Beverly Webster for helping type and edit this newsletter edition. And to Bob Barry's budding artists for graphic works. Thanks, Sylvia Hampton, for your continued efforts in the membership department.

Calling all teen volunteers! Thirteen to sixteen year olds interested in sanctuary work are invited to participate in a winter volunteer program starting on the first Saturday in February. Daily chores like sweeping the barn, clipping trails, and cleaning animal cages will be a part of the assigned work, as will caring for the salt water aquarium, making brush piles and nesting boxes, and answering the office phone.

spective volunteers should call the sellow if they plan to attend orientation and training on 1 February at 1:30 p.m. Bring warm clothes; gloves are a must.

SANCTUARY MUSEUM CONT.

by Sanctuary staff, and a lecture demonstration area will be included in the barn plans.

Do you have any thoughts on museum displays or feelings about what should be included in the museum? Contact one of the museum committee members or talk to one of the Sanctuary staff.



BIRD PUN ANSWERS

- 1.) Robin
- 2.) Puffin
- 3.) Blue Jay
- 4.) Merlin
- 5.) Nightingale
- 6.) Grosbeak

NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY EVENTS

Every Sunday Morning 8:00 AM

BIRD WALK. A brisk way to start a winter Sunday. Our winter walks focus on coastal life, including seals, and wintering land birds. Everyone welcome. Dress warmly!

Sunday Afternoons 2:00 PM FAMILY PROGRAMS AND FILM SERIES.
Film Series: With the exception of Rattlesnake Country, all films are free and generally run for 40 minutes. Films are geared for primary to junior highschool-aged children (dates subject to change).
Rattlesnake Country

January 9
January 16
January 23
January 30
February 6
February 13

February 20

February 27

March 6

March 13

So Little Time Life of the Beaver Bighorn, with John Denver

Birds of Prey of the NE United States

Silent Spring
Tundra Wolf

The Incredible Flight of the Snow Geese.
Family Programs: Special programs in natural history for the

whole family.

Ole family.

<u>Children's Story Hour</u>- Reading Aloud several special stories

from Nature.

<u>Mammal Adaptations-</u> Using live mammals and artifacts, this program teaches the importance of fitting the niche to survival of the species. Also discussed will be the topic of endangered species.

Birds of Prey- This is a program on the special relationship

between predators and their prey.

March 27

March 20

<u>Insect Architecture</u> - A program on the master builders in the insect world.

January 13 7:30-8:30 PM STAR WALK. North America has the best star-gazing in the winter of anywhere on the Earth, with many of the brightest stars visible. Join us for a tour of the constellations through telescope and iegends. Dress warmly!

January 19 7:00-9:30 PM CROSS-COUNTRY SKI WORKSHOP. See description and registration form on facing page.

January 22 5:00-6:00 AM OWL PROWL . A pre-dawn stroll through the Sanctuary to listen for the calls of the Great-horned and Screech Owls. Call the Sanctuary if you plan to come on this one.

February 9 7:30 PM THE ECOLOGY OF SALT MARSH BIRDS. Natural History Lecture Series. Slides and lecture by Steven Reinert on studies he has made in a Barrington, RI salt marsh. Learn of the fantastic nest-building techniques of the red-winged blackbird, the secrets of seaside sparrows and the haunts of the seldom-seen clapper rail.

February 16 7:30-8:30 PM February 19 1:00-4:00PM STAR WALK. See above description.

NESTING BOX BUILDING WORKSHOP. Description and registration information on facing page.

March 5 1:00-4:00PM CHILDREN'S NATURE POETRY DAY. Description and registration on facing page.

March 9 7:30 PM <u>PLANTING THE WILD</u>. Natural History Lecture Series. Slides and discussion by Jorie Honkin of "Garden in the Woods", on propogation of native wildflowers in both garden and natural settings. Information for both the curious naturalist and gardener on the very specialized habitat requirements of some of our native wildflowers.

ere

March 14 7:30 PM March 19 5:30 PM STAR WALK. See above description.

WOODCOCK WALK. An informal stroll through the refuge in search of one of Spring's earliest celebrations: the courtship flight and song of the male woodcock.

All above programs cost \$1.00 for Sanctuary members and \$2.00 for non-members, except Sunday morning bird walks and Sunday afternoon films, which are free to all.

WORKSHOPS AND CLASSES

Gross Country Ski Workshop

Learn the basics of x-country. Workshop will include tips on Equipment choices, care and waxing, skiing techniques, clothing, winter safety, winter botany and animal tracks, and much more. Slide show and hand outs. INSTRUCTOR: Suzi Williams COST: \$5. member, \$7. non-member DATE: January 19 TIME: 7:00-9:30

Wooden Decoy Carving

Bird carving is high craft and art form combined. Learn the history of wooden bird and decoy carving, the basics of carving, and the tools required. Participants will work on their own carving throughout the course under the tutelage of an experienced carver. INSTRUCTORS: Jim Williams/Barry Murphy COST: \$20 members, \$25 non-members DATE: Feb. 3 - Feb. 24, plus Feb. 26 TIME: 7:30-9:00pm

Nesting Box Building
Build a nesting box using the simple
sign and construction methods of staff Propenter Gary MacDonald. Martins, Bluebirds, Swallows, and Wrens wil thank you! Take home your own birdhouse. COST: \$5.00 members, \$7.00 non-members DATE: February 19, TIME: 1:00-4:00pm

Naturalist Writers Discussion Group

The evolution of human attitudes to-ward nature will be one of the topics of this discussion group. Writings from Darwin, Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, and contemporaries like Edward Abbey, and Annie Dillard will be discussed. DATE: February 15- March 8 TIME: 7:30-9:00 COST: material costs only (copying costs)



CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Nature Club

A Saturday morning alternative for your child, the Norman Bird Sanctuary's Nature Club is a place where children can safely do things that have always excited their curiosity, under the guidance of a knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff. Seven to 10 children per instructor. Children learn by doing and have fun at the same For children in grades K - 6. Saturday Mornings 9:00-12:00 Session # 1: Jan. 29 - Feb. 26 Session # 2: March 5 - April 2 COST: Members: \$20/five week session Non-members: \$25/five week session

Winter Week

A vacation at the Norman Bird Sanctuary! Crafts, films, hikes, games, nature discovery activities. Vacation does not need to be an end to fun learning. For children in grades K - 6. DATE: Feb. 21 - Feb 25, 9:00-12:00 COST: Members: \$20 Non-members: \$25

Children's Nature Poetry

This one afternoon workshop will be an exploration of the sanctuary on foot and through the imagination. Workshop leader, Lida Whitman, will lead children through a number of observing and writing exercises.

DATE: March 5 TIME: 1:00-4:00pm \$4.00 member, \$5.00 non-member.

PROGRAM REGISTRATION FORM

NAME	TELEPHONE #	-14
ADDRESS		
SANCTUARY MEMBERNON-MEMBER	PLEASE SEND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION # Attending Fe	е
Nature Club Session # 1 Nature Club Session # 2 Winter Week Children's Nature Poetry Day Wooden Decoy Carving Cross-Country Ski Workshop Naturalist Writers Discussions Nesting Box Building	Jan. 29-Feb. 26 March 5-April 2 Feb. 21-Feb. 25 March 5 Feb. 3-Feb. 24, Feb. 26 Jan. 19 Feb. 15-March 8 Feb. 19	
	Total Enclosed \$	

AQUIDNECK ISLAND PROJECT

Save the Bay's Aquidneck Island Project is off to a flying start with assistance from over 100 volunteers and support groups including a dedicated group of representatives from the Norman Bird Sanctuary. The three-year grant-funded project aims to prevent pollution problems by examining the relationships among water quality, waste water system operation, and land use, and by involving citizens in choosing among alternate plans for handling decisions in these areas.

In the first six months, the staff has concentrated on research, building networks in the community, and recruiting volunteers. The staff has talked to dozens of community groups and local and state officials and has conducted a watershed tour and an island-wide pollution source survey. Over 75 islanders took part in the survey which revealed that, although the Island is basically in good shape, over 385 possible pollution sources were uncovered, including problems with septic systems and hazardous waste sites.

It has become clear that although there is a great deal of interest in the issues of water, waste water and land use, it is difficult to trace the relationships among these issues. And it is especially difficult to do the kind of information gathering and systems thinking needed to appreciate how decisions made in one town regarding the placement of sewer lines can degrade the quality of drinking water for all the Island communities.

But this is exactly what happened what sewer lines were extended to a rural section of Middletown several years ago. The presence of sewer lines encouraged residential and commercial development in the area around Easton's Pond, a major reservoir for the area. Development caused erosion and siltation of the pond, loading it with pollutants and reducing its storage capacity. Since the seventy year old water treatment plant is obsolete and in poor repair, it cannot do a good job of purifying the water. In fact, consultants have recommended that it be replaced, and the water department head says that it is nearly impossible to turn out a good product with the plant.

Solutions to the predicament range from new zoning and subdivision ordinances, local ordinances requiring erosion control at all building sites, and water systems improvements.

Participants in the Aquidneck Island
Project will be examining case histories
such as these in a series of workshops
this spring. They will be aided in
their deliberations by research conducted
by AIP staff and university classes. The
information will be analyzed with the help
of the project's computer.

For more information on how you can participate in the workshops or receive information about other aspects of the project, call or write to Save The Bay at 154 Francis Street, Providence, RI 02903, telephone 1-272-3540.

NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY
Third Beach Road
Middletown, Rhode Island



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