



LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

FROM THE DISHMAN HILLS

JANUARY, 1988

SOMETHING ABOUT ROBINS

If you think that the robins go south in the winter you are partly right. Spokane's Christmas Bird Count found many hundreds January 3, when many Audubon Society members braved chilly temperatures under sunny skies for the all day stint. It is generally believed that our robins that nest here in the summer do migrate south but may be replaced by others from farther north. The large number of robins this winter is highly unusual, however. Just why so many are staying is hard to say. Robins don't seem to mind cold weather as long as they find plenty of food, mostly in the form of mountain ash berries and old apples. This year observers reported robins picking insect larvae out of the water along the shores of the Spokane River, which is unusually low at this time. It may be also that food farther north is scarce. At any rate, seeing a robin doesn't mean that spring is just around the corner.

If you have seen a "robin" that isn't a robin, your eyes haven't been deceiving you. It's a varied thrush, sometimes called a mountain or Oregon robin. Resplendent with its burnt orange breast adorned with a broad black crossband and splashes of orange else where in its plumage, it has staged a major invasion this winter with over 80 tallied on the Christmas count. Normally only a few appear, though 152 were counted in 1974. This year's large numbers are not strictly a local phenomenon, for the Christmas Count at Harrison, Idaho found 87 of these handsome birds. They seem to prefer apples still clinging to the trees but also eat other fruit. They nest in the moist evergreen forests of our western mountains where their mysterious whistles delight the ear of the human visitor. Their summer food consists not only of wild fruit but also of insects and other small invertebrates picked up on the ground. The three or four dark blue eggs, finely speckled with brown, are laid in a nest of grasses and rushes covered with moss and placed in a small tree or shrub. Two broods are produced each year.

Juncoes, sometimes called snowbirds, are also abundant this winter. Their black or gray heads, white undersides and flashing white outer tail feathers readily distinguish these sparrow sized birds. They welcome bird seed when snow covers their wild food. In the spring they will again leave us for their nesting sites in foothills and mountains.

We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving some of the natural areas of the Spokane area for people to enjoy and learn from. Larry Thieman, President; Thomas H. Rogers, Vice-President and bulletin editor; Helen E. Lininger, Secretary; David E. Lentes, Treasurer.

We offer slide programs on the Dishman Hills and other outdoor subjects, and guide service on hikes in the Hills. No charge for these, but we welcome contributions.

Call us at 926-7949 for arrangements. Our monthly meetings starting in October will be at Riverview Terrace Retirement Center, E. 1801 Upriver Drive at 7:30 p.m. the third Monday.

DECEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS JUMP

Our treasurer reports very good December contributions of \$3044.85. The balance we owe on the 140 acre addition to the natural area is now down to \$25,700.32 thanks to all of you who have contributed money, recyclables and/or services. If you have contributed during December but are not recognized below, please let us know.

Lawrence C. Bernbaum, Stuart Blackwell, Margaret Bloom, Gerald G. Brooks, Gretchen Brown, James Caddis, Joyce C. Calandrella, Pamela Camp, Leta Chapman, Ruth/Cecil Cunningham, Steven Davenport, Janet R. Davis, Margaret M. Fellows, Joan G. Fergin, Dr. W.A. Fernau Jr., Evelyn Flock, John Gardner, Lila S. Girvin, John Gorman, Elton Grant, Emmett Gumm, Mrs. Donald Hagan, Eris A. Heggen, Blanche Holsten, LeRoy Hook, Patricia Ann Houff, Dorothy Kirk, Marion E. Krauss, Lynn Lang, Patrick S. Lettermaier, Bernadine McClincy, Margie F. Middendorf, Pauline Moore, Helen E. Nelson, Bruce Newman, William B. Nourse, Irene N. Peyton, Francis/June Potter, Julius F. Presta, Ambrose Priestley, Madaline Queener, Hazel Richard, Tom Rogers, Lauretta M.W. Ropp, Julie Rosenoff, Bill Royall, Dennis L. Sanders, Edward B. Saxon, Frank/Clara Simons, Donna M. Smith, Holly Frost Sonneland, Dr. Roy C. Stewart, Patricia Sweeney, Mary Sweeting, Florence Sylvester, Mrs. F.L. Terhaar, Larry Thieman, Alice Tiffany, Thomas N. Tremaine, Doreen B. Vance, Elizabeth M. Welty, Whitworth Belles Garden Club, Mary Ann Wilhara, Bob Willrich and Jeanne H. Wilson.

Our annual meeting for electing officers and directors for 1988 will be held January 18. Please consider volunteering. We especially need directors since several spots have been open for some time.

Please use this form when sending contributions
(Contributions are income tax deductible)

Account No. **13080**

\$ _____ Land purchase fund

\$ _____ Memorial for _____

\$ _____ Annual Dues (\$10) New? ___ Renewal? ___

\$ _____ Student or Living Lightly (\$5)

\$ _____ To cover bulletin expense (\$2)

_____ Check here if you do NOT want your name listed as a donor.

Please make checks payable to Dishman Hills Natural Area Association and mail to The Treasurer, P.O. Box 14141, Spokane, WA 99214-0141. Many thanks!