

T H E Z E P H Y R

Monthly Bulletin of the Outdoor Nature Club of Houston, Texas.

May, 1925

Vol.2, No. 5

Who could observe a summer sunset fling
Its flaming banners in the western sky
At eventide, and hear the woodthrush sing
Its soft and wistful woodland lullaby;
Or view, against the night's dark canopy,
A thousand worlds ablaze in boundless space;
Could feel the fury of the storm-swept sea,
Or touch a flower's fragile, dew-veiled face,
Behold the grandeur of the mountain peak,
See insects march in countless caravan,
Know Nature as it is, and then still seek
To cherish ill against his fellow man?

The Save The Redwoods League, according to its Secretary, has seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars in gifts from interested people, donated for the purchase of particularly fine stands of redwood trees. Realization that thoughtful citizens are willing to "dig down in their pockets" in order that this generation may save and care for at least some portion of the wildwood heritage entrusted to our care, is a source of deepest satisfaction and encouragement to all earnest conservationists. But it is not the ancient, towering redwood tree alone that demands our consideration. What of that evergreen symbol of Yuletide joy and good will that brightens our winter woods with its glossy foliage and bright berries?

In our Southern forests, there still exist wonderful groves of holly trees, which must sooner or later disappear before the ax and saw. Shall we permit all of these natural wonders, gifts of a kindly Providence, to be dissipated before our eyes? It is well that nature lovers plant holly trees, and urge rigid economy in the use of cut sprigs and branches, but this is not enough. What is a hill, compared to a mighty chain of mountains, a fountain, compared to a roaring cataract? Where Nature has given us natural wealth in massive bulk and magnificent proportions, we should not think of the future's share in terms of nickles and pennies. In this time of rapid development, there must be quick action, while there is still opportunity. Who will secure for future Americans a worthy sample of the impressive Southern holly forests we are privileged to look upon, and set it aside untouched and unspoiled, as is being done in the case of the redwood trees, in the West?

In the January issue of "Natural History", there is an appeal, by Thomas Liggett, for the preservation of a wonderful virgin forest in Northwestern Pennsylvania. Almost every argument advanced by the writer, in his convincing article, applies equally as well to the stretch of lake-studded wilderness along San Jacinto River now being advocated as a forest park for South Texas, as the reader may judge from the following brief excerpt:

"On this property there are many spots that are both unusual and spectacular. It is a place not only recreational but educational. It has been well said that by keeping our people more closely in touch with nature we build a finer type of citizenship than is attained when they are surrounded uninterruptedly by the man-made environment of a city. This being true, it is the more important that spots such as Cook Forest should be preserved. Lord Ashfield, chairman of the London Underground Railway system, sees in the automobile, good roads, and opportunity through them to get out and see the beautiful in nature, some of America's greatest antidotes to Bolshevism, and if this claim be valid, how important it is that Cook Forest and similar tracts should be available for the use of the people!"

The Second Annual Meeting of the Outdoor Nature Club marks the close of a year of pleasant and successful activity. Just how successful our efforts have been can best be shown by a comparison of the years work with the aims of the club, as summarized on the back of our membership card:

"To make stronger the bond of friendly understanding that exists among all lovers of nature."

The club's membership is composed of men and women of many different vocations, and of various religious and political convictions, but all meet on the common ground of appreciation of Nature's beauties and benefits and a desire to help in the work of conserving them. All lovers of the outdoors are invited to attend the club's meetings and participate in its outings. A spirit of harmony and friendly cooperation has always prevailed, and we have learned that human nature is no less worthy of appreciation and understanding than wild nature, of the fields and woods, the sky, the sea, and the mountains.

"To study our local flora and fauna and work for the preservation of all useful and interesting forms."

Almost every conceivable phase of nature has been studied and discussed during the past twelve months. Each topic was presented by a recognized authority invited to address the club, or by a member thoroughly conversant with the subject. Entertaining and instructive lectures were given by the following distinguished speakers: R. B. Lawrence, ornithologist; Mrs. H. D. Morse, on "Memorial Tree planting"; Oliver Allstorm, poet; Paul Wipprecht, agricultural expert; J. G. Burr, Auditor of State Game, Fish and Oyster Commission; and J. C. McVea, City Engineer, on "San Jacinto River Park". H. P. Attwater gave his celebrated lecture on "Natural Products of Texas"; and L. H. Daingerfield, president of the club, gave an illustrated talk on the weather.

There have been eleven official observation trips by automobile, each trip carefully planned to acquaint members of the club with the season's most attractive features. The bird villa at South Houston, autumn color along Greens Bayou, spring blossoms at Dyersdale, shore and aquatic life at Heron Lake - these were a few of the outdoor experiences enjoyed by the club as a whole. Numerous special trips were made by small groups, and individual observation work was done by practically every member.

So much for the study part of the program.

During the past fiscal year, the club has produced, directly and indirectly, more than two hundred pieces of magazine and newspaper publicity, ranging in size from a full page, with illustrations, to small items of only a few lines. In every case, the underlying purpose was to further the cause of conservation, though various methods were used. The club's monthly bulletin "The Zephyr", has followed the same plan of spreading information and stimulating interest. Probably the most important task undertaken was our nation-wide holly conservation campaign, which resulted not only in a big step towards the perpetuation of our Christmas symbol, but also added impetus to the whole conservation movement. The value of insectivorous birds as crop protectors received wide recognition through the work of H. H. Schutz, chairman of the conservation committee. A portion of Memorial Park has been set aside in its natural state as a bird, tree and wild flower preserve, and the club is now heartily advocating the purchase of a large tract of virgin forest along San Jacinto River, a section of the famous "Big Thicket". At the conference on stream pollution, held in November of last year, the club was ably represented. Club members have planted tree erected bird houses, and scattered wild flower seeds, in proper season.

"To cooperate with other societies throughout the land in the work of observation and conservation".

The club, from its formation, has been affiliated with the National Association of Audubon Societies, one of the world's foremost agencies in the preservation of wild life. In our "Save the Holly" campaign, the club joined hands with the Garden Club of America, the Wild Flower Preservation Society, the Prairie Club, and many other societies throughout the United States. The work of game protective associations, bird-banding societies, forestry associations, and other similar bodies, has received the cooperation of the club, as well as the individual support of many members. We have also cooperated with local organizations in work coming within the scope of our constitution and by-laws.

"To encourage nature study, tree planting, etc., among school children as well as adults."

The club numbers among its members school teachers who have been doing effective work along this line. Several prizes were offered by the club in the wild flower identification contest among the children of the county schools, sponsored by the Harris County Library, and a letter was mailed to each participant commending his interest in the wild flowers of Texas and asking his cooperation in saving them for the enjoyment of all. One set of colored lantern slides, showing typical birds, animals, wild flowers, and picturesque landscapes of this locality, has been completed. Other slides will be added from time to time, and used for illustrating lectures on natural history, local geography and conservation of wild life. Letters from children attending schools where these slides have been shown indicate the effectiveness of this method of interesting the young folks, and through them, their parents and friends.

"To make known to our citizens and to the world all the natural beauties Nature has bestowed upon our city and state."

Fully 25% of the club's publicity has been in magazines and newspapers published outside of Houston. "The Zephyr" has been mailed regularly to a number of out-of-town members, and to a long list of persons in all parts of the country. The chairman of the holly conservation committee is still receiving occasional letters of commendation from other states, and clippings of editorials approving the club's work and ideals. Our neighbors of the North, the East and the West, and our kinsmen here in the South, are learning not only that we Houstonians enjoy to the utmost our superabundant gifts from nature, but also that we are willing and eager to assume our share of the responsibility their custodianship places upon us.

"To encourage hiking and interest in the outdoors as a source of health and inspiration."

Long hikes across fields and along streams have been regular features of the club's program. All day hikes were made on both sides of the San Jacinto River, from Sheldon to the San Jacinto Battlegrounds. Memorial Park has been thoroughly explored by parties on foot, and the courses of all our winding bayous and brooks have become familiar to a steadily increasing group of enthusiastic hikers.

A people without children would face a hopeless future; a country without trees is almost as hopeless; forests which are so used that they cannot renew themselves will soon vanish, and with them all their benefits. When you help to preserve our forests, or plant new ones, you are acting the part of good citizens -- Theodore Roosevelt.

Notes and News.

An absorbing story in "Outdoor Recreation" describes the adventure of Dr. Travis, pastor of a church in Montclair, N. J., who performed the unprecedented feat of jumping astride the back of a full grown, wild bull moose, and riding it long enough for a moving picture to be taken of the event. Dr. Travis' daring feat may not furnish any good advertising for munition manufacturers, as he did not carry a gun, and his bewildered mount was permitted to escape into its forest home unharmed, but the memory of his exploit, and the pictures recording it, will probably be far more satisfying to him than a stuffed trophy or a flattering write-up in a gun-powder advertisement.

The second annual meeting of the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation will be held in Washington, D. C., on May 28, 29 and 30. The hundreds of delegates who will attend this gathering will represent the finest type of wide-awake, constructive American citizenship.

For the past two years, the Girl Scouts of Portland, Ore. have been gathering the seeds of wild flowers and selling them in small packets. This meant guarding and watching the plants throughout the blooming season and the study of the life history of each species, as well as insuring their perpetuation by selling the seeds with directions as to the best methods of planting. Recently the Portland Park Commission formally gave them Governor's Park as a wild flower preserve, in which will be planted wild flower seeds and bulbs under expert supervision. These are to be transplanted to other parks later.

The Southern Methodist University, at Dallas, has a memorial tree planting campaign under way. The trees are to be planted along Bishop Boulevard, from Mocking Bird Lane to Dallas Hall. -- Nature Magazine.

What's in a Name?

One of the first subjects that came up for discussion when Houston's lovers of the outdoors formed their own society was the choice of a name for the organization that would fittingly represent its character and purposes. After many titles were suggested and rejected, the name "Outdoor Nature Club of Houston, Texas", was selected by a vote of the membership of the club. On first thought, the name may seem a trifle clumsy, yet it covers the full range of the club's activities better than most names or combinations of names that could be used. This is not simply a study club, or a conservation club, or a hiking club. It is all of them combined, so the names "Nature Study Club" and "Hiking Club" are misleading, to a certain extent, when used to designate our organization. A rose by any other name may smell as sweet, but the Outdoor Nature Club by any other name is an entirely different proposition. Let us all try to remember this when speaking or writing about the club.

How are your outdoor manners? As we motor along our country highways or hike through our forests, it is apparent to the least observant that outdoor etiquette has been sadly neglected by the average American. It is, therefore, encouraging to learn that the Forestry Committee, of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, under the leadership of its chairman, Mrs. Francis E. Whitley, has launched a campaign for "outdoor good manners."

... The littering of a camping spot with papers, cans and garbage, and the all-too-common habit of leaving unquenched camp fires, which may destroy camp ground and hundreds of acres of forest, is bad manners, bordering upon criminal ignorance. The flipping of a burning cigarette into the brush and unnecessary destruction of wild flowers and blooming shrubs fall in the same category..... American Forests and Forest Life.