

T H E   Z E P H Y R

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

March, 1925

Vol. 2, No. 3

Pots of Gold

The foolish followed the rainbow,  
Wherever they saw it bend;  
But they never came to the pot of gold  
That swings from the rainbow's end.  
Spring beckoned the wise, "Come hither".  
They hearkened, and behold!  
The vines of the yellow jessamine  
Were heavy with pots of gold.

-- Mrs. A. J. James.

-----

"Whereas some sections of our State abound in holly, dogwood, and other decorative and flowering shrubs and trees which add beauty to our woods wherever they grow;

And whereas many people are thoughtlessly cutting and gathering these plants for their own pleasure or ruthlessly for commercial purposes;

Therefore, be it resolved that the D. A. R. in Texas go on record as opposing the careless and extravagant use of these greens and as favoring the conservation of all plants, shrubs, and trees of this kind."

This resolution was passed at the conference of the Daughters of the American Revolution, in Wichita Falls, November 6th, 1924. Mrs. P. S. Tilson, Chairman of the Conservation and Thrift Committee, D. A. R. of Texas, has also kindly furnished The Zephyr a copy of the National D. A. R. Wild Flower Pledge, which has been accepted by the D. A. R. Chapter of Texas, and is as follows:

"That the world may be more beautiful for all, I promise not to pluck flowers nor destroy plants in woods and fields where they are unprotected, except such as flourish abundantly or are in the nature of weeds. All my influence shall be used to protect wild flowers from destruction by others."

-----

The Poor Man's Minstrel

The season of song is at hand. The concert and the opera we have had, and are to have again. Vocalists whose artistic genius and skill has thrilled and delighted have sung from man-made stages, lighted with all the brilliancy, or shaded with the befitting gloom, which the sense and spirit of the songs demanded, and the rich, clad in purple and fine linen and adorned with jewels rich and rare, have listened enraptured.

With spring and its roses and flowers and violets and diaphanous clouds has come the poor man's minstrel. His stage is the dew-gemmed bower. The only light which falls upon him is the golden rays of the moon, or the shimmering light of the twinkling stars.

He sets no hour to begin. At twilight, at the witching hour of midnight, in the misty gray of the early dawn, he sings as never singer sang before, and, running the gamut of every note and tone, rises to such heights of melody that the air is vibrant with the matchless music poured so prodigally forth in a cataract of song by the monarch of all singers - the poor man's minstrel, the Southern mockingbird. -- From The Houston Chronicle, 1922.

-----

The pecan, our state tree, and the bluebonnet, our state flower, are both typical of Texas. The mockingbird would be equally appropriate as our state bird. Why not choose this feathered prince of our woodlands, before some other state claims him as its own?

## Some Don'ts for Nature Lovers

- Don't - Expect to see everything on one trip to the woods or fields. Nature is in no hurry to reveal all of her secrets.
- Don't - Be careless with your campfires. You may destroy the very things which you admire.
- Don't - Forget to leave the woods as beautiful as when you entered them. There are others who would enjoy them.
- Don't - Destroy any creature or thing wantonly. A true nature lover is a true conservationist.
- Don't - Forget to put up bird houses in the Spring. Birds not only add life and beauty to your premises, but protect your trees and flowers from insect pests.

-----

A quaint and interesting character is a certain neighbor of mine. All day long he sleeps. When I am returning home from work in the evening, he is just coming forth, to spend the night out under the bright lights and take his toll of the foolish little moths that flutter about them. Often he comes home in the morning full, and creeps into his corner to hide himself from sight. In fact, one of the first things he does is to seek out a place where he may become thoroughly soaked, and those who see him on his nocturnal rounds say he is full of hops. Sometimes, especially after one of his soaking spells, he indulges in a little song, in a peculiar soft, drowsy voice. He is a very poor dresser, stepping out night after night in the same wrinkled, dirt-colored suit, which he changes only once in several weeks. There is a youthful sparkle in his eyes, yet he is very old, and many times a grandfather. Many are the tales that have been told about him, some of them far from complimentary, but if we are to believe the statements of his friends, he is a most upright and useful citizen.

To settle my doubts about the matter, I secured a copy of Farmer's Bulletin No. 196, entitled "Usefulness of the American Toad". Among other things, this bulletin states that there is no truth in the various stories that the toad has a jewel in its head, that it can produce warts, and that young toads come down with the rains of spring and early summer. It informs us that the toad starts out in life as a tadpole (one of a family of several thousand), that it drinks by absorbing moisture through its skin, has a homing instinct like that of the cat, lives to a considerable age, and that it renders invaluable aid to the farmer and gardener by consuming injurious insects, which constitute more than 62% of its food.

The next time you are sprinkling the lawn and a thirsty, dusty toad comes out to enjoy the grateful moisture, send him on his way with a good wish, for he is a steady worker, an opponent of race suicide, and a good neighbor who minds his own business. The community will lose a worthy member when he "croaks".

-----

The Audubon Society of Kansas is engaged in an active state-wide campaign to secure a large vote of the school children of the state as to their selection of a "State Bird" for Kansas. The effort has the hearty endorsement of Jess W. Miley, State Supt of Education. The Society, over the name of Madeline Aaron, Secretary, of Wichita, has just issued a broadside illustrated with pictures of the Prairie Chicken, Meadowlark, Cardinal and Bob-White. It contains the opinions and preference of a number of writers as to the bird that should be selected. This is a splendid undertaking, and every State Audubon Society might well follow the example set by Kansas. -- Bird-Lore.

## Notes and News

On sixty-five acres of woodland, N. Humason, City Manager of Lufkin, Texas, bids birds welcome, offering them freedom, rest and protection. About "Shady Shack"; which is one mile east of town, there are forty-two bird houses, and the sanctuary abounds in pine, oak, hickory, gum and ash. By way of "eats", there are many haws and dogwood trees, five hundred fruit trees, and twenty-five hundred blackberry and dewberry vines. To complete this birds' paradise, there are two spring-fed lakes - and always the vigilance of Mr. and Mrs. Humason, who are sincerely interested in saving a glimpse of to-day for our citizens of tomorrow. -- Holland's Magazine.

After weeks of careful planning and real work, the Art Committee, on Monday night, February 23rd, presented the results of their activities in a display of hand-tinted lantern slides of "Houston During the Four Seasons". The slides were beautifully reproduced upon the screen, and their interest was increased by the lecture and appropriate music arranged for the occasion. Sufficient returns have already been received to more than cover the initial cost of the slides, which will be an invaluable asset to the Club for entertainment and educational purposes. It is the plan of the Art Committee to increase the number of slides from time to time, choosing the subjects from among the photographs added each month to the Club's album of outdoor pictures.

An experiment which will be watched with more than ordinary interest by all who are interested in nature is that being conducted by Mr. Benjamin Clayton on his farm in Brazoria County. A special effort is being made to attract and protect insectivorous birds. Bird houses have been erected for martins and other species which nest in cavities, some of the houses having been constructed by J. B. Leaman, a member of the Club who is manufacturing various types of houses suitable for all species of hole-nesting birds. Mr. Clayton is a believer in the value of wild birds as checks upon the increase of noxious insects, and this view is shared by H. H. Schutz, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, who has laid considerable stress upon this practical means of combatting insects destructive to crops.

At Rome, Ga., the most remarkable dogwood-planting campaign is on. The city aims to be the dogwood city of the world, and from what has been done, as outlined by Secretary Foster of the Chamber of Commerce, that promise is well within sight of accomplishment. -- Nature Magazine.

According to present indications, the housing accommodations offered to our friends the birds by members of the Outdoor Nature Club have met with full approval. One member has put up a score of bird houses, ranging from a roomy apartment house for the martins to boxes of various sizes for the bluebirds and titmice. Nearly all of these houses were claimed within a day or two after they were erected. The birds are on very friendly terms with their human neighbors, and gather nesting material about the premises without fear or haste. On March 8th, one of the houses contained a nest and five blue eggs, property of Mr. and Mrs. Bluebird. A Heights family of dyed-in-the-wool nature lovers has a rustic bungalow which is visited many times daily by chickadees and tufted titmice, while several bird admirers closer towards the center of the city have colonies of purple martins. When the nesting season is over, a list will be made of the number and types of bird houses put up in and around Houston, and the birds that occupied them. Only the "early birds" have started housekeeping, and there is still time for anyone who appreciates the color and grace of these animated music-boxes to secure one or more pairs of them as tenants for the spring and summer.

Those who enjoyed the delightful bird imitations and lectures by Chas. Bowman Hutchins, when he was in Houston last spring, will be glad to know that he is planning another visit here in the near future, with Mrs. Hutchins, who is a Texas product and a talented musician, as well as a genuine lover of the outdoors.

At this wondrous season, when the benevolence of a mighty power is so evident about us, The Zephyr begs leave to quote from an article in the Houston Chronicle several years ago by Miss Katie Daffan, whose eloquence in behalf of our forest treasures springs from a deep and abounding love for the Southland and all its native charms:

"...But we in Texas - and especially around Houston, Texas - do not have to wait until the days and nights are equal for wonderful evidences of spring. Our wildwoods for weeks have been covered with the glow of the redbud. Our dogwood blossoms of perfect wax would shame the exotic petals of the South American lilies. Our wood violets, crocuses, primroses, buttercups, and all the rest, would delight any lover of the beautiful in art, as well as in nature.

And our trees! Frilled and fringed, from palest yellow to richest green, they stand everlasting monuments to beauty, comfort and utility. But we are not satisfied to admire all of this splendor, and to rejoice with our wildwoods in the return of their gala time. We do our very best to destroy it all as we strip the beautiful limbs, tear them to pieces, and break off the mammoth branches, in order to gratify our selfish desire to possess them. We fill our automobiles full of the rich, flower-laden branches of the trees, we dig up the violets and moss by the shovelful, and leave ill assorted ruins instead of the peaceful beauty that we found.

Now, if this beauty belonged to us and was ours to destroy, it might be all right, but it doesn't belong to us. Even if we own the land upon which the woods grow, we haven't the destructive right or privilege, for beauty is intended by nature to be unusual, and for the enjoyment of all of us.

On Sunday afternoons, we take our cars to the woods, pull down everything we can reach, then return home late with a car full of withered, half-dead, erstwhile beautiful greenery. We can not possibly receive more than a momentary pleasure, a transitory joy of possession, when, if we had left the beautiful greenery in its native home, we could have gone again and again to have found the same delight in being so close to nature. Others, too, could have enjoyed her wonderful beauty in her delicate spring robes.

...Nature would have beauty everywhere, but we, who share so little of her majesty, incline not our hearts to her holy teachings, and tear down as rapidly as she can build up.

A blessing comes from every valuable thing that is kept inviolate. Nature is rich in blessings, and without them, we cannot hope to possess the best. Let us try to remember this as we tear down redbud, dogwood, woodbine, violet beds, and all the other woodland beauties: The hand that made them, made them for all of us, not alone for those of us who seek to destroy and desecrate."

Advocates of the plan for a great wilderness park along San Jacinto River are putting the proposition before the public in such a way that no broad-visioned person can fail to see the necessity for such a park. It requires no stretch of the imagination to picture the industrial and commercial Titan Houston is destined to be, with prosperous smaller communities clustered about its far-reaching environs. As business expands, more and more territory will be absorbed, and many of the breathing spaces and natural beauty spots we now enjoy must inevitably disappear. But progress and prosperity will not diminish the demand for recreation and outdoor life, which is such an integral part of American character. To the contrary, the need for areas of untrammelled natural beauty and interest will increase as Houston grows. Apparently, we have sufficient park space for our present needs, but what of the future? If we are to make adequate provision for a population many times that of today, now is the time for action, whether by the city, the county or the state.

In a great democracy of free people, the protection of wild life and the preservation of all other natural resources, which under-ly national prosperity and happiness, must depend finally, as does the stability of the government itself, upon the support and willing service of every citizen. -- Theodore Roosevelt.