

THE ZEPHYR

Monthly Bulletin of the Outdoor Nature Club of Houston, Texas

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Give fools their gold, and knaves their power;
Let fortune's bubbles rise and fall;
Who sows a field, or trains a flower,
Or plants a tree is more than all.
-- Whittier.

The close approach of Christmas brings to public attention a phase of the great conservation movement that has received, in recent years, more and more thought by organizations interested in the preservation of America's valuable resources of the wild. Since its formation, the Outdoor Nature Club has joined heartily in the effort to arouse popular interest in the conservation of our decorative evergreens. In doing this, the club has carefully avoided the position of favoring the passage of restrictive legislation not demanded by general public sentiment.

Knowing that the holly tree, which occupies a unique position in the affections of the people because of its beauty and symbolism, was rapidly disappearing, and feeling that general knowledge of this fact was all that was necessary to insure proper provision for its preservation, the Outdoor Nature Club has confined its efforts to pointing out the value of the holly as a feature of our scenery, proving that its continued general use meant eventual extermination, and asking nature lovers everywhere to join us in voluntarily giving up the use of holly and using substitutes for Yuletide decorations. There has been no attempt to make this a "reform" movement, no thought of forcing our plan upon anyone not in sympathy with it.

We cannot claim to be entirely unselfish in our motives, for the disappearance of the holly from every spot within reach of the club's outings would leave a vacancy like the absence of an old friend from his customary place at the table, but the Outdoor Nature Club plans to have its own forest sanctuary, where holly trees, unscarred and symmetrical, will share the guarded ground with other native trees, and the disappearance of this lovely evergreen from the woodlands about Houston would work less hardship upon our members than upon the general public, whose eyes will long in vain for the sight of the holly's rich foliage among the barren woods long after their hands have lost the itch to ply ax and saw.

Friends, ten years from now - probably much less - you, or your children, will be using artificial wreaths and sprays in the window and above the mantelpiece, for the real holly will be so rare as to be unobtainable. Is it not the sensible thing to begin using those substitutes now, and keep the American holly as a cherished part of our Southern scenery, as it has been through the years gone by? If you agree, then invest a small sum in one or more of the attractive manufactured wreaths on sale in many of the downtown stores; put your decorations up early, so that your friends and neighbors may see; and then, when Christmas comes, get into your car and drive far out to where the birds are singing their Christmas carols among the glossy leaves and ruby berries of your own Christmas gift to posterity. ----- Merry Christmas!

Once again the American Tree Association has come to the rescue of our time-honored Christmas tree by announcing that the general use of young firs, spruces and pines, obtained properly, will not be contrary to the important principle of forest conservation. This good news comes in a special circular of the association which is so well written that we hope it will result in a broader spirit of responsible and provident enjoyment, rather than furnish justification for further extravagance and thoughtless vandalism.

The Outing Committee is not claiming credit for the unusual display of autumnal color that has beautified the woods this year, but does state that if all members have not enjoyed the season to the utmost it is not the fault of this committee. -- Our San Jacinto River hike was one of the best the club has ever staged. Cool breezes and bright sunshine made tramping delightful, while Nature seemed eager to give her grandest opera, in a stage setting such as human skill could never duplicate. The Greens Bayou hike resulted in the rescue of several fine young holly trees from an area being cut over. The small hollies were carefully dug up and transplanted at the homes of those fortunate members who happened to be on the outing. -- Several of the ladies collected bouquets of autumn leaves that begged description.

The club neither practices nor preaches an absolute policy of "hands off" in the woods. There are some wild flowers that may be gathered in reasonable quantities, provided they are plucked, not pulled up by the roots, from places where they do not serve to beautify the roadside or adjacent landscape. Attempts to transplant rare plants from their native soil should never be made unless there is a reasonable certainty of the transfer resulting in success. -- The collecting of entomological, botanical and geological specimens is to be encouraged, always considering local conditions that might alter circumstances. But the plucking of rare flowers, or even common ones when their absence would spoil a pretty view, the hacking of valuable trees, and the collecting of birds' nests and eggs are activities no longer indulged in by outdoor folk in good standing. -----

During the holidays, recipients of this bulletin will probably have ample opportunity to do some reading, and so there is listed below a number of articles in current publications that will be found to contain both interest and information of value. Read them all, if you can.

"Our Christmas Greens", by Elizabeth G. Britton, and "Both Sides of the Range Controversy", by Geo. F. Authier, in American Forests and Forest Life, December, 1925.

"Our Christmas Greens - A Real Problem", by P. L. Ricker, in Nature Magazine, December, 1925.

"Reports of State Societies and Bird Clubs", in Bird Lore for November-December, 1925. Members of the Outdoor Nature Club who cannot find time to read all the reports carefully are urged to go over and digest the reports of the following organizations: Alexandria, Arlington and Mt. Vernon Audubon Society; Federation of Bird Clubs of New England; New Canaan Bird Protection Society; St. Petersburg Audubon Society; and Ulster Nature Club. Due to an unusual combination of circumstances, we were unable to get our report ready in time to be published with those of other clubs affiliated with the National Association of Audubon Societies. With the reports of our associates before us, we are in a position to realize the work we must do if we are to keep pace with the splendid records they have made.

"The World of Science", by A. P. Pycraft, in the Illustrated London News, November 21, 1924.

"Further Particulars about Holland's Campaign", in Holland's Magazine for December, 1925.

All the publications listed are on the shelves of the reading room at the Houston public library. -----

Puzzled about Christmas gifts? Well, here's a suggestion or two that may be helpful. -- Instead of buying a Jack-in-the-box for little Jimmy, why not get him a martin house and put it up on a tall pole. He will get real fun out of watching the jolly purple martins pop in and out of it all spring and summer. -- His older brother, who is an enthusiastic Boy Scout, would enjoy Hornaday's "American Natural History", a scout knife, or one of Dan Beard's inimitable woodcraft books. -- A good pair of field glasses would probably be appreciated by big brother Bill, for his camping and canoeing trips. -- And here's a tip for the young fellow who wonders how he can make a "hit" with "her": Be original. Pass candy and trinkets by, and get her a fine young holly or crape myrtle tree. Then go out to her home on Christmas morning and plant it where its handsome foliage or billowy blooms will catch her eye every time she goes to the door to admit your rival. You'll win. -- Send Dad the National Geographic Magazine for a year, and give Mother the "Book of Birds", full of topics for club meetings and new pleasures for every auto ride.