

Wissahickon Nature Club

Speaker

On December 13, Join **Don Weiss** at the **Wissahickon Nature Club** as he shares the beautiful sites and stories of his time at **Glacier National Park** during the first week in September. It is a lovely time of year to be in the park, with many mountain views and beautiful lakes. Although the fires and smoke the park was experiencing blocked many of the dramatic views, they did add their own photographic possibilities. There was plenty of wildlife in the National Bison Range, about 2 hours South of the park. Many birds and even a few flowers.

Also, our traditional annual Holiday, Christmas Cookie party will follow his presentation. Bring cookies. Eat cookies. Take home cookies. Bring a friend. What a wonderful way to introduce your friends and families to our Club.



Photo by Don Weiss

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TREASURER'S REPORT

ACCORDING TO TREASURER **DIANNE MACHESNEY**:

Balance	\$1293.43
Expenses	- 0 -
Deposit of dues	65.00
New balance:	\$1358.43

THANK YOU

TO **PAT TRUSCHEL** FOR CRAFTING OUR HOLIDAY PARTY FAVORS THIS YEAR.

PROGRAMMING CHAIR IS NEEDED FOR NEXT YEAR. IT'S NOT THAT HARD, AND WE WILL BE HAPPY TO HELP.

WORTH REPEATING

IF YOU, TOO, CAN COME TO LOVE THIS LAND AS OUR ANCESTORS DID, ALL THE PROBLEMS OF THE WORLD WILL FALL AWAY LIKE AUTUMN LEAVES IN THE WIND.

TONY TEN FINGERS
WANBII NATA'U
OGLALA LAKOTA

Don't miss our next program. On March 14, **Bonnie Isaac** will present **Herbarium Happenings**.

Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania

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Fern Hollow Nature Center

Sam McClain-Capezuto, Director
412.741.6136
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Outside My Window Outings Kate St. John 412.421.1566
www.birdsoutsidemymywindow.org/events/

Three Rivers Birding Club

Bob VanNewkirk, President
412.366.1694
www.3rbc.org

Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club

wpamushroomclub.org.
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FEBRUARY'S PROMISE

By Chuck Tague

February 12, 1994

The January thaw came late this year. Like Indian Summer, the January thaw is an almost predictable unseasonably mild spell of weather. At first it was a welcome break from the biting winds, bone chilling cold and knee deep snow that had gripped Western Pennsylvania almost continuously since the first day of Winter. But with the thaw came heavy rains, rapid snow melt and a break up of the ice on the rivers and the larger tributaries. High waters and potentially disastrous flood conditions developed all across Western Pennsylvania and many residents were grateful when the sub-freezing temperatures returned.

A week or so later another mild spell arrived, but there was a big difference between the January thaw and the warm, clear days of early February. The February days were almost perfect and very un-winter-like. The afternoons were clean and crisp, more than just a lull between cold fronts. They brought a little glimpse of what we can expect in the months to come. They brought the promise of the return of Spring.

The remains of the January storms were still very visible on those mild February afternoons, but the ground was not completely covered with snow and ice and gray had been replaced as the predominant color of the hillsides. The sky was bright and blue, its

beauty no longer obliterated by the blinding glare of the snow. The crystal clear sunlight accented the diverse colors of the trunks and twigs of the trees and shrubs; the silver beeches, the almost black Red Oaks, the salt and peppery White Oaks, the bright whites, yellows and tans of the Sycamore and the maroon and gray of the Red Maples. Large areas of the ground began to appear, revealing the brown and tan shades of last year's grasses and wildflowers and the rich rusty tones of the fallen leaves. It may have been my imagination, but in some of the bare patches there seemed to be the slightest hint of green.

I knew Winter was far from over. In fact, before I could put my thoughts on paper the ground was again covered with a coating of snow, dropped there by an early morning storm that arrived with a mixture of hard pelting sleet and freezing rain. But on those two mild days in the first week of February, I felt the first stirrings of the coming regeneration, the impending and inevitable explosion of new life. I felt the promise of the return of Spring.

I was not the only one that felt the promise. It was evident, not only in the frantic comings and goings of the people, but in the increased activity of the birds and animals. The birds in particular were busy, and noisy. But it was not the sounds themselves that were so new and exciting. Woodpeckers had been drumming, Mourning Doves moaning, Blue Jays complaining and Song Sparrows practicing their melodies for several weeks, and the White-throated Sparrows have been singing since they arrived in October.

What was exciting was the vigor and enthusiasm of the birds on those beautiful days that made me forget about the realities of Winter.

And on those few days in early February, new voices were added to the chorus. I heard the familiar, musical "birdy, birdy - what cheer, cheer, cheer" of the Northern Cardinal for the first time, as well as the whiny singsong of the House Finch. But the most enthusiastic of the new singers was the Tufted Titmouse. The repetitive "peter, peter, peter" was loud and clear and delivered with competitive vigor where ever I went.

The thorny hedge in my yard was alive with the chatter of House Sparrows and in a tree I heard the "Chirrup" call of one of the many American Robins that is spending the Winter in Western Pennsylvania. In the woods the sharp, liquid "tse-lip" of the chickadees blended with the nasal "yank" of the White-breasted Nuthatch.

On the hillside across from house, in a tangle of old grape vine, I heard the welcome chatter of a Carolina Wren.

Along the interstates and over fields pairs of Red-tailed hawks were soaring dynamically and calling loudly, solidifying their bonds for the upcoming breeding season. The crows were also busy. They were wandering around the countryside in groups varying from four or five birds to a dozen, and each time they crossed the territorial boundaries of another group they were challenged with outraged caws and attacked with well coordinated swoops, dives and other aerial maneuvers.

The mammals were moving as well. White-tailed Deer especially, but also raccoons, were out and about. Unfortunately, the evidence for this was not only the many deer sightings but a sharp increase in the number of fresh road kills along the highways.

The beautiful days of early February were soon over. The bitter cold and snow of Winter had returned. But the ephemeral magic of those mild and sunny afternoons lives on in the promise they delivered; a promise that will soon be kept.