

The Bourne Conservation Trust

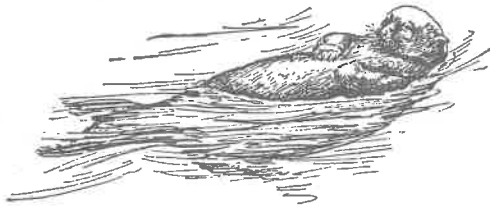
NEWSLETTER Number 14

Winter 1991

Unkenneled & Unruffled On Red Brook Pond

Whatever the season, there is always wildlife activity on Red Brook Pond. It may be stately— a gliding swan, or comic— a skittering bufflehead, or even boring— a basking turtle. If there is light, some activity can be observed, but much of what takes place happens so suddenly— an osprey plummeting, a kingfisher diving— that it ends before binoculars can be focused. Occasionally, however, episodes like those described here unfold at a more leisurely pace.

Unsettled Otter



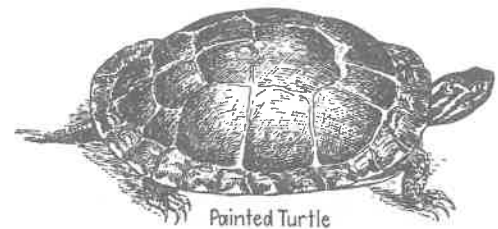
A cavorting river otter appeared on the Pond shortly before noon on December 27, diving and surfacing again and again, leaving in his wake a string of water rings stretching from the pump house to the southeast cove where, some twenty romping minutes later, he came up with a small fish. With it clamped between his teeth he swam nonchalantly off to the northeast and disappeared into the shallows. A week later he returned and repeatedly poked his head up through the new thin ice, peering around, ducking out of sight,

and popping up somewhere else until he surfaced with another fish— this time a large one— which he tossed onto the ice and set to feasting on. Otters will travel several miles in search of a meal, scores of miles to check out a promising new habitat's possibilities for shelter and to sample its food and water. Whether Red Brook Pond will capture this otter's fancy remains to be seen.

Unlikely Turtle

At large in the Pond is a 'rogue' turtle, but not a rogue in the 'wild-outcast' sense. Perhaps he's just an aquatic eccentric who swims to a different drummer, or maybe a slow learner whose genetic wires got crossed with a consequent reversal of instincts. Anyhow, where a normal painted turtle would exercise caution and flee, he brazenly stays put. Long after his cousins have sensed danger and exchanged their sun-drenched logs for the security of the Pond's murky bottom, he's still perched high and dry, craning his neck for a better look. Once on a drowsy August afternoon he thrust his head out of the water, gazed fixedly at a passing skiff, submerged deliberately, swam fearlessly at the intruder and butted it one.

On last December 9, just two days before autumn's first film of ice covered much of the Pond, when the noonday temperature stood at a cool 40° and his cousins were already asleep for the winter deep in the mud, he was spotted paddling about, sniffing the crisp fall air.



Painted Turtle

Unsated Hawk



One mid-morning early in December a sharp-shinned hawk alighted in an east-shore swamp maple and while peering down at the neighborhood's only sheltered bathing and preening spot some fifteen feet below, nodded his swivel-mounted head mechanically like a wind-up toy. Meanwhile local sparrows, chickadees, cardinals, titmice, nuthatches and bluejays were eerily silent and strangely invisible. A half hour later, still hungry, the hawk launched himself into the wind, headed north and was last seen being urged on his way by a squadron of raucous, dive-bombing crows.

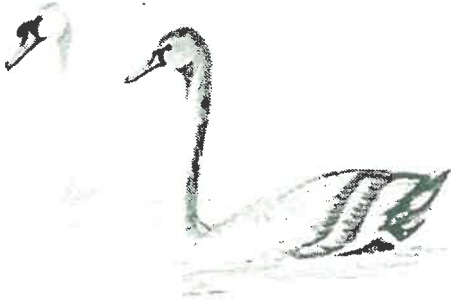
Unstable Heron

When the pre-dawn temperatures drop into the 20s, just before the sun's rays have cleared the southeast scarp, when the Pond's windless north shore is still in shadow, great blue herons glide in from the east— sometimes one, sometimes a pair, normally a half dozen and once a record fourteen. Like high-wire artists, they alight unsteadily on hospitable branches of the tall north-shore pines and teeter precariously, waiting for the sun to thaw away the night's deep chill.



Great Blue Heron

Unstoppable Swan



After the early January cold snap had frozen over half the Pond, the swan couple took to bedding down on the dark ice. In the early morning light— heads and feet tucked out of sight— they looked like miniature igloos on an arctic ice field. At dawn their black legs and huge feet were invisible against the dark ice and when they rose, they seemed to float above their own icy reflections. Their pristine movements— wing stretching, neck craning, feather preening— were statuesque and dignified, textbook examples of tasteful elegance until they began to waddle toward the ice's edge about as gracefully as fully equipped Scuba divers strolling along a beach.

Adult swans will slip quietly off solid ice and into open water without a ripple. They may struggle a bit when climbing back onto the ice, and if the ice is too thin may find the feat impossible. A few winters ago a mature male swan, after several attempts to climb onto ice so thin that it kept breaking under his weight, broke open a 200-yard channel to open water by repeatedly charging and shattering the ice with his chest while his mate and lone cygnet paddled along behind.

Jingle Bells redux

Our special Christmas cards, representing donations to the BCI as well as remembrances to the recipients, were sent to 45 people. One of our contributors wrote that this was "a great idea for the person who has everything."

Remember, only ??? more shopping days 'til Christmas.



"People who need people. . ."

May be, according to Barbara Streisand, "the luckiest people in the world," but like all else in life they must have limits. The revised Federal Population Census records "massive gains" on Cape Cod— over 26%. This crowding of the Cape emphasizes the need to continue our land preservation program.

As another Hollywood type put it:

I'm really afraid to go back to the Cape. I've heard so much about what's happening there. I dread going back to find all the open spaces cluttered up and filled in. I'm just afraid of what I might find, or worse, not find.

(Jack Lemmon, 1973)

To keep all of the open space from being "cluttered up and filled in," we continue our . . .

Rattling the cup

We have paid \$125,000 of the \$250,000 currently due. There is an additional \$25,000 due in October, so our cup overfloweth not.

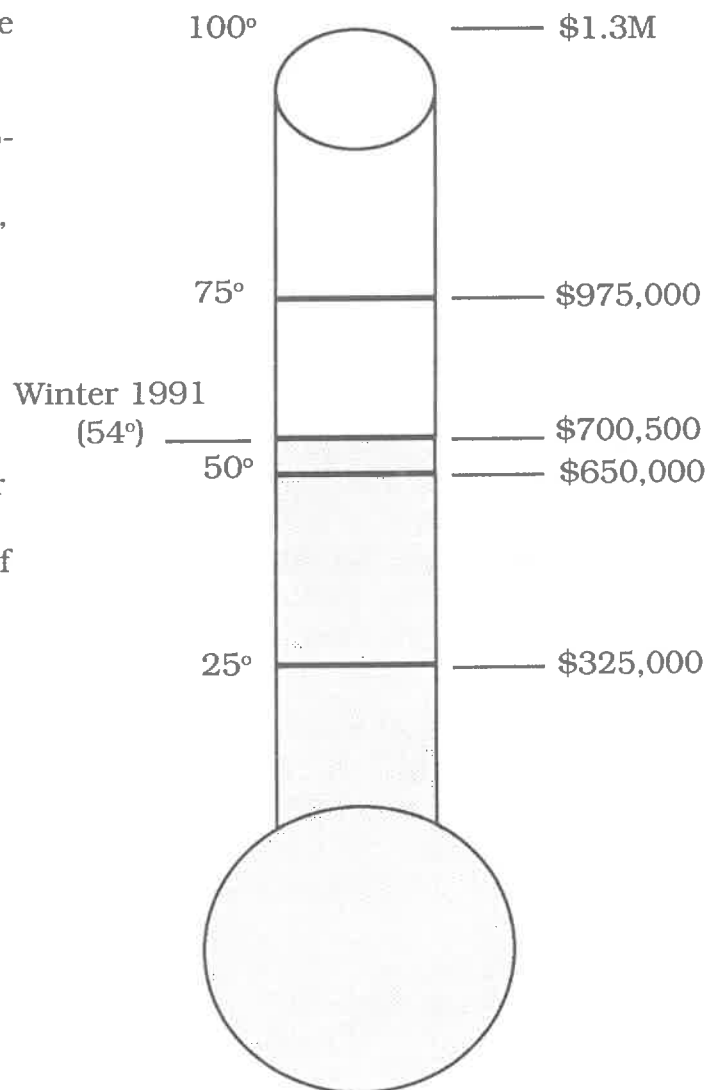
In 1990, we had 490 donors, a respectable representation in view of the small population in which we are working. By the end of this year, we hope to stretch that number to a cool 1,000: if each of last year's donors again contributes and brings in an additional donor, that would just . . . about . . . make . . . it.

The good news! We fulfilled our \$50,000 matching grant and, impressed by the number of donors, one individual gave an additional large contribution. Also, we received a grant of \$1,000 from the Olive Higgins Prouty Foundation.

And so where are we? We are . . .

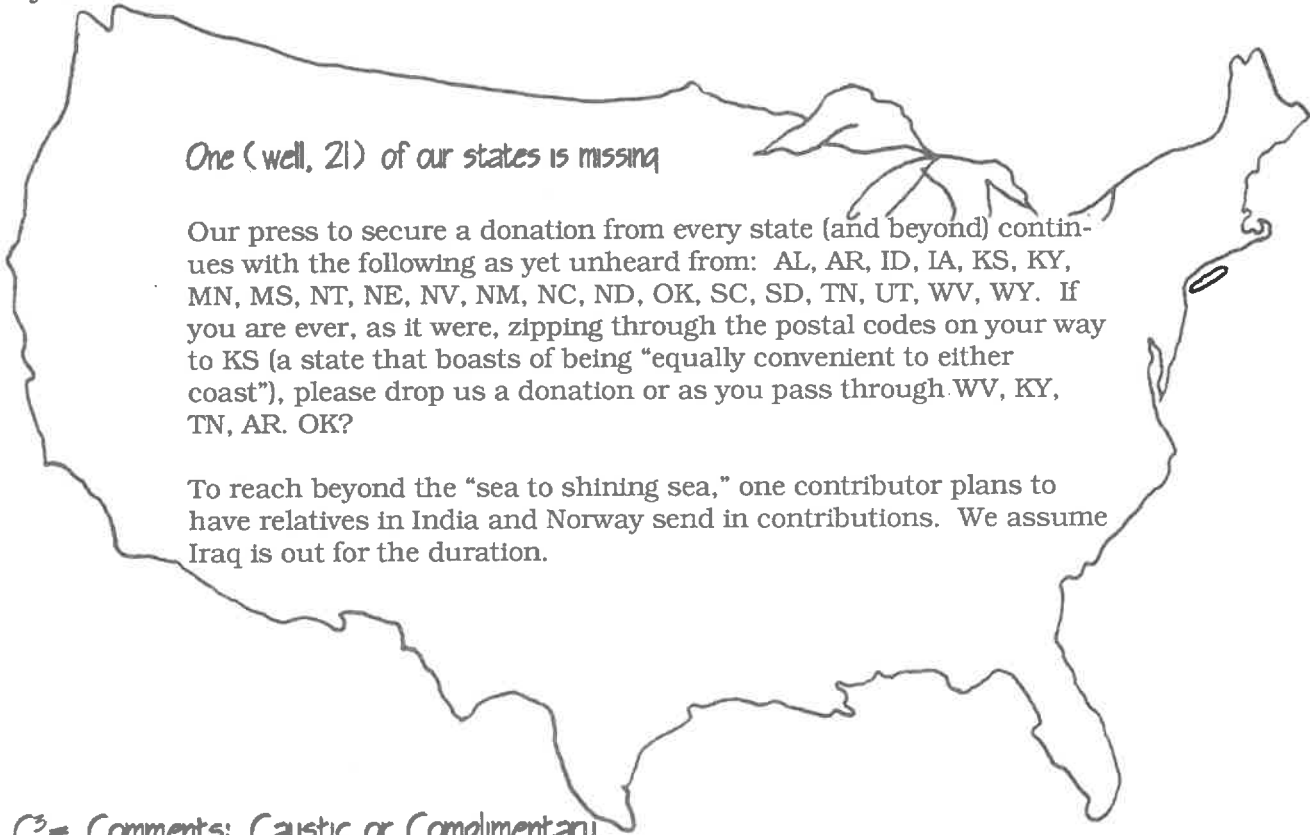
Half-way home

In concert with the season's march toward spring, we have gained another 9.62° (or \$125,000) toward our goal. "Home" is now about 46° away.



New Land Acquisition

Approximately seven acres off MacArthur Boulevard were generously donated to the BCT by Robert Walsh. The BCT now has 89 acres of land sequestered for the pleasure of all.



C³ = Comments: Caustic or Complimentary

We encourage C³. We appreciate comments about contents of this newsletter: does it meet your requirements in regard to what we are doing, how we are doing it, and why?

Edna St. Vincent Millay, who penned such frothy lines as:

I will be the gladdest thing
Under the sun!
I will touch a hundred flowers
And not pick one.



also had her earthier moments. She characterized a writer as one who “wilfully appears before the populace with his pants down.” We are prepared for such exposure.

On a more affirmative note, we also are interested in new ideas— new Strategy & Tactics, S&T being much in vogue these days— for increasing donations. Parenthetically, and in another context, for a contribution of \$6,000 to the Boston Pops, one can have a single shot at conducting the orchestra.

We can do better than that. While the realm of Red Brook Pond may be short on woodwinds, it is long on wildlife. Your contributions help keep our all-natural orchestra in a continual concert. And you can hum along.



Cardinal

'Ears hearing from you

Along with contributors' donations, came these comments:

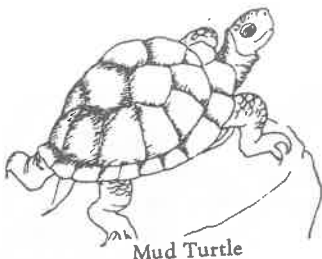
- " . . . good luck in you effort"
- " . . . believe in your goal (land purchases)"
- " . . . matching grant sounds great"
- " . . . congratulations on progress . . . excellent copy and brochure."
- " . . . good work . . . great piece of writing"
- " . . . agree with what you are trying to do so efficiently:"
- " . . . BCT is a great idea"
- " . . . got the trail guide, thanks so much"
- " . . . hope you'll make your goals in spite of recession and panicky stomachs"



Those having a long association with this area will find particular pleasure from the person who wrote:

" . . .as a small child, I went with my mother to Pocasset to collect my father from the train station. We made it a point to drive slowly past Red Brook Pond on our way home. My father always loved the turtles seen comfortably arranged on a certain partly submerged log. And that evening's bedtime story would always include some characters, finned, feathered, or 'phibian from the pond.

"Times have changed, but not my love of that pond."



Mud Turtle

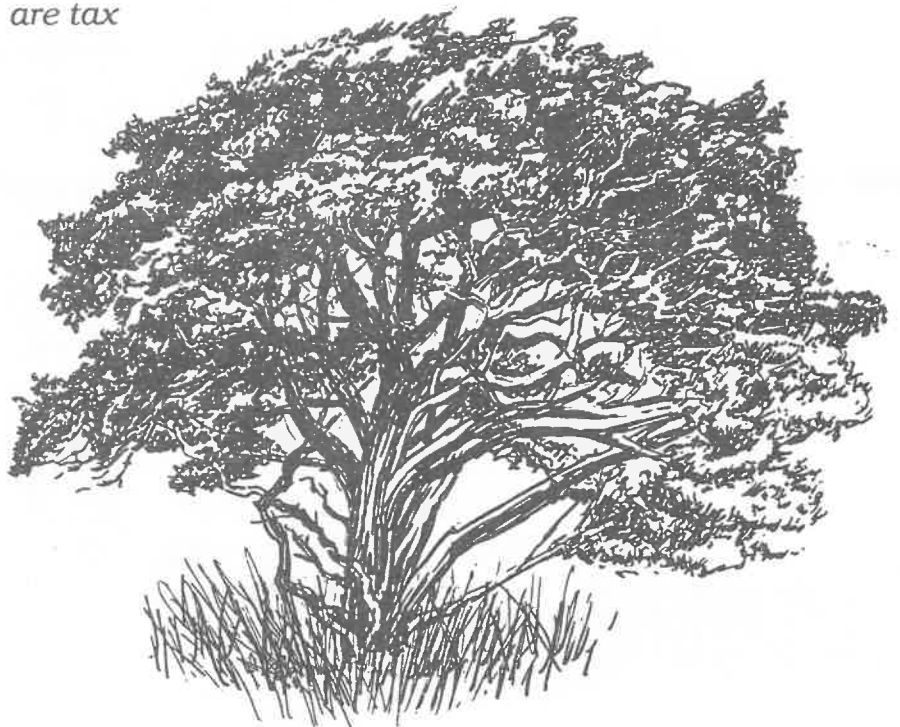
The BCT is tax exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are tax deductible within IRS guidelines (ID Number: 04-2767827).

Send It Where. . .

*Bourne Conservation Trust
Post Office Box 203
Cataumet, MA 02534*

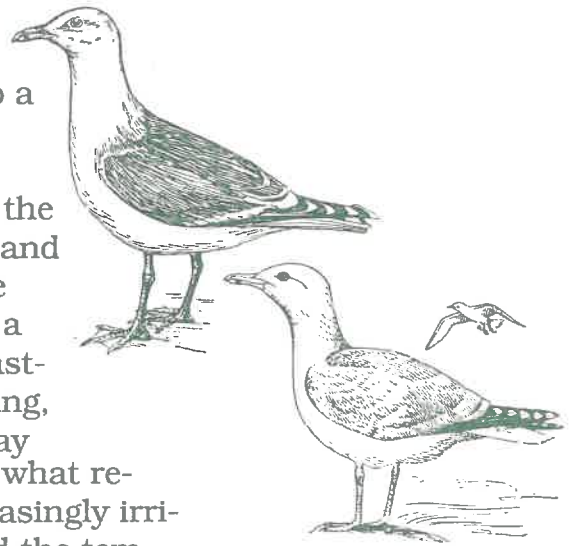
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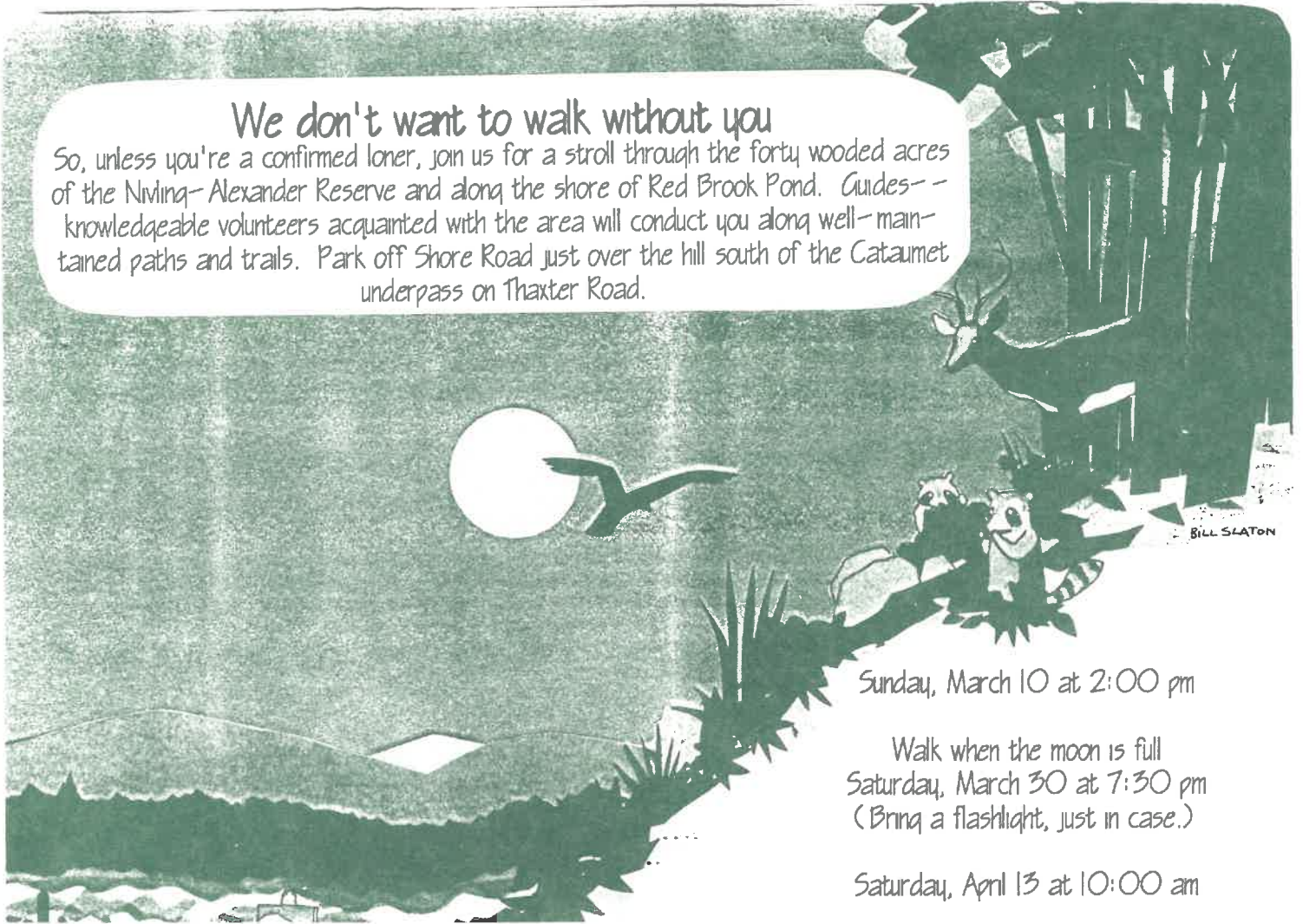
A Gathering of Seagulls

The early February warm spell brought to the Pond not only three warm, sunny, almost windless days, but also a raucous seagull influx. By noon of Day One some 150 adults and yearling herring gulls plus a smattering of black-backs had drifted in from the east and settled on the glistening ice pan where they passed the time preening and bathing. At dusk they disappeared only to reappear the following morning— by then their number some 200— a bit farther to the west due to the melting of the pan's eastern edge. Again the day was spent preening and strutting, and again by sundown the pan was unoccupied. On Day Three they were back in force, this time crowding on to what remained of the punky, shrinking ice and becoming increasingly irritable and noisy as the wind shifted to the northeast and the temperature dropped. Again they left at dusk and the following morning failed to reappear. During it all the resident swans and mallards and the visiting buffleheads and mergansers watched the arrivals and departure with studied indifference.



We don't want to walk without you

So, unless you're a confirmed loner, join us for a stroll through the forty wooded acres of the Niving-Alexander Reserve and along the shore of Red Brook Pond. Guides— knowledgeable volunteers acquainted with the area will conduct you along well-maintained paths and trails. Park off Shore Road just over the hill south of the Cataumet underpass on Thaxter Road.



Sunday, March 10 at 2:00 pm

Walk when the moon is full
Saturday, March 30 at 7:30 pm
(Bring a flashlight, just in case.)

Saturday, April 13 at 10:00 am

Sunday, April 28 at 2:00 pm

Memorial Donations
November & December 1990*

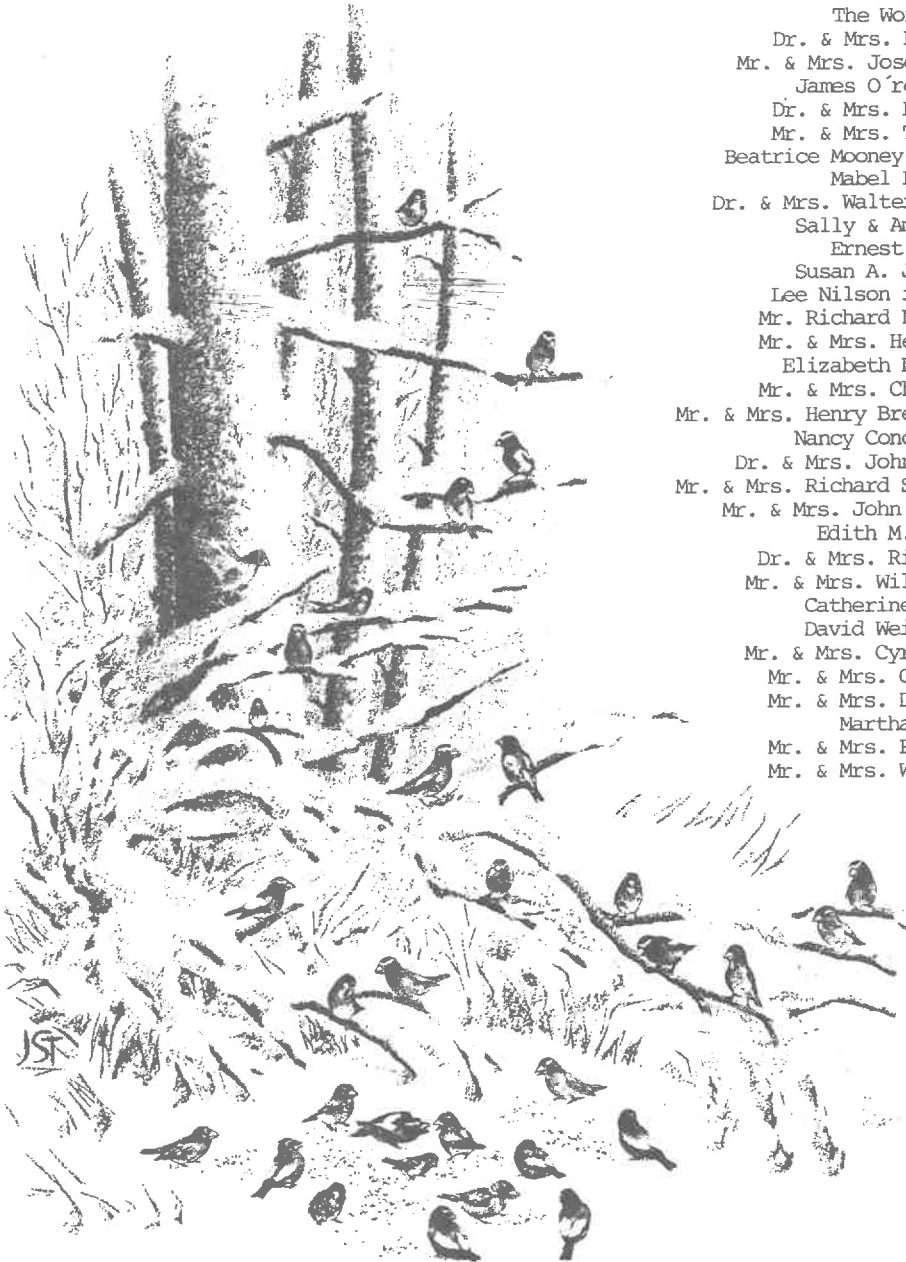
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Martha Meeh in Memory of Donald Worley
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Fisher in Memory of Donald Worley
Mr. & Mrs. William Eustic in Memory of Don Worley

*Memorial Donations received in 1991
will appear in the next newsletter.



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