



Think & Believe

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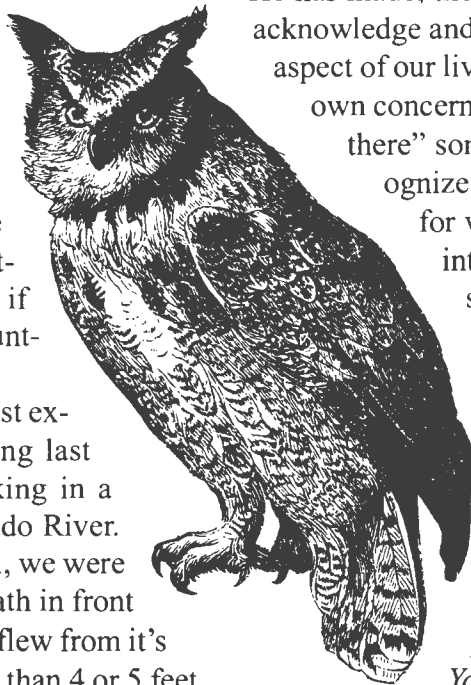
“Owl Hooting” Adventures

(by *Mary Jo Nutting*)

It all started several years ago when Dorothy Hahn invited me to go along with her on an “owl hooting” adventure. Dorothy was working as a biology field assistant for the BLM at the time. Among other things, her duties included doing an owl survey on the Uncompaghre Plateau. So, one fine summer day, off we went to count owls!

The technique was to go out well after dark, find a clearing near the edge of a wooded area, play tape-recordings of various owl “hoots,” and wait for the owls to swoop in. Sadly to say, no owls answered our calls that night, but it did get us started on many more unsuccessful, but interesting “owl-hooting” adventures. (I’ve often wondered if “owl hooting” isn’t a bit like snipe hunting!)

Things often happen when you least expect them, though. One cloudy evening last September, Dorothy and I were walking in a beautiful wooded area near the Colorado River. As we crossed the bridge over the canal, we were “gabbing” as usual and watching the path in front of our feet. All of a sudden, a huge owl flew from its perch on the rail of the bridge not more than 4 or 5 feet away from us. As it flew off powerfully and gracefully, we watched in awe, grateful for the opportunity to see the beautiful bird, but disappointed that we had not been more alert as we walked.



How often do we miss what God has placed in our paths because we are so engrossed in our own concerns we forget to look up? Scripture tells us, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” (Ps. 24:1) God’s wonders are all around us -- trees, grass, flowers, clouds, sunshine, gentle breezes, howling winds, birds, bees, wooly worms, and even owls. How often do we really stop to see what He has made and thank Him for it?

Even sadder than our carelessness in noticing what He has made, though, is our slowness to see Him and acknowledge and thank Him for His presence in every aspect of our lives. It’s so easy to get caught up in our own concerns and to think about Him as “way out there” someplace in space, that we fail to recognize His nearness. We struggle and search for wisdom and seek for evidence of His intimate presence in our lives. Are we so tied up with our struggle to know Him and discover His will, that we fail to recognize that He’s right here all the time and His wisdom is available to us just for the asking?

Lord, “open our eyes,” our physical and our spiritual eyes, and help us “look up” -- look up to You in faith and gratefulness. May we appreciate You and the wonderful world You have made for us to enjoy. Thank You for Your bountiful goodness, Your infinite wisdom, and Your intimate involvement in all our days. We love You, Lord, our Creator, Redeemer, Provider, and Friend.

Notes & Quotes

❑ There's more to owls than "hooting." For example, did you know the following facts about the great horned owl?

○ *An owl has more rod cells in its retina than most other birds do. These gather whatever light is available and allow it to "see in the dark."*

○ *Binocular vision -- an overlapping of each eye's field of vision -- gives [the owl] a greater ability to judge distances.*

○ *The third eyelid regularly cleanses and moistens the eyes of the owl. It is like a built-in wiper system which prevents the owl's eye from becoming dry. This feature is necessary to preserve the keen vision and accuracy of the eye for hunting.*

○ *The feathery tufts we see on the owl have nothing to do with hearing. The real ears are precisely positioned in different locations on either side of the owl's head. This results in a sound reaching each ear at a different instant. The time interval between the same sound reaching each ear gives the owl the ability to accurately pinpoint the exact source of the sound.*

○ *The owl has four pairs of extremely sharp and powerful claws -- two sets on each foot. They are arranged in such a way that they come down on the prey like sets of crossed ice hooks. The claws or talons are so sharp that they can quickly sink into even thick skin and flesh. This grip ensures a safe return of its catch to the nest.*

○ *The owl's foot is equipped with non-skid pads. These pads work the way tennis shoes do on a gymnasium floor and aid in retaining its grip on prey.*

○ *The intricate feather structure of the leading edge of the wings enables the owl to fly noiselessly. As air passes over the feathers, it is broken up and the sound level of the flapping is reduced to almost nothing.*

○ *Rather than choosing the warmer spring months, [the owl] nests during the cold months of late winter. Small prey are not afforded their usual ground cover during this time because of lack of foliage. This enables the parent owls to meet the tremendous food requirements of their young.*

❑ Since this issue seems to be "for the birds," we thought you might enjoy some "fun-facts" about other birds.

○ *Twenty-five thousand, two hundred sixteen [feathers] were counted on one [whistling swan]. Eighty percent of these feathers were located on the long, slender neck.*

○ *The nest of the grebe is a masterpiece of precautionary construction. It is uniquely designed to escape many land predators as well as torrential floods. The grebe begins construction by diving to the bottom of the lake and bringing up plants and mud. These are then piled on a preliminary platform of green stalks which in their fresh condition will easily float.*

The platform is small enough to avoid easy detection, yet large enough to bear the weight of the eggs as well as the nesting grebe. The final touch comes as the grebe loosely attaches this floating nest around the stalks of nearby cattails. This both anchors it and allows it to float up and down with the waves.

○ *If a goose is shot down by a hunter during the fall migration flight, its mate has been known to circle back, risking death itself, in order to help its partner. If one is wounded, the other will remain with it until it is healed. If the partner cannot be found the other will often stay behind to look for it, enduring the hardships of winter in that area in order to continue its search.*

○ *A woodcock's eyes are set far back on top of its head. This means that as it probes the ground in search of food, it can still be alert to various enemies which might otherwise be able to surprise it from the rear. With the eyes in this position, the range of a woodcock's vision is 360 degrees.*

❑ All of the quotes on this page are from the wonderful book, **Character Sketches, Volume I**, 1976. We highly recommend this book and others in the series for excellent studies of character qualities illustrated through the various fascinating animals and biblical examples. Write to Institute in Basic Youth Principles, Box One, Oak Brook, IL 60522 (630-323-9800) for purchase information.

❑ Look up! Marvel at God's great creation, but even more, remember Jesus' words and watch for His soon return. **"Look up ... your redemption draweth nigh."** (Luke 21:28)

Spotlight On Science

“His eye is on the sparrow, so...”

A Year-To-Date Birding Report

(With comments on the divine virtue of birding)

(By Dr. James J. S. Johnson)

I vigilantly view voracious victual-vacuuming vultures and vim-filled vireos. I voluminously verify various vocal and visible visitors. I'm valiantly vying for valuable virtue.

Virtue? Yes, virtue. Birding builds character.

Maybe you've heard the song "His Eye Is On the Sparrow, I Know He Watches Me" (by Ethel Waters). Well, this year my eye — in fact, both my eyes — have been on the sparrow, and on the Blue Jay, and the Bewick's Wren, Rock Dove, Scissortail, Muscovy Duck, Snake-bird (that's Texas-talk for "anhinga"), Cattle Egret, and a lot of other fine-feathered fowl.

As an adjunct professor of ecology and environmental studies at Dallas Christian College (I teach for LeTourneau University also), I teach about warblers and woodpeckers and such, — so it's not surprising that I'm attracted to wild birds. However, this is the first year I have undertaken to keep a daily birding journal — to document all the bird species I observe each day of the year.

Why? I need the character development — as we all do. How does birding develop character? Consider the following:

At Dallas Christian College, before I "fly" into my birding lectures and audio-visuals, I like to teach my introductory ecology students that birding is a valuable character-building habit; — in fact, the habit is literally divine. Here's my logical proof:

(1) true virtue requires copying God's character traits (since we're created in His image);

(2) God's eye is on the sparrow (and the other birds, too) Jesus said so — see Luke 12:6;

(3) therefore, true virtue includes being a birder! (So, buy binoculars and a bird-book, folks!)

My students have yet to refute this logical syllogism. So, it is only fitting that I personally develop some serious birding virtue.

Of course, I keep a growing life-list. (Doesn't every self-respecting birder?) For instance, I try to maximize my travels, by somehow including birding. Last spring I was invited to speak to the Society of Wetland Scientists

(about wetlands, how did you guess?), at their annual meeting in Boston. I worked out my itinerary so I could visit the Maine Audubon Society's Gilsland Farm Sanctuary, a wonderful preserve including open field, wooded, pond-edge, and salt-marsh habitats — a great place to view Bobolinks, Great Blue Heron, Black-capped Chickadee, Purple Finch and Common Tern.

Later in the year I took a business-mixed-with-pleasure trip to Colorado, on the fringe of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. I added a few to my life-list: American Kestrel, Orange-crested Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wood Pewee, and more!

Do I recommend keeping a daily birding journal? You bet I do! I use a large wall-calendar, because it has daily "squares" that are big enough for recording all the birds I observe — which is usually about one or two dozen each day. If you are like me — you may find the simpler your system is, the more likely you are to use it consistently. Also, a wall-calendar is hard to lose in a stack of papers! (Maybe some of you can relate to that problem.)

Try to establish a routine on when and where you go birding; routines are easier to keep with regularity — good habits are hard to break! I generally drive by the park sites each morning before I start to work at my office. I keep an arsenal of bird guides in my car and at my office, so if I can't identify a new bird at the park (from a guide in my car), I'll soon be at my office before my field notes and memory get lost.

What about backyard birding? Yes, I include that in my birding routine, also. (My backyard is a certified backyard bird habitat, for those of you who are familiar with the Texas Parks & Wildlife's "wildscapes" program.) My provision of water and birdseed has increased my winged visitors, and some have decided to raise families in our shrubs and trees.

So, am I more virtuous for having kept a daily birding log this year? Has my character changed for the better? My wife says I'm a character, so there must be real virtue to keeping a daily birding journal. After all, "His eye is on the sparrow," so watching sparrows has got to be worthwhile.

(Submitted by author. Used with permission. Previously printed in *Woods, Wings, Water*; Summer 1996; a publication of the Dallas County Audubon Society)

Schedule Of Events

Please PRAY!

Nothing of value happens unless God is at work!

The Nuttings are scheduled for programs in France, Albania, and Hungary. Please pray for safety, health, boldness, clarity in translation, and openness in those who hear. Pray also for rapid recovery from jet-lag.

Feb 26-Mar 7: France: University and Church Lectures
Mar 8-22: Albania: Campus Crusade Conference & Universities
Mar 23-26: Budapest, Hungary: School & Church Lectures
Ap 12-20: Grand Canyon, AZ: ICR Grand Canyon Adventure
Contact ICR, 619-448-0900

The Johnsons are planning programs for schools, Awanas, and homeschool events. Pray for them and the children they will teach. Pray also for adequate rest as they prepare for a busy summer VBS and Camp Schedule.

Mar 19: Grand Junction, CO: E-Free Awanas
Contact 970-241-0046
Mar 20: Montrose, CO: Spring Creek Christian School
Contact 970-249-5500
Ap 8: Basalt, CO: Alpine Christian School
Contact 970-927-9106
Ap 12: SPICE Homeschool Curriculum Fair
Contact 970-858-7171

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(Write or call for a brochure.)

Twin Peaks Family Science Adventure: Jun 29-Jul 4
Redcloud Family Mountain Adventure I: Aug 10-15
Redcloud Family Mountain Adventure II: Aug 17-22
Id-Ra-Ha-Je Family Labor Day Camp: Aug 29-Sep 1

Focus on Creation Family Nights

AOI's Focus on Creation Family Nights got off the ground in October last year. They provide a great time of fun and learning for kids and adults alike. Monthly meetings include creation videos, special speakers, children's programs, refreshments, and fellowship time.

Dave Nutting, founder and director of Alpha Omega Institute did the October and November programs, introducing the ministry of Alpha Omega Institute and speaking to us about the ACLU and it's anti-creationist activities. In December, board member, Jerry Nine, shared how knowing we are specially created by God can dramatically impact our lives personally. Then in January and February, Jim Davidson awed us with the absolute statistical impossibility of evolution and the marvellously wonderful power and wisdom of our Creator.

Mike Shaver, a former ranger at Colorado National Monument, is on tap for the March meeting, with an enlightening, slide-illustrated program highlighting the opposing views of the geology of the Monument. Then in April, Mike will be showing with slides how a whole lot of water was responsible for the erosional features of Central Washington.

Focus on Creation Family Nights take place the first Friday night of every month. Each includes a special program for children ages 3-11. Call us for location and schedule information. Be sure to stop by if you are in western Colorado!

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VBS Training • April 5 • Call for information

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