

the ROADRUNNER.....



newsletter of the
El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
P.O. Box 9655, El Paso, TX 79986

Editor: Sarah Dodds

March 1982

Volume 12, Number 3

GENERAL MEETING

MONDAY, 15 MARCH, 7:30 PM, GARDEN CENTER, 3105 Grant St. in Memorial Park. What bird has a range restricted to parts of New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado; a range that has been shrinking steadily since about 1900? (No fair looking at the next paragraph!) Along with several other grouse species, it has an intriguing lek mating system, in which males and females gather together on a communal display ground every spring.

We're talking about the LESSER PRAIRIE CHICKEN, and we invite you to hear an expert on this bird speak to us on 15 MARCH! From 1975 to 1979, the Department of Fishery and Wildlife Sciences at New Mexico State University conducted an intensive study of the habitat requirements of Lesser Prairie Chickens in southeastern New Mexico. At our March general meeting, Dr. Sanford Schemnitz, head of the department, will share the results with us. With the aid of slides, he'll introduce you to this fascinating species, and psyche you up for our 20-21 March field trip. #

FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY 6 MARCH. ARROYO PARK/RIO GRANDE. Meet at 7 AM at New York and N. St. Vrain Sts. in the gully between Kern Place and Rim Road. (The Tennis Club is nearby.) The downtown location, the easy walking and the likelihood of seeing many of El Paso's common desert-scrub birds make this a good trip for beginners. For those who

FIELD TRIPS (continued)

want to investigate a riverside habitat, we'll also try the Rio Grande near the Hacienda Cafe and further up the river at the brick plant where the Belted Kingfisher hangs out. Leader: Jane Fowler (772-0296).

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, 20-21 March; LESSER PRAIRIE CHICKEN COUNTRY. Meet at 6 AM at the Bella Napoli Restaurant, 10600 Montana. We'll caravan some 245 miles to Roswell, N.M. and spend the afternoon at Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Then it's early to bed, early to rise (4 AM!), so we can get to a booming ground (known as a "lek") east of Roswell before the Lesser Prairie Chickens do. You can stay in a Roswell motel or camp at nearly Bottomless Lakes State Park.

After watching the chickens strut their stuff at daybreak (weather permitting), we'll bird our way back to El Paso, with stops planned at Lake McMillan on the Pecos River and Rattlesnake Springs near Carlsban Caverns National Park. Leader: John Sproul (545-5157 h, 541-6126 w). Reservations REQUIRED!

SATURDAY, 3 APRIL. AGUIRRE SPRING. Meet at the blue spire in Sunrise Shopping Center, 8500 Dyer. Pack a lunch. You can walk the 4½ mi. Pine Tree Trail or go a shorter route. This Organ Mts. trip is a treat always! Leader: Barry Zimmer (545-5184). Best time to phone is around 5 PM or later on weekday evenings. #

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

OBSERVATIONS (continued)

MONDAY, 8 MARCH, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Jane Fowler, 8812 Parkland, El Paso (772-0296). Chapter priorities for 1982-1983 and EP/TPAS input to National Audubon's goals and environmental priorities will highlight the agenda. All members are welcome. #

OBSERVATIONS

The continuing warm weather in the El Paso area and an increase in birding activity helped to provide for an interesting reporting period (Jan. 15-Feb. 15). Many species normally found wintering in more tropical climates were sighted, while several montane species, usually driven into El Paso only during cold spells, inexplicably made their appearances. A few accidentals showed up, and to top it all off, the first spring migrant of the year was seen at an extremely early date.

LOONS - FALCONS

On 1/29, a single Neotropical Cormorant was observed at Tornillo Lakes (BZ,JD), and was sighted again on 2/4 in the same location (BZ, KZ, JD). These reports provide two of only a handful of winter sightings for this species in the El Paso area. Fourteen Cattle Egrets made an appearance near Clint on 1/23 (SD,MM, RS), while a solitary bird was noted at Tornillo on 1/26 (BZ). A lone Snowy Egret shared a roost with an unusually large number of Black-crowned Night Herons (50+) at Tornillo on 1/4 (BZ,KZ,JD). On a filed trip to the upper valley on 2/14, four Green Herons were sighted in and around the Randel's Pool area. (JS, et al). A surprising find was that of two Whistling Swans at Tornillo on 2/13 (AG,MG). Subsequently, on 2/14, only one of the two birds could be found (BZ, JD). Snow geese were reported three times, all at Sunland Park,

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with the high count of 30 on 1/31 (BZ). A lone Canada Goose remained at a pond off Gary Lane on 2/14 (BZ, JD), while three were sighted at Burn Lake in Las Cruces on 1/30 (BZ) and again on 2/7 (KZ). Perhaps the best find of the month was that of a flock of 11 White-fronted Geese at Ft. Hancock on 2/14 (BZ,JD). This species has been documented in El Paso only once before, nearly six years ago. The male Eurasian Wigeon continues its presence at Feather Lake with reports on 1/23 (JS,JF et al.), 1/26 (BZ,JD), 2/6 (JS,DJ, et al.), and 2/11 (BJ). This extremely rare bird is becoming almost commonplace in our reports as it persists in hanging around the lower valley. A lone female Wood Duck spent the morning at a pond off Country Club Drive on 1/23 (BF). Common Mergansers lived up to their name with almost 10 reports coming in, ranging in location from Fort Hancock to Burn Lake. Most notable was a group of 50+ at Feather Lake on 1/26 (BZ,JD). Three Hooded Mergansers showed up at Burn Lake on 2/7 (KZ,BS&BS) providing the only report of this species this winter. A high of 5 Ferruginous Hawks (possibly 1 dark phase) were noted at Santa Teresa Country Club (hereafter STCC) on 1/23 (JD). Although not a full species, a very good sighting was that of the Harlan's race of the Red-tailed Hawk on 2/14 near Tornillo (BZ,JD). Two Bay-winged Hawks near Fort Hancock on 1/26 were the first reported in some time for this continually decreasing species. Three Golden Eagles were seen at McNary on 1/26 (BZ,JD), while lone birds were sighted at Aguirre Springs on 1/28 (BZ,KZ) and off I-10 near the Fabens exit on 2/14 (BZ,JD). Single Prairie Falcons were observed at STCC on 1/31 and 2/7 (JD), while a falcon species ap-

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OBSERVATIONS (continued)

appeared briefly over West Cottonwood Springs on 2/7 (AA). A female Merlin made a surprising appearance at an eastside backyard on 2/14 (BR), and another probable Merlin was flushed out of the marsh at Feather Lake on 2/15 (JS,BB).

QUAIL - WOODPECKERS

The rails, normally secretive and rare, put on a show this month with three reports of both Virginia's and Sora (JG,BZ,JD,KZ). Most impressive, and indeed nothing short of spectacular, was a report of 8 Sora and 3 Virginia Rails all in one drainage near Tornillo on 2/4 (BZ,KZ,JD). On 1/26, fourteen Sandhill Cranes were soaring over a field near Tornillo (BZ,JD). Shorebirds also put in a good showing, presumably due to the warm weather. Fourteen Greater Yellowlegs were seen on 2/4 at Tornillo (BZ,KZ,JD), a small group was there on 2/4 (AG, MG), and 20 were seen on 2/14 (BZ, JD). Thirty Long-billed Dowitchers were also present at Tornillo on 2/4 (BZ,JD). Three Short-eared Owls were flushed from a large grassy field off McCombs Rd. in northeast El Paso on 1/30 (JD,AA, EK), and were sighted there again on 2/4 (BZ,KZ,JD). White-throated Swifts were everywhere with seven reports coming in (BZ,KZ,JD). Most notable were large flocks of 300(!) on 1/19 at Sunland Park (BZ) and 200 on 1/23 near Canutillo (JD).

PASSERINES

Two Vermilion Flycatchers, one male at McNary and a female at Tornillo, were seen on 1/26 (BZ,JD). A single Barn Swallow, perhaps the harbinger of spring, made an extremely early appearance on 2/15 at STCC (JD). A lone Steller's Jay frequented a westside backyard (Coronado Hills) on 2/7 and 2/12 (MD). Solitary House Wrens were seen at Randal's Pool on 1/21 (KZ) and at Hueco Tanks on 2/9 (BZ). Thrushes fared very well as more than a dozen reports for Western Bluebirds came

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OBSERVATIONS (continued)

in (BZ,KZ,SD,JD,AA) from throughout the checklist area. Noticeably absent all winter, they invaded the area around mid-January and remained throughout the reporting period. Also interesting were two reports of Mountain Bluebirds - one a flock on the Cielo Vista golf course in late January (EG) and the other a lone bird off I-10 north of town on 1/30 (MB). A single Hermit Thrush, the only one reported, was at West Cottonwood Springs on 2/7 (AA). Townsend's Solitaires were observed on two occasions, one on 2/6 in northeast El Paso (JD) and one at Hueco Tanks on 2/9 (BZ). Single Black-tailed Gnatcatchers showed up near McCombs Rd. on 1/30 (JD,AA, EK) and on 2/4 (BZ) and at STCC on 2/7 (JD). A single female Phainopepla was feeding at a rest stop in the lower valley on 1/26 (BZ,JD) and a pair was seen in the same place on 2/14 (BZ,JD). Common Yellowthroats were seen on five occasions (JS,JD,BZ,JD, KZ) with a high count of 3 on 2/4 at Tornillo (BZ,KZ,JD). It is interesting to note that all the Yellowthroats reported were males. A very good winter sighting was that of an Orange-crowned Warbler at Fort Hancock on 2/14 (BZ,JD). A group of five Black-chinned Sparrows were observed at Hueco Tanks on 2/9 (BZ). Another good winter record was that of a Clay-colored Sparrow at Hueco Tanks on 2/9 (BZ). This species passes through our area in small numbers in fall, but winter sightings are few. Swamp Sparrows were reported three times - one at Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds on 1/30 (EK), another in a drainage ditch near Tornillo on 2/4 (BZ,KZ,JD), and another at Diez Lagos on 2/14 (AA).

CONTRIBUTORS - Art Arteaga, Bob Bleicher, Janet Brockmoller, Marty Brown, Sarah Dodds, Mary Ann Dodson, Jeff Donaldson, Bill Follett,

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CONTRIBUTORS (continued)

Jane Fowler, Al and Madeline Gavit, Ed and Elza Gilboe, Joe Guinn, Dan Jones, Earle King, Margaret McDaniel, Bettie Roberts, Rose Marion Smith, John Sproul, Barbara and Bernie Steinau, Barry Zimmer, Kevin Zimmer.

Note: If you think you have a rare or unusual bird (a good method for checking being the current EP checklist) please call 545-5184 immediately. Often times with rare birds, time is of the essence in getting someone else there to verify it. Feel free to call anytime between 8 a.m.-11 p.m. If you get no answer, please continue calling until you do. This number may also be used as a hotline for the area to find out what interesting birds are currently being seen. Your cooperation in reporting unusual sightings will be greatly appreciated. /Barry Zimmer/ #

COLOR SLIDE CONTEST

All you shutterbugs get busy and enter your slides in the following categories: 1) Birds; 2) Habitat; 3) Flora and Fauna. Send your entries to Kris Kohlhoff, 6945 La Cadena, El Paso, 79912.

Identify each slide with the date taken, your name, location and species and/or habitat. Slides received after March 15, will be entered in April's contest. ALL slides become the property of EP/TPAS. Winner will receive free swimming lessons at Feather Lake. /Kris Kohlhoff/ #

HELP A LOCAL ARTIST

Local artist Tom Cummings is interested in getting photos of ducks, especially Pintails, to use as models for his paintings. If you have any you can spare or loan, call him at 598-3270 or send an extra copy to him at 8125 Roland, El Paso, 79907. #

SECOND ANNUAL BIRDATHON

The Birdathon was initiated last year as the National Audubon Society's annual fundraising competition in which bird watchers solicit pledges from sponsors, who agree to contribute a stated amount for each bird species the watcher identifies on count day. This year the Birdathon will be held on Saturday, May 1st. Our chapter, the Southwest Regional Office, and National Audubon each get 1/3 of the money we raise.

Our 1/3 of the money will go toward our local Raptor Protection Plan. There will be national and regional prizes awarded to chapters based on the amount of money raised per member as well as the total amount per chapter.

Individuals will be eligible for awards for having the greatest number of sponsors, for identifying the largest number of species, and for raising the most money.

Perhaps the most unique prize will be awarded only in Audubon's Southwest Region. It will go to the person who, by 9 April, has secured the largest dollar amount in total pledges per bird species seen. The prize? You'll be invited to do your Birdathon birding on the Texas Gulf Coast with none other than ROGER TORY PETERSON. Transportation will be at your own expense. Start lining up your pledges now if you want this opportunity.

Plan to participate, have fun, and raise money for Audubon. Be either a sponsor or a watcher or BOTH! More details next month. /Jane Fowler/ #

RUMMAGE OUT, \$\$ IN

Our 7 February rummage sale got our fund-raising year off to a good start. Jane Fowler, Liz and Joe Guinn, Peggy Heisel, Jo Nagel, Sid Shepperd and John Sproul sold our junque to raise \$294! #

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Our new chapter leaders took office at the February general meeting. These folk have much they want to accomplish in 1982, but they can't do it alone. Want to get our Raptor Protection Plan off the ground? How about contributing to a biological reconnaissance of Rio Bosque Park? Can you spend a morning at Feather Lake greeting visitors? Or a few hours at a shopping mall with our traveling membership display? There's no lack of things to do!

I hereby challenge each local member to contribute four hours of your time to Audubon this year. You can make a difference, and I guarantee you'll enjoy whatever you do. To volunteer, contact the committee chair in the field that strikes your fancy. If you aren't sure just where you want to help, contact our membership chair and volunteer coordinator, Bob Johnson. Audubon is not just the people listed below; it's YOU. /John Sproul/

1982-83 CHAPTER DIRECTORY

President	*John Sproul	545-5157
Vice-pres.	*Jane Fowler	772-0296
Sec.-Treas.	*Jo Warolin	594-7318
Pres.-elect	*Peggy Heisel	821-0989
Conservation	*Tony Worth	592-4926
Education	*Ginny Baker	562-9461
Field Trips	*Art Arteaga	532-6281
		X1274 (ofc)
Finance	Jo Warolin	594-7318
Hospitality	Jane Fowler	772-0296
Library	Joe Lykins	598-6694
Membership	*Bob Johnson	751-0125
Programs	Peggy Heisel	821-0989
Publications	*Sarah Dodds	533-7990
Publicity	*Jo Nagel	566-2143
Sanctuary	*Joe Guinn	566-8438
Audubon Council of Texas	Helen Barto	755-7546
Clean Air Act Coordinator	Joe Lykins	598-6694
Endangered Species Act Coord.	Diane Dutton	532-7546

* - Board of Directors

HUECO TANKS CBC RESULTS

Hawk: Cooper's 3, Red-tailed 7, Ferruginous 1, Marsh 10; hawk, sp. 3; Prairie Falcon 1; American Kestrel 6; Scaled Quail 64; quail, sp. 6; Mourning Dove 21; Roadrunner 3; Common Flicker 11; Ladder-backed Woodpecker 5; Say's Phoebe 5; Horned Lark 74; Scrub Jay 1; Verdin 3; Wren: Bewick's 2, Cactus 11, Canyon 4, Rock 15; Thrasher: Curve-billed 2, Crissal 3; American Robin 25; Townsend's Solitaire 2; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 1; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 10; Loggerhead Shrike 50; Starling 1; Yellow-rumped Warbler 1; House Sparrow 72; Western Meadowlark 24; meadowlark, sp. 5; Blackbird: Red-winged 15, Brewer's 45; Pyrrhuloxia 41; House Finch 120; Pine Siskin 30; Lesser Goldfinch 10; Towhee: Green-tailed 11, Rufous-sided 5, Brown 4; Lark Bunting 47; Sparrow: Savannah 1, Vesper 16, Lark 2, Black-throated 133, Sage 171; Junco: Dark-eyed 127, Gray-headed 10; Sparrow: Chipping 69, Brewer's 1190, White-crowned 714, White-throated 1, Lincoln's 2, Song 28.

TOTAL: 53 species; about 3244 individuals.

PARTICIPANTS: Anne and Hampton Bowman, Mike Butler, Jean and John Coyle, Joyce Davis, Joe DiPasquale, Sarah Dodds, Jane Fowler, Al Gavit (compiler), Ed Gilboe, Joe Guinn, Peggy Heisel, Howard Jackson, Kris Kohlhoff, Jo Nagel, Brian Olson, Peter Riede, Sid Shepperd, Rose Marion Smith, John Sproul, Dennis Taylor, David and Stella Weinstein, Scott Wilson. #

FIELD TRIPS FOLLOW-UP

On 30 January (cold but sunny), 15 birders went to the Ft. Bliss Ponds. 29 species were seen in all, including our bird of the day--a Virginia Rail! Also spotted: 2 male Common Yellowthroats, Buffleheads, and a large number of Marsh Hawks.

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FIELD TRIPS FOLLOW-UP

Some 24 participants turned out on 14 February for our Randel's Pool/Durling Farm field trip. A total of 47 species was seen, among them: Green Herons, Lesser Goldfinches, Verdin, Cooper's Hawk and a Scrub Jay (all Randel's Pool area); also Great Horned Owl, American Kestrels, Gambel's Quail and a femal Ladder-backed Woodpecker (all Durling's Farm area).
/Jane Fowler/

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT
THREATENED!

Our nation's most important wild-life law, the Endangered Species Act, expires on 9-30-82. Congress began its formal reconsideration of this Act before a Senate sub-committee in December. Judging from the tenor of these hearings, it appears a serious weakening of the Act is a distinct possibility. Conceivably, it will be so gutted as to be unrecognizable.

We must NOT lose the only tool we have for halting the threat of extinction facing many species. Animal and plant species are the living components of the world. Their interrelationships are of vital importance to their survival and ultimately to the survival of humans.

Healthy, natural communities generate oxygen, recycle nutrients, break down pollution, maintain soil fertility, control water availability and moderate climate. Wild species are the source of many of the basic necessities of human life and if protected, promise an infinitely renewable supply of food, energy, medicine and aesthetic pleasures.

If the Endangered Species Act is to survive, we must persuade Congress of its importance. Write or telephone administration officials and members of Congress before the May 15th close of hearings. Urge your friends and associates to do the same.

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ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (cont.)

You are urged to start with a letter to:
Honorable John H. Chafee, Chrmn.
Sub-committee on Environmental
Pollution
5229 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

In your letter state your support of a strong Endangered Species Act without weakening amendments. Also send letters to your Congressman, Hon. Richard White
2266 Rayburn House Office

Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
or U.S. Courthouse
El Paso, Texas 79901

/Diane Dutton/ #



RIO BOSQUE PARK - HOW TO GET THERE
AND WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE
THERE

Those of us who attended the general meeting on February 15 saw many photos (mostly aerial) of Rio Bosque Park, but how many of us could confidently give instructions on how to get there? The newcomers in our midst, it seems, can do better than the not-so-active long time residents.

All right, here's the most legal route to Rio Bosque Park. Turn off I-10 at the Avenue of the Americas and drive west until you reach Socorro Rd. Take a left on Socorro Rd. and drive until you reach the Socorro Sewage Treatment Plant, located on the west side of the road. Turn west, wend your way across the drainage canal and you will come to the north side of the tratment ponds and the south side of the not very prepossessing Rio Bosque Park. It needs help.

As we learned at the general meeting, the planning for the proposed Omar N. Bradley Park has begun in earnest, and several of our chapter leaders have met with the

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RIO BOSQUE PARK (continued)

National Park Service people assigned to help with the planning. We advised them of our support for the proposal, our interest in keeping Rio Bosque Park a natural area and our willingness to work with them. They stated we could be particularly helpful in two ways:

- * by preparing a sound proposal for management of Rio Bosque, and
- * by providing a report on Rio Bosque's biological resources.

YOU can help! Next time you are in the Rio Bosque area, keep a record of what you see. Don't just record birds, either. We are interested in mammals, reptiles, plants, all biological resources. Report your findings to Tony Worth (592-4926), and he'll use them for our report to the Park Service folks. Thanks. #

REGIONAL CONFERENCE SOON:

Your Input Wanted

National Audubon's Southwest Regional Conference is fast approaching. Set for 16-18 in Rockport, Texas, it will feature presentations from Audubon's National and Washington, D.C. staff; workshops on membership, publicity and newsletters; and pre- and post-conference trips in one of the Gulf Coast's hottest birding areas. For more details, contact the NAS Southwest Regional Office (P.O. Box 416, Brownwood, TX 76801 or John Sproul (545-5157 h, 541-6126w)

At the delegate meeting, an important topic will be recommendations for National Audubon's environmental goals and priorities. The Audubon Cause (AUDUBON, Jan 1980, pp. 78-79) is a formal statement of Audubon's major environmental concerns and an action agenda. It includes 45 specific goals developed through input from chapters throughout the nation. Of these, Audubon's staff identified 10 in

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REGIONAL CONFERENCE (cont.)

September 1980 as the society's top priorities (AUDUBON, Jan 1981, pp. 110-111).

In 1982-83, the society will be revising the Audubon Cause and the Action Priority Goals. The process starts with YOU. What do YOU think are the important environmental issues Audubon should address in the next 2 years? Give your views to any member of our Board of Directors (see p. 5). We'll see that they are discussed during the delegate meeting at the regional conference. The top priority goals to emerge from this conference will be presented to Audubon's national staff for development of a national action agenda. #

LENA MCBEE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A unique new addition to our chapter library is MY VERY OWN CENTENNIAL by Lena McBee., edited by Gaylord Castor. A founder of the El Paso Bird Study Club and a legend in local birding circles, McBee turned 100 last year. Though not primarily about birding, this book offers some fascinating glimpses into the history of field ornithology in the El Paso area. Thank you, Gaylord Castor, for presenting a copy to our chapter. #

JUST WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED

For sale at our general meetings are several items, at least one of which you've been wanting a long time. Pay your money and take your choice of:

- * BIRDSEED--a hand-packaged mix specially formulated for El Paso area. \$2 per 5-lb. bag.
- * THE GUIDE FOR CITIZEN ACTION 40 pp., paperbound. \$2.50.
- * GUIDE TO THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES by Laura and William Riley. 653 pp., hardbound. \$12.75 members, \$14.95 non-members. #

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I want to join the El Paso/
Trans-Pecos Chapter of the Na-
tional Audubon Society.

Name

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Membership Category desired:

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Sr. Citizen, Individual/\$17

Sr. Citizen, Family/\$19

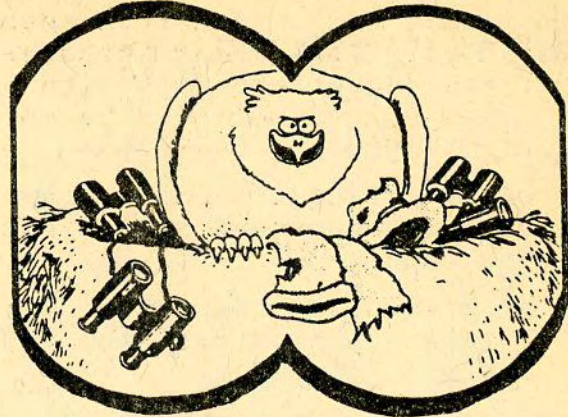
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