

Garden Branch Meet

Members of the Oakland branch, Woman's National Farm and Garden association met for their May luncheon Monday at Haven Hill.

The lodge and surrounding acres were formerly owned by Ed. Ford but are now part of the Michigan Department of Conservation.

NATURE NOW

By Lydia King Frehe
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

Wood Ducks Nest In Cavity of Tree

During the last three weeks we have been observing a pair of wood ducks nesting in the vicinity of 14 Mile road and 14th Street.

They have selected a cavity in the trunk of a maple tree. This stands at the top of a ravine some 250 feet from a small stream which winds through a wooded valley. The nest cavity faces the ravine and is 45 feet from the ground.

The wood duck is admittedly our most beautiful species of North American waterfowl. Once seen, its conspicuous and distinctive color markings are never forgotten. Commonly used adjectives, such as "beautiful" or "gorgeous" are wholly inadequate terms. Roger Tory Peterson by-passes this assignment by writing simply, "highly iridescent, descriptive words fail" and adding, artist-like, "the pattern diagram explains it much better."

THE WOOD DUCK, like all wild things, is best seen in part and parcel of its native habitat; floating on some secluded inland pond or stream, presenting its features on a mossy swamp-log or flying skillfully through the tree tops to its nesting place.

Our pair of wood ducks has made much ado selecting the nesting cavity. This important matter decided, the female busies herself re-arranging any material that may already be there and mixing it with down from her breast. The latter also serves to bare a brooding spot on her thick feather-covered body so that the eggs may be better warmed. Of this material she shapes a cup-like hollow. At this writing she has already laid a clutch of 10 to 12 eggs, and the incubating period of 21 to 30 days has begun. Once the female is well established in the nest the male usually deserts his mate.

THE MANNER in which the wood ducklings leave the nest has been carefully documented by competent ornithologists. Ducks are precocial birds and are born well equipped with down and quite self-sufficient. On a day when they are ready for the great adventure the mother duck utters a soft subdued call from the ground under the nest. The ducklings hear her quiet invitation and one by one they appear at the opening. With an upward and outward spring they jump to the ground. This procedure has been observed with a nest located over a sidewalk. No apparent injury resulted.

With an instinct that is as unfailing as it is amazing, the little ones make their way unaided to the waiting stream or pond. Thereafter they are on their own with some coaching from their mother on the best possible conduct of young wood ducks. During the summer we frequently see such a little family swimming by on the clear blue water of Wallon Lake, the sun bright on the grass, so intent on their bird-business.

THE FOOD of wood ducks is some 90 per cent plant and 10 per cent animal material. Of the former they dine on the seeds of trees and shrubs and on leaves of water plants such as duckweed, water arrowweed and skunk cabbage. As the season advances the birds wander deep into the woodland in search of berries, grapes, chestnuts, beech-nuts and acorns. After their autumn migration to the southern states they prefer to eat wild rice and bitter pecans, the strong contractions of the gizzard being adequate for cracking the shells of the hardest nuts. Of animal fare they are especially fond of spiders. Other insects eaten are beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, flies and wasps.

The wood duck is found only in North America. It is an early migrant.

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Article Discusses Swimming Pools

Frank Whitney is the author of the article "Our Indoor-Outdoor Swimming Pool," in the May-June issue of "Jolpher."

The article says that the purpose of the modified swimming pool is to provide a natatorium which incorporates desirable features of both the traditional indoor and the outdoor type. The success of this venture can be measured by objective evaluation of comparable results.

Accomplishments can be increased through study and elimination of problems created by the commiser. More functional use should be planned for the new characteristics offered. Patios or sun decks should contribute more than a sun tan and underwater windows should serve enough purpose to justify their installation.

The indoor-outdoor pool has made a tremendous start and has a brilliant future. The future can be made evermore a part of the only for its flesh but for its feathers which are used in making trout lures. However, it was saved by timely legislation, and now is becoming more abundant in many areas.

present by continual scientific study, evaluation and application. Whitney is athletics and physical education director and recreation co-ordinator, public schools, Birmingham.

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Birmingham Back 30 Years Ago

Beck Cleaners, 332 N. Woodward, celebrating their 30th anniversary this month, felt that many Birmingham area residents, both new and old, would be interested in what happened in Birmingham "Back when Beck began," as reported in the pages of The Birmingham Eccentric.

Annexation of suburban areas resulted in street numbering that was very confusing to the Birmingham Fire Department. A new block numbering system was the answer. Cost—\$2,000.

New non-stop record for small airplanes was set by Harry Brooks of Birmingham. He flew his Cessna 170B from Fort Worth to Tampa, Fla., approximately 1000 54 miles per hour, in 1 1/2 hours, an average of 71 M.P.H. The plane measured only 5' high and 16' long, had a 25' wingspread and carried 52 gallons of gasoline.

An ordinance was passed compelling street cars to stop at Trolley bridge crossing and Woodward in Bloomfield Hills as a safety measure. Autos had to cross the tracks at this point and since the pavement was opened several serious accidents had occurred.

The new Series Pontiac Six 2.4 liter sedan (with four wheel brakes) sold for \$745 at the factory. Advertising featured the beauty of new fenders and running boards.

Birmingham Village President presided at a meeting to plead for public support in conferring protection. Police were definitely certain of the location of at least four "Blind Pigs" but could not make purchases needed to obtain warrants.

S.S. Kresge Company signed a 99-year lease for the property at 119-121 N. 2nd Street. It was estimated that rental would amount to \$730,000 during duration of the lease.

Society Notes on a prominent wedding. A new well was being dug as the Village's third source of water. Drilling had reached 125 feet by the 10th of May, and it was thought that another week of digging would let the tale.

This sign appeared over the Marquee of the Kunsky-Birmingham Theater.

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Prominent "figures" in the news—Village President: Harold T. Ellery, by Village Attorney: C. H. Ozden, Foundation: 15,000. Assessed property valuation: \$3,000,000.

Watch next week's Eccentric for a special announcement of Beck Cleaner's 30th Anniversary Celebration—Thursday, Friday and Saturday—May 22, 23 and 24.

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