

Whippoorwill E-Comment

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Egregious Orthographic Error

I know that three people read my last issue, *Whippoorwill E-Comment* 69, because they commented on it – Hugh Singleton, Dave Griffin, and Lee Hawes. Lee pointed out the fact I had used an incorrect word when I described my good friend Bill Warner, who lives in As, Norway, as an *expatriot*, a careless mistake. The word should have been *expatriate*, someone who lives away from his/her native land. I know that Bill is a critical thinking patriot who is deeply concerned with the abysmal opinion Europeans, Norway in particular, have of the United States because of what they consider the destructive behavior of our president.

A Priceless Record

One of Bill Warner's classmates, both in high school in Cleveland and at Transylvania College, is Dan von Koschembahr. He possesses a rare treasure, a large box of manuscripts written by his grandfather, Dr. Daniel Quiring. Dr. Quiring was a Professor of Anatomy and Chairman of the Department of Anatomy at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. Included in this collection is a letter, written to his grandson the day he was born, expressing hope

and expectations for Dan's life. Many of the manuscripts were written about scientific subjects, most of which were published in professional journals, but one was the manuscript of a book of advice for students, *A Student in Search of a Soul*. Dan is currently editing and formatting the manuscript in preparation for self-publishing the book through Lulu. How many of us are privileged to read the recorded thoughts of our forebears? None of my ancestors wrote anything, and consequently, there is virtually no evidence they ever existed.



A**FTER** the massive die-off from the West Nile virus last year, I was fearful we might not have birds for many years. I reported on the silent spring we observed, which continued through the winter. None of our regular winter birds were

present last winter - no house finches, purple finches, winter wrens, goldfinch, white breasted nuthatches, brown creepers, blue jays, woodpeckers, or even starlings. The feeders had no customers - they sat forlornly full of seeds, and winter was as silent as our spring had been.

To my relief, the spring migration of 2008 started surprisingly normally. The birds returned, but not in what I knew as a regular pattern. The red-winged blackbirds arrived early, and species started trickling into the state in a different pattern. Many birds can be expected at or near some particular date, such as the swallows to Capistrano, but the time schedule this year was rather haphazard. Species returned out of order, and were generally early, rather than late. Usually the kingbirds are the last breeding species to appear. When they appear, for all practical purposes the migration is over. But this year, the kingbirds arrived an entire month early, and many birds I knew were early arrivers, found their way here late.

So far, the breeding season appears to be close to normal. I suspect that many are resistant to the West Nile virus, who are rapidly reproducing with less competition and are replacing those who died out -- a simple Darwinian pattern.

Kudos to Johanna Shipley and her fine article in the latest *Gator Growl* about her fascination with humming birds. She knows her birds, and is such a fine writer that one is inspired to go out with binoculars and search for humming birds.

On the Evolution of AJ

The practice of our brand of journalism has changed radically since I joined the association in 1970. Then, letterpress was king, and most journals were produced on hand presses from handset type. A few mimeographers were around, but their papers hardly compared in appearance with printed journals. Even then, most old-timers waxed nostalgically about the *golden age* of AJ when 24 page deluxe journals were published routinely by elderly formal gentlemen on the best printing papers in the world, some being hand-dipped in European mills, and sewn into lavishly expensive covers. The journals were beautiful - truly collector's items. Alas, those days are gone forever. I thought about what would happen if commercial sponsors underwrote the production of such bijoux today, and have compiled a short possible list:

1. The Ajax Inner Tube Co.
2. Conestoga Wagons, Inc.
3. MiLady Side Saddles
4. Finest Mustache Cups
5. Raccoon Coats, Ltd.
6. Michigan Beaver Hats Inc.
7. Sleeve Garters Unlimited
8. Ivory Button Hooks, Inc.
9. Rangoon Gas Mantle Co.
10. National Buggy Whip Co.

But AJ is alive today because of personal computers, thankfully.

Whippoorwill E-Comment is the occasional brain spasm of J. Hill Hamon, Frankfort, Kentucky.