

Northeast Avalon Times December 2019

**Make buying less and giving more a Christmas tradition
Birds I View
Bill Montevercchi**



A hearty and robust male ring-necked duck [Rick West]

It's coming on Christmas,
They're cutting down trees.
Putting up reindeer
And singing songs of joy and peace,
Oh, I wish I had a river I could skate away on.

River by Joni Mitchell

The joy in the air is colliding with the “buy at all costs” promotions. When the spirit rises above the commodification of Christmas it nourishes the soul, society and the planet.

During the past few months, I think we received 25 or more L. L. Bean catalogues in the mail. We’ve canceled the mailings and are no longer buying from L. L. Bean. In 2015, the company mailed over 50 different catalogs to customers in every state in the US and over 170 countries.

One can only imagine the staggering energy and environmental costs associated with this practice. And given that L. L. Bean web orders surpassed catalog orders in 2009 and that the website logged more than 1.6 million visits on Cyber Monday 2015, their catalogue distribution seems unnecessary.

This level of color paper transmission is out of alignment with ongoing climate and ecological crises. Surprisingly it is also inconsistent with L. L. Bean's own philosophy and practice. The company uses sustainably sourced paper made from 10-20% recycled content, fuels its truck fleet with biodiesel and recycles more than 83% of its waste.

Growing up in New England, I remember the company espousing a rural, down home environmental ethic and selling practical quality products and goods. How did the company morph into a mega-corp glutting the environment with color catalogues? It appears that success led the way. L. L. Bean boasts annual net sales of \$1.6 billion dollars with outlets throughout the USA and Japan.

The company website indicates that the business is a privately held, family-owned business. Yet I wonder if Leon Leonwood (L.L.) Bean who founded the company in 1912 selling duck boots to hunters would approve of the cataloguing glut that is now part of his namesake business?

Looking a gift horse in the mouth

Amid the noise and confusion there is much to be grateful for. And there many ways to gift others and share during the Christmas season and throughout the year. For instance, to help people reduce both consumerism and clutter the Cooperative for Social Justices is organizing a re-gifting raffle. Donated unused items are now being collected. Society members will group items into baskets and then sponsor a raffle on 20 December. If this might of interest to you, contact socialjusticecoopnl@gmail.com.

Last Christmas we had the most enjoyable time with family friends sharing gifts in a practice they called "secret Santa". The basic game plan was that everyone bought and wrapped a gift that cost less than ten dollars. All gifts without identification of a giver or a recipient were put under the tree. Then names were drawn out of a hat and the person whose name was drawn would select and open a gift and then try to guess who it was from. If the guess was correct, the gift-giver would select a gift and repeat the process. If the guess was incorrect, another name would be drawn from the hat and so on.

Good cheer, laughter and camaraderie made the gift-sharing experience one that delighted young, old and all those in between. And as with all good sharing among friends and family should, the festivities culminated in a magnificent meal.

Buying less and giving more is a always a win-win situation and perhaps even more so at this time of year. The best gifts can still be given freely. Give generously, give support, give a helping hand, give joy and most of all give and hold hope as we move forward with positive and constructive visions for 2020.

Birds in the area

While out turr hunting off Crow Head in Twillingate in early November, David Boyd got a fine photo of a humpback whale. Dozens of dolphins were in the area but no turrs. Dave is concerned about the lack of enforcement in the hunt and writes “I saw more [turrs] in one day in the 50’s than I see all year now.”

Nathan Bollinger recently saw a snowy owl on three-pond barrens. It is the first December sighting that I have heard of. An opportunistic hairy woodpecker took advantage of dog bones our huskies have left in the yard. The woodpecker gleaned the marrow from the hollows in bone where its beak and tongue could over-reach a canine tooth.

Evening grosbeaks are moving about in Portugal Cove a flock of 30 birds has been visiting a feeders by Neary’s Pond (Carolyn Mayo) and off Bauline Line (Tania Strassburger). In late November, Janet Montevecchi had some stunningly close encounters with a pair of normally secretive golden-crowned kinglets along a meadow on the Beachy Cove Mountain trail. In Long Pond – Manuals, starlings have been seen murmuring (Linda Gaborko) and a flock of two dozen American goldfinches are visiting the Gaborko-Bennett feeder.

Contacts = mont@mun.ca, 864-7673[w], 895-2901[h] 695-5305 [c]. Birds I View columns can be found at http://www.mun.ca/psychology/montevecchi/public_outreach/birds_ir_view/