A Message from the President

Greetings!
It may have been frigid outside, but those Sheep who met for the retreat this past weekend were hot--both literally and figuratively. It seems that the thermostat could not be adjusted, but the number of layers we were wearing could. It all worked out just fine. As usual, lots of visiting, spinning, eating, and more, and we decided that the lovely setting warrants a warm-weather retreat as well.

I came home inspired to try something new, and fired up to get more projects completed, to include the lock-spun yarn for which I recently purchased some Cotswold fleece from Robin Nistock--how is that for slipping in the program for the March meeting?

I hope to see you there,
Sharon

Australia’s Oldest Man Knits Sweaters for Penguins

Now there’s a headline fit for the tabloids! It turns out that there’s this 109-year-old man who knits tiny, colorful sweaters for penguins injured by oil spills. Check out this link: http://abcnews.go.com/International/International/tiny-penguins-tiny-sweaters/story?id=28886035

March 14

We are very fortunate to have Robin Nistock (Nistock Farms) visit with us on March 14th! Please take a few moments to look at the Nistock Farms website. It is impressive! Robin is looking forward to telling us about her operation and answering lots of questions. She will have fleeces and roving for sale too. Don't miss this meeting: it will be great!

Our April meeting will be our Garage Sale. Start sorting through your stash to see what you’d like to sell!

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The Black Sheep meet from 11am - 3pm on the 2nd Saturday of each month at All Saints Church Parish Hall, Route 34B, in Lansing, NY.
Patsy Zawistoski Spinning Workshop. The Southern Tier Fiberarts Guild, with the support of the Mid Atlantic Fiber Association (MAFA), is offering a two-day spinning workshop in June, with Patsy Zawistoski. Contact Carol Wood woodrose46@yahoo.com

A Look at Fiber History at the Oxford Winter Farmers’ Market Sat. March 7th. History of fiber production in our region. Spinning wheels on display. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Parish House Community Center of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Oxford. Contact Paige Smith, Three Meadows Farm, Oxford freshfromyourneighbors@gmail.com
Hello! My name is Abby, and I am the newest, and the youngest member of the guild. You may have met me at the last meeting. I am ten. I grew up around cows, horses, and sheep. Santa brought me a foal named Lexie this Christmas, which I will start training next summer. I like to spin, dye, and (as you can see) card, and I am learning to knit too. I am helping Sharon use up her stash.
I have grown to see the world through spinners’ goggles. An illustration might help you to appreciate the extent of this affliction; I was a beginning spinner when web worms invaded our trees a few years back with their ugly webworks, and I went out on a whim and gathered a few handfuls so I could carry out experiments on the question of whether they might be persuaded to yield a spinnable, silken thread. I will spare you the messy details, except to note that the experiment ran aground on the shoals of stickiness. Another, less disastrous but more painful experiment (reported on in an earlier essay) involved extracting spinnable fiber from stinging nettles. And finally, of course, there was my rather more satisfying attempts at spinning yarn from strips of paper, on which I reported some years back. No matter the situation, the first thought that pops into my mind is “I wonder if I could spin that.” My wistfulness has recently been given new life by a couple of things. The first of them was learning about the exotic, vanishing sea silk on which I reported in the last issue. The second is my recent discovery of a journal called Textile History. In one of its issues I learned about lace-bark, a small, rare tree that grows (or grew?) in remote upland parts of Jamaica, with the lilting Latin name Lagetta Lagetto, whose inner bark could be peeled from the tree, stretched open, and dried into a lacy fabric that required no spinning, knitting or weaving. It was whole cloth, one might say. The background of this page is a piece of lace-bark fabric in its native state. Might as well leave that one off my fiber bucket list, though. The tree is apparently very rare by now, according to the articles I read, though no one knows how rare, and both the traditional knowledge of how to maintain it and how to process its fiber have been lost. Frail hopes of reviving the declining local lace-bark industry were dashed for good by Hurricane Gilbert in the 1980’s. Going up the ladder of sustainability by another few orders of magnitude, another article in Textile History reports on the early use of Spanish Moss as a fiber plant for clothing. This one is common enough that I’ve actually seen it, though according to the article, it too is threatened by habitat loss. Spanish Moss was the ‘hair of Trees’ in the Biloxi language. It looks, in any case, like a fiber of dire necessity—too course and stiff for comfort. I’ll skip that one.

The good news is that not all exotic fibers are endangered. The abundance of one of them, in fact, has become an ecological crisis. Kudzu produces a bast fiber of a “translucent, almost radiant luster (generally considered to be even finer than that of silk)” according to the chapter “Weaving with Kudzu” in The Book of Kudzu. This fiber has been used in the weaving of cloth for garments and other uses in Japan and Korea for millennia, and is being resurrected by some American artisans. There are even websites devoted to it (kudzuweaving.com). And there is no shortage of it in our own country. Imported to the southeastern US as a forage and folder crop, it escaped into the wild and proliferated with such vigor that it has become known as “the Vine that Ate the South”. It is usually woven without spinning, to take advantage of its native radiance, but nothing says that we can’t try spinning it. I’m sure there are folks down south who’d love to sell us some.

—Wayne

Shurtleff, William and Akiko Aoyagi. The Book of Kudzu.
Convert your Baynes hook flyer to a SLIDING PINCH HOOK FLYER for $32.00 including rebalancing. See Jim Johnson at a meeting or call 607-564-7178 or email hilltoppaddles@earthlink.net.

FOR SALE: 1810 Great Wheel purchased from Bill Ralph. Miner's head, spins beautifully. For further info and/or to give it a spin, please contact shelly@chezmyers.com

In an effort to reduce my personal stash, I’d like to sell cotton warp, loop mohair, rug wools, fine wools, rayon and rayon chenille and other interesting stuff at prices ranging from low to ridiculous. I also have a Hansen e-spinner with woolee winder, two bobbins and kate for sale. Contact Karey Solomon at threads@empacc.net.

For sale from my own happy sheep and rabbits in Trumansburg: Navajo-Churro roving in a variety of natural colors. Angora rabbit wool in white. Contact Sharon Berger @607-592-4649 or sabeger@twcny.rr.com

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