

REPORT TO THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION
BY THE COMMITTEE ON BIRD PROTECTION, 1961

IMPROVED STATUS

In this fast-moving and ever-changing world many events have a pronounced impact on bird life. Some events improve habitat and afford better protection for some species, while other activities directly or indirectly cause widespread damage. One major improvement, we feel, is reflected in a growing public consciousness of the importance of our avifauna and a growing public concern and demand for its protection and wise management. Many organizations and citizens' groups are giving more and more protection to bird life.

The President's 23 February 1961 special message to the Congress (House Document No. 94) on natural resources, we believe, is a reflection of this improved attitude. It is well to remember that this is the most comprehensive statement ever made by a President to the Congress on natural resource problems and urgent needs. To the Congress he expressed the hope that "consistent and coordinated Federal leadership can expand our fish and wildlife opportunities without the present conflicts of agencies and interests: one department paying to have wetlands drained for agricultural purposes while another is purchasing such lands for wildlife or waterfowl refuges—one agency encouraging chemical pesticides that may harm the song birds and game birds whose preservation is encouraged by another agency. . . ." At the dedication of the new National Wildlife Federation home office in Washington, early in March of this year, the President commented that we must keep America a "place where wildlife and natural beauty cannot be despoiled."

A vigorous effort by the Administration to stop the foolish bureaucratic and wasteful conflicts of interest between bureaus and departments has long been needed. We hope it is successful. Two of the more devastating factors causing a reduction of our birds and other wildlife have been these excessive and ill-considered drainage and pest control programs sponsored, encouraged and subsidized by an arm of our federal government.¹ Several bills have been introduced into the Congress to correct and prevent these excesses in the drainage and pesticide programs and more action is promised unless the Executive branch of the government develops better coordination between its bureaus and agencies and prevents the unnecessary loss of wildlife caused by ill-advised and short-sighted programs.

¹ This and any similar statements are, of course, made independent of the Canadian members of the A.O.U. Committee.

THE DRAINAGE PROBLEM

The drainage craze has done serious damage in the principal duck nesting areas of the prairie states, particularly the Dakotas and western Minnesota. From the viewpoint of agriculture and many property owners, some of this drainage was desirable. If the farmer wanted to drain his own land, in our free enterprise system, that should be entirely up to him, providing such drainage did not harm adjacent property or noticeably cause injury to society and provided further that the farmer paid for his own program of drainage. The fact is that much of this drainage was encouraged by the federal agency, and the government paid a substantial subsidy to help with the drainage. As a result, many areas were drained where the project was not economically sound. Many and perhaps most "pothole" areas were drained that could not or would not have been drained without the government subsidy and support. Much of this new land was used to increase the production of unneeded and (from the public viewpoint) unwanted cereal crops in which we already had such bulging surpluses that the government was paying more than a million dollars a day for storage! As of 30 April 1959, our Commodity Credit Corporation, the price support arm of our government, already had on hand 1,084,090,690 bushels of wheat in storage before the beginning of a new harvest. Yet, we were still encouraging and subsidizing drainage in the wheat belt. A different bureau of the same government was attempting to encourage waterfowl production in the same area and was trying to buy wetlands there.

Another paradox in government handouts is that in some of the same counties of some of these prairie states, where payments for "Soil Bank" and "Land Retirement" had been given, and where so much subsidy had been doled out for drainage of prime waterfowl habitat, and where so much money had been expended for price support for surplus grain production, these same counties felt compelled to apply for and received drought relief. In 1955 Congressman Lovre of South Dakota urged the USDA to grant drought relief to 26 counties of his state. In 1955 the North Dakota Water Commission stopped drainage activity in three counties in the belief that it was aggravating high water conditions. A bill passed Congress and was vetoed by the President proposing to reimburse farmers for flood damage caused by government-supported drainage. Such federally supported misuse of land certainly has serious effects on all water and marsh species of birds that are dependent on such an environment.

It is gratifying to report that the Secretary of Agriculture and his immediate assistants are currently making great effort to correct this unjustified and unfortunate drainage which lowers the water table in this section of the country. An international committee of Canadian and U.S. government officials responsible to the Ministers of Agriculture and North-

ern Affairs and Natural Resources, and the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior, is studying the present and potential waterfowl production grounds to determine what might be done to improve permanently, or at least check, the gradual downward trend in waterfowl production on both sides of the international boundary.

THE WATERFOWL SITUATION

The waterfowl situation this year is far from satisfactory. A three-year drought has occurred in the prairie pothole breeding grounds where a high percentage of our harvestable ducks are hatched and reared. Some of these areas have suffered the worst drought year of recorded history. Fortunately, there was some improvement in 1960; otherwise, the situation would be still more acute this fall of 1961. Conditions looked more promising earlier in the season but worsened as the summer advanced. Generally, northern areas, including Canadian "park lands" (north of the prairie), showed an improvement over last year. This appears, however, to represent merely an incursion of waterfowl from the southward forced north by the dried-up pothole region.

It should be pointed out that there is much evidence to indicate that when these birds are forced out of their favored nesting habitat, production is greatly curtailed. Apparently many waterfowl did not attempt to nest this year. It also appears that renesting attempts following nest loss also are decidedly lowered among those birds moved out of their accustomed or favored nesting sites.

In the prime pothole prairie breeding grounds nest production is largely in proportion to the number of water areas available. The number of those nesting areas this past summer is lower than at any time since the devastating drought of the 1930's.

Hochbaum reports that despite the very dry season this was the most active year for drainage in Manitoba at least, where some 3 per cent of the potholes in some districts have been drained during the year. Production seems to have been very low indeed for the Canvasback, Red-head and Ruddy. Hochbaum further points out that recent studies show a very distorted sex ratio among the Canvasbacks, with approximately 70 per cent males. If this figure is reasonably accurate, it clearly shows that this choice bird is indeed in a precarious condition and deserves widespread and complete protection. Canada permits one Canvasback and one Red-head in the bag to allow for a bird taken accidentally. Unfortunately, many, if not most, hunters do not know their birds, and many protected birds are taken indiscriminately, accidentally or unknowingly. It seems no more illogical that the hunter be required to pass a test to obtain his

hunting license than it is for him to take a test before receiving a driver's license.

In the United States no Canvasback or Red-head ducks are allowed in the bag of game. Generally, only one Wood Duck and one Hooded Merganser may be included in the daily bag in the United States. Because of a general reduction in the resources available, the season and bag limits have had to be drastically curtailed this year. This is not uniform but varies, as it should, in accordance with the expected waterfowl population within the respective flyways. In the Atlantic flyway the season granted is for 50 days and a bag and possession limit of two and four ducks, respectively, or, if for 40 days, the limit is three and six birds.

In the Mississippi flyways, where populations are expected to be alarmingly decreased, the limits and seasons set are for 20 days with three and six birds in the bag and possession or, if for 30 days, with two and four birds as the daily take and possession limit. The Central flyway is provided a 30-day bag, with three and six birds or, if for 40 days, two and four birds in the bag and possession. In the Pacific flyway the waterfowl situation looks decidedly more favorable, so it is allocated a 75-day continuous season with a bag and possession of five and five or four and eight, or a split season of 68 days and four and eight or five and five birds as bag and possession limit, respectively. Some other arrangements or combinations of bag and possession limits are offered at the discretion of the various states. Bag limits in ducks in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario were reduced to five per day, the lowest harvest ever given.

The federal and state refuge programs generally have been of great importance in the production, conservation, and sound management of birds. Because cultivated food crops caused an abnormal concentration of birds, a few problems connected with conservation, management, and harvest are becoming acute and of national concern. This is becoming increasingly serious at some of the so-called refuges where an abundance of food has been provided and where public shooting has been permitted. It is a fact that at these favorable areas geese, in particular, are noticeably altering their migratory and wintering behavior patterns. It is reported that 10,000 Canadian Geese were killed in 10 days at the National Horican Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin last fall.

This "refuge," like the famed Horseshoe Lake State Refuge of southern Illinois, because of being on the upper reaches of the migratory path, and because of the favorable habitat and abundance of an artificially produced food supply of grain, corn, and greens, attracts and holds geese in ever-increasing numbers. The birds are held in large numbers with a concentrated food supply in a limited area, often until after the instinct for further southward migration has passed. These areas then become the

terminus of the migration, and these geese and their young attract others so that the birds build up in surprising numbers in a restricted area. A slaughter of birds followed, and too often with high crippling loss. There is always the threat of serious overharvest under such situations.

We must remember that our geese and other migratory birds are under international treaty that obligates the signatory nations to manage wisely this renewable natural resource in the best interests of all our peoples. This would indicate that we are pledged to sound management that within reason would make the resource equitably available to all our people within the flyway and normal wintering grounds. An ever-enlarging concentration of geese in a limited area for a long period is not good for the resource nor for society as a whole. These artificial concentrations could endanger the security of certain races and segments of the goose population. Those who are benefited by large concentrations of birds in their immediate area are understandably anxious to retain their favored position. The solution to the problem must rest heavily on the leadership of the Federal Service in its management, control and public relations problems.

FEDERAL REFUGE PROGRAM

The fiscal year 1961 (ending 30 June 1961) was memorable for its enlargement of the federal wildlife refuge system. The establishment during the year of three very large and important wildlife and wilderness areas increased the (U.S.) national system from 17½ million acres to 28½ million acres. These three major acquisitions are: (1) the 8.9-million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Range. It contains, besides some important waterfowl production habitat, a unique, undisturbed arctic wilderness of major value to the grizzly, black, and polar bears, caribou, Dall sheep, moose, wolverine, wolf, and other endangered and important animals of the Far North; (2) the Clarence Rhodes National Wildlife Range, comprising 1.8 million acres of low-lying tundra on the coast of the Bering Sea from Hooper Bay to Kipnuk, excluding Nelson Island. This includes the primary nesting area of the Cackling Goose and the Black Brant. It comprises important nesting habitat for the Emperor, Lesser Canada and White-fronted geese, Whistling Swans, Lesser Sandhill Cranes, Eider Ducks of several species, Scoters, Greater Scaups, Pintails, Old Squaw Ducks, and a great many species of shore birds, as well as many species of nongame birds; (3) the 415,000-acre Izembeck National Wildlife Range on the tip of the Alaskan Peninsula. This key area is important as a producing area for many species of game and nongame birds and a major feeding area and migration unit for many species of interest to the citizens throughout the western half of the United States and Canada.

In addition to these newly acquired major and very large refuge areas,

there has been a stepped-up effort to acquire more production ground habitat in the pothole area of our northern states where so much effort has gone into drainage. While progress has been made, it has not kept pace with the drainage. During the year, by using "Duck Stamp" funds, scattered units of potholes have been secured in six counties in North and South Dakota. Some other important additions to the national refuge program also have been made.

THE PESTICIDE PROBLEM

The comments here included should be considered a supplement to the Committee Report of 1960, as that report is still applicable.

Conservation leaders and bird students have been greatly concerned over the ever-increasing use, and sometimes irresponsible use, of highly toxic, broad-spectrum and stable chemical pesticides and the effects these may be having upon birds and other wildlife. Members of this committee, and in fact many members of the A.O.U. and other bird societies and protection groups, have been active in attempting to bring more sanity and maturity into pesticide operations. While this complex and controversial problem is still with us as a major threat to bird life, and probably always will be, the situation has markedly improved in a number of important respects.

A growing and articulate public is demanding the elimination of the flagrant excesses that have characterized some major control or eradication operations in recent years. This public concern became sufficiently pronounced that top administration leaders recognized the seriousness of the intra- and interdepartmental conflicts. The President showed his concern in his special conservation message to the Congress on 23 February 1961. Subsequently, the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture referred to the urgent need of coordination between their two departments. A coordinating committee assigned to these controversial and vexing problems was established between the two departments. Recently, the President has enlarged the coordination board to consider the effects of government-sponsored pesticide programs upon human health and wildlife (including fisheries). Two representatives each were appointed from the Departments of Health, Education, and Welfare, Defense, Interior, and Agriculture. Dr. Robert J. Anderson of the U.S. Public Health Service was selected to serve as chairman. This coordinated approach certainly is a step in the right direction, and it should prevent any arrogant bureaucracy from proceeding independent of other public needs, interests, and resources. This set-up, we believe, will prevent the excesses that too frequently characterized the "fire ant eradication program."

Well over a year ago the problem of the various pesticides and their effects upon wildlife was at last, and perhaps rather reluctantly, placed

in the lap of the National Academy of Science-National Research Council for it to make a study and report. A rather large committee, with three subcommittees, was selected to look into this problem. Two members of the A.O.U. committee, Messrs. Gabrielson and Cottam, have done considerable work on this Research Council assignment. In addition to these more formal approaches to this complex and difficult problem, a number of executive conferences, semiprivate discussions, and public meetings have been held during the past year to point up the problems and to effect better coordination. Members of this committee have participated in many of these. As a result of these developments, there is a more conciliatory and cooperative attitude on the part of most control workers in the control arm of government.

LEGISLATION

During the past year a number of important and far-reaching pieces of legislation have been introduced and some acted upon that ultimately could have marked effect upon birds and other wildlife. Among these we may list the following (excluding appropriation bills):

(a) Implementation of the Oil Pollution Treaty Act, H.R. 8152 (Bonner) and S. 2187 (Magnuson), inacted into law as Public Law 87-167. This act was necessary to enable the federal government of the United States to put into effect the International Convention for prevention of the pollution of the sea by oil, ratified earlier by the Senate. While we will still have oil problems, this instrument will enable the government to be more effective in preventing and cleaning up oil slicks that originate beyond the three-mile limit, and it should also aid in more effective enforcement of existing state and federal laws dealing with oil-pollution problems.

(b) Anti-Pollution, H.R. 6441 (Blatnik) and S. 120 (Kerr). Inacted as Public Law 87-88. This should be a great step forward in helping to clean and prevent pollution throughout the nation. In turn, this should improve the environment for water and marsh birds as well as for fish.

(c) Acquisition of Wetlands, H.R. 7391 (Dingell) and S. 2173 (Humphrey and McCarthy). Passed and signed by the President. This bill authorized \$105,000,000, to be spent over a seven-year period for the acquisition of wetlands. After such a period repayment of the loan would begin at the rate of 75 per cent from sale of "Duck Stamps." This money, we believe, will be used mainly on the nesting grounds of waterfowl.

(d) Amendment to halt waterfowl wetland drainage. Proposed amendment to H.R. 8230 (general farm bill). House passed the bill with the amendment by Reuss but the Senate did not and the bill was lost in conference. Then, H.R. 8520 and similar bills passed the House by voice vote. The Senate will consider the measure after Congress reconvenes. This is a vital measure which will save important wetlands that are of high value

in waterfowl production from government-supported drainage. This measure would save taxpayers money and help prevent unjustifiable destruction of waterfowl nesting habitat.

(e) Garrison Diversion Proposal, S. 230 (Burdick and Young). This measure modifies the huge Missouri River Basin project and, when completed, would have 24 areas for fish and wildlife conservation with certain recreational development at several other major impoundments. The total project would include industrial water for 1,500 towns and irrigation for 250,000 acres. Some \$23,932,000 would be allocated for fish, wildlife, and other recreation. The measure has the support of the Administration and has been favorably reported from the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. Presumably, it will be pushed in the next session of the Congress.

(f) Multiple Use S. 2516 (Moss and Morse) and several similar House bills. The objective is to apply the multiple-use concept to the Federal Public Domain lands as the multiple-use forestry measure applies to the national forests. Conservation forces generally are supporting this measure as they insist that more than grazing or timber uses be considered in our public domain. Further consideration will be given this measure in the next session of Congress.

(g) Wyandotte National Wildlife Refuge, H.R. 1182 (Lesinki). Enacted, Public Law 87-119.

(h) Wilderness Bill, S. 174 (Anderson) and H.R. 1295 (Saylor). Objective is to establish and protect specific wilderness areas. Passed the Senate 78 to 8 and will be further considered by the House in the forthcoming session of Congress.

(i) Stabilization of the Tule-Klamath Wildlife Refuge, S. 1988 (Kuechel). In our Bird Protection Committee Report of 1960, we commented on the importance of the Tule-Klamath refuges of Oregon and California and stated that agricultural land-grabbing agencies and private interests were attempting to drive out migratory waterfowl from these areas and devote the land entirely to agriculture. Mr. Seaton, then Secretary of Interior, took courageous and bold action and took the land out of the hands of the irrigation districts and raised water levels to favor the waterfowl resource.

To prevent subsequent attempts by selfish interests to ruin further these areas of almost indispensable waterfowl value, Senator Kuechel of California introduced legislation in the Congress declaring it is the policy of the Congress to stabilize ownership of land in these areas in the name of the government of the United States as wildlife refuges. The government already owns these lands, but this legislation, if enacted, will prevent administrative agencies (without approval of the Congress) from turning

over these areas to agricultural and irrigation interests that have shown little or no interest and appreciation of the public waterfowl resource. These refuges are among the most important waterfowl areas on the continent. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the waterfowl of the Pacific flyway in the United States use these areas for a considerable part of each year. If these refuges were destroyed, not only would the waterfowl resource be seriously affected but depredations upon agricultural crops would become intolerable. This legislation certainly is in the broadest public interest and should be vigorously supported.

The Kuechel bill will be further considered in the next session of the Congress.

In Canada, the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act empowers the federal government to enter into agreement for the retirement from agricultural production lands marginal for that purpose. The ARDA program has not yet been fully worked out, but there is good reason to believe that there are very significant possibilities for the preservation and extension of habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife.

PRAIRIE CHICKENS

The situation concerning populations of these grouse generally has not improved over the past year; in fact, there has been a further decline and the situation is becoming precarious in most of the states containing races of these birds! There is some encouragement in the fact that most of the states are becoming much more conscious of their responsibility to bend every effort to save these majestic birds, even though few believe that any significant amount of hunting can ever again be enjoyed. These grouse must be saved as a most interesting relic fauna in many states.

In Illinois, Indiana, Colorado, Michigan, and perhaps in just about all of the states still favored with these birds, the populations during this past year have declined to an all-time low. An important area of 2,560 acres in Jasper County, Illinois, contained 29 cocks a year ago and now has but 7. The urgent need is habitat favorable to their survival. Great effort is now being made by a number of the states and by private interests to obtain essential property and conduct necessary research on the birds. Some states have already acquired land, and private capital is being raised to acquire more land. Research, including procedures in artificial propagation, is necessary.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Bald Eagle. The National Audubon Society deserves our heartfelt thanks for its great effort and for the funds expended in the study of our national emblem in order to learn much more precisely of its present status

and prospects for survival. The Society's leadership and publicity for this bird undoubtedly will result in a greater public demand for better protection of the species. Over the years this beautiful majestic bird has alarmingly decreased, for which a number of factors undoubtedly are responsible. Until the Audubon study is completed, we had best defer final conclusions. Even so, it appears that the destruction of habitat and perhaps the uncontrolled trigger finger of irresponsible hunters are two of the major factors causing a decline in population. The partial survey seems to have disclosed the fact that while this king of hawks has alarmingly decreased over the years, it may not be so near oblivion as some had previously thought.

An intensive study of 31 active nests by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife in 1959, in the Everglades National Park in southern Florida, revealed a 58 per cent success with 27 young birds fledged. While this degree of success may seem fairly low for many smaller species of birds, it really is not a bad record for a large species with a relatively low rate of reproduction. With public concern, better protection, and perhaps a little sound management, the Bald Eagle can be increased to the betterment of all our people.

The Golden Eagle and other hawks. The Golden Eagle, the largest of all our birds of prey, is another of our dwindling and persecuted species that needs much better protection than it is receiving. It is indeed interesting, stately, and of high economic, esthetic, and cultural value to America. It is true that occasionally an individual bird may do damage to young sheep and goats, yet it is also true that except under unusual conditions and places it does ever so much more good than harm.

In response to public sentiment in favor of better protection, Senators Yarborough, Keating, Clark, and Saltonstall introduced a joint resolution, No. 105, to amend the Bald Eagle Act to extend to the Golden Eagle the same protective provisions presently provided the Bald Eagle. It is to be hoped that this resolution will be approved by the next session of the Congress.

In the arid Southwest sheep country, the bird is badly persecuted, and there is danger of losing this species unless the public is aroused. This situation is serious because it is considered an attractive sport to pursue and shoot the bird from airplanes. Its reproductive rate is low, and the annual slaughter is surely endangering the species.

As evidence that there is a national decrease, counts of birds passing over Hawk Mountain over two discrete seven-year periods show a drastic decline of both Bald and Golden eagles. Dr. Maurice Brown gives the following statistics:

<i>Bald Eagle</i>	<i>Total number</i>	<i>Immature birds</i>	<i>Per cent of total</i>
1935-1941	364	133	36.5%
1954-1960	259	60	23.1%
<i>Golden Eagle</i>			
1935-1941	434	159	36.6%
1954-1960	290	74	25.5%

For the Bald Eagle there is a decrease of 28.8 per cent of adults and 54.9 per cent of juveniles during the two seven-year periods; and for the Golden Eagle the respective decreases were 33.2 per cent for adults and 53.5 per cent for juveniles for the comparable period of time.

Hal Webster, Jr., of Colorado, a careful observer, outdoorsman, and falconer, has studied raptorial birds and has for years compiled statistical data on populations of hawks. He reports a 90 per cent decrease of Golden Eagles in the state over a 25-year period. He also feels that most Buteo Hawks have decreased about 80 per cent during the same period.

It is indeed gratifying to find game commissions alarmed over the decrease of the states' raptorial populations. The Colorado Commission has noted an alarming decrease in all Buteos (which are protected) for the past two or three years and is, therefore, seriously considering complete protection, even for the Accipiters, with the hope that the protection of these birds will give added protection to their soaring hawks. The commission has concluded that it is a rare sportsman who can differentiate between the unprotected Accipiters (Sharp-shinned, Cooper, and Goshawks) and the Buteos.

COLONIAL WADING BIRDS AND ACCRETION ISLANDS

No noticeable change seems to have occurred in the abundance of most large wading birds during the past year. Some are becoming reasonably abundant. The picturesque Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Ibis, and Reddish Egrets are still uncommon and need effective protection as do all waders. A key to the success of many of our lovely colonial water birds, including our beautiful and graceful terns, skimmers, herons, ibises and egrets, can be found in the vigorous protection of nesting islands. Accretion islands afford some of the best nesting sites along the extensive gulf coast and particularly along the long Texas coast. The Fish and Wildlife Service and the state game departments can render effective help in encouraging dredging operators and companies to construct suitable accretion islands and locate them in the most desirable places. The Fish and Wildlife Service, because of its close cooperation with the U.S. Corps of Engineers and with its sister agency, the Bureau of Reclamation, already has rendered much help along this line. A.O.U. members, state and local bird and nature clubs, and civic organizations can render great service in getting

the title to many of these areas turned over to organizations that recognize their value and will give the necessary protection and security from dredging, vandalism, and mismanagement. National organizations such as the National Audubon Society at times can help out in getting titles and arrangements made for protection and management. The only reasonably sure way of maintaining key nesting sites is by obtaining fee simple titles to such property and turning it over to organizations that will properly manage and protect it.

Kirtland Warbler. That some state fish and game departments have become of age can perhaps best be shown by their concern and effort to protect endangered nongame species. Michigan deserves the blue ribbon for its decision to save its Kirtland Warbler! The state recently has acquired and set aside an area of considerable size to maintain Kirtland habitat. In this area this unique and restrictive little warbler is to be given first consideration in management. The state expects to maintain the specialized and distinctive habitat through cutting and planting jack pine and in the use of controlled fire if this becomes necessary. We believe that ultimately the state will command greater public support because of its concern for nongame "dicky-bird" species.

Ivory-billed Woodpecker. No birds have been reported in Florida during the past year. A reliable observer was reported to have seen one bird in South Carolina during this period. Several competent and reliable observers have seen this vanishing species in east Texas during the past two years. Mr. Whitney Eastman, who has devoted much time to a study of this rare and gravely endangered species, believes there are five Ivory-bills, including two pairs and one (extra) hen still extant in this near-virgin area. With so few birds remaining, the chances of saving this attractive giant woodpecker are slim indeed.

Eskimo Curlew. On 22 March 1959 T. Ben Feltner found an Eskimo Curlew on Galveston Island. It (or another) remained in the vicinity until 26 April and was reported in the *Auk* (76: 539). On 4 and 7 April 1960 there were reports of two observations of the bird in the same vicinity (Emanuel, 1961, *Auk* 78(2): 259-260). Through advance planning the Houston Nature Club arranged for a "curlew watch" the first week end of April 1961. The efforts were rewarded, and the bird was seen at close range with telescope and good binoculars by a considerable number of competent observers, including Victor L. Emanuel, Mrs. J. A. Snyder, Clinton Snyder, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry B. Strickling, and our President and his wife, Dr. and Mrs. George H. Lowery, and many others. The bird was seen and carefully studied in close proximity with the Long-billed Curlew and Whimbrel. Dr. Lowery points out that the only other possibility would be the extralimital *Numenius minutus* from Siberia migrating to Australia.

Even ignoring the improbability of this accidental to south Texas, the cinnamon-buff underwing coverts described by a number of the observers would seem to make the identification of *N. borealis* as accurate as can be made without collecting the bird.

Whooping Crane. The last of the 36 (30 adult and 6 immature) whoopers left the vicinity of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in May 1961. The first contingent of the northern migrants returned on 14 October. A report from the Canadian Wildlife Service indicated that three whooper nests were in Canada's Sass River area on 30 May. One unconfirmed additional report of a fourth young also has been rumored. Not infrequently more young birds arrive at the Aransas than had been seen on the nesting grounds. Only time can tell how many young may show up or how many adults ended their life span on their long northern sojourn. (Written 14 October 1961.)²

One young whooper was produced during the summer from the original captive pair (Josephine and Crip) at the Audubon Park Zoo in New Orleans. This is of interest in view of the fact that Josephine is known to be not less than 25 years old. The young bird and five adults or semi-adults seem to be doing reasonably well there now. There also is one lone crippled adult bird at the San Antonio Zoo. It is indeed a shame that this public resource of five birds is retained in close confinement at this one New Orleans zoo against the public wish that not all eggs be retained in one basket and where conditions are not particularly favorable for these rare birds.

Trumpeter Swan. These birds seem to be increasing, and 1960 marked the third consecutive year in which these graceful birds exceeded 650 in number in the United States. More than 1,500 swans were censused in Alaska in 1960, but some of these may have been whistlers. A fair number of birds also are known to occur in British Columbia and Alberta. During the past two decades trumpeters have been transplanted from Red Rock Lakes Refuge to Malheur Refuge (Oregon), National Elk Refuge (Wyoming), and Ruby Lake Refuge (Nevada). Nesting has been observed on all of these transplanted areas. In September 1960 some 20 cygnets were transplanted to Lacreek Refuge in South Dakota. It will require several years before these birds are mature enough to breed.

New Mexico Duck. Two of these birds were recorded at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico, in May 1960, and 22 were noted in June; but only three by the last of July. None were seen there in 1957 or 1958. We do not know the total number of individuals, but we do know that the number is small.

² As of 15 January 31 adult and 5 young Whooping Cranes were at their wintering grounds on or near the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

Ross' Goose. During the past five years, inventory records show this uncommon, diminutive white goose to be increasing steadily. The 1961 count was in the neighborhood of 23,000 birds, or a 28 per cent increase over the 1960 count.

Great Basin Canada Goose. This, our largest extant race of *canadensis*, has shown a slight increase this year over the past few years of continual decline. Overharvesting on the wintering ground is believed to be the cause of this decline. The federal and state agencies have a moral obligation to cooperate and prevent this unnecessary overharvest.

Masked Duck. A pair of these extralimital ruddies was observed at Laguna Atascosa National Refuge near San Benito, Texas, on 29 December 1960. One female was seen repeatedly by ornithologists and bird watchers, including Connie Hagar, Whitney Eastman, and Clarence Cottam, for more than a month last May, near Rockport, Texas.

Other diminishing species. Reports indicate an alarming and dangerous decrease of Bluebirds, Robins, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Upland Plovers, Bobolinks, and King Rails. The causes of these apparent decreases have not yet been fully determined. Could the pesticide problem be associated with this?

Nene or Hawaiian Goose. The Nene is our rarest goose, and we are elated to know that its numbers are increasing as a result of sound research and management. Eleven or more young were known to have been hatched in the wild, or near-wild conditions on the Big Island of Hawaii. The Hawaii Game and Fish Division has produced and liberated 50 pen-reared birds in newly created sanctuaries to augment the wild stock.

At the Severn Wildfowl Trust in England, Peter Scott has had phenomenal success in artificially propagating Nene. He now has more than 100 birds, and he is offering about 20 full-grown goslings per year for sale for \$22.50 per bird, with the suggestion that they be liberated on Haleakala on Maui. This area is believed suitable for the birds.

The so-called Nene restoration project was started from one captive pair in 1949, when the Hawaiian Board of Agriculture commenced a study and experimental propagation of this rare goose. By 1957, the flock had increased to 57 birds.

Hawaiian Duck. This certainly is an endangered species and should be studied, with a restoration project initiated to repopulate former known habitats of this rare bird. We have little information regarding its present status, but we know that it is in a precarious state. It is to be hoped that more funds from the "Restoration Program" can be directed to saving this seriously endangered species in its native habitat.

Other endangered Hawaiian birds. The Hawaiian Gallinule and, to a

lesser extent, the Coot and Stilt are seriously endangered. Their greatest need is the preservation of suitable habitat. On the respective islands the following endemic species are endangered: (a) Kauai: *Anas wyvilliana*, *Moho braccatus*, *Hemignathus lucidus hanapepe*, *Psittirostra psittacea*, *Phaeornis palmeri*, *Hemignathus procerus*; (b) Maui: *Palmeria dolei*, *Loxops coccinea ochracea*, and *Pseudonestor xanthophrys*; (c) Oahu: *Himantopus himantopus knudseni* and *Loxops maculata maculata*.

Laysan Teal. A program of artificial propagation was initiated in 1958, in six aviaries in the United States and at the Wildfowl Trust in England. Some two dozen young were produced in the 1960 season. No reports of 1961 have been received.

Albatross at Midway Island. Very little change has occurred in the status of the Albatross of Midway since 1960. The widespread public protests of a year ago caused the Navy to desist from its proposed course of slaughtering these birds on Sand Island because of their too frequent collision with airplanes at the Naval Air Field. The Fish and Wildlife Service studied the problem and recommended the clearing of vegetation and leveling of dunes along parts of one runway as a means of decreasing the hazard. After the leveling project was completed, there was a 67 per cent decrease in the number of Albatross flying over the principal runway.

Foreign species endangered.³ Many species in various parts of the world are endangered. Among these should be mentioned the Monkey Eating Eagle in the Philippine Islands. This interesting species is being destroyed and trapped for zoos throughout the world.

The Kagu of New Caledonia.

Manchurian Crane of Japan.

Several relict endemics of New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

Insular species of birds on Islands of Australia. Originally, there were 2,000 to 3,000 pairs of Australian Gannets nesting on Cat Island off Tasmania. Fishermen slaughtered these and other island birds for crayfish bait so that now less than 30 pairs of Gannets remain. With the almost total elimination of Gannets the fishermen are now slaughtering Fairy Penguins and Slender-billed Shearwaters to use as bait in their fishery exploitation. These islands are isolated and difficult to control.

Maleo fowl and Bird of Paradise of the Celebes and Aru Islands, Indonesia.

The Giant Ibis of Cambodia.

All birds of prey in Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

³ From Standing Committee of Conservation Report for the Period of 1957-1961, and from the Resolutions adopted at the Tenth Pacific Science Congress in Hawaii, 6 September 1961.

A major need is the preservation of appropriate habitat.

Respectfully submitted,

IRA N. GABRIELSON

H. ALBERT HOCHBAUM

ROBERT A. McCABE

DAVID A. MUNRO

RICHARD POUGH

CLARENCE COTTAM, *Chairman*