

EDITORIAL

The Conservation Crisis

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The world is in a crisis: the environment is being degraded at an alarming and ever escalating rate. We, as ornithologists, are keenly aware of many of the problems because they are now so ubiquitous that often our own research is being directly affected. This is true whether we study communities in the boreal or tropical forests, or we examine the physiology of one species or the phylogeny of many. As scientists we have the ability and opportunity to increase people's understanding of this crisis, which in turn will hopefully help ameliorate some of the problems. Keeping abreast of issues that have major impacts on the biological diversity of the world is proving difficult, particularly because the complexities of situations are constantly being recognized at the same time that new, more pressing issues are being raised. Thus, the Conservation Committee of the AOU decided to publish a quarterly column in the Commentary section of *The Auk*. Our goal is to provide up-to-date scientific information, indication of possible consequences, and suggested actions about various issues

that directly affect the conservation of birds throughout the world.

The topics of those commentaries will focus on conservation concerns that are of particular interest to a large portion of our membership. These include, but are not limited to, subjects that are under study by various subcommittees of the Conservation Committee. The current topics are the status of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), forestry practices as they relate to the conservation of birds, the wild-bird trade, the impact of exotic and pest species, and avian conservation problems on offshore islands. The organizers of these subcommittees are David Ligon, Michael Morrison, Steven Beissinger, Stanley Temple, and Daniel Anderson, respectively. Other topics of major concern for which the committee is currently organizing subcommittees include the draining of North American wetlands and the impact of oil spills on birds.

We invite members of the AOU to participate in this new venture. Suggestions for future commentaries should be sent to either Peter Stacey or Terry Root, who are editing this column for the Conservation Committee. Information to be brought to the attention of the Conservation Committee should be sent to Terry Root, who chairs that committee. The first of the series of commentaries transmitted by the AOU Conservation Committee follows.

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