

CONSERVATION

Members of The Wilson Ornithological Club, in touch with its Conservation Committee only through these pages, might easily wonder what kind of work we can do for conservation. The committee, on the other hand, is anxious to be more than a nominal group; which means that we must work closely with our fellow members. Our first concern is the manner in which the club can serve best the cause of conservation; how can we, a widely-scattered ornithological group, fit in with the national picture. The answer, we feel, is to be found in Section 2, Article 1 of our Constitution which states: "The object of The Wilson Ornithological Club shall be to advance the science of ornithology, particularly field ornithology as related to the birds of North America, . . ." Our main job, then, is to conduct original research in ornithology. This is fundamental to bird conservation, hence our position in this field is clear-cut and long established.

Today, conservation is big business. It spends many millions of dollars each year. It sends 1500 delegates to its annual convention. It publishes reports by the ton. Yet with all its money, with all its manpower, the great conservation program in this land of ours promotes but a meagre schedule of fundamental wildlife research. Gustav Swanson most recently pointed this out in his summary of the last North American Wildlife Conference. Anybody who cares to thumb through the transactions, journals and reports produced by our conservation program will note for himself the shortage of original research. Since this is a natural characteristic of the rapid development of the program, we are underlining rather than criticizing this point. It is simply a fact we must face. Administrators, politicians, and taxpayers who put up the money want to see things done right now: tomorrow, next month, or by year's end at the latest. Since research usually labors 2 to 5 years before producing tangible results, it is little wonder that it is not popular with budget committees at this stage of the game.

We must not fret then for want of a job; our obligations to the conservation field stare us in the face. Our main concern is the manner in which we can fit more closely with the national conservation program, and to this end we might organize our thoughts as follows:

1: *More work with the larger species.* This classification no doubt is awkward, yet stated simply, those birds which are game or predators or which conflict with our civilization are mainly the larger ones. These are the birds which need conservation most, and which have been studied least. The smaller kinds, particularly the passerines, may be studied close to home over long periods with small budgets, hence the greater attention they have received. Yet we must advance to our larger species the same kind of fundamental research which Mrs. Nice applied to the Song Sparrow. It particularly behooves those of our members who are professionally engaged in some phase of the conservation program to help direct research of this kind, and to plant the seed of an idea where a project can grow and thrive.

2: *Broadened associations.* In the rapid development of professional conservation biology during the last 15 years, the *game manager* or the *wildlife technician* has built up a science of his own which sometimes breaks too far away from the fundamentals of biology upon which it was founded. It has come to the point where the ornithologist and the technician often are worlds apart, having different associates, following different literature, going to different meetings, seldom associating with each other in common understanding. The ornithologist often considers the technician too "practical" in his interests, while one often hears the professional biologists referring aloofly to what they like to call the "*dickey-birders*". Both groups and the birds as well are the losers in this misunderstanding, and we must by all means bring them closer together. That means, of course, aiming first at closer associations within our own club, for our membership includes both groups. We must remember that the pro-

fessional biologist is constantly under pressure to produce practical results; otherwise his funds may be cut short. And the professional must realize that in the meticulous studies which have been made of the Song Sparrow or of the Snow Bunting, there are clues that surely will lead him to a far better understanding of the larger species that concern him.

Moreover, we should extend ourselves to the point of following the work of European biologists more closely. Our general disinterest in overseas biology is appalling, despite the fact that not a few foreign workers such as Lebet, Siivonen, and Tinbergen publish in our own tongue. In waterfowl biology, for instance, there is so very much we could learn about our own problems if we would only give attention to some of the foreign work that has been done with these birds.

3: *Cooperation.* As a relatively small group, our work is greatly strengthened when we join forces with our associates in other parts of the country. Along this line, Richard H. Pough, Curator of Conservation at The American Museum of Natural History, has drawn up a plan whereby the Conservation Committees of The Wilson Ornithological Club, The American Ornithologists' Union, and the Cooper Ornithological Club will work closely together as a cooperative group. The development of special study projects to be carried out on a long-term basis will be encouraged under this new plan. There will be more about this in the next issue of the Bulletin, but we give notice here that the first of these study projects has been set up in our club under the direction of Walter E. Scott. This will investigate the Old-squaw mortality in the Great Lakes fishing industry. Members living in the Great Lakes region who would like to cooperate on this important project should get in touch with Walter Scott.

There are, thus, 3 specific activities in which members may advance the cause of conservation.

ALBERT HOCHBAUM, *Chairman*

LIFE MEMBER

Dr. A. W. Schorger, a member of the Wilson Ornithological Club since 1927, is president of the Burgess Cellulose Company. He has received degrees from Wooster College, Ohio State University, and the University of Wisconsin. He is a past-president of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters. Field work has taken him in this country from coast to coast, and to Mexico, England, and Morocco. While most of his published papers are on the present distribution and early history of the birds and mammals of Wisconsin, he has been especially interested in collecting material for a monograph on the passenger pigeon.

