

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Previous W. O. C. presidents writing in this page have pointed out the various phases of bird study that are open to advanced amateur observers and have outlined the values derived from different branches of ornithology. We might well observe that in order to continue to enjoy field observation of birds or to be in a position to contribute to ornithology, we must have birds to observe and this in turn requires good bird habitat. Would it not be wise for us to divert a little more of our energies from actual bird observing to the work of preserving from destruction our birding habitats that are basic to our continued interest in birds?

One hears much about large state and federal game refuges, and state and national parks, which are excellent conservers of certain species of wildlife. I want to call your attention more especially, however, to the small, local birding places. I am keenly conscious that around Minneapolis nearly every spring we are forced to abandon some favorite place for class field observation for a less desirable place or one much farther away.

In some localities there are conservation-minded groups already organized which sponsor preservation of small natural areas. For example, the Minnesota Academy of Science sponsored the acquisition of 500-odd acres of the Cedar Creek Forest near Minneapolis and St. Paul. The Academy later turned it over to the University of Minnesota for research use by the colleges of the state. Bird watchers, either in groups or as individuals, should search out these local groups and support their efforts to rescue at least a few of our local birding areas before they are taken over by taverns, manufacturing plants, housing projects, or intensive cultivation. We, of course, cannot stand in the way of legitimate housing or agricultural developments, but most communities can afford to restrict such growth in at least a few choice natural areas if the right local forces will sponsor the imposing of such restrictions. Most state departments of conservation now have large sums of Pittman-Robertson money and more recently assigned Dingle-Johnson funds specifically set apart for, among other purposes, habitat improvement for game and fish. Direct personal appeal to, and cooperation with, the directors of these projects can result in the preserving of many fine bits of local wilderness. Direct personal contact with park board members, highway department directing personnel and such officials often pays off well in preventing so-called "development" in already preserved natural areas.

Each community has its own special problems in conserving choice birding spots and each has its own local organizations to which appeals might most profitably be directed. Considerable ingenuity and initiative must be exercised by persons making these efforts, but I am sure that very satisfying local preservation work can be done by small groups or even individuals if the right contacts are made. And, after all, most of us derive our major enjoyment from the local birds we can observe from day to day about our homes or on Saturday or Sunday morning hikes near home.

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