

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

A strong interest in wildlife conservation has always characterized the membership of the Wilson Ornithological Society, in response to which we have traditionally maintained a Conservation Committee. As one thumbs through a set of volumes of *The Wilson Bulletin*, one encounters Conservation Committee reports of varying length, scope, and quality, as well as outright gaps in the record. For many years the Committee endeavored in its report to present a series of conservation news items—a roundup of important losses and gains for wildlife during the previous year. Such multiple coverage meant that the presentation of individual items was necessarily somewhat superficial. On the other hand, some Conservation Committee reports consisted of major analyses of single subjects.

The increase of general interest in environmental matters has led to the publication of several kinds of progress reports on conservation. Most appear more frequently, and can thus bring news items more quickly to readers, than the annual Committee report in *The Wilson Bulletin*. For the past several years the Council of the Wilson Society has given its approval to the concept of a project-oriented Conservation Committee, with the mission of presenting to the W.O.S. membership detailed and informed studies of individual current issues in wildlife conservation. Whenever possible, the Committee's reports are to present objective analyses of varying points of view, indicating the data (if any) that support each. If the Committee sees fit, it can formulate specific recommendations and forward these to the Resolutions Committee, to be considered by the W.O.S. membership at the next annual meeting.

In 1973 I appointed Dr. Clait E. Braun of the Colorado Division of Wildlife as Chairman of the Conservation Committee, on the enthusiastic recommendation of Dr. Gustav A. Swanson, the retiring Chairman. I asked Dr. Braun to assemble two subcommittees of knowledgeable specialists, to investigate and report on the present status of eagles and of Sandhill Cranes, both groups being the subject of no little controversy in the western states and provinces. The first subcommittee report appears in this issue of *The Wilson Bulletin*, and the second will appear in June. These reports were presented to the Council at the 1974 meeting, and were accepted with hearty commendations to Dr. Braun and his Committee members. I believe that readers of the *Bulletin* will be impressed, as was the Council, with the thoroughness and the objectivity of these reports.

In 1974–1975, a new Committee under Dr. Braun's chairmanship has been examining the effects of alteration of sage brush on the native avifauna of this habitat, as (to use Dr. Braun's words) "projects designed to 'reclaim' the land from sage brush have been in vogue in recent years." The report of this study will be presented to the Council at the Bozeman meeting in June, and will subsequently be published in *The Wilson Bulletin*.

These achievements of the Conservation Committee, praiseworthy though they may be, satisfy neither Clait Braun nor me. The Committee exists not only to report to you, but also to *listen* to you. We urge members of the W.O.S. to participate in the activities of the Committee by suggesting possible issues for investigation; by volunteering specialized knowledge to assist the Committee in its research and its evaluations; indeed, by volunteering to *serve* on future Committees; and even, if you wish, by registering your disagreement with the conclusions presented in the Committee's reports. Address your communications to: Dr. Clait E. Braun, Wildlife Research Center, P.O. Box 2287, Fort Collins, Colorado 80522. The questionnaires returned by Wilson Society members some years ago indicated that many of you thought the Society should take a more active part in conservation activities. The Conservation Committee exists as a medium whereby members can express their personal concerns, and we hope you will thus use it.—KENNETH C. PARKES.