

## THE VERDI BURTCH MEMORIAL SANCTUARY IS ESTABLISHED AT BRANCHPORT, NEW YORK

It takes only a little idea, tenaciously held, to realize a cherished desire. When Verdi Burtch died in 1945 many of his friends tried to fill the void by finding ways to perpetuate his enthusiasm and to continue his valuable observations. At that time the *Keuka Park Conservation Club* began the Verdi Burtch Memorial Lectures which have been well supported.

The idea of securing the marsh at Branchport as a sanctuary for wild-life was purposed. Steps were taken to investigate the possibility of buying the land. This proved difficult at first but after several years, success has been achieved.

Last spring a rumor that the end of Keuka Lake at Branchport was to be developed for cottage sites was the stimulus for immediate action. Members realized that they could not stem the tide of "progress" entirely. So, they compromised by securing about six acres of cattail marsh west of the inlet and south of the highway. The area includes not only the cattail marsh but some bordering, higher land and patches of sedges where Mr. Burtch used to set his traps for bird banding. Here he often banded the Nelson's Sparrow which is rare in this vicinity.

The sanctuary may be entered by a right of way through the Burtch property or by boat through the inlet to the "basin" where the ducks, geese and swans feed in season and the shore birds stop when the water level is low enough to expose the mud.

The project was quite simple. Club members learned that they could buy the area for six hundred dollars. There are about thirty-five members in the club and in addition, Mr. Burtch had many admirers and friends. Members started their campaign by publishing a letter in several local papers which set forth the value of preserving samples of different habitats in this vicinity. They gave some emphasis to the contribution of marshes but did not mention the specific project.

Later, two letters were written: one to the club members, another to friends whom they thought might like to share in the project. The response was most heartening. Six hundred dollars was quickly raised and the deed was registered.

There remains only the matter of having appropriate signs made and raising a fund to maintain the property. There is land that could well be planted to attract more birds and bring into a small area many plants that are native here, but are disappearing as land use brings about changes.

*The Keuka Park Conservation Club* is grateful to many of the members of the Federation for helping to make this dream a reality.

There are now two distinctly different areas set aside where many forms of wildlife can find sanctuary and where members can find refreshment and enlightenment. The other area is the Keuka College woodlot which has been under members guidance since 1936.

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