

sighted a Wheatear on the morning of September 9th. During the day the bird would perch for some time on a large rock offering good chances for observation. On the same day, the Schoeffels, who are members of the Queens County Bird Club, notified five top rank birders of the club who came over and verified the identification.

The bird was seen until early evening of that day, on September 13, by this writer, and by various individuals, including the Schoeffels who live nearby, through September 15.

During its stay the Wheatear's habits were studied and it appeared to be entirely silent, and no phonetics of any kind were heard. According to the Schoeffels it remained rather solitary and when two Prairie Horned Larks alighted briefly on the hillside, it joined them for a few minutes and then flew off by itself. Late in the day observations indicated that the bird spent the night on the ground in the matured grasses and weeds at the foot of the hill.

The Wheatear resembled a Robin while on the ground, travelling a few steps, stopping, and then advancing again. Very often it flew up on rocks, logs or other projections and at times onto the roofs of houses. On one occasion it alighted on the eaves and hopped rapidly up to the ridge of the roof where its Blue-bird-like shape stood out in profile against the sky. Standing rather upright, it occasionally flirted and spread its tail and from its prominent perch was seen to fly out after passing insects, somewhat similar to the actions of the Cedar Waxwing.

Its preference for bare surfaces and barren surroundings was quite evident and its food was largely gleaned from these open surroundings. The Schoeffels and other members of the Queens County Bird Club found its food to consist largely of grasshoppers and it was described as quite active in capturing these. It would catch one and throw it on the ground. Sometimes the grasshopper would fly away, but if stunned, or injured otherwise, it would be eaten. After chasing a grasshopper it would fly back to a rock or log and await another. The bird was not opposed to a windfall so to speak, for when William Schoeffel laid a small handful of dead grasshoppers on a rock frequented by it (bait which he had acquired for fishing) it ate them all.

CONSERVATION NEWS AND NOTES

WALTER ELWOOD, *Chairman, Conservation Committee*

We can have conservation troubles — believe it or not — even without a session of the legislature.

The word which finally leaked out about the State Thruway's bright plans to go crashing for three miles through the heart of the Montezuma Federal Wildlife Refuge, through pond and marsh, certainly gave us a smack right between the eyes. Murder, we said.

Far be it from us to accuse the State Thruway Authority of publicity-seeking on this little arrangement between itself and Washington. And far be it from us to claim we understand the attitude of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in consenting to such a lamentable intrusion into a territory it is supposed to safeguard. Maybe we should have learned by this time not to expect much sympathy from Secretary of the Interior Chapman, the

gentleman who put the stamp of his approval, as you recall, on those much-protested dams in Dinosaur National Monument, who is apparently disinterested in the protection of the bald eagle in Alaska, and is obviously a stout believer in "Progress", let the chips fall where they may.

Since the State Thruway Authority considers its plans all set, it is only Washington, D. C., apparently, that can now save the day. A proper degree of pressure applied in that quarter, and in sufficient volume, could well persuade the Fish and Wildlife Service to reconsider its agreement and to withdraw its consent to the routing now in the blue prints.

An alternative routing is, of course, possible, one that would by-pass the endangered area. That is all we are praying for.

The response to our Federation Bulletin has been outstanding, so many of our affiliated clubs and cooperators having taken this issue to heart, and pen in hand, besides. Fifteen radio stations put it on the air. A brave start has been made in our campaign.

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The Panther Mountain dam issue which common sense told us was respectably dead and buried has walked right out of its shroud and into our midst again, as full of life as ever. October 2 was the deadline in State Supreme Court for the filing of arguments challenging the constitutionality of the Stokes law barring the building of the dam. The Black River Regulating District is seeking, in addition, a court order condemning 3,100 acres of the Adirondack League Club's holdings. The Attorney General's office states it will "vigorously defend" the Stokes Law.

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I hope many of you have had a chance to read Lieutenant-Governor Frank C. Moore's stout-hearted address on "Our National Resources" given at the Izaak Walton League banquet in Utica on September 14. His courageous stand in defense of our Forest Preserve merits our warmest commendation. He is all for more adequate constitutional safeguards against such threats as the Panther Mountain dam represents. He believes the State should own more than the forty per cent it now owns within the established boundary lines of the Forest Reserve, and that it should make more of an effort to acquire private holdings, especially along waterways.

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For the first time in New York State history, a conservation workshop for college instructors was put into operation in June. Five faculty members from each of the eleven State Teachers' colleges participated in this intensive stream-lined course developed around the fundamental natural resources of soil, water, forests fish and wildlife, to help them in their own newly established conservation training program for future teachers.

.....We have all been conscious, I suspect, of the perils for wildlife, birds in particular, bound up in the ever-expanding use of powerful insecticides and the ever more powerful ones being concocted. And now comes our State Health Department to warn us about one of these — parathion, so toxic that workers are admonished not even to enter fields for five days after spraying with this new dope. If a man can be made dangerously ill by walking through such a field forty-eight hours after the spray has been applied, it must be tough, to put it politely, on the vesper sparrows, meadowlarks, pheasants and all the rest of the ground-working birds.

The grove of sugar pines in California, the subject of years of strife between public interest and private enterprise, may yet be rescued. The U. S. Forest Service has promised to take steps to acquire the tract from the Pickering Lumber Company, offering the company other timberland in exchange, and has promised to leave the area inviolate so that, as funds are contributed, it can be added to the long-desired proposed State Park.

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The Fish and Wildlife Service has *not* turned in — shame on them! — a favorable report on the bill extending protection to the Bald Eagle in Alaska (H.R.1870). Alaskans don't like the bill, those at least who wrote in are dead set against it. The toes of local autonomy have been stepped on again!

In the interests of whittling down our national budget, the Department of the Interior will be obliged to abolish 4,180 jobs, including 105 in the Fish and Wildlife Service.

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Read "Enjoy Them While They Last" by Ben East, in *Natural History*, Sept. 1951. Its subtitle reads: "Our slaughtered shorebirds sound a grim warning for the vanishing wildlife of Alaska. Today the same lies are being invented by men unwilling to admit their own guilt in the killing." Mr. East's article is a deeply moving narrative.

A NEW AUDUBON SOCIETY WILDLIFE REFUGE IN WESTERN NEW YORK

During April 1951 the *Buffalo Audubon Society, Inc.*, purchased a 48.5 acre tract of land in the Town of Java about 2 miles east of Java Village, N. Y. It originally comprised arable and non-arable land, a wooded hillside and two types of grassy marsh. Just to the east of this tract lay a large beaver-pond.

After negotiations with our farmer neighbors, who were eager for some of this arable land, the pond, lodge and dam became Audubon property with an increase of about 20 acres and the good will of our neighbors who will more or less act as wardens.

This pond covers about 20 acres and contains over 13 million gallons of water. Its value in maintaining water-table and atmospheric moisture is felt for miles around. It is a ready-made "project" for flood control.

Its abundance of aquatic plants and surrounding marshy terrain afford food and cover for several species of ducks and other marsh birds. Its large population of frogs, their tadpoles and other amphibia, which thrive on the well represented insect life, offer food for the feathered denizens of such an area, and even the dead trees present nesting sites for hole-nesting birds who find a bountiful supply of food right at hand.

Here we find an example of Nature's way of maintaining a balance, a self-sustaining area where the nature-lover, sportsman or student may come to relax and reflect on life as it was before "progress" took over. *The Buffalo Audubon Society*, present and future, and the little beavers intend to keep it so.

This fall the Soil Conservation Service, under the direction of Mr. Keil, will plant 11,500 coniferous trees and several thousand fruit-bearing shrubs on most of the non-arable land which will establish a foundation for future increases in the flora of the property. A 2 acre area will be set aside for annual planting of seed bearing crops for bird food.

As the development of this sanctuary proceeds its value as a community