

SYNOPSIS OF PAPERS PRESENTED

AT FIFTH ANNUAL FEDERATION MEETING

A wide variety of interests were covered in the series of ten papers and two dinner talks presented at the Fifth Annual General Meeting of the Federation, held Saturday afternoon and evening, May 24. Dr. Minnie B. Scotland, Professor of Biology at State College, Albany, presided as program chairman of the afternoon session.

Beaver Meadow

Western New York has a new Audubon sanctuary, the Beaver Meadow Wildlife Refuge. It was described by W. H. Almendinger of *Buffalo Audubon Society, Inc.* He related the circumstances which led to the acquisition of the property, told about some of the plans for the future, and reported on the flora and fauna as recorded during the first sanctuary year.

Verdi Burtch Memorial

There are questions and problems when a club becomes a sanctuary owner and operator. Francis H. Orcutt of *Keuka Park Conservation Club* pointed out. About a year ago the club purchased the marsh in back of the Verdi Burtch residence at Branchport, and established it as a sanctuary. Clubs contemplating similar acquisitions will find considerable help in the complete paper as presented by Mr. Orcutt.

Gull Populations

Gulls of the St. Lawrence and of Lake Ontario have been under observation for years; John D. Belknap of *North Country Bird Club* has been one of the prime movers in these studies. He has previously reported on his findings, both at Federation meetings and in the pages of *The Kingbird*. In this paper Mr. Belknap briefly reviewed the history of the breeding gulls, Ring-billed and Herring, in northeastern Lake Ontario. Four islands are the principal colony sites, and the nesting Ring-billed Gulls are really concentrated on them. Mr. Belknap described the method used in making population counts, and pointed out the limitations; counts from May, 1950, to date were presented. His paper also dealt with the feeding habits in northern New York, and with the winter distribution of the species in eastern United States.

Bird-Banding

Thirty-nine Baltimore Orioles were banded in two seasons at Bird Haven by Mrs. Gerald Fitzgerald of *Sassafras Bird Club*. Twelve hundred Evening Grosbeaks were banded there during the 1951-1952 winter, she reported. Records of returns and of "foreigners", observations concerning changes in plumage and in color of the beak, evidence of territorialism, and activities during mating season were among the items included in Mrs. Fitzgerald's talk, as well as the history of Snowball, an albino robin.

Tape Recordings

Many of those at the afternoon meeting heard a bird song with which they were not familiar; others found it possible to identify the bird readily. The bird had been singing at Rochester earlier this year. It was a Western Meadowlark, so like the eastern species in appearance but so different in

voice. Again, the audience was asked to contribute some imitations of bird songs. They did, and moment later were able to listen to their imitations. John Blackmer and Reginald W. Hartwell of *Genesee Ornithological Society* were demonstrating the tape recorder which they had adapted for use in recording bird songs in the field.

Detailed information and diagrams were presented to show that anyone can set up a similar apparatus at a price no greater than that of a good camera, and that no more than average ability is required — but Mr. Hartwell did point out that the ideal situation is to have one ornithologist and one radio engineer for the working team. Their equipment can be used in the field, away from power lines, since it has been adapted, by means of a power converter, to work from 6-volt storage-battery power to provide the required 110-volt, 60-cycle current. Since a preamplifier is used, bird calls can be picked up at considerable distance from the microphone. The equipment is easily transported in an automobile.

It was suggested that there will be scientific value in bird-song recordings made by people in different localities, and that records may be filed and labeled, much like a collection of bird skins.

Advances in Song Studies

Advances in song studies and recording methods have been many and important, Dr. Peter Paul Kellogg of Ithaca emphasized. Early recordings called for bulky equipment, elaborate set-ups, and exacting conditions for operation. Today the story is different, and even more simple recording methods are on the way, he said. A new song record, of Florida birds and including the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, was announced by Dr. Kellogg.

Flash Photography

An ample amount and proper quality of light are required for good color photography of birds, Milton R. Goff of *Genesee Ornithological Society* pointed out. Photoflash lamps of both the conventional and electronic types answer the specifications. Mr. Goff described a basic two-lamp set-up in which the main front lighting is supplemented by a secondary back light, presented a graphical method for determining lamp position, and explained the use of simple artificial backgrounds to relieve the dark background so typical of most flash photographs.

Roosting Grosbeaks

How in a series of late afternoon and early morning observations he was able to track a flock of Evening Grosbeaks to their roost in woods miles from his feeding station was narrated by Stephen C. Fordham, Jr., of the *Schenectady Bird Club, Inc.* His paper also briefly reviewed the history of Evening Grosbeak movements in the northeast, particularly in this state, and presented observations and comments about the food, migration, meeting and roosting habits of the species.

The Snowy Owl

Some of the age-old superstitions about owls and some of the life history of the Snowy Owl were included in the paper prepared by Eleanor Roberts of *Watkins-Montour Bird Club*. There was, as well, a plea for complete protection of the Snowy Owl in this state.

The Kingbird