

The Program Committee, under the chairmanship of Al Fudge and with the help of Cecil Ryan and his local committee, functioned admirably and made our annual meeting at Elmira a most successful and memorable occasion.

The Constitution and By-Laws Committee members, under Sam Madison's able leadership, will soon complete their work in arranging for incorporating the Federation under New York State Laws. They will also submit the proposed changes in our Constitution and By-Laws to implement the incorporation and to make other changes previously voted at our council meetings. Regarding the suggestion to shorten the name of our organization, the consensus of opinion so far received is to allow the present name to stand, as it well describes its entity.

For over two years we have had the benefit of the services of Stephen W. Eaton as Editor of *The Kingbird*, and I especially commend him for his excellent handling of this important and time-consuming job, and regret that he cannot continue beyond this present issue. His successor has been the concern of Fred T. Hall, chairman of the Publications and Research Committee, and we are pleased to announce that Mr. Gerald Rising of Rochester has been selected as the new Editor, commencing with the May issue.

In my last message I mentioned that the first questionnaire from the State Book Committee was expected to be mailed soon, but this mailing has been delayed in order to discuss it further at a committee meeting in Syracuse on December 3, when the final draft was approved. Robert Arbib, Jr., has done an outstanding job as chairman of this important committee, which will possibly soon complete its work in organizing, and in making rules and suggestions to be followed in the publication. All of the members of this committee, and its sub-committees, have given much time and effort to further the work on the State Book, and especially Allen Benton, chairman of the sub-committee on Bibliography, and William L. Webb, chairman of the sub-committee on Ecology, who have given so freely of their time and talents.

I wish also to thank, in the name of all Federation members, our Regional Editors for their painstaking and selfless efforts in providing us with such interesting information from all regions in our Empire State.

May I take this occasion to wish for the incoming officers the same fine cooperation which I have received during the past two years, and a most successful administration.

THE STATE BOOK QUESTIONNAIRE

As members of the Federation are well aware, one of the major reasons for the formation of the Federation, and one of the most important projects that it will ever undertake, is the publication of a new *Birds of New York State*. This project, which has been universally approved as desirable and necessary, has been under discussion and consideration almost since the inception of the Federation.

For the past three or four years a committee, representing all parts of the state, has been hard at work planning this book. Many different problems have been discussed and resolved: the division of the state in recording areas, standards and criteria, content of species write-ups, introductory chapters, editorial organization, and a host of other questions from ecology to illustrations.

The progress of the work has now reached an important stage, at which

the book becomes not merely a committee activity, but a cooperative activity for every bird watcher and recorder of data on New York State ornithology. A questionnaire is now ready (in preparation for more than a year) which will form the basis for all the post-Eaton information found in the book.

Why a questionnaire? Because no other way seems feasible or possible for the quick orderly gathering of the vast aggregate of information tucked away in filing drawers, notebooks, field cards, and club minutes from the Niagara Frontier to Montauk Point. The editors cannot call in all these sources of information and cull them. They cannot talk with every observer who has kept records in the last forty-five years. They can merely ask questions, in as concise and clear form as they know how, and hope that you can provide the answers.

The editors know that almost no one likes a questionnaire. At first glance, theirs look like a lengthy and complicated one. By way of explanation, however, it is not as bad as it seems. In its longest form, it will be seven pages. These seven pages include a page of general instructions with *no questions to answer*, a page of questions devoted to the area you cover (which you need fill in *only on the first questionnaire* you return), two pages on migration, two on breeding, and one on seasonal occurrence other than migration or breeding. Actually, although the total for the longest possible species questionnaire may be 61 questions, other species may vary from 41 to 18.

The editors have standardized the forms, so that elaborate printing revisions are not required for each species. Questionnaires will be sent out in check list order, so that everyone will know which species is next, and may prepare for coming questionnaires.

Another point the editors make is that no one should feel discouraged or disheartened by the length of the questionnaire or their own lack of complete answers. It is hoped that hundreds of returns will come in for each species. No observer anywhere is expected to know all the answers—or even half the answers—to any one questionnaire. If you have merely a *single* scrap of information, a *single* arrival date, a hatching date, a nest site or colony location, return the questionnaire. Your lone record may fill in a gap when all the data are analyzed and reduced to a species write-up in the book.

The first few questionnaires, on the loons and grebes, are in the nature of experiments, in two directions. First, although the editors have revised their questionnaire seven times, they will never know what the flaws in it are until it is actually tried throughout the state. And second, it is a test of our mailing list. Eventually it is hoped that the editors will have the names of every competent observer who has been active in New York State in the past half century, but our present list is probably far from complete. Our list may also contain some names which will prove valueless either because of non-cooperation or lack of information. Needless to say, the editors are in constant search for new names, and anyone knowing competent bird students who do not receive the first questionnaires should send their names to Robert F. Deed, 50 Clinton Avenue, Nyack, N. Y.

In conclusion, the forthcoming state book is the once-in-your-life-time opportunity to enter the information you have gathered about New York State birds in a permanent, lasting important treatise. The opportunity presents itself to create a state book packed with more valuable data than any other ever published. But it can only be published, and only be complete, if the data in your notebooks, field cards, and club records are made available to us. The editors hope that you will make it your most absorbing work during the months ahead.

Robert Arbib, Jr.