

ACTIVITY IN SAPSUCKER WOODS

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There is an interesting woodland of about 130 acres some two miles as the Crow flies northeast of the Cornell Campus that we call Sapsucker Woods. It was christened in 1909 when the author, Louis Fuertes, Francis Harper and James Gutsell discovered that the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker nested there, together with Canada Warblers and Northern Water-Thrushes. This gave it the distinction of being somewhat Canadian and different from the Campus and adjacent woodlands. We found Ruffed Grouse there that Sunday morning and Pileated Woodpeckers and Red-shouldered Hawks and Horned Owls and many other unusual birds that made us want to return.

Through the ensuing years we returned many times, as have successive generations of Cornell students, and we have always found it rewarding. The Arthur Lanes, now the caretakers, moved in and tamed the Chickadees and the woodland gradually became a mecca for bird classes. Graduate students in ornithology selected research problems on the birds nesting there. Paul Kellogg and Albert Brand studied Grouse; Sewall Pettingill, Woodcock; J. Southgate Y. Hoyt, Pileated Woodpecker; Heinz Meng, Cooper's Hawk; Robert Stein, Alder Flycatcher; while Oliver Owen worked out the bird ecology of the area.

In 1954, Lyman K. Stuart interested his family in giving the woods to Cornell University as a memorial to his father and his uncle, Charles H. and Kenneth E. Stuart, who also had been much interested in nature. The Walter C. Heasleys added twenty acres of their woodland to round out the Stuart gift and make the sanctuary a complete unit. The Stuarts also financed three miles of chain link fencing to surround it and provided an endowment for maintaining it. In addition, Stuart, through the Arcadia Foundation is providing funds for a field headquarters and research building for the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

In accepting the gifts from the Stuart family, the Cornell trustees not only set aside the area in perpetuity as a bird sanctuary, but they also set up the Laboratory of Ornithology as a separate department in the university. For forty years the Laboratory had existed as a non-administrative unit attached first to the Department of Entomology, more recently to the Department of Zoology and finally to the Department of Conservation. In its new role, the Laboratory of Ornithology is not attached to any college or department but has two directors, Professors Arthur Allen and Paul Kellogg, who are also members of an advisory council responsible directly to the president of the university. The laboratory will not supplant any of the ornithological teaching or research in other departments, but will supplement their work with additional facilities as well as carry on its own projects, for which it has gained an enviable reputation through the years. It will provide a scientific, educational, and cultural center for the study of living birds.

The activities of the Laboratory are not limited to the local birds. This past Winter, for example, the Donald McChesneys and the James Passes of Syracuse are financing an expedition to Kenya to obtain films and recordings of African birds and their songs for the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithol-

ogy and its Library of Natural Sounds. The Lawrence Grinnells have just returned from a similar trip under the auspices of the laboratory, and Professors Allan and Kellogg will continue their expeditions to various parts of the World.

The Laboratory of Ornithology is designed to be self-supporting and the trustees have established the "Cornell Trust for Ornithology" which may receive tax-free gifts for general maintenance or for specific ornithological purposes. A number of such benefactions have already been received and, in addition all royalties from the Cornell Bird Records have been turned over to this trust by Professors Allen and Kellogg.

In addition to the fence surrounding Sapsucker Woods, many improvements are planned or have already been initiated to make the area attractive to as great a variety of birds as possible as well as to visitors. At the north end, for example, where the building will be placed, about ten acres of water have been impounded to form a partially wooded pond, and already Wood Ducks, Blacks, Mallards, and Pied-billed Grebes have moved in and Herons, Bitterns, and Rails are looking it over. About four miles of trails have been constructed which will serve for fire protection as well as for making the area more accessible for classes and more desirable for those birds that prefer the "edges" so created.

A fireproof, ranch-type building, 170 feet long by 50 feet wide has been designed with a connecting observation room 25 feet by 50 feet at the edge of the pond. This room will have picture windows overlooking the water on the west and the bird feeders on the southern woodland side. The plans provide for offices, laboratories and an aviary for studies in bird behavior as well as for a sound room, dark room, library and reading room. A seven-ton memorial boulder has been placed among ferns and hemlocks near the gateway to the woods. Here also there will be a small open-air classroom facing the bird feeders.

There is considerable open land north of the pond which belongs to the university and about twenty acres of this has been enclosed within the fence to make a home for the Bobolinks, Meadowlarks, Henslow's Sparrows and other field birds. A part of it may be planted to groups of desirable trees that will make the area more attractive to certain birds not at present represented in the list of eighty-odd nesting species. At one corner of the large pond, for example, we plan a thicket of balsam and spruce for Magnolia and Blackburnian Warblers. Within the woods, near one of the trails, a depression 75 by 25 feet has been bull-dozed where it is hoped to start a sphagnum bog and perhaps bring in Nashville Warblers, which do not nest there at present, as well as pitcher plants, sundews, and orchids.

Members of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs will always be welcome at Sapsucker Woods and it is hoped by the directors that many of the readers of *The Kingbird* will include the refuge in their bird watching tours. Sapsucker Woods Road, formerly Townline Road, runs through the woods. It is the next north-south road east of Warren Road which leads to the Mohawk Airport and which is well marked.

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