

Let's Protect The Kingfisher: New York State has done well in shortening the list of unprotected birds. There are five species not currently protected by state law: house sparrow, starling, crow, grackle and kingfisher. The nuisance value and purported crop destruction associated with the first four of these birds will undoubtedly keep them unprotected for some time to come. However, I can see no valid reason for not providing the kingfisher with the benefit of legal protection. It has been only in recent years that this bird began to reappear noticeably in the Upper Susquehanna Valley Region. It is apparent that the Kingfisher does not presently suffer from wanton destruction. Nevertheless, he is fair "game" for the living-target seeker. Also, there still are sport fishermen who are not willing to admit the truth revealed by research into feeding habits of the Kingfisher which indicates that this bird can actually improve stream fishing by maintaining the intrinsic balance of Nature.

If these deterrents to the kingfisher's welfare seem too insignificant for granting him protection, then let us evaluate his individuality. As his name infers, he is a master at his craft. His name also suggests dignity and poise which he upholds well in a most regal and prepossessive attitude, both in his physical mien and the authoritative control of his domain. True, his voice is not even slightly melodious but his hearty, unexpurgated rattle endorses not only the air but the area with a distinctive signature which is sadly missed when the Kingfisher is not there. This endorsement alone warrants protection for the Kingfisher in order to preserve the bird and the very character of his natural realm. Yes, I feel very sincerely that New York State can and should add the kingfisher to the list of birds protected within the State boundaries. If enough interest is brought to light, this protection can become an actuality.

—Robert Burland, 16 Reynolds Ave., Oneonta.

Comment by Mr. Joseph A. Blake Jr., Chairman of the Conservation Committee: I am in favor of granting New York State protection to the Kingfisher. As has often been pointed out the damage to game fish by this bird is negligible and, on the whole, he is an engaging member of our fauna. I should certainly miss him, as would many persons, if he were absent.
