

A COUNCIL OF NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETIES

In October of 1960, the Audubon Naturalist Society was host to representatives of fifteen Audubon and Natural History Societies at their second annual council meeting. Two and a half days of spirited discussions took place, with talk about a wide range of the problems and projects common to the groups.

The Council of Natural History Societies originated in 1959, formally, after several years of casual talk of such an arrangement. Whenever representatives of such groups have met, often at scientific meetings, we had found ourselves spending more time in the corridors comparing notes of our own plans and activities than we did in the proper sessions. There was so much practical information to share, and so much inspiration to be gained from the knowledge of others' achievements. Why, we kept saying, couldn't we meet sometime, with nothing else to do but talk together? Finally more and more people were urging this step, and in 1959 several suggested that it would be convenient to gather in Washington for a preliminary session. So it was that the first meeting was held here in October of 1959. Nineteen organizations were represented then, and proposals were drawn up for a type of Council to continue the meetings. The sessions in 1960 voted on a definite form of organization and by-laws.

The plan is very simple. We want only one thing: the chance to hold a town-meeting kind of session annually, where representatives of local, state and regional natural history societies can share experiences and define new goals. The Council will have no authority to speak for the member groups — it is purely a clearing house. Between meetings, a simple newsletter will keep up communications between us, and give a place for particular topics to be discussed and summarized. Expenses, and thus cost to members, are to be kept at an absolute minimum. Only organizations, not individuals, may join. The Council will exist solely as a service organization for its members, who may act as they determine on the information gained through the Council. No existing organization is designed to fill this need, and it should be a helpful supplement to national conservation programs. Its chief merit may be in the fact that it is a means for us all to help raise ourselves by our bootstraps, self reliantly, and without sacrificing any local vigor or authority to another organization. Several types of groups have shown an interest in the idea, from state Audubon and ornithological societies to museums and more specialized organizations. They range from those with less than 100 members to one with about 10,000. Some have large staffs and budgets, most operate by volunteer help and a pittance. With all stages of development on hand, much can be learned of the ways of reaching up to the next level of membership and usefulness.

The geographic span of the groups represented has been broad, bounded by Hawaii, Florida, Maine, Ontario, and Oregon. It has been an inspiration to meet the many capable and delightful people who are undertaking the same sort of work as we are in conservation and natural history education.

We have greatly enjoyed being host to the first two meetings, and look forward to attending future sessions, which will be held at various locations from year to year.

Irston R. Barnes

At a meeting held at the time of the A. O. U. meeting in Washington in October 1961, representatives of Council groups established the rates of dues. These had been under discussion since the first meeting, and it was felt that they should be held to minimum levels. We should prefer to have many groups belong, each paying just the cost of the proceedings and occasional newsletters. The publication of the proceedings of these meetings has been generally accepted as a major service of the Council, and if it is done at all thoroughly, it is a fairly expensive business. The most economical means of reproducing these proceedings is used, but the transcribing and typing is still a considerable job, which must usually be done professionally.

These are the dues now in force:

<i>Size of Organization</i>	<i>Annual Dues</i>
Up to 300 members -----	\$10.00
300 to 1,000 members -----	15.00
Over 1,000 members -----	25.00

Peter C. Peterson, Jr. of Davenport, Iowa, was chosen Chairman at the October meeting. It was the recommendation then that we supplement the general meetings with those of a more regional nature, so that people unable to travel to a more distant meeting could have the first-hand experience of these discussions. Accordingly, a meeting was held this past April 14-16 at the Morton Arboretum near Chicago, Illinois. Midwestern groups were the main participants, although the Florida Audubon Society was also represented.

The course which the Council will take will be determined by the interests and suggestions of member groups. We who have participated in the meetings so far have found them of great value, and we anticipate even more stimulating discussions as the scope of the Council increases with new members.

Officers of the Council of Natural History Societies, 1962 are:

Chairman: Peter C. Petersen, Jr.
Vice Chairman: C. Russel Mason
Secretary: Shirley A. Briggs
Treasurer: Robert J. Watson

Shirley A. Briggs

Note: Dr. Barnes has given his permission to use his article, printed in the Jan.-Mar. 1961, *Atlantic Naturalist*, to inform the club members of the Federation on the organization of the Council of Natural History Societies, its aims, and the benefits of membership.

The additional facts were supplied by Miss Shirley Briggs, to bring the information up to date.

We sincerely thank Dr. Barnes and Miss Briggs for this information.—Ed.