
JOHN JACKSON ELLIOTT

June 17, 1896 - June 28, 1963

It is with a profound sense of shock and loss that I must report to the Federation the death of its President, John J. Elliott, of Seaford, Long Island. John Elliott died at home quite suddenly on June 28, of a heart failure culminating a period of recent ill health. Thus is ended all too soon a life dedicated to ornithology, to conservation, and to the service of his fellow man. Of few men can we so truly say, he was a wholly good man.

My first acquaintance with John came more than thirty years ago when I began to edit a weekly bulletin of the bird life of Long Island. One of its earliest and most faithful contributors, whose records were both thorough and unimpeachable, was a man respected before I had ever met him, John J. Elliott. One day in the middle of a salt marsh at Jones Beach we met, and since then have spent countless hours together in the field, in meetings, in correspondence, and in friendship. No one knew more about the bird life of Long Island, and no one was more tireless in the pursuit of this knowledge. (It was a rather terrifying initiation for a neophyte watcher to be assigned to John Elliott's party on a Christmas count; not only could he walk the legs off men one half his age, he was a relentless, if good-humored inquisitor when it came to accepting records.) To the end his standards were the highest; many a rare bird reaching John on New York's rare bird alert system stopped right there because John refused to give it credence. These high standards served him well as regional editor for the *Kingbird*. His seasonal summaries are models of accuracy and reliability.

With the coming of World War II, John agreed to assume temporary editorship of the *Long Island Bird Notes*. It was a favor that lasted seventeen years. Week after week, John gathered records from observers all over Long Island, wrote a wise and pertinent commentary, and became known to countless thousands of readers, to many of whom he introduced the joys of bird watching.

His work in the more serious aspects of ornithology show what an amateur, using only spare time crowded with family and community activities, can accomplish. He was the nation's leading authority on two different species on the North American list, the European Goldfinch and the Ipswich Sparrow, and his chapters on these species have already been prepared for the "Bent" series of volumes. His published articles ranged from the habits of Herring Gulls to the bird life of the Adirondacks. But Long Island, and in particular its marshes and shore line, was his lifelong home and first love.

We will miss John Elliott. We will miss his unfailing good humor, his gentle wit, his boyish enthusiasm, his serious interest in all who came to know him, his leadership in the coterie of Long Island bird watchers, and his fine stewardship of our Federation. It is a measure of the man that for all his devotion to birds, he was an active churchman—warden of his church

for 25 years, Chaplain of his American Legion post, and active in other community endeavors. To Nancy Elliott and the happy family he created we express the Federation's deepest sympathies. Though he was prematurely bowed by an affliction that brought no murmur of complaint from him, of him we can truly say, "this was an upright man."

Robert S. Arbib Jr.

NOTE: In having the acting presidency of the Federation pass to me in this untimely and unhappy way, with six month's of John Elliott's term of office still to run, I ask all those who now serve the Federation in any capacity to remain "in office", so that together we may pass over this difficult transition period as smoothly as possible. John leaves the Federation thriving and growing. Let us go forward from here.

R. S. A.

EDWARD J. WHELEN DIES

Edward J. Whelen, president of the Brooklyn Bird Club and long a leader and inspiration for birders in the New York area, died in February of a heart attack. He was taken ill at the dinner preceding a Brooklyn Bird Club monthly meeting.

The heart condition which he had had for several years did not seem to have deterred his birding enthusiasm or activity. In January, only a couple of weeks before his death, he had gone out to Montauk Point at the tip of Long Island, where he and his party had recorded a number of good wintering birds.

He was an enthusiastic member of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs and for many years had taken charge of the winter duck census for the New York region. This area sprawls over Manhattan up the Hudson River and also involves Brooklyn and ferry transportation to Staten Island.

Nothing could take second place to conservation for Ed Whalen. He was a member of the Federation Conservation Committee. He gave generously, eagerly — in fact, pages of it, all handwritten — of his enormous knowledge when asked for background information on issues in which the Federation was engaged — Great Horned Owl, Forest Preserve, etc.

He talked up conservation at almost every meeting of the Brooklyn Club. The club newsletters, which he wrote, snapped, crackled and sizzled with his comments and appeals. They were actually fun to read as well as being motivating.

In the December, 1962, issue of the newsletter, he pointedly referred the poison spray proponents to the dictionary, asserting that in their arguments, "Black becomes White and White is Black, and such words are dangerous, deadly and destructive, become dandy, delightful and diverting!"

Essentially Ed was a teacher and his conservation determination and his very personality, which could hold a room of persons spellbound, seemed to