

CONSERVATION NEWS

MAXWELL C. WHEAT, JR.

In the first wash of emotion following President Kennedy's death, there was a lot of renaming of places in his memory. It was a natural response, reflecting the terrible need of the American people to do something — Anything! — when all seemed so futile. There was also an understandable, although self conscious kind of questioning of the idea of old and familiar sites being somewhat impetuously redesignated. This mixed feeling was true with the rededication of Tobay Wildlife Sanctuary on Long Island as the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary.

Yet, the finest sense of the phrase "there could be no more fitting tribute" did apply here — in the very fact that instead of something new arising, something old was being kept in as near a natural state as possible. Tobay — or Kennedy Sanctuary (the new name will take some getting used to) commemorates a distinctive effort of President Kennedy's "New Frontiers" program and that was to conserve our Old Frontiers.

The preserved tract or marsh, muck and some upland is small — 500 acres. But it encompasses great hope. Renaming it after the late President symbolizes our hope that his resparking of the conservation movement will yet increase. It would be a living and growing memorial to see the acres of Kennedy Sanctuary added to so that the whole of Long Island's remaining south shore wetlands were preserved, including the natural barrier beach and seashore of a close by Fire Island National Seashore.

There is good foundation for hope, or a working optimism, for the wetlands and the proposed national seashore. "Nothing breeds success like success," and that was the purport last fall of the third annual meeting of the Hempstead Town Lands Resources Council which has been leading the wetlands fight in association with the Federation, National Audubon Society and other organizations. Three years ago golf courses were to be developed on these wetlands. The Council caused those plans to be reversed. On the foundation of that success, speakers urged more support to preserve 10,000 acres of wetlands in the Town of Hempstead.

That they will get that backing from birders was evident at the meeting. The predominance of birders there was inspiring. At first glance the gathering, in itself large, seemed like a special meeting of the Baldwin Bird Club, so many of its members being in the audience. Seeing so many of my fellow birders out to support this conservation effort made me experience an emotion of pride at being one of them.

The dilemma, if it can be called that, of the leaders for a Fire Island National Seashore was, that at this writing, their campaign was going so well — too well. What was happening with the forces that two years ago practically had the concrete laid for a highway across the length of the Fire Island barrier beach on Long Island?

As of the first of the year only the tokenest of opposition was being heard. An advisory board of the Department of the Interior (Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments) had singled this project out for "top priority" over seven other recommended proposals. Many key congressmen and senators were enthusiastic. Rep. Leo W. O'Brien of Albany felt there was "no doubt whatever" of Congress approving a Fire Island bill.

Fire Island leaders were trying to heap the crest of support higher with letters to Congress to push the legislation through in this session. There might never be as good an opportunity, especially in view of the legislators' growing restiveness to get something accomplished in a Congress that at this point had been able to achieve little.

Letters urging the establishment of a Fire Island National Seashore for the good of the residents of the state and the nation should be sent to the chairmen listed below with carbons or separate letters going to local congressmen.

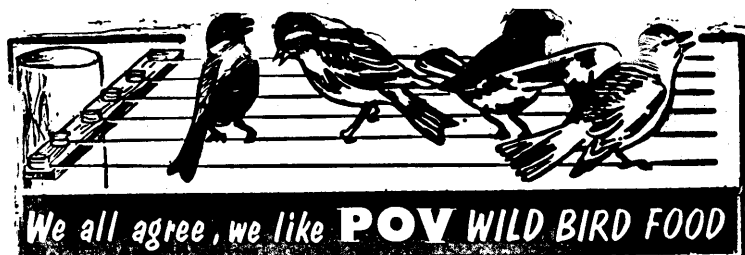
The Honorable Alan Bible, Chairman
Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands
Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.

The Honorable Thomas G. Morris, Chairman
House Subcommittee on National Parks
House Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Ironically, if you like to 'rough it' deep in the wilderness, you can probably get there the easy way — via airplane, motorboat, snowmobile, motorcycle, etc. The noise from these and other gadgetry vehicles crashing through the wild is beginning to resound in the protesting voices of conservationists commencing to fight this relatively new and mechanical threat to wilderness areas, particularly the Forest Preserve.

Last fall Conservation Commissioner H. C. Wilm issued regulations prohibiting the use of motorized land vehicles on certain roads and trails — a highly commendable step for controlling this threat. However, shortly afterwards the order was slackened to permit travel by vehicles designed exclusively for ice or snow. The original order did not cover airplanes and motorboats which the Department said presented more complex problems.

The Board of Directors of the Scarsdale Audubon Society issued a 1000 word statement praising Commissioner Wilm for the original regulations, but urged action for planes and motorboats. The Club directors also called for a public information program. Copies of this statement are available from Mrs. Robert L. Reed, North Mountain Drive, Ardsley-on-Hudson, New York.



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Recommended by Roger Tory Peterson