

CONSERVATION NEWS

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At its annual meeting in Poughkeepsie the Federation endorsed resolutions that aligned it in the forefront of several crucial conservation efforts. It urged "caution" and "restraint" in the use of pesticides. The delegates called for an end to bounty payments by counties. They adopted a hold-the-line attitude against the intrusion of the Forest Preserve and wilderness areas in the nation by damaging motorized equipment, a problem aggravated by the population explosion of four-wheel driven vehicles, specially geared two-wheel scooters, endless-tracked sleds or snowmobiles, motor boats and airplanes.

Alarmed at the apparent decrease of the Osprey, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Great Blue Heron and other species in New York State, the Federation has added its alarm to that of the late Rachel Carson and others over the wildlife destruction being caused by pesticides and poison sprays. The Federation's voice was "heard" in The New York Times (a paragraph) and the Scarsdale Inquirer which reproduced the four page mimeographed resolution in full — thanks to Mrs. Wallace L. Cornwell of Scarsdale who brought it to the paper's attention.

"Since pesticides have been shown to cause wildlife destruction," the Federation declared, "and residues have been found hundreds of miles and several years from the site and time of application, then it is time to question the almost single-minded reliance on these devices and to look most urgently for non-lethal approaches to blemish-free apples and mosquito-free residential areas."

It was to the latter, non-agricultural type of spraying, that the Federation's attention was particularly directed. All too often such spraying is entirely unnecessary except for convenience or comfort. "What is the comparison," the resolution asked, "between a few less mosquitoes in the back yard and dead fish piled on a nearby shore — or even the extinction (in some areas at least) of the Bald Eagle?"

"The Bald Eagle, symbol of our nation, may already have disappeared as a breeding bird in New York State," the Federation declared. "In the early 1950's there were an estimated 12 pairs nesting. During the last three years no eagle nest is known to have been active in the state." Eagles are believed to be affected by the pesticides ingested from dead fish upon which they feed and which have concentrated within their bodies residues of long lasting pesticides (those that, like DDT and its derivatives, require a long time to break down chemically).

Osprey are believed to be similarly endangered. Unhatched osprey eggs in Connecticut have had concentrations of DDT. Last year, eastern Long Island, once the site of one of the world's largest Osprey colonies (so numerous that some even had nests on the ground — unusual for the Osprey which usually prefers a penthouse view from a tree or pole) had about 200 nests. Once there were some 500 nests.

Leroy Wilcox, who has been keeping records for three decades, noticed the decline setting in about ten years ago. In 1962 he made a check of all nests on Gardiners Island in early June and again in early July. By the

latter time the young should have been four to five weeks old. Instead, only 20 per cent of the eggs had hatched. There were many unhatched and rotting eggs in the nests.

At the meeting Dr. Walter Spofford expressed concern for the Osprey population in the Adirondacks from DDT spraying by hotels and resorts for their guests' comfort — particularly from black flies. The resolution included opposition to this spraying. He also reported that in the state the Cooper's Hawk and Sharp-shinned Hawk had not been seen as numerous as before. He expressed concern for the Peregrine Falcon.

Drops in heronry populations have been reported from both ends of the state. Mr. Wilcox says the Black-crowned Night Heron has become scarce on eastern Long Island. Harold Mitchell, former Federation president, says that numbers in three Great Blue Heron colonies in the Buffalo area have declined. Pesticides are suspected in all these cases.

The Federation endorsed passage by Congress of S. 1251 by Sen. Maurine Neuberger which would increase investigation of pesticide-wildlife relationships. By July 1 this bill had passed the Senate. The Federation also endorsed S. 1250 by Sen. Neuberger that would require Federal agencies to consult the Fish and Wildlife Service before starting large scale spraying operations. Also supported was S. 2792 by Sen. Abraham Ribicoff permitting government inspection of pesticide plants and other regulatory practices.

Besides trying to curb the inadvertent destruction of wildlife by pesticides, the delegates called for a halt to the planned destruction of wild creatures. Payment of bounties by county governments was opposed. In taking this action the Federation was backing up a recommendation made in the "Leopold Report" by the Secretary of the Interior's Advisory Board on Wildlife Management. This was a dramatic statement calling for a reevaluation of the worth of predator control programs including those conducted within the Interior Department through its predator control service. This significant report can be obtained by writing to the Office of Information, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D. C. The Federation urged Congressional passage of H. R. 9037 by Rep. John Dingell that would phase out the Federal control program employing 600 to 700 professional hunters and that would substitute a staff of six regional experts to advise and assist states in setting up trapper-instructor services.

Destruction of the natural growth in the Forest Preserve and the nation's wilderness areas by mechanized vehicles was condemned. Thus, the Federation lent its backing to the fight being taken up by the National Committee for the Protection of Trail Country, an organization closely linked with the Scarsdale Audubon Society. The Federation urged a prohibition of these vehicles except for emergency purposes. It further passed a special resolution commending Assemblyman R. Watson Pomeroy, chairman of the Joint Legislative Committee on Natural Resources, for his efforts in trying to have snowmobiles banned after they were dropped from the list of vehicles prohibited by the Conservation Department.

In other actions the Federation reaffirmed its support for preservation of 10,000 acres of salt wetlands on Long Island's south shore and for the

32-mile long proposed Fire Island National Seashore. The Fire Island bill by Rep. Otis G. Pike of Suffolk County was approved by the House National Parks Subcommittee. Action was scheduled in July by the House Interior Committee.

The Wilderness Bill was again endorsed, the one passed by the U. S. Senate. However, the one reported to the House floor in June was considerably weakened. For instance, S 4 provided that primitive areas and roadless areas in National Parks and Wildlife Refuges could be brought into the Wilderness System by presidential recommendation unless Congress objects. H. R. 9070 would have Congress positively approve acceptance after review by the Secretary of the Interior. This would make it more difficult to add areas to the Wilderness System.

Delegates urged congressional passage of H. R. 3846, the Land and Water Conservation for the development of outdoor recreational areas on a financially matching basis.

The Federation extended hands across the sea in urging protection of the eight-square mile Japanese Island, Mikura Jima, with rare flora and fauna. However, this very much concerned the effect on wild life and terrain our government can have in establishing facilities on foreign territory — in this case a test bomb site which has been proposed for this island. The feeling was that our defense agencies could well use consultants in the natural sciences to warn of the effect of such decisions — especially when alternatives might be possible.

With regard to areas in New York State, the Federation urged that Buckhorn Island State Park near Buffalo be used as a wildlife refuge. A bill in the Legislature last year provided for using this state park as a site for a musical festival. This would probably involve spraying for mosquitoes, affecting an important wetlands area utilized by wildlife. The Federation also endorsed the host club's (Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club) for preservation of Cruger's Island (where Federation members had good views of the Cerulean Warbler). This action received a front page story on the front page of the Sunday newspaper in Poughkeepsie.

For the first time at the annual meeting the Friday evening meeting of the Conservation Committee was opened to all members of the Federation. Some 60 persons attended and participated in the discussions on the resolutions to be presented to the Council and delegates. This response was very gratifying.

Two new members have been appointed to the Conservation Committee: Mrs. Ruth Rubenstein, a Federation life-member and conservation chairman of the Brooklyn Bird Club, and Mrs. Beverly Waite, nature columnist for the Knickerbocker News in Albany.

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