

CONSERVATION NEWS

MAXWELL C. WHEAT, JR.

New York birders are in the forefront of conservation efforts both statewide and in local communities where one lady was able to change some official and public thinking about pesticides and a bird club was instrumental in halting an aerial spraying campaign against the gypsy moth.

While many of us were at the annual meeting in Syracuse talking about a suggested four-point program a club could follow in dealing with a local pesticides issue, Mrs. Otis C. Parrish of Lyons Falls was doing something about it. It was on Friday night, June 11—the same time when the Federation conservation committee was having an open meeting in a crowded room in a Syracuse University dormitory—that Mrs. Parrish was nervously seeking recognition to go up in front of a village open meeting to answer inquiries being directed to a spokesman for a group that wanted to embark on some wholesale spraying.

"At this point," she wrote Dr. Sally Hoyt Spofford, "with a trembling hand and voice I asked if I might have the floor and was granted it. I felt I had the information they were seeking and was only awaiting the proper moment. I hadn't known before that I was going up front to face the audience, but this I did as I felt I had so much more to give than the speaker. I read your letter (an explanatory letter sent by Mrs. Spofford), gave the highlights of the leaflet (reprint of the pesticides article in the January, 1965 *Kingbird* by Dr. Walter Spofford and Dr. David Peakall), and told briefly the *Farm Quarterly* story" (also sent by Mrs. Spofford and describing the effect of pesticides on milk in the Washington, D.C., area).

Mrs. Parrish added that in response to her remarks "One of the men got up and said, 'I came here tonight not knowing anything about pesticides. I feel now I have gained a great deal of information and that we should not go forward with any spraying at this time.' As a result of this meeting a Citizens Committee was appointed to study the subject." She reported that in the meantime the Village Board is trying corrective measures in place of pesticides. Her husband was told by a Village official that Mrs. Parrish had "sold the people on not spraying."

One of the suggestions of the Federation's conservation program for a club (obtained free of charge by writing the conservation chairman) was for appearances by an informed citizen before public meetings concerning pesticides. Another suggestion was for a public meeting on pesticides held by the club itself and for articles in the club newsletter. These were some of the activities pursued by the Huntington Audubon Society on Long Island in its successful fight to prevent the New York

State Conservation Department from carrying out an aerial spraying program against gypsy moths in the Nissequoque area. Sevin was the proposed pesticide.

William A. McAneny, president, led the effort with John Taylor writing about pesticides in the club newsletter. Leaflets with the article by Dr. Spofford and Dr. Peakall were distributed at a public meeting. Mrs. Betty Allen organized a group of club volunteers who rallied many of the home owners in the contemplated spray area to fight it.

At the annual meeting the Federation joined those now engaged in the effort to preserve for New Yorkers one of its great resources, the Hudson River and its environs. The delegates gave their support to H. R. 3012 by Rep. Richard Ottinger which would establish a Hudson Highlands National Scenic Riverway.

Also, the delegates urged the scenic preservation of Storm King Mountain on the Hudson River and opposed the construction there of a pump storage power plant by Consolidated Edison Company. Among other reasons cited for this action by the Federation, was the possible decimation of the Hudson River striped bass population. There was also the question of pollution.

Now New York City, suffering from a severe water shortage, has considered drawing from the Hudson River, polluted as it is. As a start toward clearing up this resource as well as other waters in the state, the Federation urged enthusiastic support by clubs and members of the one-billion-dollar anti-pollution bond issue that will appear on the ballot this fall. The National Audubon Society has termed this perhaps the first fully realistic attack on water pollution ever proposed by a state government.

The Federation, in line with its belief that 10,000 acres of salt wetlands in the Town of Hempstead on Long Island's south shore should be preserved, opposed a proposed U.S. Army Engineers Hurricane Dune Barrier Project which would dredge eight million cubic yards of fill, most of it coming from these wetlands. It joined with the Hempstead Town Lands Resources Council, recent American Motors Conservation Award winning organization, in this action.

The Federation delegates also urged upon the State Conservation Department that no timber cut for fire purposes or any other possible reason in the Adirondack Forest Preserve should be sold commercially. There have been suggestions in this direction.

In a statement of conservation policy rounding up its various positions, approved both this and other years, the Federation called upon "every citizen of our state and nation to come to the defense of his land—for assuredly we are losing our land as though it was being ravaged by some conqueror. Not, however, an enemy in foreign guise come to take us over, but our own compulsion for progress, plus lack of insight or admission of

how vast and permanent is the 'scarred earth policy' which is the effect of those who are invading our land (and by land we also mean the valuable lands under water; the rich and fertile lands—called wetlands—in our bogs, marshes, swamps; the life-filled waters, even the purifying air; and of course, the plant and animal wildlife that lives in, on and above our land) with dredges, bulldozers, and in the forests mechanized vehicles like snowmobiles, or in the air airplanes releasing their poison sprays."

We are glad to announce two new members of the conservation committee; Mrs. Ruth Williams, president of the Tioga Bird Club and Mrs. Frederick Marsi of Binghamton who is also corresponding secretary of the Federation.

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FIELD NOTES

Dark Phase Gyrfalcons in Columbia and Albany Counties: On January 21st, 1965 at the Wilson M. Powell Wildlife Sanctuary, Old Chatham, N.Y., I glimpsed a bird which was certainly a large falcon and probably a dark-phase Gyrfalcon. Terrain and other difficulties prevented me from seeing where the bird went and I was unable to see it again despite considerable searching. On February 1 another (or the same bird) was seen briefly flying over the road near Chatham Center. Hours were lost in unsuccessful searches of the area and members of the Alan Devoe Bird Club of Chatham were alerted. Unfortunately, the news was passed on as a positive identification and was so listed in the *Kingbird*, volume XV, 1965, p. 122.

On February 13th while traveling on the Thomas E. Dewey Thruway headed toward Albany I saw two dark-phase birds, one of which was flying over the center mall paralleling the course of the car and, for several seconds, only about ten feet away from me. The light was excellent; the flight pattern and distinctive features were clearly evident and there is no doubt in my mind that this bird and its companion were Gyrfalcons. The locality of this record was near the community of Selkirk, just north of the Selkirk exit of the Thruway.

The rare records of the Gyrfalcon this far south are usually of single birds, so the sighting of two birds apparently travelling as a pair seems most unusual. When seen, both birds were airborne, one about 20 yards behind the other and following the flight pattern beat for beat. At the place where the birds were seen there were large areas of open fields usually inhabited by pheasants and the patches of dense woodlots surrounding the fields have had populations of Ruffed Grouse. Members of the Schenectady Bird Club were notified, but a search of the area the following day failed to disclose the Gyrfalcons.

Compared to the Peregrine Falcon, the wing beat seemed slower, almost ponderous. At first glance from behind I thought I was observing a Turkey Vulture taking off from the center mall; but as I neared the bird the pattern and rhythm of the wing beat seemed more like that of a Herring Gull. The more solid dark color of the Gyrfalcons made them loom or appear much larger than the Peregrine Falcons I have seen.

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