

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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