

KEEP THE FOREST PRESERVE 'WILD FOREVER'

MAXWELL C. WHEAT, JR.

Strung out from the party emblems on the voting machines this fall will be found, among those hustling for governor, congress, legislature, etc., candidates for delegate positions at the 1967 Constitutional Convention. Depending on how a voter feels about the gubernatorial hopefuls, he will probably click down the levers for delegates as though he were running off a bunch of zero's on an adding machine after having taken more care on the bigger numbers in front. Yet, these delegate aspirants could well be the most important for conservation. The elected delegates will draw up a new constitution to see New York State through years that will probably witness continued urban population spread, amassment of idle time leaving millions running to authorities like siblings beseeching their parents "What can we do now?," and increasing mobility in search of something to do. The delegates could accede to these pressures and do away with the constitutional protection of our Forest Preserve in the Adirondacks and Catskills as 'forever wild.'

New York's has been an example of the most permanent type of wilderness preservation found anywhere in the country. Only last year in his new book, *A Wilderness Bill of Rights*, U. S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas declared that "at the federal level there is no constitutional guarantee that we will have even an acre of wilderness left out of the vast public lands owned by the central government. At the state level, New York leads the way."

Yet, this exemplary protection could be penciled out in response to an already rising demand to make a simple and efficient constitution for these increasingly complex times. It appears so cumbersome to have to push a constitutional amendment through two different elected legislatures and then have it approved by the electorate before allowing a ski tow, highway, power plant, etc., in the Forest Preserve. However, it has been this so-called cumbersomeness that has often prevented the Forest Preserve from having been an easy prey to pressures for power projects, lumbering, resort areas, highways, etc.

Conservationists have started working early to inform the public as well as the candidates for delegates. The Constitutional Council for the Forest Preserve was formed Jan. 15, 1966 at Rhinebeck, N. Y. and is now holding meetings throughout the state. If one is held in your area, please make every effort to attend and show your support.

These meetings have proved to be chances to meet other Federation members and friends. At this writing, David Bigelow, an artist at a Buffalo science museum and a member of the Council executive committee, was helping to plan a meeting in that city. Present at the preliminary meeting in December was Daniel Smiley of the John Burroughs

Natural History Society. Mrs. Robert L. Reed, conservation chairman of the Scarsdale Audubon Society, was a leader in setting up the Council. At a recent planning session in her home were Robert Arbib, former Federation president, and Sheldon E. Merritt, president of the Buffalo Audubon Society. A few weeks later, Mr. Merritt and another former Federation president, Harold Mitchell, drove over roads all but obliterated by a slushy snow to a Council meeting in Schenectady. Walt Sabin, president of the Schenectady Bird Club, was present there with other members.

What can your club do? Plan a meeting this fall to which candidates for delegates will be invited to speak. Three delegates will be elected from each senatorial district. Inviting these candidates to speak will spur them to do their conservation homework in preparation for your meeting. It can serve as education about the Forest Preserve for delegates who actually may know little about it. At the meeting they will be able to learn the views of your club. The Council is planning to prepare materials that can be distributed at such meetings — inquire by writing:

Constitutional Council for the Forest Preserve
Suite 1625
500 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10036

The Council is seeking to show broad support for the Preserve. It is felt that this was an important factor in retaining the 'forever wild' protection at the 1938 Constitutional Convention.

Your Club could send the following statement to the Council:

"It is the position of (name of your organization) that the present wording of the first two sentences of Section 1 and all of Section 4 of Article XIV of the New York State Constitution, as given below, should be retained in any new or revised Constitution that may be presented to the people for approval by the New York State Constitutional Convention, and that protections accorded the Preserve by these key policy statements should be strengthened, not weakened or compromised by any changes in other parts of the Constitution.

Article XIV New York State Constitution

Section 1. The lands of the state, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed.

Section 4. A violation of any of the provisions of this article may be restrained at the suit of the people or, with the consent of the supreme court in appellate division, on notice to the attorney-general at the suit of any citizen."

David Newhouse of Schenectady, chairman of the Council, has asked for donations of \$5 or more from individual members to support this work. Club memberships are also available. It is the purpose of the Council to disband when its work has been completed. This would probably follow final ratification of the revised Constitution by the electorate.

333 Bedell Street, Freeport, N.Y. 11520

JANUARY WATERFOWL COUNT, 1966

JOHN L. MITCHELL

The twelfth January Waterfowl Count of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc. was conducted from the 15th through the 23rd. The State Conservation Department survey was conducted from the 4th through the 12th. The data from each count are included in the accompanying tables. Our total of 155,999 birds is ten percent below the Conservation Department's total of 170,862. This difference reflects the extremes of weather plus the fact that neither Lake Champlain within Region 7 nor Lake Canandaigua within Region 3 was covered by the Federation this year.

Of special note in 1966 is the high count of Mallards and the low count of Brant. The Double-crested Cormorant in Region 1 is a new species for the list. A full review of the twelve years will be presented in a later report in this journal.

I wish to thank the following Regional leaders for their help in this census:

- Region
1. Mr. Harold D. Mitchell
 2. Mr. Walter Listman
 3. Dr. Sally Hoyt Spofford
 4. Mr. Leslie E. Bement
 5. Dr. David B. Peakall
 6. Mr. Arthur W. Allen
 8. Mr. B. R. Seguin
 9. Mr. Edward D. Treacy
 10. Mr. Maxwell Wheat
 - Mr. Cornelius Ward

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