

## CONSERVATION NEWS — "FOREVER HABITABLE"

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Each individual in this state has the right to an environment of air, water and land that is "forever natural" to assure his or her life, health and pursuit of peace, quiet and happiness.

(Suggested assertion for the new state constitution)

"Forever wild" may be having an influence far deeper, greater and more significant than even the Article 14 in the New York State Constitution in which the phrase is found — "shall be forever kept as wild forest lands." Today "forever wild," "forever natural," "forever pure," are increasingly being heard crackling from imploring orators' tongues or being seen in bold type newspaper headlines. These phrases are on the way to becoming part of our personal and social language. When this happens we are talking about words that have power.

The ancients would have called it magic. They used certain words to exhort the gods — to bring rain on parched lands, to assure peace and happiness and to preserve life itself. Now, in this scientific age we are invoking the words "forever wild . . . natural . . . pure" for the same reasons.

We now know what the ancient peoples did not know — that trees transpire and evaporate quantities of water back into the atmosphere. According to John Stewart Collis in *The Triumph of the Tree* (Viking Press, New York) on a summer day the stomata or "breathing tubes" of a full grown willow tree can transpire up to 5,000 gallons of water. This can be returned as precipitation. The writer refers to forests as "oceans of the continent" because "The amount of water . . . thrown off by the forests into the air is so enormous." In pleading for the forests, man in effect is appealing for a natural rainfall. The exhortations to delegates at a Constitutional Convention in Albany or to the voters have really the same urgency as the ritualistic pleas of antiquity.

Today, man has the power to save or destroy his very environment. Man is the god.

The delegates at the Convention have this power. After them the voters will have the power.

The entreaties to continue the 'forever wild' protection of the Forest Preserve in the Adirondacks and Catskills have poured in from throughout the state. The New York Times of May 8 said that the Blaine Amendment and the Forest Preserve were "the two topics that have sparked the most mail to the delegates."

But increasingly people have been asking for even more than the Forest Preserve. They have been asking for the preservation of the very water and air we need for life. Delegate J. Milfred Hull, Box 623, Smithtown introduced a measure for constitutional safeguards for air,

water and other natural resources. The Long Island Press headlined this story, "FOREVER PURE."

This came at the same time that three scientists were reporting in *Science*, the journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, that a study in a Long Island salt marsh "suggests that DDT residues are currently reducing certain animal populations within the estuary."

Dr. Charles F. Wurster, Jr., assistant professor of biology at the State University at Stony Brook, one of the three scientists, warned that "I don't look on the picture optimistically. We have introduced into our environment a molecule that has never been there. It is completely foreign and organisms have never handled it before, and their physiological systems are poorly equipped to deal with its toxic properties. This is a very poor situation."

Such a dire warning charges a phrase or plea for "forever wild" — or "pure" — or "natural" — with emotion.

Think of what we are spewing into the air. Sulfur dioxide pours out of chimneys of coal-burning furnaces. It irritates nose and throat. Nitrogen dioxide emanates from cylinders of high powered automobiles and can be poisonous. There is now 4.85 percent more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than there was around 1900 because of the burning of coal, oil and gasoline.

Air pollution can and has killed man.

We are talking about the first resource of life — the natural air around us. We can survive without food or water for several days, but less than five minutes without air. The man in the city requires the natural air no less than the man in the country.

We are now talking about "forever natural" on 42nd and Broadway!

This has generated the urgency in the words "forever wild" or "forever natural." These words invoke now the thought of life itself.

Our plea to man to keep our environment "forever habitable" is really a prayer to man himself.

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## FIELD NOTES

**House Finch Influx at Schenectady:** The first House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) recorded in the Schenectady area was a male seen with Purple Finches (*Carpodacus purpureus*) on April 29, 1964, and later banded and photographed on May 5, 1964 at my feeder (*Kingbird*, 14(3):153, 1964). During the late winter and early spring of 1965, Purple Finches were common at the feeder, but no House Finch was seen. No Purple Finches were seen at the feeder during the winter of 1966 and when migrants arrived in mid-April to mid-May, no House Finch was noted among them.

In 1967 migrant Purple Finches again arrived in about mid-April after being absent all winter. On May 5th, there was a marked influx of Purple Finches, and with them came a pair of House Finches. Both were captured at about 6:20 pm., the male banded and the female found to be already banded. The male was fat