

State with a kind of eminent domain of their own. "After they are created the state has no control over them. Neither do the taxpayers," declares Long Island Press reporter John M. Greene. Comptroller Arthur Levitt has urged more control because they are a "threat to the election process." Nobody elects their members and once appointed they can go their way.

In the State Legislature Sen. Bernard Smith (R-Northport), chairman of the Senate Committee on Conservation and Recreation, and Assemblyman John G. McCarthy (R-Huntington) have pre-filed bills to force the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the State Department of Transportation to hold public hearings and consult with local governments before drawing up plans.

Enhancement of the rights of the people to good environment may also come about through up-dating of procedures in the Legislature and Congress. Bills to improve accessibility to information on how lawmakers vote and what they say have been introduced in the State Legislature in recent years. After this year's election, Assemblyman Perry B. Duryea, Jr. (R-Montauk), expected to be Assembly speaker, asserted: "Our basic mission will be to restructure the Assembly." He talks about reorganizing committees, reducing the power of the half-dozen strongest and abolishing unimportant ones. Four committees in 1966 received more than 70 per cent of all the bills and five of the 38 received none.

Congress gives more visibility to the activities of its members by printing the Congressional Record and hearings proceedings. However, even here there is serious talk about changing the structure, especially with regard to seniority. Rep. Benjamin S. Rosenthal (D-Nassau) has announced he will propose to the Democratic caucus January 2 that committee chairmen be approved by a vote of the caucus members (the Democrats being the majority party).

Conservationists should watch these developments in the Legislature and Congress because such changes could have considerable effect on environment legislation.

333 Bedell Street, Freeport, N.Y. 11520

FIELD NOTES

Snowy Owl Face-cleaning: Recently, field notes have appeared in *The Kingbird* on a Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) bathing (May 1967) and on Snowy Owl behavior at the Syracuse Airport (July 1966). In the light of these, the following note on what was apparently face-cleaning by a Snowy Owl at the Syracuse Airport may be of interest.

On March 2, 1968, shortly before dusk, Stephen Morgan and I visited the Airport, hoping to watch at close range one of the Snowy Owls which had been wintering there. Shortly before we arrived, a snow-squall started, dampening our hopes of clear Snowy Owl observations. However, we soon spotted the big black-barred fe-

male owl perched on the ground, as she appeared dark against the new snow. I stopped the car as close as possible (about 50 yards from the owl) in order to have a better look without leaving the vehicle. In a few moments, oblivious of the automobile, she took flight, sailed past us about five feet above the ground and only a few yards away, and realigned on the ground 30 yards from us. Only when she began to tear off and swallow chunks of something in her talons did we realize that she must have caught prey as she alighted, since she had been carrying nothing when she flew past us. We watched through binoculars (mine 9×) as she fed, and determined that the prey was a mouse, which was devoured in five or six bites, the long tail last. Then the Snowy Owl burrowed her face into the snow and rubbed it back and forth sidewise a few times, took a couple steps forward and burrowed and rubbed her face again ("as if finding a clean spot on the roller-towel")—repeating this hard wiping followed by stepping forward three or four times.

In "The behaviour, breeding, and food-ecology of the Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*" by Adam Watson (*Ibis* 99: 419–462) he states: "After feeding, both sexes sometimes cleaned their bills and faces by wiping them," but I could find in the literature no more detailed description of face-cleaning nor any from the wintering grounds.

Margaret S. Rusk, 220 Ostrom Ave., Syracuse, N.Y. 13210

Spring Warblers in Fall-like Plumage: On May 18, 1968, while banding at Vischer Ferry Game Management Area in southern Saratoga County near Schenectady with Will D. Merritt, Jr., of Rexford, I mist netted and banded two warblers that showed no apparent trace of spring aspect in their plumage.

The first bird was a Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Dendroica pensylvanica*) which was captured at 0710. The bird had an unflattened wing chord of 58 mm., was fat class 0 and weighed 8.5 g. The bird displayed the white eye ring, typical bright yellow-green back and a clean white breast with no trace whatsoever of chestnut streaking on the breast or flank. This corresponds to the typical fall aspect of an immature female, or possibly an immature male. The plumage was fresh looking and not excessively worn. The forehead of the bird lacked any hint of olive-yellow, so typical of the spring aspect.

Bent (1) in referring to Dwight says that the first nuptial plumage (first alternate feathering) is acquired by partial prenuptial (prealternate) molt in late winter or early spring, while Forbush (2) says that the molts are similar to those of the Myrtle Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*). For the latter he states that the bird acquires the "first breeding plumage by partial prenuptial molt (March to early May) involving body plumage, wing coverts and sometimes a tertial (this molt somewhat restricted in the female)."

The freshness and apparent lack of wear on the plumage suggest that the bird had recently molted and that the fall aspect was preserved. However, my examination of the plumage was not that complete, unfortunately, to ascertain definitely that the plumage had been recently acquired by molt, or that the bird was still in the process of molting. The examination for visible fat deposits, involving blowing the breast and belly feathers aside, revealed no sheathed feathers. Nowhere on the exposed surface of the plumage were sheaths visible either. Will Merritt photographed the bird with 35-mm. color transparency film.

The second bird was a Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*) which was captured at 0940 on the same net check, fortuitously, with a typical spring-plumaged male of the same species for comparison. I photographed these birds simultaneously in the hand with 35-mm. color transparency film. The individual in question had an unflattened wing chord of 58 mm., was fat class 2 and weighed 8.7 g. The more typical spring-plumaged individual had an unflattened wing chord of 67 mm., was fat class 2 and weighed 12.8 g.

In comparing these data with those in Table IV of Goodpasture (3) relating to fall, tower-killed Tennessee Warblers, the bird with the 58-mm. wing was clearly a