

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Every so often someone who should know better makes a statement implying that research is about over and that man now has learned all there is to know about birds or even science in general. Almost immediately, as though the statement may have triggered it, research blossoms forth with new ideas and in new directions. We have been gathering data about the birds of this State for generations and can give very good descriptions of the ranges of bird species within the State as well as reasons for the fluctuation of these ranges. We have considerable data on the behavior of our bird species to go with information on molts, nesting, food habits and so forth. Now the expanding human population is such that many bird species are threatened with loss of habitat as well as death by poisons intended for other biota.

We suddenly find that we can furnish community planners, who are interested in conserving our native fauna and flora as well as attractive natural areas, only generalizations. What are the minimum habitat requirements of any species? Are there key plants which signal, by their disappearance, the elimination of a certain bird species? What are the noise, air, and water pollution tolerances of any bird species? We may recommend that a certain saltwater marsh on Long Island be preserved in the hopes that the Seaside Sparrow will continue to nest therein — but will the birds really remain? — is the marsh too small? — is the noise or disturbance factor at a tolerable level? From these few sample questions one may see that we now need new parameters for some of our ornithological research. We need re-evaluation of old data and more species specific information than we now have. We know the plants furnishing food and shelter for the Seaside Sparrow but what size marsh would produce sufficient food and shelter plants and what factors affect this flora we don't know well enough.

Sadly, economics-minded planners, politicians, and general public are often unwilling or unable to set aside large areas based on generalities. Today large enough areas still exist in some metropolitan zones but all under the eye of some developer or industry. We can most effectively protect such natural areas by gathering *now* enough precise data to prove our case. Marsh species seem to be under the most imminent threat and there is yet time to measure the exact size and to note the prevailing plant and terrain conditions, especially where the rarer native species still exist, so this data will allow us to present better facts for the protection of other marshes and natural areas. There are some facts which only a professional could gather, but facts are what we need, and any small datum collected by even the rawest amateur could be most useful. It is something, we think, all our members and member clubs should consider.

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