

PRESIDENTS PAGE

When a reader turns to this page he expects to find the usual subject matter, be it an appeal for funds to preserve some ecologically unique area or for support of pending legislation vital to our future or for help on some special project of the organization. However, for this column I intend to write about something quite different.

As I contemplate the great increase of knowledge that has accumulated during the last three or four decades, as the result of exploration and research, I am happy at the corresponding growth of interest in many forms of natural history. With all the hustle, bustle, competition and mad races to exploit and expand in the name of progress, it is encouraging to learn that the average individual's attitude regarding nature has probably changed from indifference or apathy to curiosity, to genuine interest and more recently to real concern. The latter condition is no doubt due to the writings, scientific research and warnings of many famous ecologists. In my opinion, the writings of people such as Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Stuart Udall and Peter Farb have stimulated interest and aroused us from our former lethargy.

Important and challenging as all these writings are, I like to think of the saying attributed to Confucius about the one picture and the one thousand words. This brings me to the real object of my entire dissertation. I am truly amazed when I take note of the great number of exceptionally talented nature artists who are currently illustrating many of our popular field guides, state bird books etc. Prior to 1930 there were just a relatively few well known nature artists. Today we have several dozen or more who are extremely talented in this field. There is no need to mention their names, for they are well known to ornithologists, bird watchers and nature lovers generally. Original paintings, prints and sketches by many of them are in great demand and some bring very high prices. This remarkable increase in the number of talented artists in this field reflects the growing interest in our entire environment and also a deep concern for our endangered species. As an added tribute to these artists, I think that it should be mentioned that many of them are dedicated conservationists who have given much of their time and talents to stimulate interest in conservation and to furthering its cause.

There is no doubt in my mind but that these many talented artists, thru their work, have fostered a greater appreciation of all living things and have helped to give our hobby a better public image.

Kenneth D. Niven