

A STATEMENT OF THE POSITION OF THE FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF NON-GAME SPECIES IN NEW YORK STATE

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There is a growing interest in the non-consumptive enjoyment of our wildlife resources in the United States. The National Survey of Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation for 1975 (published in 1977) provides information on two aspects of the non-consumptive enjoyment of wildlife—wildlife observation and wildlife photography. In 1975 over 49 million Americans participated in wildlife observation, a level of participation second only to sport fishing in magnitude. Those 49 million Americans engaged in the activity of wildlife observation for a total of over 1.5 billion days, more than for any other category, including sport fishing and hunting. Nearly 15 million people participated in wildlife photography with a total of nearly 1.6 million days devoted to wildlife photography. In addition, 40% of fishermen and 44% of hunters also engaged in wildlife observation and 13% of fishermen and 14% of hunters also photographed wildlife.

Though few data are available to document the magnitude of our population specifically interested in bird study, the results of a 1974 study do offer some insight into the magnitude of that activity. That study reveals that the total direct expenditures in the United States for the enjoyment of non-game birds in 1974 amounted to an estimated \$500 million. Expenditures for bird seed, binoculars, and camera equipment constituted 95% of the total. In the same report, the expenditures associated with waterfowl hunting in 1974 were estimated to be about \$300 million, or only 60% of expenditures associated with the enjoyment of non-game birds. The study predicts a continued growth in the interest in non-game birds in this country.

There is a concern for non-game species management at both State and Federal levels. For example, the state of Colorado has implemented a non-game management program financed by means of a voluntary checkoff plan whereby taxpayers in that state can designate \$1, \$5, or \$10 from their state income tax refunds to go to a special non-game wildlife fund. This plan produced a revenue of \$345,000 for 1978 for the management of non-game species. When

combined with appropriated funds, Colorado's non-game budget for 1978 amounted to \$688,000. At the Federal level, the "Nongame Wildlife Conservation Bill of 1978" currently is being discussed in Congress. If passed, that bill would provide matching federal funding to states which develop acceptable non-game management programs.

Traditionally, the species population has been the focus of management efforts for game species. Game managers exercise control over the timing of harvest through the establishment of specified hunting seasons and regulate the amount of the game resource harvested through setting bag limits for game species. These methods are supplemented by various types of habitat manipulation and management, including the cutting of timber, mowing, plantings, and sometimes, prescribed burning. Obviously, the regulation of season and harvest are not techniques which can be applied in the management of the non-game resource.

The management of non-game species necessarily must focus on the management and preservation of suitable habitats to support those species. Such an approach requires new techniques and perhaps more importantly, new ways of thinking about the management of wildlife resources for both consumptive and non-consumptive enjoyment. Increasing pressures for land development, as well as current agricultural practices, have created an environmental patchwork of habitats. Suitable patches of habitats of various sizes now are distributed in a manner analogous to that of "islands" surrounded by "seas" of urban, suburban, or agricultural developments. To address this problem cogently and comprehensively requires that non-game species and their habitats must become the primary focus of specialized management efforts and new management concepts, rather than the secondary beneficiaries of management plans and methods developed for game species.

Over 550 species of reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals are reported to occur in New York State. Only 52 of those species are considered game species. Among those 550 species are included 410 species of birds. Clearly, any non-game species management plan for the State of New York will have to focus considerable attention on the avian component of non-game species in the State.

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs includes 42 member clubs, representing 10,000 citizens of New York State, united by their common interest in the birds of the state. Included among the

members of the Federation are many of the foremost professional ornithologists in New York State. The Federation recommends that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) should give more serious and concentrated attention to the development of a non-game species management program. In the absence of federal funding for such a program, the Federation recommends the DEC and the State Legislature explore alternative funding schemes, perhaps modelled after the plan implemented by the State of Colorado as discussed above. Further, the Federation wishes to advise the DEC that it is willing to make its knowledge and familiarity with the birds of New York State available in an advisory capacity to DEC with specific reference to the management of non-game species of birds.

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