

IN MEMORIAM

Maxwell Corydon Wheat, Jr. (1927-2016)

Maxwell C. Wheat, Jr., longtime Conservation Chairman of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, (predecessor to NYSOA), and founder and editor of *New York Birders*, the organization's newsletter, died June 7, 2016 in Alexandria, VA.

Max Wheat was born in Geneva, NY and graduated from Hobart and William Smith Colleges with a degree in English. Following service as a Marine in World War II, he went on to earn Masters degrees in English and education.

Max settled on the south shore of Long Island, where as an avid birder, he became involved with the Federation in the 1960s. In 1972 he began a periodic bulletin called *Conservation Now*. Out of this grew the now regular newsletter, *New York Birders*. He edited or co-edited this publication for 23 consecutive years. His knowledge and experience as a published writer and poet served him and the organization well in this role.

He also fully realized the importance of bird conservation and put in 12 years as chairman of the Conservation Committee. Max was so committed to this work that in 1970, then Federation President Edgar Reilly stated, "Max Wheat and conservation are synonyms."

In addition to his involvement with the Federation, Max was a prolific poet. His subjects were varied and broad and often included birds, but at times touched on controversial topics. In 2007 he was named Nassau County's first poet laureate. However there was opposition to this within the county legislature, due to the anti-war nature of some of his poems. Despite this rejection, his peers and community rallied behind him and gave him the title by acclaim.

For many Federation members, their fondest memory of Max are his readings of bird poems to close the papers session at the group's annual meetings. This was a tradition for many years and provided a thoughtful counterpoint to the scientific presentations.

Max Wheat received the Gordon M. Meade Distinguished Service Award in 1976 for his outstanding service to the Federation. In the 1998 supplement to *The Kingbird*, "Federation of New York State Bird Clubs History of the First Fifty Years", author Stanley Lincoln singled out Max Wheat for praise:

"Clearly, accolades must go to Wheat, who, in addition to his work on the Conservation Committee, produced an early publication, *Conservation Now*, and then edited *New York Birders* for nearly a quarter century. This rare combination must be viewed as fundamental to the success of our conservation focus."

Max Wheat is survived by his wife Ginger and three daughters. Our condolences go out to the Wheat family.