

BIRD-LORE

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# Bird-Lore

A Bi-Monthly Magazine devoted to the Study and Protection of Birds and Mammals

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BIRD-LORE'S MOTTO:

*A Bird in the Bush Is Worth Two in the Hand*

THE identity of wild-life interests with those of man has rarely been more clearly emphasized than in the articles by Dr. Finley, and Messrs. Cooke and Baker, in this issue of BIRD-LORE. It is especially fitting that these papers should be published hard on the heels of the St. Louis meeting of the General Wild-life Federation, where Secretary Wallace set the keynote: "Every form of life has value and interest," he said; "even the most insignificant creatures may be found to exercise the most profound influence upon mankind. . . . As I see it, the problem of wild-life restoration is fundamentally one of land utilization, a matter to which we have just begun to give effective consideration in the past ten years."

In this concept there is, we believe, more hope for the wild-life conservationist than has ever before been visible over a horizon clouded with confused ideas of conservation by means of incubators, game-farms, predator 'control,' and restrictive legalism. The broader realization of man's needs, and wild-life's needs, has literally come down to earth; but instead of the shock being the disillusion we associate with such an experience, the shock has been that of clear vision thrust suddenly upon us—much as certain blind men see again when their equilibrium has been terrifyingly disturbed.

One may carry the metaphor further, and recognize that the new realization is not entirely comfortable. We can see—but years of wandering at a loss in the wilderness are behind us. Whether we have come down to earth in time remains to be seen.

Flood-control—a matter for engineers and sociologists, but without the advice and services of the biologist, the work and wisdom of these men is as nothing. Reservoirs

may be built, and 'submarginal' farmers moved from exhausted land (some of which was 'born tired'), but unless there is control of waters where they fall, and in their course to the sea, experts in human and mechanical manipulation can merely postpone the evil day. Proper management of the land, the *sine qua non* of flood-control, means resting earth to provide wild-life crops, cover for birds, increased oxygen supplies for fishes and other forms of aquatic life.

The western plains—a great source of food for Americans of the present day, and many tomorrows, yet unless we revise our attitude toward it, this, one of the nation's greatest resources, will continue on the "easy Aver-nian descent." When such a basic resource goes, the 'American way' of the historians cannot linger far behind. Here are found the 'hereditary ranges' of some of our most striking wild life, and in the move to bring back the shallow seas of grass, we find an augur that should hearten every conservationist.

Wasted rivers—in many instances these have not been exploited and turned over to the greedy few as extensively as have the soil, the grasslands, the forests. Those who—legally or otherwise—would pirate our running waters will not find an apathetic, uninformed public, willing to turn its pockets inside out for the benefit of the few. Such organizations as the Audubon Association can make their will felt. If we did not appreciate the necessities that Dr. Finley has set before us, the fiasco of the New York State Barge Canal might be repeated indefinitely. With rivers preserved, wild life—the vast complex associated with rivers—will be conserved. A conservationist who was twenty-five years behind the times might think this was a queer way to go about saving salmon and Kingfishers. We, happily, know better.

We know better—we who have watched the evolution of this new concept of land utilization. But do the tailor on the East Side, the Maine lobsterman, the Minnesota farmer know better? Herein lies, in our opinion, the gravest challenge yet to be met by conservationists. And herein, since these are the voters who control this nation, may lie one of the most serious challenges facing democracy today. The necessity for conservation education can scarcely be exaggerated.