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COMMENTARY

YEAR-END MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, JANUARY 1989

First, let me say “*greetings*” to everyone, especially to all of you with whom I didn’t have a chance to speak personally at the 1988 Annual Conference here in Minneapolis. We were delighted with the enthusiasm of all participants and I want to say thank you again for participating. There were 462 registrants, 117 papers presented orally and 12 presented as posters; an excellent meeting! I’m always delighted to see so much interest in raptors . . . that is indeed our reason for getting together.

My objective for the rest of this letter is to report to you on our accomplishments during 1988 and to describe our goals for 1989. Our efforts this past year were aimed at 1) providing more direction to our organization and 2) setting up more structure for getting things done a little more easily—mostly spreading the work around a little more. Our accomplishments were:

1. updating the long-range plan
2. updating the bylaws
3. preparing an annual calendar (to assist in scheduling events, publications, etc.)
4. establishing lists of duties for all Officers, Directors and Committees (to help each of us do our jobs and to avoid overlap)
5. appointing new committees and trying to “activate” some existing committees with new leadership and new members

New committees were Rehabilitation, Bylaws, International Activities, and Membership

Also at the conference, we approved initiation of two more new committees: Conservation, and Development

6. handling more RRF business by mail and less at the annual conference
This a) permits getting more done each year and b) gives Board members more time to interact with RRF members at the annual conference and less time in board meetings
7. we increased our international activities and the number of international members
8. we increased RRF membership
9. we tried to “pull off” Earth Day II.

I believe we did pretty well with most of these accomplishments, i.e., we succeeded in setting up a better structure for getting more done more easily. Some of our new committees are just getting started but they appear to be on the right track. Dick Clark, our Vice President and President Elect, has done a lot with international activities. This is an area of great potential growth for RRF. We now have approximately 20 percent of our members from outside the U.S. and Canada. Dick has set up a program which will allow each of us to sponsor an international member who, or library which may either be under-funded or simply has trouble getting U.S. currency or its equivalent. I encourage you to participate in this program.

We didn’t do as much toward increasing membership as I’d have liked . . . there didn’t seem to be enough time. However, I’ve only set two goals for myself for next year:

1. increase membership
2. work with committees to help them get more active and to meet their goals. The activities of education and awards committees are ones I’m especially anxious to increase.

Our Membership Committee, of which I am a member, has a lot of ideas for increasing membership . . . you’ll be hearing more. If we get more members and thus more income, we’ll be able to offer more and/or larger awards, perhaps produce educational materials for distribution in third world countries, and be certain of being able to pay our bills.

I haven't mentioned Earth Day II. Deciding to take on a single conservation effort was a new direction for RRF. We've been involved in Peregrine, Bald Eagle and Osprey restorations, Condor management, etc., but to consider a broad, more inclusive effort was something different; something the Board agreed we might be ready to try. My idea was to try to stimulate the large and more influential conservation organizations to want an Earth Day II, then provide some organizational structure and workers from RRF. It was a long shot, but worth a try. I contacted the ten largest conservation organizations. Their responses were mixed; although generally all felt it was a good idea, they indicated that they were already overcommitted and unable to manage any more projects. Two organizations were willing to help if someone else would take the lead. This response was, of course, discouraging, so I made further contacts only to get less response or no response.

Until recently I felt that the effort had failed. However, Rich Howard (from Idaho) sent me an article from "Outside" magazine (May, 1988) which indicated that major conservation organizations have begun planning something called "Celebration of the Outdoors" or "Earth Day II." This may be a coincidence, but in any case I'm glad it will happen. We don't need to get credit . . . we need to get action. Also, the Minnesota Audubon Council President wrote me to say that the national office shared my letter with regional offices and that the letter stimulated a new column in their quarterly newsletter, entitled "Saving the World—Beginning at Home." (RRF was given credit for this idea in the first column.) The column will offer ideas for ways individuals can conserve, recycle, etc. This was the point of the original Earth Day. So, the notion has not died and maybe it will spread more widely with time.

All in all, I'm pretty pleased with our accomplishments this year and I look forward to even more next year and in future years. With regard to the future, the next conference will be in Vera Cruz, Mexico from 10–13 October 1989. Preliminary cost estimates indicate that this will be quite affordable. I'm excited about it. Dick Clark also has a lot of ideas for RRF and will have a chance to put them into action beginning in 1990.

While it is our pleasure to serve you, I'm sure Dick would agree if I say that we both need your help and support. Please let us, or any of the Board members, know how you feel about RRF activities. Also, let us know how you'd like to help. Thank you.—**Gary E. Duke, President.**