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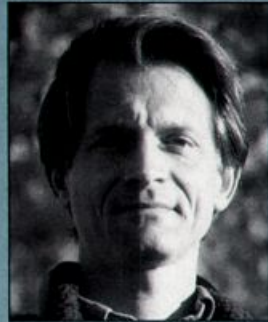
THERE ARE TIMES when you just have to plain admit that you were wrong. And, readers, this is one of those moments, as painful as it is to me and maybe to you. But confronted with the facts, there is only one honorable thing to do. So when President Bush aired his interpretation of the Los Angeles riots—that they were caused by the failed social programs of the '60s and '70s—I faced the music and realized I had sold the administration's analytical skills short.

The interesting thing about an epiphany like this is the opportunities it creates. Imagine what it would be like if you could believe what you hear from Marlin Fitzwater about global warming. Or from Dan Quayle on how the administration's friends really care about wetlands! Or from Agriculture Secretary Madigan about the Forest Service's commitment to multiple-use management of the national forests. Or from Rush Limbaugh, a conservative radio talk-show host, about the truth behind environmental science and ecofacism.

This idea has a lot going for it. We could all sleep at night. We could enjoy big cars, snow leopard coats, raw pork; we could stop petitioning local school districts to take Paul Bunyon books out of the elementary school libraries. We could not worry about exporting banned pesticides to developing countries because their citizens don't live long enough to die

J. P. Myers

FACTS, INFERENCES AND SHAMELESS SPECULATIONS



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from cancer, anyway. And best of all, we might get some real insights into why bird migration is virtually disappearing!

With that last issue always in mind, I called around to a few deep larynxes in the Administration to ask. It turns out—and you read it here first—that the very same people working on the Los Angeles problem are also doing the Administration's most sophisticated analyses on the causes of migration's collapse. That's how important this issue is to the President!

Their report isn't public yet—so much rests on the timing of its use—but the sources did reveal the lead hypotheses they are working on:

- Rowdy punk murrelets, looking for cheaper sources for mousse to get that much-desired, whiskered auklet look without having to go all the way to An-

chorage to a feather stylist, lured the Exxon Valdez aground with large speakers broadcasting the mating calls of female supertankers in heat. The rest is history.

- A conspiracy of Yellow-billed Loons, seeking to extend their breeding distribution into climes more moderate than the Arctic coastal plain, contracted with Hydro-Quebec to create a new system of large freshwater lakes on the southeastern shores of James Bay. The loons stand to get a two-fer here because the hydro-engineering will increase the heavy metals in their diet, decrease their buoyancy and

thereby increase the efficiency of their submarine fishing.

- A marginalized, flightless race of the Urubamba ant pitta successfully petitioned the World Bank to apply \$200,000,000 worth of DDT to rainforest Amazonia. Another two-fer: eliminate avian malaria vectors and at the same time produce a bumper crop of dead insects, giving the flightless pittas a competitive advantage over their flying conspecifics. Major problems, however, for migratory species whose physiology is sensitive to chlorinated hydrocarbons.

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- Seeking warmer winters, a dirty tricks brigade of resident passerines, red squirrels and right-to-die sea eagles sabotaged long-distance transmission of electricity, thereby decreasing the net efficiency of electricity generation and increasing carbon dioxide emissions. Their campaign got an unexpected boost when the bluebird lobby realized that global warming will produce a lot more dead trees for nesting, as well as better insect foraging in winter.

- The Interspecific, Intrageneric Union of *Sialis* Spp forged a coalition with the Northwest Red-backed Vole Association to lobby the United States Congress to increase the federally-set timber targets and thereby increase the rate of clear-cutting on national forests. The bluebirds benefit



Could this Phalarope secretly be behind the decline of all avian life? Photo by H. Cruickshank/VIREO


because they get more edge and open habitat, and the local economy will have more discretionary money for bluebird boxes. The voles win in the short-run because Spotted Owls lose. There seems to be something shortsighted about this strategy, but no one ever accused any vole of letting its brain cells get in the way of a population boom.

- Sandpipers, Phalaropes and Gulls United for Weird Sex underwrote nationwide efforts to remove local governments' abilities to set pesticide standards. They figure the more compounds out in the environment that disrupt sexual behavior and morphology by interfering with fetal development, the better.

- The death of Delaware Bay had nothing to do with agricultural runoff, really. Instead it was caused by a massive eutrophication event stimulated when the roughly 1.5 million shorebirds that move through that estuary targeted chicken farms in the Bay's watershed in interspecific fecal

warfare. Spokesbirds for the terrorist strike claim they are merely emulating United States Presidential politics.

I know you're asking why environmentalists and the professional ornithological community failed so miserably in getting to these root causes of migration's impending failure. The simple fact is that it took analysts with a more dispassionate view of how the world works than is possessed by folks always moaning about human impacts on the environment.

The brilliance of the analyses is that they put that blame back squarely where it belongs—right on the wings of the birds that migrate. And since they're causing it, they can solve it. Or so says Deep Larynx. That way the Administration can focus on real problems... like studying how failed Treasury policies of the '60s and '70s caused the S & L and banking crises. 

—J.P. Myers is Director of the W. Alton Jones Foundation