

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Conservation Education

Two recent articles by Aldo Leopold should be read by every member of the Club. Each can be read in a few minutes; each deserves long reflection. The following quotations are but samples, not summaries, and will not spoil the fun of reading the complete articles.

From "Land Use and Democracy" (*Aud. Mag.*, 44, Sept.-Oct., 1942: 259-265):

"Conservation is our attempt to put human ecology on a permanent footing. Milk-and-water education has convinced people that such an attempt should be made, and they have told their government to act for them. Some other force must now persuade them to act for themselves.

"Money-minded people think they are acting when they pay taxes. This hallucination, during the 'defense' period, nearly cost us the war. It will cost us our natural resources if we persist in it.

"To analyze the problem of action, the first thing to grasp is that government, no matter how good, can only do certain things. Government can't raise crops, maintain small scattered structures, administer small scattered areas, or bring to bear on small local matters that combination of solicitude, foresight, and skill which we call husbandry. Husbandry watches no clock, knows no season of cessation, and for the most part is paid for in love, not dollars. Husbandry of somebody else's land is a contradiction in terms. Husbandry is the heart of conservation.

"The second thing to grasp is that when we lay conservation in the lap of the government, it will always do the things it can, even though they are not the things that most need doing.

"The present over-emphasis on game farms, fish hatcheries, nurseries and artificial reforestation, importation of exotic species, predator control, and rodent control is here in point. These are things government can do. Each has an alternative, more or less developed, along naturalistic lines, *i.e.*, management or guidance of natural processes. Research shows these alternatives to be, in general, superior. But they involve husbandry, which government can do only on its own lands. Government lands are a minor fraction of our land area. Therefore government neglects the superior things that need doing, and does the inferior things that it can do. It then imputes to these things an importance and an efficacy they do not merit, thus distorting the growth of public intelligence.

"This whole twisted confusion stems from the painless path, from milk-and-water education, from prolonging our reliance on vicarious conservation." (p. 262.)

From "Wildlife in American Culture" (*Jour. Wildlife Manag.* 7, 1943:1-6):

"Ornithology, mammalogy, and botany, as now known to most amateurs, are but kindergarten games compared with researches in these fields. The real game is decoding the messages written on the face of the land. By learning how some small part of the biota ticks, we can guess how the whole mechanism ticks.

"Few people can become enthusiastic about research as a sport because the whole structure of biological education is aimed to perpetuate the professional research monopoly. To the amateur is allotted only make-believe voyages of discovery, the chance to verify what professional authority already knows. This is false; the case of Margaret Nice proves what a really enterprising amateur can do. What the youth needs to be told is that a ship is a-building in his own mental dry-dock, a ship with freedom of the seas. If you are a pessimist, you can say that this ship is 'on order'; if an optimist you can see the keel." (p. 5.)—F. N. H.

Winter Feeding

"Few pleasures are more fascinating than watching birds feeding at window-shelves and at stations near our houses . . . But let us be sincere with ourselves and not count this feeding as a virtue nor take credit for our generosity. The statement of the National Audubon Society that 'wildlife is at the weather's mercy during periods of subnormal winter temperatures and snow' is without foundation in fact. The birds do very well without us. Nature has taught them how and

where and in what latitude they can best feed themselves. The greatest consideration we can show to birds is to protect their natural environment. When this is impossible, the best feeding of birds is done by natural plantings. What birds need most is *protection from interference*.

"The bird feasts that we spread often set up false conditions . . . We learn little of the balance of nature when we observe it through a pane of glass. . . .

"But if you have already taught birds to abandon their wild ways be sure to continue to feed them until the coming of spring. In the event of an ice storm which covers ground and bark and standing seeds with a hard coating of ice, grain and other food scattered widely over the countryside may save many birds—particularly if an unseasonable ice storm should come in the spring after the migrating birds have arrived from the south." (Rosalie Edge, "Conservation for Victory," *Emerg. Cons. Com., Ann. Rep.*, 1942, Publ. 88, April, 1943:26.)

Mrs. Edge's example of the ice storm would seem to come very close to the Audubon Society's account of the effects of "subnormal" weather, and in any case couples poorly with the flat statements of her opening paragraph. Nevertheless, if she may here—as elsewhere—be criticized for driving a generality too far, she has a factual starting point which she has not hesitated to bring forward, even though the facts may be displeasing to many of her readers. The necessity for winter feeding of songbirds has been increasingly questioned of late. There can be little doubt that artificial winter feeding is being greatly over-emphasized as a conservation measure. In short, it is well to examine critically the idea of winter feeding, but it is too soon to consider the question settled. Meanwhile, remember Mrs. Edge's good advice: when you do start to put out feed next winter, don't stop until spring.—F. N. H.

Small Arms Ammunition for Civilian Use Rationed in Canada

Because of a two-thirds reduction, as compared with 1942, in the amount of necessary metal available for the manufacture of small arms ammunition for civilian use, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board of Canada has issued an Order, effective on March 24, 1943, which sets up rationing regulations to ensure that the reduced supply of such ammunition goes to essential users.

A spokesman for the Board pointed out that the supply of copper alloys is limited and that since such materials are required for both munitions for war purposes and ammunition for civilian use, curtailment of output of ammunition of the latter type is now necessary to safeguard the flow of materials for direct war use.

The Order divides Canada into remote areas and settled areas, as defined therein, and names eight classes of non-military "essential users" of small arms ammunition, including police; guards of commercial establishments; licensed trappers; prospectors; persons who rely on the hunting of wild game and birds for food; persons who require ammunition as a means of protecting live stock, poultry, and crops; gun clubs with special written permission to obtain ammunition; and certain defense units not organized under the Militia Act but furnished with written permission to obtain ammunition. Essential users resident in remote areas may purchase necessary ammunition without special formality, but those resident in settled areas may purchase ammunition only upon their completing and filing certificates of essentiality and, in some cases, obtaining the approval of their local ration board. Purchases of ammunition for the Dominion Government or for the government of any province are not affected by the order. Persons who desire to hunt for sport or for a non-essential food supply may not purchase ammunition for those purposes, but may use any ammunition that they may have had in their possession when the order became effective.—Harrison F. Lewis.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
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