

# Conservation

. . . with Marie Mellinger

## YOUTH AND CONSERVATION

JAMES W. REINIG, Guest Columnist

If one looks at today's active "ecology" groups, one will notice that most of them have something in common: they are usually primarily composed of and run by young people. This is interesting when one realizes that many people consider the youth of today to be apathetic to "old" ideas such as conservation. So why should the young people of this nation be so concerned with ecology and conservation? By examining the motives of various ecology groups the answer can be easily discerned.

Ecology related groups today range in interests from old-fashioned conservation to such modern concepts as material recycling and pollution and pesticide control. However, all of these groups have the same general purpose, that is to guard and protect our natural heritage, even though they go about it in many different ways.

Organizations like the Nature Conservancy try to gain immediate protection of land and wildlife by buying blocks of land and setting up nature sanctuaries. Recycling groups have a more farsighted approach. They try to get the maximum use from a natural material, paper or aluminum for example. Their logic is that the more paper or aluminum one can use over, the fewer trees that will have to be cut down or the smaller amount of land that will have to undergo the ravaging effects of mining. Some eco-groups serve as watchdogs over polluting cities and factories. One of the largest and most active conservation groups is made up solely of young people. The six million members of the Boy Scouts of America are dedicated to protecting nature and promoting conservation.

Many people are "ecologists" on their own, that is not belonging to any organization. Most of the volunteers to clean up the effects of oil spills, for example, are just individuals that want to lend a hand in cleaning up our environment.

The unifying idea among all these groups is always to try to protect nature from the assaults of man. It is to fight for our natural heritage so that following generations might have the opportunity to enjoy it also.

When one realizes the latter purpose of these groups, the answer to our question becomes obvious. It is the young people who are going to live in this environment for the next half century or so. They do not want to be forced to breathe polluted air and drink dirty water in the 21st century. They want their children to have the same chance to enjoy nature that they had.

The reason is not so cloudy after all. Young people regard ecology and conservation as a matter of survival — their own.—1014 Stanton Drive, North Augusta, S.C. 29841.

[James W. Reinig is an Eagle Scout and one of four young men from North Augusta, S.C., who received Hornaday Award Medals from the Boy Scouts of America for their outstanding contribution to conservation in working for protection of birds of prey in South Carolina. A 1972 honor graduate of North Augusta High School, Jim is currently a freshman at Harvard University. Jim's paper on the nesting habits of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers received a first place award in the biological sciences from South Carolina Junior Academy of Sciences in 1972. As a result of his scholastic ability and

achievements in conservation, Jim has received a grant from the Explorer's Club of New York City, which he plans to use in the summer of 1973 to study the natural history of Nepal. We are truly proud to have young men like Jim Reinig working to make our world a better place to live in this century and the next.—ED.]

### **What Happened to Arbor Day?**

April has three holidays that should be celebrated in all of our schools and by all bird, botany, and conservation groups. The first holiday was Arbor Day. The idea for a special tree planting day originated with J. Sterling Morton, and the date of the first Arbor Day was 10 April 1872. Arbor day became part of the spring school schedule in Ohio, New York, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan, where the children studied trees and took part in special programs and tree planting ceremonies. Some of these states even printed a glossy publication on nature and conservation for the use of the schools. Birdsey Northrup of Connecticut traveled and lectured on the need for the conservation of trees and the Arbor Day concept.

What happened to Arbor Day? Perhaps we need a modern day Northrup. Edward P. Cliff, of the U.S. Forest Service wrote, "trees are increasingly recognized as a vital asset in soil and water conservation and in upgrading the quality of the whole environment. The potential benefits are many, cooling shade, better air to breathe, protection from winds, habitat for birds and wildlife, a pleasant and serene environment, and an increase in natural beauty." Arbor Day was such a simple idea, perhaps we need to return to a simple idea in our complex society.

Bird Day was an offshoot of Arbor Day, and originated in Pennsylvania in 1894. It was sometimes celebrated on the second Friday in April, but more often combined with Arbor Day as Arbor and Bird Day. Trees and birds definitely go together. An important part of every Arbor Day was putting out birdhouses. This again is a simple concept that should gain more importance today. David H. Kennemur, of Spartanburg, S.C., wrote, "One small nestbox for bluebirds, a better world for Mankind."

All birders everywhere should combine and lobby to make 26 April a national holiday! Why? Because that is the birthday of John James Audubon. What better time for a birder to be born than April, when the air is alive with bird wings, and the morning chorus of bird song fills the air? In the Audubon opera, *Mirror for the Sky*, Jessamyn West wrote, "He painted himself in every picture so he would never die." But much greater than any of the Audubon bird paintings is the movement he started, or that started in his name, a movement that has grown from merely looking at birds, to preserving their habitat, to a total concept of the bird, the tree, and the environment.

Plant a tree and put up a birdhouse! A simple thing for each person to do. Multiply this by thousands and make this a better world.

### **Special Note**

By this time most of you have probably viewed *Deliverance*, or at least seen the film clips on television. The picture was partially filmed on the Chattooga River, but the beauty of the river is obscured by the violence of the action. The constant theme is that of "man as a natural killer who must conquer nature." It would be more fitting and more in keeping with the beautiful river if man learned to live with it instead of against it!