INTRODUCTION:
PLACES TO HIDE AND SEEK

At the beginning of the twentieth century, long before "endangered species" became a household term, the forerunners of the National Audubon Society were determined to set aside essential habitat for birds. Pioneers in wildlife conservation such as George Bird Grinnell, William Dutcher, T. Gilbert Pearson, Teddy Roosevelt, and Ludlow Griscom realized that, in order to survive, each species requires a unique combination of plants, animals, climate, soil, and water. In addition to these environmental factors, birds of value to the millinery trade or as food for the table had to be protected from market hunters.

Early in the twentieth century, the Florida Audubon Society, then in its infancy, was determined to set aside, as a sanctuary, an egret rookery at Cuthbert Lake in the Florida Everglades. At the time, an ounce of gold was worth thirty-two dollars, as were the plumes of a single egret. Since egret plumes were literally worth their weight in gold, it is not surprising that plume hunters looked upon any egret colony as a source of instant wealth.

Guy Bradley, a young man with an intense interest in wildlife and a native of Cape Sable, Florida, was thoroughly familiar with Cuthbert Lake. He readily accepted the Florida Audubon Society's offer to patrol

and protect this rookery for the generous salary of thirty-five dollars per month. Kirk Munroe, of the Florida Audubon Society, wrote to Mrs. Kingsmill Marrs, president of Florida Audubon, about his young friend, describing him as "a thorough woodsman, a plume hunter by occupation before the passage of the present law, since which time, as I have ample testimony, he has not killed a bird . . . I know of no better man for game warden in the whole state."

On July 8, 1905, plume hunters murdered Guy Bradley. Later two other Audubon sanctuary wardens met the same fate.

In those early days, the Florida Audubon Society, like the Audubon Societies in Massachusetts and New Jersey, was reluctant to become an affiliate of the National Association of Audubon Societies. It took the diplomacy and organizational skill of Carl W. Buchheister to weld the reluctant state Audubon Societies into what is now the National Audubon Society.

Today the common egret is truly common; the snowy egret is likewise; and the reddish egret is out of danger. Egret plumes no longer appear on ladies' hats; egret breasts are nestled down on eggs or young in nests instead of roasting pans. Can we conclude that Guy Bradley did not die in vain?

In those days, state and federal wildlife agencies showed little or no concern for any wildlife species not ranked as "economically important." Hunters were willing to buy licenses to hunt waterfowl, doves, and gallinaceous birds such as turkeys, grouse, and quail, thus providing some income for the agencies. Consequently, some effort was put forth by federal wildlife enforcement agents to protect and manage migratory species such as waterfowl, woodcocks, and doves, while responsibility for nonmigrants such as quail, grouse, and turkeys was left up to the states. Over lengthy and determined opposition, state and federal laws were eventually enacted that outlawed the sale of wild birds for food and feathers. While such action came too late to save the passenger pigeon, it provided vital support to the Audubon sanctuary managers.

But no matter how effective protection from nets and guns may prove to be, each species has special requirements for nesting, brood rearing, and escape from natural enemies. Meeting these requirements and protecting birds from hunter disturbance is the principal aim of the National Audubon Society wildlife sanctuaries.

Prior to the mid-1920s, the National Audubon Society's main concern

was rallying and organizing interest in birds. In 1903 President Teddy Roosevelt established the first national wildlife refuge, Pelican Island, in Indian River, Florida.

In 1923 T. Gilbert Pearson persuaded the General Land Office of Texas to give the Audubon Society a fifty-year lease (renewed in 1973) on 3,871 acres in Laguna Madre. The lease included Green Island, east of Brownsville, site of the largest colony of reddish egrets in North America, and farther north near Corpus Christi, the group known as Three Islands, North Bird Island, and South Bird Island, all containing thriving wading-bird colonies.

In 1924 National Audubon established its largest wildlife sanctuary, the Paul J. Rainey, in the brackish marshes of southwestern Louisiana. This was the beginning of the wildlife management program that now embraces some 150,000 acres in one-hundred sanctuaries.

Prior to 1966, when National Audubon established its Wildlife Sanctuary Department, Alexander Sprunt Jr. was responsible for five sanctuaries in Florida, one in Louisiana, and six islands along the Texas coast.

Sprunt was uniquely qualified to be director of southern sanctuaries when the National Audubon president, John H. Baker, appointed him in 1935. Alex grew up in South Carolina's low country and was thoroughly acquainted with native wildlife, author of *The Birds of South Carolina,* and curator of ornithology at the Charleston Museum of Natural History.

In California, William Goodall, former director of the Audubon Camp of the West, was the logical man to direct the programs at three sanctuaries in California.

Alex and Bill reported to NAS president John Baker in the Audubon office in New York City.

Carl W. Buchheister succeeded Baker in 1959. Buchheister and executive vice president Charles H. Callison decided in 1966 that the growing number and diversity of Audubon sanctuaries necessitated establishment of a single department with overall responsibility for managing them. I became the first director of the National Audubon Society Sanctuary Department in 1966.

Before joining the National Audubon staff, I spent twenty years as manager of the oldest private duck-hunting club in North America. The Winous Point Shooting Club on Sandusky Bay, off southwestern Lake Erie, was founded in 1856 and is still active.

I was hired by Windsor T. White, president of the club and president

of White Motors Corporation. After surveying the marsh, I told White it was dominated by cattail, a good muskrat food, but of no value to those flat-faced ducks and geese. I could replace it with choice waterfowl food plants such as Walter's millet, rice-cutgrass, and several species of smartweed (a close relative of domestic buckwheat). But it would cost upward of a million dollars and could take six to eight years to establish the necessary water control.

White said, "Aldo Leopold suggested I hire you and I did. What you recommend, I will support. But you'd better know what you're doing."

"Fair enough," said I.

Fortunately, two club members were interested in general ornithology or bird watching; another was interested in botany. With allies such as these, I eventually persuaded the club to establish a scholarship program at Winous Point whereby graduate students could do research on any phase of marsh ecology. This program is still active, and today alumni hold important positions in various state, federal, and private wildlife agencies. Robert L. Meeks and Robert Hoffman of Ducks Unlimited are cases in point, as are John Koerner and Ralph Andrews with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Robert Donohoe and Karl Bednarik, formerly with the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

Working with wealthy duck hunters and advanced students of wildlife biology is not so different from working with the board of directors of National Audubon, administrators such as Buchheister, Callison, Elvis J. Stahr, and a competent staff of professional wildlife managers on Audubon wildlife sanctuaries.

In 1974 I realized that the national office in New York was a long way from the marshes of Louisiana, the islands along the Texas coast, the prairie potholes of North Dakota, the spruce-fir forests of Maine, the arid lands of Arizona, or the chaparral of California.

To keep the board, administrators, and sanctuary managers in closer contact, I started our newsletter entitled *Places to Hide and Seek.* Six issues of these newsletters were written per year, based on reports from the wardens. Each issue covered three or four sanctuaries and was usually about five printed pages in length.

I hope excerpts from those newsletters will give you, the reader, an intimate look at some of the people, places, plants, and animals found on National Audubon Society sanctuaries.

Deciding which sanctuaries to include in this book was not easy. Each

has one or more unique features. Corkscrew Swamp in southwest Florida is the only remnant of virgin bald cypress on the continent and contains the largest colony of the endangered wood stork. On Lake Okeechobee, by educating duck hunters and by providing and protecting a safe nesting area, Rod Chandler brought the endangered Everglade kite population up to a safe level. At Beideler Forest in South Carolina, we saved a remnant of the virgin cypress-tupelo swamp forest and gradually restored most of the original Four Hole Swamp. Every duck species that nests in North Dakota nests at the Alkali Lake Sanctuary near Jamestown, North Dakota, and we restored much of its native grassland and stopped the disastrous soil erosion on the hillsides. We hope to use it as a demonstration of sound land management, which is relatively rare in North Dakota.

In Maine, Steve Kress brought the puffins back from the verge of extirpation, and the camp program is a unique educational effort in marine biology. At the Lillian Annette Rowe near Gibbon, Nebraska, migrating sandhill cranes find food and shelter every spring, and nearby fields contain restored native prairie.

The Starr Ranch in southern California is a stronghold for the endangered California gnatcatcher and the plant community called coastal sage scrub.

It is safe to say other sanctuaries are equally valuable from the conservation standpoint but may lack unique features and so are not included in this book.

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