

## Editorial

Harold Gilliam in *Audubon* (March-April, 1968, pp. 45-65), with a supporting picture essay by Rondal Partridge, describes "The rape of San Francisco Bay." He explains how San Francisco Bay, an incomparable harbor, is an extension of the Pacific Ocean, formed at the end of the last ice age when the rising sea flowed through a river-carved gorge, the Golden Gate, to flood a long valley in the Coast Range. The Bay is 50 miles long, and once contained more than 700 square miles of blue water. It is the favourite resting and feeding habitat for thousands of migratory birds of the Pacific Flyway. It is the home of countless animals which live in its fertile marshes. Four million people live in the area; many more will come. But already some are beginning to realize that this wonderful place is being steadily and relentlessly destroyed.

San Francisco Bay is the most important single stopping place for birds in the Pacific Flyway. About a million waterfowl, mostly ducks, winter on the bay, and along the tidal flats there may be at times as many as 30,000 shorebirds per mile. In this area the cities are actively expanding into the bay from all sides. The bay's original 700-square-mile area has been diminished to 400 square miles. Of 300 square miles of natural marshland only 75 are left. There is scarcely a cove, inlet or marsh remaining which has not been marked for filling, for freeways, airports, playing fields, factories, shopping centers, subdivisions or one of at least 32 garbage disposal sites.

Now communities around the shores of San Francisco are concerned about preserving and improving their waterfronts. They are beginning to prohibit more filling of the bay; they are beginning to control and prevent further pollution of its water and air. They claim the right to prevent destruction of their environment which belongs not only to them but also to future generations. If the "Save-the-Bay people" accomplish a near miracle and save something of the natural area in which they have grown up and to which they have become deeply attached, they will be an inspiration to us all.

We may feel that Saskatchewan does not have the problems of a large urban complex like San Francisco. But if we stop to think seriously, we must realize that we, too, have problems of water pollution, soil and air pollution, and the rapid and irreparable loss of natural areas. For example, our fertile grasslands with their shallow, easily drained sloughs are disappearing too soon and too completely from the Saskatchewan scene. In the SNHS we have been interested in promoting the idea of a national grassland park, not only because such a park would provide a way for Canadians to come to know and appreciate what our great plains were like in the days before settlement, but also because it would guarantee the preservation of a worthwhile segment of grassland.

As individuals, many of us can help by saving a few small corners, woods, grassy slopes or sloughs from the bulldozer or from overgrazing. All concerned individuals, however, have another channel for action. Societies like our SNHS which are trying to set up sanctuaries to preserve wildlife and its native habitat are in urgent need of support. The pressure to grow cash crops like wheat often forces the clearing of areas which are not really suited for cultivation. Large tracts of marginal farmland such as those pictured in the cover photo might much better have been preserved as grassland. Wide open grasslands will be valued more and more as an urban civilization closes in upon us. In our materialistically oriented society we forget too often the intangible worth of wildness and open spaces.

In order to promote projects devoted to saving natural areas we need a national voice. This necessitates a closer association of all conservation-minded Canadians. Nor should this cooperation stop at our border. It has been most encouraging to the SNHS in the past year to learn of the vigorous development of a new society to the south of us—the North Dakota Natural Science Society which is now publishing the first issue of its new journal, *The Prairie Naturalist*. We shall welcome this journal warmly, for its name tells us that our two societies have a common cause.

George F. Ledingham.