

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

AN EDITORIAL HOBBY HORSE

Several times during the past few weeks administrators and "men-in-the-street" not directly involved in Science have expressed their misgivings to me about scientists and the "environmental bandwagon" as it has come to be called. There has been much discussion of late as to whether churchmen should pronounce on what the politicians say are political issues and, indeed, whether some politicians, themselves, should speak about matters falling within another's portfolio. As ornithologists, we fall between the two camps. Some of us are professional scientists, therefore we must preserve our objectivity. But we may be only "amateurs" in ornithology, perhaps only marginally qualified. Are we entitled to speak out on environmental issues involving birds simply because we wear the white laboratory coat of the scientist? The question is not easy to answer, especially when it comes from those little able to distinguish between the man and his apparel. Perhaps we have to make it abundantly clear whether we are talking with our coats on or off. Objectivity is not, however, the prerogative of the scientist and we must all take care that emotion does not blind us to facts and sound propositions.

BioScience, February 1972, the journal of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, carries a timely editorial, "Scientists and the Environmental Bandwagon," in which this theme is developed. All thinking laymen and scientists involved in environmental work, alike, who make up, in fact, the bulk of the OSNZ, should read this, and, also, a similar message concerning "The responsibility of the professional ecologist in the preservation of natural areas" appearing in the *Ohio Journal of Science*, January 1972. Copies of both these papers are available from the OSNZ's library. Let me quote the concluding paragraph of the *BioScience* editorial:

"Our fragile earth is in serious danger. We need level heads, prepared minds, careful and meticulous analyses and sound scientific programs and solutions. Objectivity must be exercised by both environmentalists and their critics. All scientists who have abandoned objectivity must become scientists again. Careful laboratory and field work must replace blind guesses and wild extrapolation. We need scientific leadership that will win the confidence of laymen and people in government."

References: BEHNKE, J. A. 1972. Scientists and the environmental bandwagon. *BioScience* 22 (2): 73; STANSBERRY, D. H. 1972. The responsibility of the professional ecologist in the preservation of natural areas. *The Ohio Journal of Science* 72 (1): 1-3.