

Whitney

In 1901, he sold his first article on wildlife to the New York Herald for \$25. After subsequent publication of articles in Scribners, St. Nicolas and Munsey's magazines, Baynes landed his dream job as a syndicated wildlife newspaper columnist and lecturer.

While visiting the Cincinnati Zoo, Baynes was shocked to witness the last passenger pigeons on Earth nearing death – remnants of a flock estimated at 2 million birds. Baynes was equally horrified by the decimation of entire bird populations by the ladies (feathered) hat industry. On June 8, 1910, Baynes delivered his famous lecture, "How To Attract Wild Birds," at Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, New Hampshire, raising \$25 for his cause and founding the first bird club in America.

As a result, "bird fever" spread like wildfire in Meriden and beyond. In 1911, Helen Woodruff, a resident of Connecticut, donated \$1,000 to the cause, funds the bird club used to acquire a 32-acre abandoned farm to create a "Bird Sanctuary." On Sept. 13, 1913, Baynes organized an evening masque, a lavishly costumed pantomime play based on mythical themes featuring masked players, to call national attention to the plight of endangered birds.

At the time, the summer White House was located in a mansion located a few miles from the Meriden-Cornish area of New Hampshire, in the home owned by novelist Winston Churchill. President Woodrow Wilson and the first lady attended the debut performance, as their daughter, Margaret, sang the opening song. Another daughter, Eleanor, played the lead role of Bird Spirit.

The excitement generated by the Bird Masque spurred Baynes to take his lecture and masque on the road, via the Chataqua circuit. The Bird Masque was performed in 120 towns to an audience estimated at 200,000 people. On Feb. 24, 1914, the Hotel Astor hosted a finale performance for an audience of 2,000 sponsored by Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, garnering accolades from President Woodrow Wilson and former President Theodore Roosevelt.

The passion of Baynes, and its ripple effect across America, speaks for itself. By

1916, just two years later, more than 200 bird clubs had formed in 23 states. Baynes put birds into the national spotlight, setting the stage for the MBTA, the first version of which was signed in 1916, an agreement between the U.S. and Great Britain to protect migratory birds. Congress authorized the MBTA in 1918. Now you know – "the rest of the story."

Fall migration is a prime time to think about birds. Thinking about just one species might put the gargantuan topic of birds, and the increasing perils they face, into perspective. The Blackburnian Warbler, with its fiery orange head, weighing less than an ounce, lives in the Northeast U.S., the Great Lakes, and Canada. For thousands of years, this tiny bird has flown each year to the Andes Mountains in South America. But its migration path has become increasingly treacherous because of people, plastic, glass and light, among many other impediments.

People have taken up thousands of acres of natural habitat. Plastic: Not only are birds of all species caught in webs of plastic waste, in the water and on land, they ingest it because it smells like food, consuming trace metals that bind to the plastic – high concentrations of chromium and silver that poison birds. "Whether you have six small pieces, or you have 276 large pieces, in an animal, the plastic does the same thing: it introduces contaminants," said Australian wildlife ecologist Jennifer L. Lavers in the Journal Environmental Pollution.

Glass towers and windows confuse birds. Window decals help birds only if they are placed in a grid with spaces no larger than 2" by 4." Other preventative solutions for new buildings include bird-friendly architectural glass products printed with UV grids as birds can see UV light while humans cannot.

Light is also a frightening obstacle for birds, especially during long migrations, many of which happen at night – but there are ways to help migrating birds. In Galveston, Texas, American National Insurance, a 32-story skyscraper, typically shines 20 beams of light each night to illuminate its plaza. Audubon volunteers documented that 395 warblers, grosbeaks, and other passerines flew into the dazzling floodlights, colliding with the building's windows – in just

one night, with only three birds rescued the next morning. Further research showing that 25 different species of passerines were killed in one week spurred American National Insurance to agree to turn off their floodlights for the remainder of the migration season.

The 9/11 Tribute as it shines upward from lower Manhattan, with its two blue beams of 7,000-watt bulbs reaching four miles into the sky, is visible for 60 miles. During migration season, New York City Audubon volunteers stand beneath the beams of light in two-hour shifts, scanning the beams, counting birds. Every time 1,000 birds or more are circling the beam, or if an exhausted bird plummets to the ground, they alert the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, which immediately turns off the lights for 20 minutes, giving birds a chance to clear the area. In 2010, a new moon and cloudy skies resulted in an estimated 10,000 birds being caught through the night migration at this one memorial – so the lights were shut down five times.

There are hundreds of ways to help birds, all documented on Year of the Bird website. Here are a few: (1) Make your backyard a bird oasis. (2) Learn to identify birdsong. The free Merlin Bird ID app helps you identify 650 US/Canadian birds. (3) Create communities, share your passion. (4) Forgo pesticides. (5) Buy grass-fed meat, as it supports grassland birds. (6) Lights Out. (The U.S. Lights Out Movement began in Chicago where bird deaths at just one building reduced by 83 percent when lights were turned off. Researchers estimate that Chicago's program saves 10,000 birds yearly). (7) Part with plastic. (8) Curb your cat indoors or in "kitty condos" outdoors. (An estimated 150 million outdoor cats kill up to 3.7 billion birds a year).

The raptors are coming. September marks the beginning of raptor migration. New Hampshire Audubon welcomes visitors to two raptor observatories, Carter Hill Orchard in Concord and Pack Monadnock Miller State Park in Peterborough, to watch raptors pass overhead as staff members tally trends in raptor populations through October.

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