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First Annual Report:

Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge, Inc.

by

H. Harrison Clarke, President  
Board of Trustees

In accordance with the By-Laws, an Annual Report meeting of the Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge, Inc., must be held each year. The present meeting is in compliance with this legal mandate. Several reports will be made at this meeting, including a President's report as herein presented.

Origin of the Refuge

Considerable discussion was held by the Allen Bird Club during the year 1949-50 relative to the establishment of a bird sanctuary in the Longmeadow flats area. As a result of the rapid destruction of the natural habitat of the area by the removal of top soil and reclamation for agricultural purposes, the Club realized that before long one of the few excellent birding areas remaining in the environs of Springfield would be lost. As a consequence, a Committee was appointed to consider this problem. The members were: Harold E. Dickey, Chairman, John Brainerd, Robert D. Edwards, Mildred Tyler, and Ernest Yates. Later, Robert Edwards became Chairman; and H. Harrison Clarke was added as a member.

During 1950-51, the Sanctuary Committee completed a survey of the various parcels of property that might be secured for a refuge and prepared a statement of estimated cost. The Allen Bird Club then authorized the Committee to proceed with incorporation and with raising money for the purchase of land and other costs. It was decided to adopt the name of Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge, thus commemorating a revered naturalist who did much to advance nature study for many years in the Springfield school system.

The process of incorporation went forward during the summer and fall of 1951. The following eight incorporators were elected by the Allen Bird Club, and served as its Board of Trustees for the first year:

- H. Harrison Clarke, President
- Harold E. Dickey, Vice-President
- Mildred Tyler, Secretary
- Ernest Yates, Treasurer
- Robert D. Edwards
- J. Edward Hyde
- George Rice
- William Tompkins

On November 29, 1951, official word was received from the Office of Edward J. Cronin, Secretary of State, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, that the charter had been issued and duly signed. Because of "Nature of organization and its fine purposes," Secretary Cronin indicated a desire to present the Charter in person to officers of the Refuge. As a consequence, the following members of the Board of Trustees assembled in the Secretary's Boston Office and received the Charter on March 21, 1952: Clarke, Hyde, Rice, and Tompkins. A photograph of the occasion was taken and has been placed in the archives of the corporation.

The process of incorporating the Refuge was directed by Harold Tickey. Legal matters were attended by Attorney Louis W. Deberly of Springfield. Gratitude is expressed to these individuals for their generous support and help.

#### Acquisition of Property

The property for the Refuge was located in Longmeadow flats between Meadow Road and the Connecticut State line, with frontage on the Connecticut river. The existing area was broken into small sections, ranging from one to thirty-eight acres, owned by a number of individuals and the Town of Longmeadow. Title searches were made by Peter Sherman Meltzer, who also performed other real estate services. Harvey and Mulcare, Attorneys, fulfilled the legal requirements.

Once the Charter was issued, the acquisition of land commenced. Part of the property was purchased outright; other plots were acquired on ten-year lease. The present distribution is as follows:

Owned	59 acres
Leased	<u>48</u>
Total	107 acres

The greatest problem facing the Sanctuary Committee, the Allen Bird Club, and the Board of Trustees in connection with the Refuge was to raise sufficient money for the purchase of property, for legal fees, and for other expenses. The money was raised largely from individual gifts ranging from \$1.00 or less to \$500.00. Three other sources of funds should be mentioned with gratitude: the annual rummage sale conducted by the ladies of the Club, which nets around \$135.00 each year; the efforts of the junior members of the Club in making and selling bird houses, feeding stations, etc., for the benefit of the Refuge, and the sale of Christmas cards by Mildred Tyler.

In this first annual report, too, special mention should be made of the effective efforts of Robert D. Edwards, who has left Springfield and is now residing in South Carolina. It is no exaggeration to say that he, more than any other person, is responsible for successfully launching the sanctuary project of the Allen Bird Club. He chaired one of the early committees to study and develop the project; and he personally solicited the bulk of the money needed initially. The Board of Trustees of the Refuge expresses its gratitude and appreciation for the leadership provided by Mr. Edwards.

A detailed statement on the financing of the Refuge will be given by the Treasurer. Suffice it to say here that, while the Refuge is currently solvent, the need for additional funds is constant and should continue to be an Allen Bird Club responsibility. An annual operating budget is needed for the payment of taxes and the upkeep and development of the Refuge. Also, a balance should be acquired for the eventual purchase of leased land and any adjacent property that becomes available.

#### Development of the Refuge

The Board of Trustees of the Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge, Inc., held four official meetings during the past year. Highlights of plans developed and action taken will be enumerated below, with brief comments.

1. Publicity. A Publicity Committee was appointed as follows: William Tomalin, Ernest Yates, and J. Edward Hyde, Chairman. A number of excellent newspaper releases, including an editorial, have appeared as a result of the work of this committee.

2. Survey: The cost of a survey of the Refuge is prohibitive at this time. As a rough substitute, so that members may know the approximate boundaries, William Tompkins has agreed to run a compass line around the property.

3. Maps: A number of maps of the Refuge are now available, as follows:

- a. "Allen Bird Club Wildlife Sanctuary," 18 x 22 inches, from the Office of Peter Sherman Meltzer; provided by Harold D. Dickey.
- b. "Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge," 18 x 21 inches; provided by Ernest Yates. (This map shows the original acreage and ownership of the Refuge area, and indicates the areas owned and on lease.)
- c. Rough Sketch of Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge, Inc., "8 1/2 x 11 inches; provided by Ernest Yates. (This map is in ditto form and has been distributed to all members of the Allen Bird Club.)

4. Posting: One hundred "No Hunting" signs have been purchased and will be used to post the Refuge. No effort will be made to comply with legal posting requirements of signs 100 feet apart, but, rather, the signs will be used at points of entry and in other ways to designate the boundaries. Mr. Tompkins, with the help of junior members, has agreed to accomplish this task.

5. Bird Census: The Board of Trustees requested that the Allen Bird Club include the Refuge as a separate area for the spring census. In this way, research pertaining to the bird population of the area is initiated. It provides a basis for comparing the number of bird species visiting the Refuge as improvements in habitat are effected.

6. Development Committee: A Development Committee to recommend projects and improvements for the Refuge was appointed with the following members: John Brainerd, Chairman, Arthur Avery, Britton McCabe, William Tompkins, and H.E. Clarke, ex officio. This committee recommended that the primary purpose of the Refuge be conservation of the habitat; and that secondary purposes be education and research. They made a number of excellent recommendations to the Board. Certain of their suggestions have been adopted, others are under consideration, and still others are in the nature of long-range proposals which are held in abeyance for the moment. At its request, this committee has now been discharged. Appreciation is expressed for the excellent set of recommendations presented.

7. Committee on Maintenance and Improvement: Recommended by the Development Committee, a Committee on Maintenance and Improvement has been appointed. To serve until May 1, 1953, the members are: Arthur Avery, Chairman, Ralph Baierlein, Esther Griggs, Raymond Longley, George Rice, and Daniel Tremble. This committee will be responsible for such projects as the following: to post Refuge boundaries; to clear approved trails; to construct gates, signs, etc.; to establish approved parking areas, and clear roads leading into parking areas; to plant, thin, and prune in accordance with approved maintenance and development procedures; and the like. In connection with the work of this Committee, the Trustees have gone on record as approving the construction and maintenance of foot trails only in the Refuge proper. It is believed that the area should be kept in as wild a state as possible, and should not be open to the public for picnic and outing purposes.

8. Committee on Research and Education: Recommended by the Development Committee, a Committee on Research and Education has been appointed. To serve until May 1, 1953, the members are: John Brainerd, Chairman, Douglas Guyette, Gladys Jones, Mabel Potter, and William Tompkins. This committee will be responsible for such projects as the following: to organize various types of inventories, surveys, and censuses; to prepare collections of different kinds, to make studies necessary for the proper development and utilization of the Refuge; to plan educational campaigns pertaining to the purposes and use of the Refuge, to aid in the establishment of a research laboratory at the Museum of Natural History; and the like.

9. Research Laboratory: Mr. Leo Otis, Director of the Museum of Natural History, has made available to authorized naturalists space in the Museum for a research laboratory. The Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge has been invited to help establish and use this laboratory. The invitation has been accepted with the Committee on Research and Education to provide the representation. The establishment of the Research Laboratory is a particularly happy one for natural history in the Springfield area. It should prove a great stimulus to even more active study of the geology, flora and fauna of this section.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, may I state that it has been a pleasure and a source of great satisfaction to participate in the Allen Bird Club project, the Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge. Many people have contributed to the success of the project so far. Willing and cooperative, they have worked hard in the interest of the Refuge. Those named above are only a few of the many who have contributed their time and effort. This report will not attempt to list them all, but merely state a general word of appreciation.

No one, least of all the Board of Trustees, feels that the project has been finished. There is no doubt, however, that a start has been made; incorporation is complete; some money has been raised, land has been acquired; and plans for maintenance, development, education, and research have been initiated. A very great deal remains to be done. A Refuge is more than just habitat, its heart and soul actually are in its utilization, in the joys and appreciations of nature study in its many ramifications experienced by boys and girls, men and women, throughout their lives. May this be a challenge to us as we move forward in memory of Fannie Stebbins who exemplified with her life what is intended by these words.