



ARE YOU INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH WDA GOVERNANCE?

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the conference as well as insure travel support to foreign investigators in Europe and America, they should submit a proposal to the Association for action. Italy provides the most encouraging consideration at present.

The Proceedings of the 1st Conference was published exclusively in microform by the Wildlife Disease Association. A few copies are still available from our business manager. Plans are in process to publish the Proceedings of this 2nd Conference and, as soon as they are concluded, announcement of cost and availability will appear in a subsequent issue of the JOURNAL OF WILDLIFE DISEASES.

C. M. HERMAN

Are You Interested in Helping with WDA Governance?

Probably all membership societies suffer from government by too few members. This is not because those few want it so, but because of difficulties of finding qualified "new blood" among the membership, and getting them involved. In the next two years as President of WDA I want to give some emphasis to broadening member participation. New participants begin with committee assignments. If you are interested in working for WDA and feel you are qualified please send me your name, and address if it is not in the membership list Vol. 7 No. 4 of the Journal of Wildlife Disease. Your self-appraisal of qualifications should include affirmative answers to such questions as, Am I and my institution willing to take a committee assignment and give it sufficient effort to accomplish the objective — including correspondence, discussions, meetings, etc. Can I expect to attend WDA meetings occasionally to participate in government affairs?

If your answer is yes to these and other relevant questions, please send me your name, address and any comments you may have.

Sincerely yours,

Lowell Adams, Sc.D.
President, WDA.

Letter to the Editor

June 14, 1971

I may be entirely out of order in writing this letter, however, I feel that the matter needs some attention. I am referring to an article published in the January 1971 issue of J.W.D. by J. E. Applegate.

On page 38 under experimental design and results, third sentence of the first paragraph, the author refers to capturing English Sparrows, infecting them with *Plasmodium relictum*, and releasing them in an area where the natural existence of the parasite is questionable. That procedure, in my opinion, is in extremely poor taste. The releasing of infected animals, whatever the parasite, should not be condoned.

I am of the opinion that many medical researchers (due to past experience) look upon disease and parasite problems of animals other than humans too damn

lightly. Can you imagine the response if the experimental design called for the release of *Microtus* infected with plague? As far as *Plasmodium relictum* is concerned, this parasite may be just as serious in avian species as plague is in humans. I am really quite surprised the author's doctoral committee approved.

I would like to think that the majority of subscribers agree with my feelings concerning such procedures, and that the journal should somehow make it known that it does not support the releasing of infected animals and the possible introduction of a foreign parasite as a consequence.

Sincerely,

John N. Stuhrt
Wildlife Pathology Laboratory
Rose Lake Wildlife Research Center
Route 1, East Lansing, Michigan 48823

Dr. Stuhrt is quite correct in urging careful consideration before disrupting a natural community. My committee and I feel that such consideration was made prior to starting the project. Because of the exigencies of publication, it was inappropriate to defend this aspect of the experimental design in my paper, but I welcome the opportunity to do so at this time.

Plasmodium relictum is the most common malaria parasite of English sparrows, in addition to occurring in many other song birds. I have personally found the parasite in every sparrow population I have surveyed (Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey) with the single exception of the Penn State population in question. Even there, *P. relictum* was found commonly in song birds from a wood lot located approximately two miles from the sparrow site; and, in fact, one strain used in the study was isolated from a Robin in this wood lot. After five years of intensively studying malaria-bird interactions in the wood lot population, it was apparent to us that any bird which did not have malaria after its first year was exceptional.

The strains of *P. relictum* used in this study were tested in sparrows in the laboratory before release into the sparrow population. The test infections were generally of low intensity and short duration, and in none of 88 experimental birds was death attributed to a malaria infection. The bird-malaria relationship thus seems very well established, and we felt sure that the danger of releasing a serious pathogen into this sparrow population was non-existent.

Let me emphasize again that I am in complete agreement with Dr. Stuhrt's cautious attitude regarding pathogen introduction. If my experimental approach has been construed as license for wholesale parasite dissemination, then I am remiss as an author, for this was not my intention. I feel just as strongly, however, that a constraint as binding as never manipulating a natural community will limit the field biologist to endless descriptive studies. When the ramifications have been carefully considered and the dangers foreseen and avoided, a wealth of information can be obtained in an experimental approach to field problems.

JAMES E. APPLGATE, LT MSC USN
