Nature Photography and Conservation

forces arising outside the image boundaries.

My first photographic efforts were exclusively with bird subjects. After several years my interest became more general, until with the improvement of my technique and with advances in photography I returned to birds. Gradually I accumulated a sizable collection of prints, the existence of which whetted my ambition for higher levels of recognition than home-town camera club exhibition, among which book publication promised the greatest satisfaction. Since I was living in Cambridge at the time, I took a portfolio around to Houghton Mifflin where I met Paul Brooks. He looked at all the prints, made appropriate remarks which seemed encouraging, and at last pronounced his edict on my work: "We cannot publish these", he said, "because they are in black and white and the birds cannot be identified from the photographs". It was a blow and I must have shown my disappointment, for he went on to say I would have to do them in color before he could publish them. I am sure he had no concept of the problems color photography of birds presented at that time, and perhaps not even whether the medium was available at all. But I took his remark as a sort of promise that if I were able to photograph birds in color, Houghton Mifflin would publish them.

I went to Eastman Kodak Company for advice on the use with synchronized flightlight of the recently marketed Kodachrome film, and began that spring to photograph in color. Several years later, after I had been granted a Guggenheim

Fellowship to photograph birds and had learned to make color prints by the Wash-off Relief process, the precursor of Dye-transfer, I returned to Houghton Mifflin with a portfolio of color prints of which I was inordinately proud. Again I was admitted to Paul Brooks office, and again he looked at the collection making appropriate and still more lauditory remarks than on the previous occasion. He said nothing about publication until finally in an agony of suspense I asked him straight out. Then he said, "We can't publish these, it would be much too costly".

About this time I became involved in another project suggested to me by my wife to illustrate Thoreau. My photographs, she said, were evocative of his commentary on nature. From then on, in addition to continuing to photograph birds during the nesting season, I devoted much time throughout the year to other subjects, and because I had learned to think in close up terms, small objects and the details of nature first drew my attention. And so I photographed the little things of the woods and fields: dead leaves, mosses, decaying logs, wild flowers, and once in a while a tree trunk or the entire tree.

The publication of IN WILDNESS at long last by the Sierra Club led to an association with that influential conservation organization which resulted in widening the purpose and scope of my photography. I saw that the camera used for other than exclusively aesthetic and creative purposes without diminishing