

## CONRAD ROLAND

ERNEST A. CHOATE

"This is mine forever. No one can ever take it from me." Since we were alone, I realized my companion was not speaking to me, but to himself about an experience which he felt most deeply. We were on a hill overlooking a cove at Springton Reservoir on a cool, clear April morning. The American mergansers, ring-necks, mallards and baldpates were there in satisfying numbers. The view was open and, as we sat on the hill, what was before us was ours forever.

Roland was never in a hurry in observing birds. He sketched interminably, and these sketches were an encyclopedia of reference for his finished bird portraits. Into these pictures went also the artist's formal training and familiarity with the world of art, literature and music.

While a student at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, he won a Cresson scholarship which entitled him to study in Europe.

An incessant reader, he owned a fine private library. His favorites and those who influenced him most were Thoreau, Whitman and Emerson. His was the cult of American individualism. Take hold of life, experience, enjoy, and understand it.

Conrad Roland joined the DVOC in 1917. He was quite active in the club until he moved to Kempton in 1936. Members are familiar with his illustration in Witmer Stone's "Bird Studies at Old Cape May" and his portrait of Witmer Stone at 70 in the 1945 Cassinia. Ten of Conrad's water colors have been published by Rudolf Lesch in full-size reproduction. They were distributed both in this country and in Europe. Exhibitions of Roland's work have been held at the Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, the American Museum of Natural History in New York and in the Wyomissing Institute of Art in Berks County.

Conrad was born in Reading on July 15, 1900. The Rolands were French Huguenots who first came to America about 1708 and settled in Berks County. His mother's family name was Kessler and her ancestors came to this country from Bavaria in the middle of the last century. Roland married Marie Palmore in 1936, and enjoyed a happy marriage until she died in 1951. After her death he lived alone on his small farm near the base of the Pinnacle, a short

distance from Hawk Mountain. He once told me that his grandfather had said no one should ever live without the sight of mountains. Conrad died of a heart attack on May 13, 1957.

His few acres were a sanctuary for birds and animals, wild food was abundant, and cover plentiful. Pigeons, barn owls and sparrow hawks were at home in the barn, as was a screech owl in the old apple tree in the orchard. An opossum was a nightly visitor to the feeding tray. A golden-crowned kinglet stayed about all winter. In the house was a convalescent chat waiting for spring to return and a crippled pigeon which was the continuous recipient of many varied confidences.

A recent issue of the Auk mentioned a few young nature artists whom Louis Agassiz Fuertes had generously helped. Among these was Conrad Roland. In his turn he helped young people of talent. His unique abilities in this chosen field were shared most generously. One of his younger friends, who now does natural history illustrations for a leading national magazine, said to Roland a couple of months before his death, "You gave me the courage to do what I wanted to do. But for you I would not have been an artist."

411 Rodman Avenue, Jenkintown, Pa.