



Delaware Valley Ornithological Club

Academy of Natural Sciences
19th and the Parkway
Philadelphia, PA 19103

February 1, 2009

Ms. Lorraine McCay,
P. O. Box 107
Cape May Point, NJ 08212

Dear Ms. McCay:

I want to thank you for taking the time to speak with me concerning the re-establishment of the Witmer Stone Wildlife Sanctuary at Cape May Point State Park. Below you will find some background information and the proposal.

Who was Witmer Stone? I am sure many people know who Witmer Stone was. However, unless you are drawn to the history of natural history you probably will not encounter his name today.

Witmer Stone (1866 – 1939) was present at the birth of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club on February 3, 1890. For the rest of his life, he was a major influence on the development of the club into a respected institution. For more information about our club, please consult the DVOC website at www.dvoc.org.

He held many different positions at the Academy of Natural Science of Philadelphia. During his fifty year association he reformed the labeling, cataloging, storing of specimens, and rescued many neglected decaying collections. At the time of his death he was Honorary Curator of Birds and Vice-President of the Academy of Natural Science.

From 1914 to 1920, Stone was Vice-President of the American Ornithological Union (AOU), and from 1920 to 1923 he served as President. He also served the AOU from 1896 – 1901 as chairman of the Committee on the Protection of North American Birds. This committee was where the cause of bird protection took hold. During Stone's Chairmanship the Lacey Act was signed into law on May 25, 1900. This was the first national legislative protection for birds.

Stone's interests were not limited to ornithology. He was a general naturalist. Over his lifetime he studied and published an astounding number of papers and many books on ornithology, botany, mammals, arachnids, reptiles, insects, etc. He was truly a man of credentials, knowledge, and accomplishments.

Witmer Stone first visited Cape May in 1890. From that time on, he spent whatever time he could there, including two month stays every year from 1920 – 1937. He was not lounging on the beach! He produced *Bird Studies at Old Cape May*, over 900 pages of detailed observations of Cape May's birds and habitat which today is considered the "Bible" of Cape May birding.

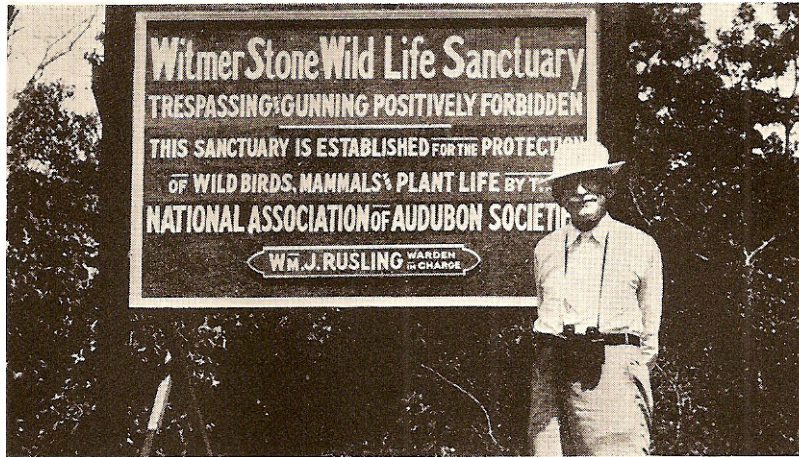
When Witmer Stone first observed the spectacle of fall hawk migration in Cape May it was accompanied by the continuous sound of gunfire. He said "the shooting of hawks during the autumn had become a regular pastime among certain so-called sportsmen. ... The bombardment begins as soon as it is light enough to see and we find in the assemblage Italians, Negroes, boys, and 'sportsmen' the last group ranging from laymen and farmers to businessmen and men of leisure, participating in the sport." Stone loudly protested the slaughter. In 1930 members of the DVOC approached the National Association of Audubon Societies to protest the shooting of

hawks in Cape May Point. Beginning in 1931, the Audubon Societies sent wardens to control the shooting, and in 1935 established the Witmer Stone Wildlife Sanctuary. According to James A. G. Rhem, in his memoriam to Dr. Stone presented in the Auk, the sanctuary was named for Dr. Stone as “a graceful appreciation of his years of service to and interest in the cause of bird protection.”

I respectfully request that the Cape May Point State Park recognize Witmer Stone and re-establish the Witmer Stone Wildlife Sanctuary on a small portion of park property along Sunset Boulevard. The intended site is the triangular area bordered by Sunset Boulevard, Alexander Ave. and Sunset Beach. I am including a map showing the area in detail.

The re-establishment of this sanctuary will not only bring honor and recognition to a man who truly deserves it, but will also showcase the seed, the small plot of land that germinated into the habitat conservation and bird protection movement in Cape May.

If approved we would like to place three signs on the property. One large sign would be a reasonable facsimile of the original sign as shown below, including changes required by the State Park, clearly readable from Sunset Boulevard. Flanking this sign should be two smaller educational signs; one explaining the purpose of the original sanctuary to stop the hawk slaughter, and another to describe Witmer Stone and his importance to Cape May and conservation.



I am including in this packet a map showing the area that is proposed to be re-named The Witmer Stone Wildlife Sanctuary, and three articles that will give you further background on the life of Witmer Stone.

I will look forward to hearing from you concerning the official decision about this proposal. If approved, I know you will explain the process that will be needed to have signs created and placed on the site.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mick Jeitner,
Chairperson, Witmer Stone Wildlife Sanctuary Committee
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Enclosures

