

# Author Rediscovered Solitude and Nature

*Sitting under the apple trees, walking down the lane, following the wood trails, circling the pond at sunset, our life here has seemed all kernel and no husk. It embraces one of the rarest things in modern life — moments of solitude. Some people need them more than others, Nellie and I more than most. For me, I never feel in some great urban center, some New York or Chicago or Los Angeles, as I do at Trail Wood: "THIS is my own, my native land."*

—from the book

*Faunists are too apt to acquiesce in bare descriptions, and a few synonyms; the reason is plain because all that may be done at home in a man's study, but the investigation of the life and conversation of animals is a concern of much more trouble and difficulty, and it may not be attained but by the active and inquisitive and by those that reside much in the country.*

—Gilbert White

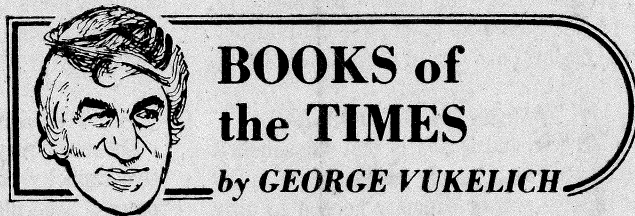
After living on the south shore of Long Island — some 22 miles from Manhattan — for 30 years, Edwin and Nellie Teale moved to a farm in Connecticut with "more or less" 130 acres.

They moved, Teale writes, because the open countryside, the stretches of woodland, the sea meadows all contracted or disappeared.

"We saw all the small towns around lose their individuality," he laments. "They merged into one vast extension of Brooklyn."

Their new old farm featured a house built in 1806, woods, open fields, swamps, two good-sized brooks, one cranberry bog and a waterfall. They moved in on June 11, 1959.

"Sitting there in the twilight," he recalls, "watching the fireflies and listening to the whippoorwill that first evening we seemed in the perfect habitat for a pair of naturalists . . . All these acres around us, all these fields and woods fading into the night, would form a sanctuary farm — a sanctuary for wildlife and a sanctuary for us."



## BOOKS of the TIMES

by **GEORGE VUKELICH**

### A Naturalist Buys An Old Farm

by **Edwin Way Teale**

**Dodd, Mead**

306 pp., \$10, 43 photographs

At their sanctuary — Trail Wood — (which reminded the jacket blurbist of Henry Thoreau's "Walden" and John Burrough's "Slabsides" — and which may remind you of Mel Ellis' "Little Lakes," Augie Derleth's "Place of Hawks" or Carl Marty's Northernnaire) the Teales have spent 15 years "roughing it smoothly."

Though 15 miles from the nearest town, electricity lights the house, pumps their water and cooks their meals. They have a telephone, an oil furnace and when the power fails they can always cook in their big fireplace as they did for four days during the big ice storm of 1973.

"One of our first concerns," Teale says, "in settling in the country was to do things alone."

They did not come to Trail Wood to kill things. Even the woodchuck "against whom almost every man's hand is turned" finds sanctuary there.

The book is also a fairly complete catalog of Connecticut fauna including frogs and fieldmice, butterflies and beavers. Teale, without making them pets or sentimentalizing them,

simply sees animals in a fresh unexpected way. The sharp eagle eyes on this codger would do a young man proud.

• "I remember a hot summer morning when I was watching half a dozen small American copper butterflies whirling in the sunshine. There was a rush and the snap of a bill. A scarlet tanager zoomed back up to a telephone wire, carrying one of the butterflies. I saw it throw back its head and swallow the insect in a gulp as a heron swallows a fish."

• "Those who leave the city behind and move to the country return not only to the open fields but to the open sky as well. Our favorite spot for watching the night sky is the open elevated ground of the north pasture. We early named it the Starfield."

• "What we had encountered on that summer afternoon was an insect slave raid . . . Almost all the reddish ants we saw were carrying in their jaws small whitish objects that looked like grains of rice. These were the living pupae, the booty of the war party."

• "On Christmas Eve, one year, when the moon was full, we turned out all the lights in the house and for a magic quarter of an hour watched a fox wandering over the glistening snow in the silver mellow light. A little later it halted suddenly and vigorously scratched its left shoulder with its left hind leg. A flea was also alive and well in the winter night."

In wildness, Thoreau said, is the salvation of the world. And maybe in the Old Ones showing the Young Ones, as Peter Weiss used to put it, is how it's done. The Teales love of earth is a joy to witness. You couldn't pick a better season for it.

*Edwin Way Teale, one of America's leading naturalists as well as a writer and photographer of nature, has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction and the John Burroughs Medal for distinguished nature writing.*