

Preface

When I was a boy in the early 1950s, I joined the Toronto Junior Field-Naturalists' Club. Once a month, on a Saturday morning, I would travel by bus and streetcar to the Royal Ontario Museum. There, from ten till noon, my eyes and mind and imagination absorbed knowledge about the fauna and flora of the city's ravines where my friends and I played and the more distant wetlands and woodlands where we went on club field trips.

I grew up immersed in the belief that a most precious part of my birth-right as a Canadian was the opportunity to experience the natural world around me with respect and delight. I was, furthermore, convinced that my country shared that belief. Had it not established remarkable agencies to study our natural heritage and to inform the world about it? Those agencies were the National Film Board of Canada, which produced so many of the nature documentaries that we watched in that darkened museum theatre on Saturday mornings, and the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), whose biologists and technicians became our mentors as we watched them on the screen.

Some kids dreamed of becoming firefighters, jet pilots, nurses, engineers. I dreamed of being a filmmaker or a wildlife biologist. As it happened, I didn't become either but, indirectly, my dreams came true. I worked for fifteen years with the National Film Board, although never as a filmmaker. And since 1986 I have had the enormous satisfaction of collaborating with the Wildlife Service, in the guise of a writer, on a series of projects that have taken me from Cape St. Mary's, Newfoundland, to Vancouver Island, with many rewarding stops in between. Those experiences have confirmed my initial sense that CWS is one of Canada's most important and valuable cultural institutions.

I use the term *cultural* broadly, with reference to the whole rich fabric of behaviours and values that bind Canadians of so many diverse origins into a recognizable society. In this broad sense, CWS has helped us to discover

and acknowledge what an important dimension our relationship with nature adds to our identity as Canadians.

I felt enormously privileged, therefore, in the fall of 1996, to be invited by Environment Canada to write a fiftieth anniversary history of the Wildlife Service. Since then, I have met and interviewed more than 120 of the agency's employees, past and present. Not one of them expressed regret at his or her career choice, or left any doubt that a life devoted to the study and protection of wildlife was a life well spent. How many other organizations can boast such unanimity of purpose? Driven by a passionate interest in the natural world and a deep commitment to protect it from abuse, members of the CWS family have gone out into this thinly populated land, often at considerable personal risk, and have come back to tell us the wonder of what is ours and why it matters. In a country that tends to deprecate heroism, the personnel of the Wildlife Service are numbered among our unsung Canadian heroes.

The challenge of telling their story has been, by turns, humbling, frustrating, and deeply rewarding. History is at best an imperfect interpretation of incomplete data. The present example is no exception. Drawn variously from oral and written accounts, it incorporates the strengths and limitations of both kinds of source material. Many who contributed time and recollections expressed the hope that the finished work would be heavily anecdotal, focusing on the characters and exploits that make up the legendary CWS. Others urged that it provide an accurate, factual outline of the evolution of Canadian administrative policies, programs, personnel, and practices on behalf of wildlife over half a century. Still others felt that the history should serve as a concordance to the scientific accomplishments and publications of the organization. None will be wholly satisfied. All, I hope, will recognize a sincere effort to achieve a reasonable balance among these competing objectives.

A word or two about the structure of the book is probably in order. Throughout its history, CWS has operated on so many fronts at once that to recount its accomplishments in chronological order would have been needlessly complex and confusing. Instead, I have chosen a thematic approach. The first chapter sets the context in which CWS was established in 1947 by providing a brief overview of wildlife policy in Canada up to the 1940s. In writing it, I drew heavily on Janet Foster's excellent book, *Working for Wildlife*,¹ which is, I believe, the only comprehensive account that has been written on this important aspect of Canadian history. The remaining chapters deal with major issues and areas of study to which CWS has devoted its talents and resources over the years. These include enforcement, ornithology, mammalogy, limnology, habitat protection, interpretation, toxicology, endangered species protection, and governance. Interspersed between the

thematic chapters are shorter sections, each summarizing key events in the organizational development of CWS during a specific five-year period.

After nearly two years of research, contemplation, composition, and revision, I am deeply conscious of how many people, projects, and events have received but cursory attention or none at all in this telling of their history. To those who regret the absence of a particular tale, or train of events, or singular achievement, or memorable personality, I can only say that I acknowledge the absence and share your regret. The inclusion of some individuals and topics and the omission of others does not imply a hierarchy of significance. The simple fact is that within the constraints of time and space, a relative handful of figures and themes had to be chosen to represent the whole. Like an iceberg, 90 percent of the Wildlife Service story remains hidden beneath the surface, waiting for the day when a different 10 percent will be revealed. I hope those who recognize the gaps in this attempt will not hesitate to fill them with histories of their own.

Having offered that caveat, I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of so many members of the CWS family for their assistance and encouragement. Without exception, those to whom I have turned for information and advice have given unstintingly of their time and knowledge. To all, I express my sincere appreciation. To some, I must extend particular thanks.

First, to Pat Logan and Tony Keith, advisors and project coordinators extraordinaire, I owe an immense debt for help, guidance, patience, editorial expertise, and unflinching confidence that this project would come to fruition.

In addition, two CWS veterans, Vic Solman and Joe Bryant, have been on hand to nurture the undertaking almost from the outset. Vic's enthusiastic feedback invariably provided a tonic to my flagging spirits. Joe's incisive editorial notes, as courteous as they were copious and uncompromising, reminded me of the high standard of scholarly excellence to which CWS has aspired over the years and motivated me to try my best to match it. If anyone deserves credit as a co-author of this history, it is he.

Special mention should be made, too, of Jim Foley, who foresaw the need for a history of CWS several years ago, developed repeated proposals for its production, and had the foresight to begin gathering an archive of significant publications and documents that he generously shared.

During the research phase of the project, I enjoyed the reminiscences of dozens of informative CWS sources. Starting on the west coast, I must mention the gracious gift of time afforded by Yorke Edwards, Ron Mackay, Art Martell, Rick McKelvey, and David Munro.

In Edmonton, Gerry Beyersbergen organized a whirlwind schedule of interviews with Lu Carbyn, Richard Fyfe, Gordon Kerr, Ernie Kuyt, Andrew Macpherson, Gerry McKeating, Frank Miller, Hal Reynolds, Len Shandruk, Jack Shaver, Ed Telfer, Garry Trottier, and himself. He then had the good

sense to arrange an unforgettable winter morning of recuperation from information overload among the bison of Elk Island National Park.

In Ottawa, in addition to those noted above, I was greatly helped by Hugh Boyd, David Brackett, Eric Broughton, Barbara Campbell, Joe Carreiro, Chuck Dauphiné, Debbie Harris, Alan Loughrey, Pierre Mineau, Guy Morrison, Ross Norstrom, Nick Novakowski, John Tener, Gaston Tessier, and Steve Wendt. I also had the pleasure of meeting and interviewing Graham Cooch and Jim Patterson at the CWS fiftieth anniversary celebration on 1 November 1997.

My guide to the Quebec Region was Gilles Chapdelaine, who put me in touch with Luc Bélanger, André Bourget, Marcel Laperle, Denis Lehoux, Austin Reed, Isabelle Ringuet, Jean Rodrigue, Jean-Pierre Savard, and Jacqueline Vincent.

In the Atlantic Region special thanks must go to Al Smith and George Finney, with whom my CWS association was initiated in 1986. Tony Erskine, Scientist Emeritus, shared his encyclopedic store of memories and never failed to provide helpful guidance in tracking down a detail or a source. Regional Librarian Jean Sealy was endlessly helpful in finding references and arranging interlibrary loans. I also received invaluable assistance from Dick Brown, Neil Burgess, Dan Busby, Richard Elliot, Ross Galbraith, Peter Hicklin, Joe Kerekes, Tony Lock, David Nettleship, Gerry Parker, Dave Paul, Peter Pearce, Jim Stoner, and Wayne Turpin.

When the time came to review the manuscript in its various draft stages, many of the above-named individuals and a wide selection of others volunteered useful corrections, amendments, and additions – especially additions! In half a century, CWS has accrued enough facts and enough fiction to fill this modest volume many times over. Thank you for all your suggestions, and for your forbearance at my inability to incorporate more than a few of them.

Among those not already named who provided extensive input at the review stage, I must mention Rob Butler, Jean Cinq-Mars, Jean-Paul Cuerrier, Kathy Dickson, Jean Gauthier, Gerry Lee, David Peakall, Don Russell, George Scotter, and Ian Stirling. In addition, I particularly wish to thank Marla Sheffer for a thorough, thoughtful, and highly professional job of copy-editing and for preparing the index.

I also want to express my appreciation to the authors of two special letters, parts of which appear in the epilogue to this history. They are Janet Foster, pre-eminent chronicler of the history of wildlife conservation in Canada up to the 1920s, and Monte Hummel, long-time leader of World Wildlife Fund Canada and nongovernment partner and collaborator with CWS in many conservation initiatives.

Credit is due, as well, to those who delved into their personal photographic collections to provide many of the images that illustrate the text.

And without the faith and financial support of the Executive Committee of CWS, this project would not have been possible.

To all these, and to the many, many others who added directly or indirectly to the richness and the vitality of this account, my heartfelt thanks. Together, we've made a good start. I hope others will produce their own memoirs and interpretations, retelling the CWS story in other ways until a composite view emerges that does justice to the whole.

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