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General Editor: Graeme Wynn, University of British Columbia



STATES *of* NATURE



CONSERVING CANADA'S WILDLIFE IN
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

◆

TINA LOO

FOREWORD BY GRAEME WYNN



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For my parents



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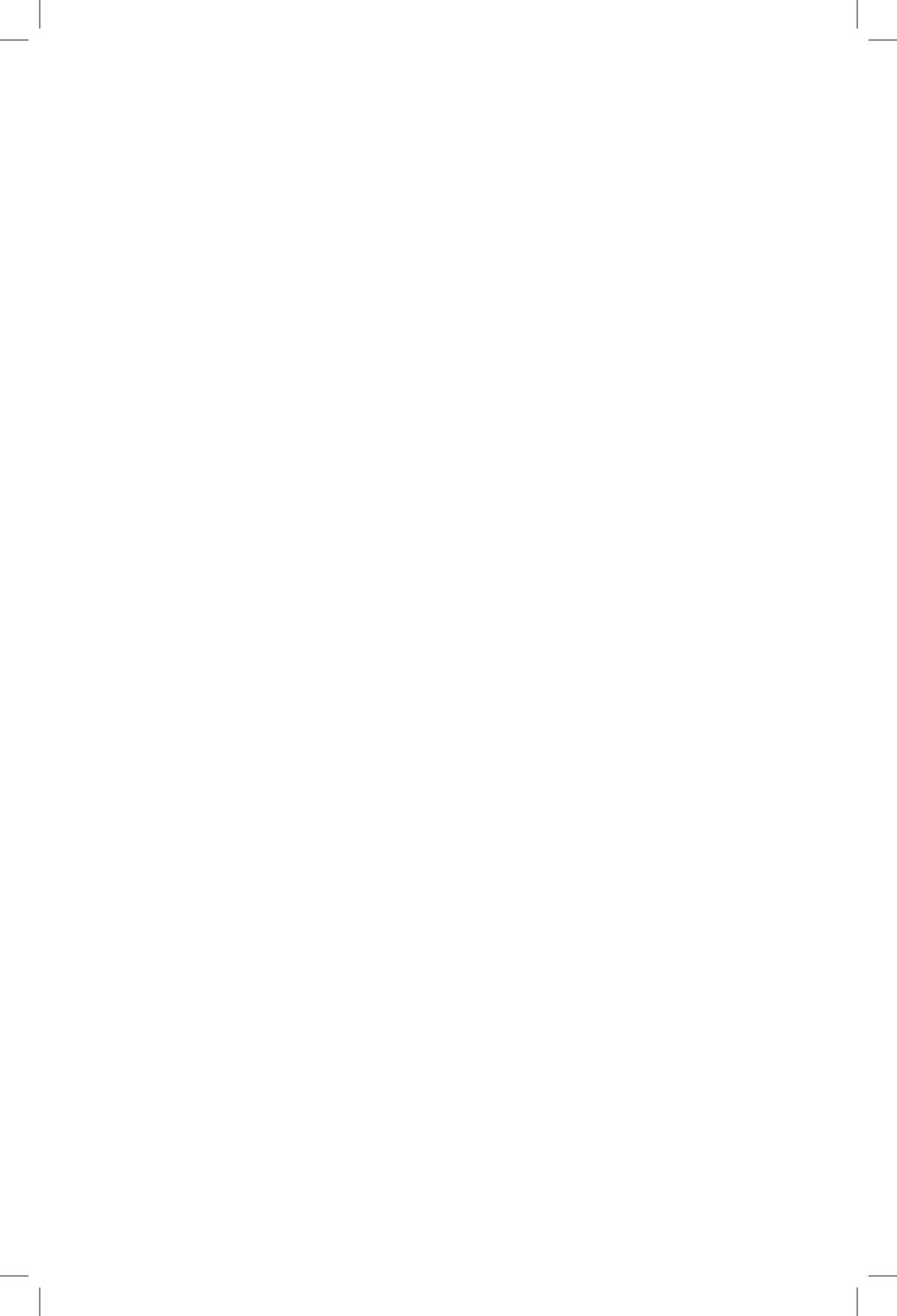
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FOREWORD BY GRAEME WYNN

Troubles with Nature

A FEW WEEKS BEFORE I began this essay, a friend told me about a coyote seen loping, in the middle of the day, through an old established residential area in Vancouver. Those who lived in the neighbourhood found several things wrong with this. In their minds, the animal was an intruder, a wild thing that did not belong on the genteel streets of the inner city. *Its* place was far away, beyond the farthest suburbs, in “the country.” This coyote, and others like it, constituted a threat. Given half a chance – or less – some thought, it would steal food from bowls left out for family pets, prey on domestic cats, attack young children, and knock over elderly citizens. *It* had no right to terrorize small well-loved animals or to instill fear in the minds of toddlers’ parents. Indeed, this coyote seemed particularly brazen: was it not supposed to be a nocturnal animal? What was *it* doing swaggering – not even skulking, but strutting as though it had every right to be there – through human space in broad daylight? This was haughty behaviour indeed in a creature that, for all its dog-like appearance, was a bother, a nuisance, a pest, and a trespasser.

The good, comfortable middle-class citizens who reacted in this way were hardly the first to express such views. Coyote sightings have been fairly common in the city of Vancouver since the 1980s.¹ Various reports place *Canis latrans* “smack in the middle” of the city, lurking in various recreational areas, following joggers on their morning runs, plucking a terrier from the front steps of a dwelling,

FOREWORD

and even taking refuge behind the snack counter of a busy gas station. “They’re all over the place,” an exercised city councillor told a local news reporter. One was spotted “sitting and watching a wedding [of all things!] in the rose garden” of the city’s most famous park. Biologists suggest that there may be three hundred or more coyotes in Vancouver, and their presence clearly disconcerts many residents.

Bears sometimes wander from the forests of the North Shore mountains into the wealthy hill-slope suburbs of West Vancouver, but their intrusion into city space is simultaneously somehow more frightening and less challenging than that of the coyotes. Black bears may be more dangerous to humans, but their assaults on backyard garbage cans are generally detected, reported, and acted upon quickly. Wildlife officials move in, trap or tranquilize errant members of the species *Ursus americanus*, and relocate them in the wilderness, “where they belong.” Coyotes defy such decisive action (and the order on which it is predicated). They slip into and out of view; they are not easily poisoned, shot, or detained by leg-hold traps because these strategies would endanger humans and their pets; and they are generally cunning enough to avoid live traps.

Most city dwellers may believe that coyotes belong “in the boonies” but, unlike bears, these creatures have found amenable habitat in urban areas. Once confined to the open grasslands of the North American west, they expanded their range as wolf populations declined and have adapted effectively to new settings. Urban forests, ravines, golf courses, vacant lots overgrown with vegetation, thickets of brush, even abandoned houses and dark areas under porches have provided foraging and denning sites for urban coyotes. “It was amazing how comfortable the animal was in the city” reflected one Vancouverite who gave chase to a coyote after it snatched his poodle. In the eyes of many, these opportunistic predators have claimed space beyond their entitlement. They have made themselves at home in “our” space. By doing so, they have forced many of “us,” their neighbours, to reshape our behaviour in immediate and practical ways. Vancouver pet owners have been warned to confine their animals or risk losing them to predation.

It has become fashionable of late to attribute such challenges as coyotes pose to urban dwellers to the ways in which we think about the world, and the labels that we ascribe to things within it.² Simply put, this is to say that we find it hard to accept bears and coyotes in

the city because we call them wild animals and cling to our convictions that the wild and the civilized are distinct realms, that the urban and the rural are separate spheres, and that culture is human and nature is, well, natural. There is a deal of useful truth in this line of argument. Wild and tame are ideas. Like “Nature,” in this view, they are not simply physical entities that are “out there” or given: they are ideas that take on “different meanings in different cultural contexts.” Just as “Nature” is “a social construction that directs us to see mountains, rivers, trees, and deserts in particular ways,” so wild and tame are concepts that help us make sense of a complex world by sorting things into classes or kinds.³ All such classifications order and simplify. In doing so, they frame the ways in which we expect things to be. When behavioural categories such as wild and tame parallel spatial expressions such as country and city, they define where certain things belong. Our views impose an ideological order on the world, but this is neither obvious to, nor observed by, all creatures within it. Ultimately, then, urbanites’ problems with coyotes in the city stem from the persistent human desire to categorize and classify, and they reflect the particular ways in which Vancouverites (and most other urban North Americans) think about wildlife. In this view, the anguish that coyotes cause citizens is socially constructed. Here the trouble with nature is at least as much a product of human attitudes as it is a consequence of the behaviour of non-human creatures. If we thought about the world differently, let us say more ecologically, we might be less exercised about urban coyotes.

The work of American science writer David Quammen helps point us in this direction by insistently excavating the variety of human-environment relations. In *Monster of God*, for example, Quammen sets out to show how humanity lives with large predators, and writes, “Great and terrible flesh-eating beasts have always shared landscape with humans. They were part of the ecological matrix within which *Homo sapiens* evolved. They were part of the psychological context in which our sense of identity as a species arose. They were part of the spiritual systems we invented for coping.” Humanity’s extraordinary capacity to modify the world has also been central to Quammen’s concerns, and he has argued, powerfully, that anthropogenic transformations of the planet favour weedy species, humans, animals, and other organisms that are able to flourish in disturbed environments. By this reckoning, coyotes and humans are both adaptive generalists.

Like raccoons, squirrels, black rats, pigeons, sparrows, and houseflies, as well as dandelions and other plants that we commonly know as “weeds,” they are ready to travel, able to adapt to disturbance, to switch food sources, and to breed prolifically; thus equipped, they thrive almost anywhere. They belong together, in disturbed and degraded (or “unnatural”) environments such as cities.⁴

Yet this takes us only so far. Acknowledging that domesticated landscapes are not necessarily the exclusive domain of humans may lead us to reconsider the categories by which we define the world, and prompt us to redraw conceptual boundaries long taken for granted. It may help us to think differently, in the abstract, about coyotes in particular and nature in general. *Canis latrans* may not warrant reclassification as “man’s best friend,” but perhaps the cunning and resilience of members of this species might be acknowledged, as it is accepted that humans are a part of (rather than apart from) the howling, buzzing world of nature. None of this will save Fifi and Fido from predation, however. Nor will it stop the raccoons (that are far more common in most suburban areas than they are in the neighbouring countryside) from fishing in our garden ponds and spilling carefully packaged household garbage on the sidewalks. Moreover, even ecologically minded urbanites are likely to be distressed by the losses and messes that result from such animal acts. To point out that bird populations tend to increase as cat numbers fall is unlikely to assuage the grief felt by the owners of felines that have fallen victim to prowling coyotes, and the raccoons’ offence in disturbing the garbage is only compounded by the fact that it is likely to attract rats, flies, and other potentially harmful (revealing terms) *vermin* and *bugs*. Human relations with nature are immensely complicated, and they cannot easily escape the web of words (and the attitudes and convictions embedded in them) by which people navigate the world. They have a history, a rich and deep foundation of mutually constituted experience and engagement, and this history is not easily ignored, summarized, or remade.⁵ It does, though, need to be understood, in order to grapple meaningfully and effectively with the sorts of challenges – the troubles with nature – that the brazen coyote presented to the group of Vancouverites with whom this foreword began.

This is where *States of Nature* makes its contribution. In the pages that follow, Tina Loo explores the “complex, contradictory, and conflict-laden” but hitherto largely unexamined history of Canadians’

efforts “to conserve and manage wildlife” in the first three-quarters of the twentieth century. The story she tells ranges widely over space, as well as time, and examines the actions and ideas of a remarkably diverse group of persons who (and organizations that) shaped Canadian attitudes towards wildlife and its management, and more generally towards the natural world, between 1900 and 1970. In sum, Loo’s account limns three noteworthy arguments. First, and least unexpectedly, she points to the increasing effectiveness of “state” intervention in the conservation of wildlife, and notes the marginalizing impact of this trend upon local and customary attitudes (and associated behaviours) towards wild animals. Second, and somewhat surprisingly in view of the first argument, she insists that private individuals and organizations, many of whom were closely associated with the very groups that the state held responsible for wildlife decline, were at least as important as state functionaries in conserving certain species and habitats. And third, she argues that wildlife management and conservation efforts, in all their varied forms and whether driven by the state or not, were basically about “the values that should govern humans’ relationships with nature.” Diverse though they were, in other words, twentieth-century wildlife conservation efforts contributed to the colonization of rural Canada and advanced a normative agenda of social, economic, and political change, the legacies of which Canadians live with to this day.

Each of these arguments warrants careful attention. The first is broadly familiar: several American scholars have written at length about the ways in which eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century rural dwellers developed practices to regulate the use of common resources, and others have charted the rise of the Progressive conservation movement, the development of centralized and increasingly efficient bureaucracies designed to manage nature, and the growing authority of trained and certified specialists in resource management and other spheres, associated with the expanding privilege afforded professional (and often scientific) expertise. Nonetheless, Loo’s argument is also significantly different, in distinctly Canadian ways.⁶ Here is a case in which that old saw of Canadian historical scholarship, that in the final analysis everything comes down to the question of federal-provincial relations, has some relevance. The division of powers between political jurisdictions in the Confederation gave substantial responsibility for wildlife to provincial governments, and created

a far more intricate patchwork of regulations – and thus a more complex history of wildlife management – than prevailed to the south and especially across the vast federal domain of the American west. This has several consequences for the story told here.

Wisely, Loo eschews the challenge of detailing the plethora of provincial legislative, regulatory, and administrative arrangements that were put in place to govern game, limit predation, and control vermin in the years after 1867 (and indeed earlier, in the various colonies of British North America). Instead, she deals with these matters allusively, emphasizing the influences of English tradition, American Progressivism, and anti-modernist sentiment in shaping the variety of game laws implemented across the country. She also recognizes that these initiatives created both conflicts and opportunities. Parks and game reserves excluded Native peoples from traditional hunting areas in Canada as they did in the United States. Rural dwellers, especially those on the pioneer fringes of settlement, and Native peoples, both of whom typically hunted for subsistence, were disadvantaged and distressed by new regulations that privileged the sport hunting of “game” over the killing of wild animals for consumption.⁷ Yet regulations were often honoured in the breach. Many held a strong sense of entitlement to the resources of the country, and exploited them in defiance of the law, with insouciant bravado or stealthy cunning. Enforcement of the regulations was inevitably erratic as widely scattered populations took their chances to hunt and fish, aware that the relatively small numbers of game wardens were unable to mount effective surveillance or convincingly pretend their omnipotence. Trying to cope, wardens resorted to forms of what we might today describe as group profiling, identifying Native people, foreigners, and the poor as particularly likely to offend against the law, and subjecting them to hefty fines if their transgressions were detected. For all of this, a number of Native people were able to respond positively to changing circumstances by selling their local knowledge as woodcraft and serving as hunting guides for those whose pursuit of fish and game was sanctioned by law.

The second of Loo’s main arguments, emphasizing the role of private individuals and local organizations in the work of conservation in Canada, is eye-catching because it runs counter both to well-known regulatory trends of the twentieth century and to common convictions about some facets of the Canadian conservation movement. In

an area in which there has been too little scholarship, understanding has been framed by Janet Foster's claim, in *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada*, that a group of "dedicated civil servants" (including the superintendent of Rocky Mountain [Banff] Park, Howard Douglas; the director of the federal Forestry Branch, Robert Campbell; Parks Commissioner James Harkin; and Dominion Entomologist Gordon Hewitt) laid the foundations for Canadian wildlife policy and brought about a dramatic change in national attitudes in the four decades spanning the turn of the twentieth century.⁸ According to this account, they achieved these goals by securing effective protection for "game" within national parks and forest reserves, by setting up sanctuaries for pronghorn antelope, wood bison, and St. Lawrence seabirds, and by negotiating international protection for migratory birds.⁹ Published in 1978, Foster's book was, at least in part, a refutation of Roderick Nash's comment, made ten years earlier at a conference in Calgary, that Canadians lagged two generations behind Americans in wilderness appreciation.¹⁰ By insisting that James Harkin and others were "fifty years ahead" of their time, Foster polished Canadian pride, even as she acknowledged American influences, particularly through Gifford Pinchot and John Muir, upon many of those who worked for parks and wildlife protection in Canada. Yet by celebrating these "far-sighted, resourceful" civil servants who "moved a conservationist agenda forward, winning over politicians and the public to the cause" by developing "strong conservationist philosophies based on their own experiences in nature, an on-the-job understanding of how wildlife populations were under threat by modern civilization, and the influence of American thinkers coming to the same conclusions," Foster, perhaps inadvertently, gave credence to what Alan MacEachern has called "a distinctly Canadian tale" featuring the "bureaucrat as hero."¹¹

By extending the scope of her analysis beyond the early 1920s, and by broadening her focus to include "non-Ottawa men," Tina Loo carries understanding of Canadian attitudes towards wildlife well beyond the beachheads established by Nash and Foster and shows that various types of "grassroots environmentalism" were in evidence before 1970.¹² From individuals as various as Jack Miner, the unschooled yet charismatic bird man of Essex County, Ontario; Charles Elton, a scholarly, pragmatic scientist from Oxford University who spent years studying the population dynamics of Canadian

snowshoe rabbits and Arctic wildlife; Farley Mowat, trenchant critic of wildlife science and *homo bureaucrat*, “that aberrant product of our times who, cocooned in convention, witlessly wedded to the picayune, obsessed with obscurantism, and foundering in footling facts, nevertheless considers himself the only legitimate possessor of revealed truth and, consequently, the self-appointed arbiter of human affairs”; and Andy Russell, the high-school dropout become hunting guide whose later career as writer, filmmaker, and public speaker led some to describe him as “a living icon of Canada’s conservation movement,” Loo assembles a fascinating parade of characters whose far-from-uniform and far-from-simple views of wildlife, and humanity’s relationships to it, both charted and changed Canadians’ attitudes towards nature in the twentieth century.¹³

There is no easy way to summarize the always complex, sometimes contradictory, and frequently shifting values that underlay the ways in which these individuals (and members of Canadian society at large) regarded wildlife and conceived of human-animal relationships through these years. Jack Miner may have been “Canada’s famous naturalist,” but he had no doubt that “God put birds and animals here for man’s use and ... control.” Elton sought to “apply the scientific method to living animals,” but Mowat, hired by the Canadian Wildlife Service to study barren ground caribou, came to see a pair of northern wolves, which he called “George” and “Angeline,” in very human terms – they were, he said, “as devoted a married pair as one could hope to find.” He wrote the widely read (and controversial) *Never Cry Wolf* to pour scorn on the scientific conviction that they and others of their kind were savage marauders. So too Andy Russell sought to “rehabilitate” an animal deeply misunderstood by the public, with his film and 1967 book *Grizzly Country*, though he continued to defend hunters’ rights to pursue the bears.¹⁴

Yet Loo finds a way through this maze of ambiguity in her quest to discern the values that have shaped Canadian attitudes to nature. In broad terms, government officials (bureaucrats and scientists) pursued an increasingly interventionist approach to wildlife management through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Beginning with efforts to limit the destruction of certain species (by restricting hunting through licensing and regulation), they moved on to govern animal numbers, through efforts at predator control and habitat management, in ways that rendered wildlife work increasingly scientific,

rational, systematic, reductionist, and abstract. All of this served to reconstitute space (as wilderness parks or backcountry preserves), to devalue the local knowledge of rural peoples (from indigenous hunters to homespun philosophers such as Jack Miner), and to convert animals into “populations.” At the same time, it broke decisively with the earlier and immensely popular Canadian tradition of nature writing (as practised in particular by Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts), in which life stories of animals were told from the animals’ points of view.¹⁵ It also took the sting out of “Wilderness Man” Grey Owl’s nostalgic anti-modernist rhetoric proclaiming that wildlife had been “made a burnt offering on the altar of the God of Mammon.”¹⁶

In the 1960s, however, new social and environmental movements began to challenge the scientific, bureaucratic, and commercial hegemony that had come to dominate many facets of life in Western societies through the previous century. In years marked by growing student unrest, the emergence of the counterculture (so-called) and back-to-the-land movements, the rise of popular ecology, and the birth of radical new forms of environmentalism, prevailing attitudes towards wildlife were also brought into question.¹⁷ In Canada, Farley Mowat and filmmaker Bill Mason (whose two feature-length documentaries *Death of a Legend* and *Cry of the Wild* were immensely popular in the early 1970s) found responsive audiences for their portrayals of wolves as moral creatures and their efforts to bridge the divide between humans and nature. In stressing the decency, playfulness, and responsibility of wild animals, both Mowat and Mason spoke (as Joy Adamson had a few years earlier in the book and subsequent film *Born Free*) to questions on the minds of many contemporaries, about the importance of gratification and the nature of freedom.¹⁸ If their answers (and the convictions that underpinned them) differed in detail, this was of little consequence to those disaffected with their lives and times. For Mowat and Mason, the war on wolves was a synecdoche for modernity’s assault on the quality of life, and their meditations on human alienation from nature turned on the conviction that there existed (in Mowat’s words) a “lost world that was ours before we chose the alien role.”¹⁹ Emotion, rather than ecology, underpinned these arguments, and others would reassert the importance of ecological science to the work of conservation, the preservation of wild places, and the development of new ways for humans

to live in and with nature, but the fundamental proposition at the heart of these claims – that wildness held intrinsic value and was not something to be possessed and manipulated by humans – encouraged people to think differently about the environment, and about the roles of humans and wild creatures within it.

Still, the change in attitudes was far from pervasive. If Mowat's anthropomorphic account of "George" and "Angeline," Mason's emotional entanglements with his tamed wolf cubs, and Russell's portrayal of the grizzly bear as "an important and highly desirable link in the ecological life chain" led many late-twentieth-century Canadians to feel differently about wolves and bears and (to paraphrase the title of Ernest Thompson Seton's most famous book) other wild animals they had known vicariously, deep down they clung to the conviction, encapsulated by chance in another of Seton's titles, that such creatures had their place and that it was separate and apart from the everyday habitat of humans. In *Wild Animals at Home*, published in 1913, Seton argued that the establishment of Yellowstone Park had provided a sanctuary for "fourfoots," where the "excessive shyness and wariness" that they exhibited in the face of lawless, rifle-toting skin hunters was replaced by "their traditional Garden-of-Eden attitude toward Man." In this safe haven, wild animals could be themselves and nature-lovers and camera hunters who travelled to "the Wonderland of the West" could encounter exemplary beasts. At the beginning and the end of the twentieth century, in Seton's words and the minds of many an urban Canadian, separation seemed to serve both humans and animals well.²⁰

To be sure, all of this gets very complicated at times. To the delight of camera-toting tourists, deer wander the streets of Banff (a small town within a national park) at certain times of the year, raising questions, for those who stop to consider such things, about whose space this rightly is. But generally, coyotes, bears, and other (potentially dangerous) wild creatures that invade "indubitably" human spaces such as the inner suburbs of large cities are regarded as out-of-place and unwelcome. Concerns about self- and pet-preservation no doubt account for some of this, and neither ecological logic (humans, coyotes, and bears are links in the same life chain) nor social constructionist argument (that our notions of wild nature are human creations) is likely to allay these entirely. The more we grapple with these matters, the more intractable they seem. Are humans parts of

nature, or is nature nothing more than a human invention? Though scientists may insist on their capacity to understand ecosystem relations and to document the workings of “nature” through careful observation, the developments traced in this book make it clear that emotion and sentiment have often exercised enormous influence upon conceptions (and thus constructions) of nature and wildlife. Yet this is not to say that the physical world is a product of the human imagination or that there is no such thing as reality. Neither Farley Mowat nor any of the others who appear in these pages doubted for a minute that the birds and beasts with which they were concerned were corporeal entities, although they variously endowed these creatures with particular characters and attributed meaning to their actions. The trouble with nature stems from its omniscience and its complexity, as well as from the ways in which it has been represented. But history can carry us forward here. Years ago, Charles G.D. Roberts claimed that “the animal story ... is a potent emancipator ... It leads us back to the old kinship of earth, without asking us to relinquish by way of toll any part of the wisdom of the ages.”²¹ By reflecting, as Tina Loo encourages us to do, on another set of stories about animals and humans, detailing various facets of wildlife conservation in Canada, we are encouraged to both humility and a sense of connectedness with nature, as we are forced to acknowledge the many ways in which the non-human world has been conceived and to respect its distinctiveness. Thus may the past guide us (as all good humanist scholarship should) in formulating our own answers to the questions with which most of those who appear in these pages struggled, in one way or another: how do we want to live in the world and what kind of people do we want to be?



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INTRODUCTION

I LIVE SURROUNDED BY tall buildings. As I write, the local newspapers are full of stories about the newest addition to the skyline, the Shangri-La, which at sixty storeys and 642 feet will be the tallest in the city – a “signature building” for Vancouver.

Despite the promoters’ aspirations, it is not likely that the Shangri-La will be featured on the postcards on offer in the gift shops on neighbouring Robson Street, souvenirs of the city sold to the tourist throng. Instead of buildings, most feature the word “Vancouver” or “Canada” emblazoned over photographs of Stanley Park and the North Shore mountains, and more incongruously, over portraits of moose, marmot, and beaver – creatures which, despite the city’s considerable diversity, are hardly common sights on its streets, to say the least.

My experience of looking at the postcards on Robson Street could, I suspect, be repeated in every city in Canada. Wildlife has been emblematic of the country from the days of the fur trade, when beaver pelts were a medium of exchange, to the present, when the “proud and noble creature” sells Molson Canadian beer, emblazons Roots clothing, and can be found burrowed in every pocket and change purse, adorning the country’s coins, along with the caribou, loon, and polar bear.

The extent to which wildlife is common currency in Canada is one manifestation of the central place that nature, and particularly wilderness, holds in defining national identity. Canada’s cultural producers literally “naturalized the nation” by rendering certain landscapes iconic.¹ The Canadian Shield of the Group of Seven, Emily Carr’s rainforests, and William Kurelek’s sky and grass are celebrated for capturing both the essence of the place and people’s relationship to it. Canadians, for all their differences, are said to be products of their environment: a “northern” people whose character was forged by a particular encounter with nature, and whose history and political culture are defined by the country’s geography and the serial exploitation of natural resources – cod, beaver, trees, wheat, minerals.

But as cultural critics have pointed out, these national icons also do other kinds of ideological work. The product of “imperial eyes,”

the emptiness of these vast landscapes perpetuates an angle of vision that overlooks the history of indigenous use as well as the conflict, disease, and dispossession that emptied them of people.²

Representations of Canada's wilderness are not limited to canvases. Thanks to environmental action, art has become life. Activists have persuaded governments to establish wilderness areas, large tracts of land protected from human settlement and development, for purposes other than recreation and tourism. As some historians have observed, insofar as North American environmentalism has been preoccupied with wilderness preservation, it too is a colonialist enterprise.³ But according to historian William Cronon, the trouble with wilderness is both broader and deeper. While people have invested it with both negative and positive qualities over time, their concepts of wilderness have consistently placed it outside history. This duality between nature and culture characterizes North American environmental thought and action and, in his view, is harmful to both. By embracing wilderness as "other," we locate ourselves outside the natural. In so doing, we cultivate a way of seeing and being that precludes forging a truly sustainable relationship with the environment, one that has a place for people, and more importantly, one that does not equate using nature with abusing it.⁴

As much as its geography, Canada's wildlife has also been saddled with the burden of national identity, not so much through the work of its painters as its writers. "One of the most important developments of nature writing in the late-nineteenth century," the realistic wild animal story was pioneered by Canadians at the turn of the twentieth century – in particular by Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts – and carried on by postwar authors such as Fred Bodsworth, Roderick Haig-Brown, Farley Mowat, Marion Engel, and R.D. Lawrence, among others.⁵ According to literary critic James Polk, the "lives of the hunted" rendered by Seton and Roberts are statements of Canadian identity. Designed to elicit sympathy for their animal victims, these tales can be read as allegories for Canada's precarious position in the world, particularly vis-à-vis the United States. According to Polk, "as Canada's perennial questioning of its own national identity is increasingly coupled with a suspicion that a fanged America lurks in the bushes, poised for the kill, it is not surprising that Canadian writers should retain their interest in persecution and survival."⁶ Margaret Atwood makes a similar point,

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arguing that these stories “provide the key to an important facet of the Canadian psyche.”⁷ The four-legged protagonists of British animal stories are, in her view, really “Englishmen in furry zippered suits,” a commentary on that country’s class system. American animal stories do not turn on social relations but conquest. These triumphal hunting tales reveal the “general imperialism of the American cast of mind.”⁸ The Canadian ones, however, differ significantly from both. They are “about animals *being* killed, as felt emotionally from inside the fur and feathers.” To Atwood, Canadians’ identification with these animal-victims is “the expression of a deep-seated cultural fear” of being overwhelmed – made extinct – by the United States.⁹ The creatures who inhabit the Canadian realistic wild animal story, she concludes, “are us.”¹⁰

But if wilderness has a human history that makes it a problematic national symbol, so too do wild animals. Take the beaver, for instance. The rodent is Canada’s national animal not because of its earnest industry, but because its pelt was a valuable commodity. When Canadians celebrate the beaver then, they are celebrating the fur trade – and its mass slaughter of wildlife in the name of fashion. Or take the coyote. First Nations storytellers like Thomas King have taught Canadians to see the animal as a trickster. A figure that can turn the world upside down, Coyote is capable of bringing a better order through chaos. His actions remind us that humans don’t rule the world. But try telling that to urbanites who discover their treasured pets missing and their children threatened when they reach out to pet the new “doggie” that appears in their backyards or the local park.

For humans, the trouble with wildlife is that flesh and blood creatures do not always live up to their representations. When that happens, the gap between animal and “animal” often proves fatal – sometimes to people, but more frequently to the wild creatures who can find themselves staring down the barrel of a weapon wielded by the local conservation officer.

As these examples illustrate, the history of humans’ relationship with wildlife is complex, contradictory, and conflict-laden. This book details just one aspect of that history, the efforts of Canadians to conserve and manage wildlife over the twentieth century to about 1970. I chose 1970 as the end point because that year marked the beginnings of a shift in the nature and tactics of the debate over

how to treat wildlife – something associated with the establishment of Greenpeace. More broadly, I use wildlife conservation as a way of understanding the shifting and conflicting attitudes toward the natural world. In that sense, this history of wildlife conservation provides a particular perspective on the history of environmentalism in Canada (defined broadly as a concern for the natural world), and specifically on the attitudes and roles of the state, urban sportsmen, and rural peoples, from resource workers to First Nations.

Both “wildlife” and “conservation” are words that need some explanation. For much of the period under study, “wildlife” did not exist. People occasionally used the phrase “wild life,” but referred far more often to “game” and “vermin.” The former were animals or birds that were hunted, worthy objects of pursuit that gave pleasure in the chase. The latter were a motley assortment of creatures that preyed on game or otherwise compromised human interests. Provincial governments across the country had game wardens and game departments which were charged with framing and implementing the provisions of the game act, a piece of legislation that protected valuable animals and birds and put a price on the heads of those that threatened them. It was not until the mid-twentieth century that the “wildlife service” emerged as a branch of the federal and provincial governments, staffed by “conservation” officers. Interestingly, fish were not usually included in wildlife, and I have maintained that convention. The book does not deal with fisheries management.

Although “conservation” and “preservation” were often used interchangeably, it is useful to distinguish between them. Except within the boundaries of provincial or federally administered parks where harvesting wildlife was prohibited or restricted only to First Nations, wildlife management policy was directed largely toward the conservation of species, that is, toward initiatives designed to safeguard the long-term survival and health of animals in order to ensure their continued use by humans. Conservation strategies might involve preservationist measures like barring the harvesting of certain species altogether, but these restrictions were temporary, and were meant to allow numbers to recover to levels that would sustain a return to hunting or trapping.

While we know pieces of the conservation story, a larger narrative has yet to emerge. Despite the acknowledged contribution of the wild animal story to the development of nature writing, the role

of wildlife in articulating national identity, the prominence of the fur trade in Canadian history, and the central role Canadian activists played in campaigns against sealing and whaling in the 1970s and '80s, environmental history is an emerging field, and only a handful of works deal with the history of wildlife conservation in Canada. Most examine a particular region, individual, organization or level of government, a single species, or policy.¹¹ Although the subject is not dealt with directly here, the literature on fishing has been particularly useful in informing my thinking, as has the work that explores various government management schemes for the fisheries and the conflict among interest groups.¹²

I have drawn on these scholars' insights to present a picture of wildlife conservation from a broader national perspective. It is one that inevitably loses some of the subtlety and in-depth coverage of more closely focused works. For instance, while Aboriginal peoples are a significant part of the story, the book does not examine indigenous beliefs and management practices (nor those of other rural people) systematically or in any detail, except to the extent that they came into focus and conflict with government conservation regimes. I hope, however, that these losses are compensated somewhat by the arguments the book offers about change over time, the range of actors and their roles, and the impacts and meanings of various conservation initiatives. They are meant to act as a framework within which to locate and understand the more specific episodes in the history of wildlife conservation that people have written about and will continue to explore.

The American literature on environmental history and the history of wildlife conservation is substantial. My thinking about the subject has benefited in particular from examples of writing that is critical in its focus, highlighting the normative nature of environmentalism.¹³ This work draws attention to the class and race dimensions of environmental action, whether in the form of pollution control, the creation of national parks, or wildlife conservation.¹⁴ Of course, American historians are not the only scholars to frame environmentalism in terms of power. Researchers focusing on the South rather than the North have done some of the most interesting work of this kind. Historians like Ramachandra Guha have revealed the connections between ecological questions and social equity in fights over resource use in India, Peru, Thailand, and Brazil. These episodes

in the “environmentalism of the poor” raise fundamental questions about the nature of development, as well as the conservation models used to counter it.¹⁵ Thinking about environmentalism in terms of values, judgements, and power has led me to frame wildlife conservation as a normative project of social, economic, and political change.

With all this in mind, the book offers three main arguments. The first is about change over time. Until the late nineteenth century, wildlife management, as we would call it now, was a highly localized, fragmented, and loose set of customary, informal, and private practices carried out by a diverse range of individuals and groups, from First Nations to the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) and local white sportsmen through rod and gun clubs. Their efforts were aimed at conserving the resource for subsistence, commercial return, or recreation. The state’s involvement in conservation was limited: local assize courts set seasons, bag limits, and bounties, and prosecuted offenders brought before them.

At the turn of the twentieth century, however, the state began to take a more active role, setting in place the structures that would allow for a more coordinated, encompassing, systematic, and ultimately more scientific approach to wildlife conservation. Statute law remained a key management tool for the state but eventually ceded its central place to science. Influenced by developments in ecology and the new discipline of game management in the 1920s and ’30s, state conservation strategy slowly shifted from simply limiting predation to increasing wildlife numbers through intense intervention. From almost its beginnings in the early twentieth century, conservation policy had the effect of marginalizing local customary uses of wildlife, and in that sense was part of the colonization of rural Canada.

The second argument is about the key actors. Despite the growth of government conservation over the twentieth century and the hegemony of scientific management, private individuals and organizations carried out some of the most important wildlife work in Canada. The very kinds of people who were targeted by state management regimes as responsible for the decline in wildlife – rural people who hunted for their own tables and for money to supplement their incomes or who made their livings in the bush – did as much if not more to further the general cause of environmentalism and in many cases to conserve particular species and habitats as those who were employed by the state.

Finally, whether it was carried out by the government or not, wildlife conservation was about the values that should govern humans' relationships with nature (e.g., Christianity, private property, non-consumptive use, efficiency, biodiversity) *and* the values that would come from conserving it; chief among them was the capacity for people to connect meaningfully – emotionally – with their own natures and with other people. Learning to live with wildlife was, for many who worked on its behalf, about creating ethical human communities. The normative nature of wildlife conservation meant that it invited commentary from a diversity of people – management was not solely the purview of government bureaucrats or experts. Over the twentieth century, sentiment, as much as science, shaped the content and trajectory of wildlife work.

The book is organized chronologically and thematically. Chapter 1 examines the legal regime that was created to regulate wildlife in the twentieth century, exploring its English antecedents as well as the twin influences of Progressivism and anti-modernism. Laws regulating wildlife stretched back to the medieval period, but at the turn of the twentieth century, provinces across Canada as well as the federal government created new bureaucracies and regulatory frameworks that centralized control over the resource and administered their provisions over broad geographic areas. Wildlife conservation was largely a matter of controlling predation through restrictions on hunting. More broadly, however, conservation policy sanctioned the non-consumptive use of wildlife, promoting sports hunting rather than hunting for the table, and through it a particular relationship between humans and the natural world. By centralizing control and privileging one kind of use of wildlife and relationship to it over others, government conservation policies created the context for conflict.

That conflict is the focus of Chapter 2, which makes the point that rural people were the targets of the game laws and investigates how they responded. It argues that wildlife conservation deepened the divisions of class and race. Moreover, in extending state control over the countryside and marginalizing the consumption of wildlife, as well as the local knowledges and practices that underlay it, conservation was an instrument of colonization. That said, however, even as some individuals were marginalized by the game laws, a handful were also able to profit from the new opportunities made available

by the emphasis on the non-consumptive use of wildlife in state conservation policy. They did so by commercializing their knowledge of the natural world, transforming and redeploying it as guides and outfitters or as rural entertainers. In selling local knowledge as woodcraft, rural people became implicated in the creation of a new set of relationships with nature that highlighted their skills and knowledge even as it marginalized them.

In examining the changing organization, substance, aims, and impacts of wildlife conservation, the first two chapters differ from the ones that follow, which are more closely focused case studies. Rendering these broad brush portraits presented certain methodological challenges. Anyone who writes about resource management in Canada must come to grips with multiple jurisdictions and different government departments. The division of powers in the British North America Act placed wildlife under the jurisdiction of the provinces. The exceptions to this were migratory birds and wildlife in the national parks and the Northwest Territories, all of which fell under federal jurisdiction. Rather than present an exhaustive recounting of the provisions of the game laws and policies of each province and the federal government, in the first two chapters I have chosen instead to identify the salient interpretive issues and to illustrate them with examples drawn from all over.

Chapters 1 and 2 make reference to the knowledge about the natural world that rural people possessed and the important role it and they played in shaping state conservation policy and practice. In Chapter 3, I deal more fully with the substance of that local knowledge, examining the career of Jack Miner, an Ontario farmer and brick maker who in the 1920s became Canada's first celebrity conservationist. Miner's career, a case study in rural ecological knowledge, provides an opportunity to understand its formation and characteristics. His ideas about conservation were an outgrowth of the Christian idea that man should have dominion over all the creatures of the earth, and were shaped by his experience of trying to make a living from the land. Despite "Uncle Jack's" great popularity and his contribution to the cause of conservation and research on migratory birds, his relationship with government wildlife workers and formally trained scientists was a difficult one that highlights the differences between two ways of knowing the natural world.

Finding common ground between scientific and local knowledge

on which to build conservation initiatives was not easy, but as Chapter 4 discusses, the Hudson's Bay Company managed to do so. Not only did it support the early research of Charles Elton – a man who would go on to become one of the founders of the “new ecology” – but it also developed a program of beaver conservation in northern Quebec in the 1930s and '40s based on ecological principles. While the federal government was showcasing Grey Owl and his trained beaver to promote the cause of conservation, the HBC was assisting researchers from Elton's Oxford Bureau of Animal Population and implementing measures aimed at increasing the beaver “crop” through the application of scientific knowledge. Although their management was informed by ecology and directed by scientists, the success of the preserves was ultimately due to the knowledge and cooperation of the Cree who worked in them.

The conservation measures implemented on the company's beaver preserves anticipated the shape of wildlife management in the postwar period. As Chapter 5 shows, after 1945 wildlife conservation became a much more proactive project aimed at actively managing animal populations. Biologists joined the ranks of wildlife workers at both the federal and provincial levels, conducting basic research into species, often with the cooperation of universities as well as the warden service, whose members were expected to have more formal training than before 1945. As wildlife work became more scientific and professional, it became more national and international, further distancing conservation from its local roots. Wildlife conservation also became concerned with increasing animal numbers through intensive management, as the federal government's management of the barren ground caribou and bison shows. In many ways it was not until after 1945 that the turn-of-the-century rhetoric of Progressive conservation, with its emphasis on efficiency and productivity, was fully manifested.

Despite their authority, however, scientists and science did not have an uncontested place in formulating public policy relating to wildlife. Focusing on the treatment of predators, Chapter 6 complicates the story of postwar conservation, arguing that when it came to dealing with this particular class of animals, scientists had to share that role with a vocal and insistent group of park wardens, cattlemen, farmers, trappers, and outfitters whose views were shaped by their experience and economic interest. Scientists had been making the case for

predators since the 1920s, but rural sentiments and practices persisted. Their strength was evidenced by the bounty, an important local institution that persisted into the 1950s, and in some jurisdictions like Ontario, into the 1970s. Even within the ranks of the government service, there were inconsistencies. While predators continued to be killed out of curiosity, fear, and greed into the 1960s, attitudes began shifting in the early years of that decade. By the 1970s, the new “values for varmints” that had been articulated a generation earlier by scientists had taken hold because popular writers like Farley Mowat and filmmakers like Bill Mason had managed to crystallize an emerging urban sentimentality about predators.

Mowat’s *Never Cry Wolf* and Mason’s *Death of a Legend* and *Cry of the Wild* spoke to a growing disquiet about the modern world; for both these men, wolves represented a wild that was fast disappearing. Save the wolf and the wild would be saved along with it – or so they implied. Whatever their disagreements with Mowat and Mason, government biologists largely shared the two men’s singular focus on the animal. While scientists appreciated the importance of habitat in determining the health of wildlife populations, habitat preservation did not become part of conservation policy until the late 1960s.

As Chapter 7 argues, by that time, groups like Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) had thirty years of experience working with prairie residents to save wetlands, and outfitters like British Columbia’s Tommy Walker and Alberta’s Andy Russell had established themselves as vocal defenders of mountain habitats. Whereas the urban-based leadership of DUC was motivated to save habitats in order to preserve opportunities for recreational hunting, Walker and Russell were moved to save wild places in order to promote a certain kind of community, a way of life in which physical nature and human culture were more integrated. A lifetime in the mountains had taught Walker and Russell that there was a connection between environmental integrity and social cohesion. Their “land ethic” was very much a social ethic.



CHAPTER ONE

Wild by Law: Animals, People, and the State to 1945

The people of the United States now mourn the loss of their wild life and are endeavouring to rescue the remnant from complete extermination, realizing what a great asset it is ... A young country [like Canada] enjoys the advantage of being able to profit by the mistakes of older countries ... It rests with us to prove that the advance of civilization ... does not imply the total destruction of the wild life but that civilization in its true sense signifies the elimination of the spirit of barbarism and the introduction of an enlightened attitude.

– C. Gordon Hewitt, *The Conservation of the Wild Life of Canada* (1921)

AS WITH MUCH in Canadian history, the story of saving Canada's wildlife can be framed, as the country's first consulting zoologist did, with reference to the United States. By the time Hewitt wrote, bison had been virtually eliminated from the North American plains and the passenger pigeon was extinct. These losses were regrettable, but where the United States had failed, the young dominion might triumph, preventing the extermination of wildlife and in so doing demonstrating Canada's superiority.

For Hewitt, "civilization in its true sense" had a place for both people and animals. The existence of wildness was not a sign of backwardness or barbarity, but evidence of an "enlightened attitude" that was at the core of civility. Such sentiments were thoroughly modern,

emerging from a fundamental shift in Western attitudes about the wilderness that began in the eighteenth century. Initially synonymous with barren desolation, by the end of the nineteenth century wilderness came to symbolize the opposite qualities, becoming for many the embodiment of Eden.¹

If Hewitt's sentiments about wildness were distinctly modern, so too were the methods he outlined for preserving it. People could save what they had destroyed. Indeed, by the time he wrote in 1921 the rescue project was well under way, as the main substance and strategies of wildlife conservation that would prevail until midcentury were well developed. His book outlined the conservation efforts undertaken by all levels of government as well as individual Canadians, highlighting federal and provincial game acts, the creation of game reserves and parks, and the work of fish and game protective associations. For Hewitt, a scientist, regulation was the key to making a place for people and animals. While the country's "impenetrable forests, trackless wilderness, and mountains ... [had] retarded settlement," and thus saved its wildlife from complete destruction, Canada would remain wild only by law.²

This chapter examines the substance, strategies, and aims of wildlife conservation in Canada to 1945. It argues that there was a fundamental change in its organization and aims at the turn of the twentieth century. At that time, federal and provincial governments began to involve themselves in the enterprise more actively. Influenced by American Progressivist thinking, which conceptualized trees, fish, and wildlife as "resources" to be scientifically managed, Canadian governments began to reconfigure conservation. Although technocrats did not dominate wildlife work in the first half of the twentieth century as they did in the United States and in the management of other resources, it was nonetheless transformed from a number of fragmentary localized practices concerned with controlling the kinds and numbers of animals killed to a centralized and bureaucratized set of policies aimed at promoting a particular relationship with wildlife. Indeed, in a process broadly similar to that described by Louis S. Warren for the United States, the involvement of both levels of government in conservation work altered the nature of wildlife as common property.³

COMMON PROPERTY AND LOCAL CONTROL:
THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY CONTEXT

While informal measures controlling resource use, like the taboos about hunting possessed by indigenous peoples, are of ancient lineage, in the English common law tradition statutes regulating the use and consumption of wildlife date back to the medieval period. In medieval England, hunting had evolved into a class privilege. The great English estates had their own gamekeepers who patrolled borders against poachers and husbanded the wildlife within them, killing predators, restocking grounds with valued birds like grouse or pheasant, and maintaining habitats conducive to game by, for instance, burning heather. These birds and animals were reserved for the sporting pleasure of the estate's owner and his guests, and their exclusive ownership was backed by the criminal law. Wildlife conservation and management were thus highly localistic, both in terms of the class interests they served and the area covered.

The injustice of the game laws and class-based nature of conservation became a target of criticism. In his celebrated *Commentaries* (1765-69), William Blackstone made the case that his country's game laws were a vestige of the "Norman yoke" and a subversion of English liberties.⁴ His attack was grounded in two key observations. Wild animals were common property, and moreover, hunting was a natural right, one possessed by "every man from prince to peasant," subject only to such restraints as served the public interest.⁵ Although his fellow jurists took issue with his arguments, Blackstone's position was embraced wholeheartedly in Britain's North American colonies.

North America's demography made Blackstone's views on the game laws seem like common sense.⁶ Frontier conditions, which made hunting a necessity, combined with the sheer abundance of animals (and a scarcity of gentry) only reinforced the idea that wildlife belonged to everyone, and rendered class-based prohibitions on taking it irrelevant and even dangerous. Indeed, in the Thirteen Colonies particularly, any controls that limited free taking were considered unduly restrictive. According to historian James A. Tober, wildlife became a point of "articulation [for] deeply held beliefs about New World freedoms."⁷

Colonists in the non-rebelling colonies did not seem to consider state regulation of wildlife – which was fairly modest in any case – as

corrosive of the liberties they enjoyed. Indeed, over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they actively pressed for it. Across British North America, individuals acting alone or through the auspices of local fish and game associations petitioned governments to pass or amend laws relating to wildlife and contributed to both their substance and enforcement.⁸ Perhaps the best example of this comes from Nova Scotia, where, led by officers of the Halifax garrison, a group of urban sportsmen established the Game and Inland Fishery Protection Society in 1852.⁹ So effective – and well connected – was the organization that the government turned over much of the enforcement of its wildlife legislation to it in 1884.¹⁰

Colonial governments across British North America responded to similar pressures by passing legislation regulating wildlife. While these statutes announced government jurisdiction over the entire resource, in practice state conservation and management remained narrowly focused on particular kinds of wild things. Until the mid-twentieth century, the law's bestiary contained references to "game" and "vermin" only.

"Game" was an ever-shifting, diverse assortment of creatures, some of which were not even native to the region, but were introduced by local sportsmen as "exotics." If Nova Scotia's statute books are any indication, snipe and woodcock were the only game in that colony in 1816. Moose became game in 1843, followed by pheasants and robins in 1856, caribou in 1862, non-indigenous American elk in 1894, and "animals valuable only for their fur" in 1896.¹¹

"Vermin" were a smaller and somewhat more constant collection of predators, consisting most commonly of wolves, bears, coyotes, and cougars. Their undiscerning carnivorous palates, which favoured wild game as well as domestic livestock, literally earned them a price on their heads and the undying animosity of lawmakers. "Whereas great damage hath been done to the farmers of this Province by wolves, bears, loup-cerviers [lynx], and wildcats," Nova Scotia's first bounty law made provision for rewards to be given for their killing.¹²

If colonial governments were concerned only with husbanding certain kinds of wildlife, then the tactics they used to do so were equally narrow. As the bounty law suggests, the main conservation strategy they pursued centred on controlling predation. Laws encouraged the destruction of some animals and limited or prohibited killing of others by setting seasons and bag limits. In that sense, the

wildlife management practised by the state was much more limited than that carried out privately and locally, whether by indigenous peoples or fish and game associations, both of whom were interested in limiting demand as well as increasing the local supply of game. Certainly it paled in comparison to the measures undertaken by the HBC in the nineteenth century. The company had a direct interest in maintaining adequate stocks of beaver and to that end initiated a series of conservation measures in the territories under its control. These were premised on a sophisticated and precocious understanding of the relationship between habitat and population, and included measures to shift hunting pressure to other species and establishing a beaver sanctuary.

Not only was early government wildlife conservation more limited than that practised privately, but its substance also reflected local knowledge and interests. In mid-nineteenth-century Nova Scotia, for instance, the colonial government empowered local justices of the peace to make provisions regarding the preservation of moose for their districts and to set rules and establish rewards for killing vermin.¹³ By 1872, local control over wildlife regulation increased when the provincial legislature empowered “the General Sessions of the Peace in every county and district ... to make all such rules and regulations as to them shall seem necessary” to carry out the provisions of the act.¹⁴ New Brunswick’s game laws suggested just how particularistic colonial wildlife conservation could be. In 1810 the colony prohibited moose hunting in a particular place – Grand Manan Island – but exempted a particular individual. As the original importer of moose to the island, Moses Gerritson was allowed to reap what he had, literally, sowed, despite the act’s preamble, which noted that the preservation of moose would be “beneficial to ... the whole of the Province.”¹⁵

Until the end of the nineteenth century then, conservation, whether carried out privately or publicly, under state sanction, was a fragmentary and uncoordinated set of practices concerned mainly with controlling the kinds and numbers of animals killed. Despite various colonial governments’ assertion of jurisdiction, wildlife, in Louis S. Warren’s term, largely remained a “local commons” – a resource regulated by local users in response to local conditions and according to practices that had emerged through a long history of indigenous use.

CHANGES

In response to concerns over the decline of animal and bird populations, the organization, substance, and aims of wildlife conservation changed, as did the status of wildlife as common property. Inspired by American Progressivist thinking, federal and provincial governments centralized control over wildlife in the early twentieth century, creating new bureaucracies dedicated to conservation. While these changes eroded local participation to a certain degree, in Canada wildlife was not transformed from a “local commons” to a “national” one as it was in the United States. Federal and provincial governments certainly consolidated their control over wildlife, but rather than creating one national commons, their involvement in conservation produced several centralized ones whose regulation was not entirely “delocalized.” Thus, there were some important continuities with nineteenth-century practice.

More substantive changes occurred in the tactics and aims of wildlife conservation. At the turn of the century, conservation strategy shifted from simply being a matter of numbers to include promoting a particular relationship between people and wildlife. Premised on an ethic of exploitation that endorsed non-commercial and non-consumptive use, this new relationship was the basis of a different kind of environmental citizenship, one that its supporters believed was the real key to conservation.

To observers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was little doubt that wildlife populations were declining. Nor was there much question about the reasons for that decline. Extinction was a by-product of expansion. Opening the western and northern reaches of North America to European settlement and urban and industrial development involved the purposeful and inadvertent destruction of wildlife habitat. The axe, the ox, and the plough turned forests into farmland, marshes into meadows. Railways disrupted the migration routes of the bison on the prairies and caribou in Newfoundland and were the cause of serious and uncontrollable fires that had both immediate and long-term impacts on populations and their food supply. Railway construction crews, as well as the men who laboured in mining and forestry camps, also took their toll, entertaining themselves by throwing the occasional stick of dynamite in a lake or testing their marksmanship on anything with feathers or hooves.



Piles of bison skulls, like this one by a railway siding near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, were a common sight on the Canadian prairies in the late nineteenth century, testimony to the environmental costs of settlement (1890). Glenbow Museum and Archives, NA 354-29

Not only was wildlife pushed, parched, burned, starved, and blasted out by European settlement, but it was also in danger of being gunned down and served up to meat-hungry settlers. Colonization was famishing business, and wildlife came under increased pressure from hunters who sought to feed themselves and their families or to earn a living supplying a growing urban market with fresh animal protein. Well after the frontier period, wild meat remained a significant part of the diet of rural people and was a feature of urban tables well into the twentieth century.

The scale and extent of the destruction elicited a response from the state. From about 1897 to 1917, the structure of wildlife management

in Canada was substantially remade. Provincial governments across the country, as well as the Yukon's territorial government, consolidated their game laws and created new bureaucracies – offices of the game warden or game guardian – that centralized policy making and enforcement under one roof.¹⁶

The federal government followed suit in the few areas over which it had jurisdiction, mainly the national parks and the Northwest Territories. In 1909, it passed an Order-in-Council making provision for the hiring of game wardens in all of the country's national parks. Two years later, in 1911, it created a Dominion Parks Branch charged with coordinating wildlife policy for the areas under its control, among other things.¹⁷ As well, under Gordon Hewitt's direction, Ottawa undertook a major revision of the Northwest Territories' game act. Passed in 1917, the revised act put new species under protection, required non-Aboriginals to take out licences to kill musk-ox and to export caribou skins, and placed responsibility for its administration and enforcement in the hands of the dominion parks commissioner, who already had responsibility for protecting game, and a corps of "competent game wardens" who would relieve the overworked Mounties.¹⁸

The trend toward bureaucratization deepened and took on new dimensions when Canada signed the Migratory Birds Convention Act with the United States in 1916 and the federal government assumed responsibility for enforcing its provisions. The process of negotiating this treaty made bureaucrats aware of the need for interdepartmental coordination and cooperation in setting wildlife policy, and to that end, the federal government created an Advisory Board on Wild Life Protection in 1916. Bringing together representatives from the National Parks Branch, the National Museum, the Commission of Conservation, and the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), the Advisory Board dealt with the international administration of the Migratory Birds Convention, as well as with the management of wildlife in the Northwest Territories.¹⁹

Canada's push to systematize, centralize, and bureaucratize wildlife conservation was influenced by developments in the United States. Inspired by American president Theodore Roosevelt's National Conservation Commission, formed just the year before, the Liberal government of Wilfrid Laurier established a Canadian Commission of Conservation in 1909 to investigate the state of the country's natural

resources. Although applied scientists did not dominate its membership as they did on the American body and in the American movement in general, Canada's Commission of Conservation nonetheless shared similar Progressivist views.²⁰

For Progressives, conservation was the "wise use" of resources; it was exploitation carried on in a manner that we would now term "sustainable." According to environmental historian Samuel P. Hays, Progressive conservationists believed that "foresight and restraint in the exploitation of the physical sources of wealth" would guarantee "the perpetuity of civilization, and the welfare of present and future generations."²¹ "Scientific management" was the key. Not only did it entail changes to the organization of conservation – the rationalization of the game acts and the centralization of policy making – but it also involved turning over the responsibility for the substance of those policies to experts who would formulate ways to alleviate the pressure on wildlife resources. To that end, Canada's Commission of Conservation directed over two hundred scientific studies in the twelve years of its existence. Dealing with subjects ranging from oysters to air pollution, each was a chapter in the "doctrine of usefulness" that was the bedrock on which North American conservation rested.²²

Technocrats did not dominate wildlife work in Canada at either the provincial or federal level as they did in the management of other resources. Indeed, in 1919 the Commission of Conservation urged provincial governments to encourage the formation of local fish and game protective organizations.²³ In the first half of the twentieth century, wildlife management was distinguished from other management regimes by the role it gave to the amateur and the lack of resources committed to scientific research. In part, this reflected the state of wildlife science at the time.

Unlike forestry and fisheries management, wildlife management only emerged as a formal discipline in the first half of the twentieth century. Animal ecology, the discipline on which it was partially built, was just being established as a result of the work of Charles Elton (1900–91), an Oxford University zoologist who had connections with Canada. Elton's book *Animal Ecology* (1927) helped lay the foundation for modern ecosystem ecology, outlining many of its key concepts, including food chains, niches, and community.²⁴ Despite his institutional affiliation, Elton was committed to developing a discipline that had practical applications. To that end, in the 1930s he

began to write about the need for a “conservation ethic,” motivated in part by meeting Aldo Leopold (1887–1947) at the Matamek Conference on Biological Cycles, an international meeting of scientists held in Labrador, Canada, to discuss fluctuations in wildlife populations.²⁵

A hunter and Yale-trained forester who had conducted game surveys for American sporting groups, Leopold went on to teach at the University of Wisconsin and was working on what would become the bible of the new discipline of game management when he encountered Elton at Matamek. If meeting Leopold introduced Elton to conservation issues, meeting Elton convinced Leopold that ecological principles had to inform game management. Published in 1933, *Game Management* bore the imprint of Leopold’s Progressivist conservation training at Yale. For Leopold, game management was “the art of making land produce sustained annual crops of wild game for recreational use.”²⁶ Limiting predation would always be important, but Leopold devoted much of his book to outlining the biological factors that influenced wildlife populations, making the case that conservation had to take into account the relationship of animals to their environment. Game managers had to shift their focus from “controlling guns alone” to manipulating food, water, cover, and disease, and they had to learn how to conduct proper population surveys.²⁷ Like ecology, game management was for Leopold a quantitative and experimental discipline devoted to the study of organisms in relation to their environment.

Despite the importance of Elton and Leopold in the development of their respective disciplines, their ideas did not influence wildlife management practice until after 1945. Until then, conservation remained the purview of practical men rather than experts. That said, there could be significant differences in the skills they possessed. At one end of the spectrum stood men such as Percy Taverner; at the other, Nathan Sabeau. Taverner, a taxidermist and draftsman by training, was a self-taught naturalist. His skills earned him the position of staff ornithologist at the National Museum in 1911, a position he occupied for more than thirty years. According to his biographer, Taverner laid the foundations for scientific ornithology in Canada, and was a leading advocate for wild bird protection, involved as he was in the negotiations for the Migratory Birds Convention and the establishment of several national bird sanctuaries. Taverner wrote 299 scientific papers, comments, and reviews, but his greatest contribution

were his bird identification handbooks, used by scientists and amateur bird watchers alike.²⁸ Nathan Sabeau, on the other hand, authored no scientific papers, but certainly saw himself as possessing all the qualifications to be a game warden. "I know all about the woods here, every hole and corner," the Nova Scotia man wrote in 1921. "And," he added, "I try to keep the law."²⁹

Men like Nathan Sabeau dominated the membership of the warden service, which was drawn from local populations.³⁰ Any man handy with an axe and who knew his way around the woods seemed to meet the qualifications for employment.³¹ In 1921 New Brunswick made such skills an absolute requirement, insisting that each prospective deputy game warden pass an examination "as to his knowledge of woodcraft, habits and resorts of game and fur-bearing animals, the game, fishery, and fire laws of the Province ... and other matters as may be required."³² These skills would be brought to bear in enforcing the law and reporting on wildlife conditions in their districts, information that would be forwarded to the chief game warden or guardian and used to frame policy. So, while Canada's wildlife commons was being centralized, the preponderance of "practical men" in the ranks of conservation during the first half of the twentieth century meant that localism continued to inform it.

Local fish and game associations also influenced government conservation policy. In western Canada, the perspectives they offered were, as historian George Colpitts points out, shaped by their social location as much as by their geographic one. Although the men who belonged to these organizations certainly spent time in the woods, they were not working-class woodsmen like Nathan Sabeau. Instead, they tended to be middle-class urban dwellers – drawn from cities like Calgary and Vancouver, and towns like Red Deer and Fernie. Not only did they carry on the nineteenth-century tradition of doing conservation work themselves, but like the men in the warden service they also reported on wildlife conditions and offered advice on seasons and bag limits.³³

Important as it was, the local advice offered by wardens and fish and game associations was just that: advice. With the expansion of the state into conservation work, local people – whatever their class position – no longer regulated the resource directly. The information and recommendations they provided about one particular locale were weighed against those provided by others and shaped in accordance

with the conservation priorities of an entire province that had been set by outsiders. Local influences continued to shape government conservation but were channelled through a centralized bureaucracy.

Despite the continuing but reconfigured influence of the local, the techniques that characterized the wildlife work undertaken by both levels of government certainly reflected Progressivists' activist approach to conservation. Concerned with regulating demand by imposing bag limits and seasons and by creating parks and game preserves, governments also worked to increase the supply of game birds and animals by restocking depleted areas. The best-known example of this occurred in 1907 when the federal government purchased Michel Pablo's herd of bison and relocated it to Buffalo National Park, as a sanctuary for what Parks Commissioner Howard Douglas called the "relics of the countless monarchs of the plains."³⁴ Building on the work of individuals and local fish and game associations, provincial governments made similar efforts, often with game birds that they raised on state farms.³⁵ While they usually confined their propagation efforts to indigenous species, sometimes they attempted to introduce "exotics" – including beaver and red deer to the Queen Charlottes and moose to Newfoundland – to provide sport for local and non-resident hunters.³⁶

It was only a short step from reintroducing species to producing them. In the 1920s both levels of government began to promote fur farming. As human settlement encroached on their habitats, there were fewer fur-bearers to keep up with the growing demand. In this context, domesticating threatened species like beaver and fox seemed to offer an effective way of conserving wild stocks while meeting market needs – but only if it were conducted along "scientific" lines.³⁷ To that end, the federal Department of the Interior disseminated information to prospective farmers on the scientific production of furs, and along with the provincial governments of Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba, established model farms and experimental stations. Spurred on by rising prices, fur farming boomed, particularly in Atlantic Canada, until the Second World War, when falling prices and a shift in taste toward wild fur brought it to an end.³⁸

Wildlife conservation in Canada also bore the imprint of Progressivists' commitment to rationalizing use. While federal and provincial game laws limiting the numbers and kinds of wildlife that could

be killed remained a key management tool, their substance was the product of much more systematic efforts to understand game conditions. At the turn of the twentieth century, both levels of government began to collect information from field officers on a regular basis. Local input from individuals or fish and game associations continued, but was channelled through a bureaucracy that fashioned it into a single set of regulations whose application was standardized across political jurisdictions. These could be quite large, ranging from a single national park to a province, a territory, or in the case of the Migratory Birds Convention Act, the entire country – areas that could encompass considerable social as well as biological diversity.

In addition, both levels of government imposed a licensing system to rationalize and regulate use. While visitors might have been asked to take out a hunting licence in the nineteenth century, locals had largely been exempt. That changed in the twentieth century: game laws across Canada required both resident and non-resident hunters to be licensed, a provision that not only brought game departments much-needed revenue, but also allowed them to keep track of and regulate the kill.³⁹ In British Columbia the licensing requirement was extended in 1913 to include firearms as well.⁴⁰

Aboriginal peoples were exempt from these licensing provisions. Indeed, the Department of Indian Affairs as well as many First Nations contended that Aboriginal peoples were not bound by any provincial game act by virtue of the treaties they had signed which guaranteed their hunting and fishing rights. The provinces, not surprisingly, had another view, and their attempts to impose the law on First Nations were a frequent cause of conflict, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. Despite Indian Affairs' position, the Parks Branch insisted that everyone was bound by the laws that forbade hunting in the national parks. Those prohibitions were contested, evaded, and ignored by First Nations, and in the case of Wood Buffalo National Park, they were modified. The Parks Branch allowed the Chipewyan to continue to hunt all animals except the endangered bison within the boundaries of the park. The federal government agreed to this modification not because it recognized the Aboriginal right to hunt, but in order to avoid the potential cost of supporting a group of Aboriginal people who could no longer feed themselves through customary means.⁴¹

Because of its jurisdiction over Aboriginal peoples, the federal

government was somewhat more attentive to the social and economic impacts of wildlife policy than was its American counterpart or its provincial ones. National parks policy in the United States prohibited all hunting except that carried out by parks personnel to eliminate predators.⁴² The federal government's sensitivity, born of paternalism, explains the one exception to Aboriginal peoples' general exemption from the provincial game acts, namely, the requirement for all trappers to register their lines. Pioneered by British Columbia in 1925, the trapline registration system developed in response to increased pressure on fur resources brought about by the influx of white trappers drawn north by rising fur prices and the prospect of easy money in the 1920s. The Great Depression of the 1930s drew more people to the backcountry. For the government of British Columbia, trapline registration was a way to rationalize resource use and to limit conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal trappers. Once registered, trapline holders had an exclusive right to take animals in specified areas. Although the DIA had argued that Aboriginal peoples were generally exempt from the provincial game acts, it considered trapline registration to be in their best interests and agreed to bind them to this particular provision. Other provinces followed British Columbia's lead and established their own registration systems: Ontario in 1935, Alberta in 1937, Manitoba in 1940, Quebec in 1945, Saskatchewan in 1946, and the Yukon in 1950. The federal government passed similar legislation for the Northwest Territories in 1949.⁴³

The same awareness of the connection between conservation and social welfare also explains the federal government's best-known wildlife conservation initiative, namely, the establishment of Reindeer Station in the Northwest Territories. Concerned about the incidence of starvation among the Inuit and desiring to relieve hunting pressure on the caribou, the federal government plunged into the reindeer business, hoping that the skin and meat provided by these animals would serve as a substitute. In 1929 it hired Sami herders to drive the three thousand animals it had purchased from Alaska to the Mackenzie Delta, and then to school the Inuit of the western Arctic in the pastoral arts, thus reducing their dependence on hunting. After a drive that lasted six long years, the herd arrived and transformed the region's economy and ecology.

THE ETHICS OF EXPLOITATION

To Progressives, wildlife management was largely a numbers game. Conservation involved managing the pressure on the resource by regulating demand and supply. But the ideology of wise use does not entirely explain the character of Canada's turn-of-the-century game laws, namely, the restrictions on how animals could be killed and what could be done with their remains. For instance, in Ontario it was illegal to hunt deer in water or waterfowl from a "sail-boat, yacht, or launch propelled by steam or other power"; in Nova Scotia to snare moose, trap them in pits, or run them with dogs; and in Saskatchewan to hunt at night or to use "poison, opium, or other narcotic" to bait and kill game birds.⁴⁴ The only legitimate way to hunt game animals and birds was to shoot them – as long as the weapon was not automatic.⁴⁵

Having bagged their quarry at the right time and place, and by proper means, hunters were not entirely free to dispose of it as they might like. The federal and provincial game laws limited the commercial sale of wild meat. These restrictions, which evolved into prohibitions in some places, were designed to get at what many conservationists at the time – and many environmental historians now – considered the root cause of wildlife decline, namely, the commodification of game and fur-bearing animals. "It is a widely accepted principle of conservation that no wild species can long withstand commercial exploitation," American conservationist William Hornaday told his Canadian counterparts in 1919. "If any principles in wild life protection can be regarded as settled for all time, it is the [necessity of] the ban on the sale of game and on the sale of the plumage of wild birds."⁴⁶ The delegates at Canada's first National Conference on Conservation of Game, Fur-Bearing Animals and Other Wild Life agreed, passing a resolution asserting that "the sale of protected game for food ... is positively inimical to the conservation of our game resources."⁴⁷

The conference resolution reflected a growing consensus about the destructive effects of the market for wild meat. At the turn of the twentieth century, almost all provincial game laws as well as the Yukon Game Ordinance of 1900 and the federal Northwest Game Act of 1917 prohibited the sale of game except during open season, and required buyers and sellers of game meat to take out a licence.⁴⁸

In some jurisdictions, such as Nova Scotia, moose hunters planning to sell their kills had first to submit the carcasses for inspection to ensure that the animal had not been taken by illegal methods.⁴⁹ When wartime shortages of meat sent opportunistic market hunters to the woods, some provinces imposed further strictures, banning the sale of game outright.⁵⁰

The operative idea behind these restrictions seemed to be that Canada had reached a stage in its development where it was no longer necessary to consume wild meat; to do so signalled one's primitiveness and geographic and social marginality. In this respect, it is significant that the only people exempted from the provisions of Canada's game laws were those living in remote districts or who were Aboriginal, and the only exception to the general trend of restricting market hunting and the sale of game meat was the Yukon.⁵¹ Although the 1920 revision of the Territory's game ordinance required market hunters and game dealers to be licensed, no bag limit or seasonal restrictions applied to those holding a commercial hunting licence.⁵²

The restrictions on how animals could be killed and the limits on the commercial use of wildlife point to the existence of an ethic of exploitation rooted not in the doctrine of wise use, but in a different set of ideas. As much as it was a numbers game, wildlife management was also a matter of morality, of creating a principled relationship between human beings and the natural world. The injunctions against wasting meat, killing animals during breeding season, and killing females and their young drew upon the moral authority of biology, while the prohibitions against taking animals by means that were too easy or effective were rooted in some general sense of justice and fair play. Bag limits and the restrictions on the sale of game meat were premised on a particular understanding of human nature, namely, that people were fundamentally greedy and motivated by the market, and that in the absence of state regulation, they would exhaust their resources. Taken together, these strictures pushed subsistence and commercial hunters to the moral margins. The only legitimate reason to kill game was for sport, that is, for non-consumptive purposes. Indeed, as Leopold pointed out, the aim of game management was to produce "wildlife crops" for "recreational use."

As much as they exemplified Progressive conservation's doctrine of wise use, Canada's game laws were also the embodiment of the principles that comprised the "sportsman's creed." Reproduced in

everything from conservation tracts to tourist brochures, the sportsman's creed was nothing less than a set of rules for ethical hunting that was meant to serve as the basis for environmental citizenship.⁵³ Gordon Hewitt believed that living by the code would "secure ... the conservation of our unsurpassed game resources," as did a number of fish and game associations across Canada and North America.⁵⁴ Among other things, the sportsman's creed declared that "no man can be a good citizen and also a slaughterer of game"; "a market-hunter is an undesirable citizen and should be treated as such"; "the best hunter is the man who finds the most game, kills the least, and leaves behind him no wounded animals"; and that "the killing of an animal means the end of its most interesting period."⁵⁵

At its core, the creed asserted that wildlife was simply too important to be eaten. It was meant to serve a larger purpose, namely, elevating the human condition by providing sport and diversion for modern men. "In the settled and civilized regions of North America there is no real *necessity* for the consumption of wild game for food purposes," it read. "The highest purpose which the killing of wild game and game fishes can hereafter be made to serve is in furnishing objects to overworked men for tramping and camping trips in the wilds."⁵⁶

As the game laws and the sportsman's creed suggest, an ethical relationship with nature was one based on the non-consumptive use of wildlife. Hunting for sport was one such non-consumptive use; wildlife appreciation in the national parks was another. Managing wildlife in the parks was not simply about protection: it also involved deploying wild animals to enhance and indeed create a generalized wilderness experience for tourists – even if that meant sacrificing the animals' lives or, in other cases, their wildness.

At Rocky Mountain Park, federal officials hoped that visitors would come away with a new or deepened appreciation for wild nature. But just in case the hot springs and mountains were not enough to instill the desired awareness, superintendents and wardens made animals part of the park's pedagogy. Instructing tourists in wilderness appreciation was so much easier if a bison or elk got their attention first. British Columbia's chief game warden argued that "scenery attracts all classes, but where one person would go to see scenery or big timber there are hundreds who would go long distances out of their way to see them in combination with the wild life indigenous

to the mountains and forests. Eliminate the wild life from a park or forest reserve and its greatest charm is gone.”⁵⁷

More charismatic than trees and certainly than the uniformed wardens, wild animals were, however, singularly unreliable teaching assistants, often failing to show up for their classes. To address this problem, the park’s management had some of Rocky Mountain’s larger mammals killed, stuffed, and mounted as exhibits in the Banff museum as a way of “fostering interest in wildlife conservation.”⁵⁸ As the exhibits were assembled, Howard Douglas, Rocky Mountain’s second superintendent, ordered an animal paddock built in 1898. The five-hundred-acre enclosure housed elk, moose, deer, antelope, and bison, including “Sir Donald” (after his donor, Lord Strathcona), patriarch of the Banff bison herd until he was gored to death in 1909, when his head was stuffed and mounted in the parks commissioner’s office.⁵⁹

The success of the paddock encouraged Douglas to add more animals. These were chosen not because they represented the park’s fauna, or even that of the region or province, but because they represented some of the country’s main species or, in the case of exotic species like the Persian sheep, because he found them interesting.⁶⁰ Soon plans were under way for the construction of a full-fledged zoo, which at its opening in 1911 contained cages housing several foxes, cougars, a marmot, and a porcupine. In 1912, the park traded two moose from its paddock for a polar bear, which remained “an outstanding favourite” with visitors until 1937, when the zoo finally closed.⁶¹ For the purposes of teaching wilderness appreciation and non-consumptive use of nature, it was more important, it seemed, that park visitors see wildlife – any wildlife, even if it was dead, caged, or exotic – rather than learn anything specific about the place itself or the relationship between its indigenous species and the Bow Valley’s ecosystem.

Animals outside the paddock and zoo were also subject to management designed to “embellish the tourist’s wilderness experience.”⁶² For instance, in 1921 Jasper’s superintendent reported that he had been working hard to acclimatize the elk that had been imported from Yellowstone, getting them used to people so they would become a draw for tourists. In congratulating the wardens at Buffalo National Park for taming “Granny” (a bison) and “Maud” (an elk), Commissioner J.B. Harkin suggested that similar efforts might be undertaken



One of the more unusual experiments with introducing exotic species in Canada was this attempt to transplant yaks to Buffalo National Park, outside Wainwright, Alberta (ca. 1920s). Adapted to high altitude habitats (13,450 to 20,000 feet), these creatures must have found life at approximately 2200 feet uncomfortable. Glenbow Museum and Archives, NA-5413-2

in other parks. While they did not quite become wild animal tamers, the wardens at Banff did install salt licks along the Banff-Windermere road in 1922 so that game would be drawn there in full view of the motoring public. The possibility that they might be luring the animals to their deaths was not, it seems, discussed.⁶³

The ethical relationship between people and the natural world that was embodied in the sportsman's creed and other forms of wildlife appreciation gained much of its purchase on public policy not so much from the Progressivist ideology, but from a concurrent social and intellectual movement, namely, anti-modernism. For anti-modernists, growth and the very "gospel of efficiency" so embraced by the Progressives was socially and spiritually debilitating.⁶⁴ Modern life, for all its comforts, was empty and sterile, lacking in meaning. The middle class particularly may have benefited from the fruits of human ingenuity, but had become incapable of enjoying them. In



Visitors to Canada's national parks were often encouraged to feed animals like these antelope as a way of cultivating an appreciation for wildlife (ca. 1920s). Glenbow Museum and Archives, NA-5413-3

fact, it seemed incapable of feeling anything but boredom or emotional exhaustion. Such was the price it paid for living in an “electrical age.” “We moderns ... are keyed up to a concert pitch,” observed one anonymous writer who called himself “The Doctor” in 1908. “The demands upon us are urgent and nerve-prostrating ... There is no tyranny like twentieth-century civilization.”⁶⁵ As a result, these people sought what they called “authentic” experiences – experiences that would alleviate their boredom and above all, teach them to feel the full range of emotions again, to achieve a balance between reason and passion. It was this bourgeois reaction against the “over-civilizing” effects of modernity and the search for the real that lay at the core of anti-modernism.

For many bourgeois people, authenticity meant an encounter with the primitive, whether in the form of Eastern mysticism, medieval society with its warrior-knights, or folklore.⁶⁶ But for many more, the



Warden Davison with his pet elk Maud at Buffalo National Park outside Wainwright Alberta (ca. 1920s). Glenbow Museum and Archives, NA-5413-4

path to the primitive led outdoors.⁶⁷ Camping, canoeing, and simply tramping around in the woods “getting aboriginal,” as one enthusiast put it, were all the rage, just the thing for the growing numbers of enervated brainworkers populating Canada’s cities.⁶⁸ While the monotony of modern life led many to consume “strong stimulants in tea and coffee,” or to pursue “wrong-headed amusement” in the form of “strong drink, tobacco, and cards,” and “horse-racing, stock-gambling, and lower grades of sport,” the true cure was to be found “in the woods and waters, in which the artificial life is cast off for a natural one.”⁶⁹ As an Ontario author calling herself “Wahnipitae” put it, “What a delightful feeling it is to sit out in the open around the big camp fire, and feel we cannot be disturbed by any trolley cars, trains, or other signs of civilization. How much at home a fire makes us feel in a very few minutes! How little we miss the daily papers! Surely some of us are inoculated with the ‘call of the wild’ and are happy in getting back to our original way of living!”⁷⁰



Mr. Campbell McNab and his hunting trophies, fetishes of bourgeois masculinity (1873). Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum of Canadian History, I81218

Though modernity's middle-class victims looked to the outdoors to cure what ailed them, the recommended dosage differed. Whereas organized camping and canoeing were often enough to cure the modern woman of what ailed her, men seemed to require a different encounter to achieve the same ends. In many ways, modernity had taken a greater toll on middle-class men, rendering them overly rational, soft, a breed prone to nervous exhaustion and incapable of being men; that is, they were incapable of acting decisively and aggressively, of doing the kinds of things that had made civilization possible in the first place.⁷¹ A weekend by the lake in a cabin might alleviate some of the stresses of modern life, but really countering its effects required a

much closer and more intense engagement with the *wild*, and not just the outdoors.

Short of war, hunting was the most effective way to restore bourgeois masculinity to its former strength and glory. As one writer in *Rod and Gun in Canada* noted, “if ... men whose brains are kept in a continual state of excitement, whose stomachs are ruined by artificial tonics, [or] ... who are cooped up at their desks the year round would try a little *play* and take a holiday in a duck marsh, they will find ... an antidote that will drive the cobwebs and aches from their brains, and their digestions will knock dyspepsia endways.”⁷² Echoing these thoughts, Quebec’s Saguenay Club told its prospective members that “with the severe demands of modern business life on the nervous and physical energy of its devotees, it is most important that a way be opened up so that the businessman may get into God’s great out-of-doors for at least some time each year. Such a holiday provides the greatest nerve tonic ever known.”⁷³ The transformation was remarkable: men who went on big game hunting holidays “go into the woods with delicate white hands and soft bodies and come out again in a fortnight brown, hale, and hearty, able to eat like a horse and work like a Trojan.”⁷⁴ “Breathing the purest of air, with the blood tingling under the stimulus of sport,” Quebec’s Triton Club members, who in 1908 included Theodore Roosevelt, felt they were “laying a reserve force of vitality that will not only lengthen [their] days but will enable [them] to present a steady front to the duties of life to which [they] have to return.”⁷⁵

Heeding the “Red Gods” – the “primitive instinct” to hunt – did not, however, mean surrendering to the passions completely and engaging in indiscriminate and savage bloodlust. Instead, the value of hunting for middle-class moderns was the premium it put on feeling *and* thinking. As American sharpshooter Annie Oakley told *Rod and Gun*, hunting was not about killing. “It is not a desire to kill that makes this [hunting] a pleasure, but something totally different. I suppose it might be called the pleasure of conscious superiority over that which is shot at.”⁷⁶ Bird hunter A.L. Phelps agreed. “The killing isn’t everything. To me the roaring rise of the partridge is almost ... as pleasurable as bringing one to bag.”⁷⁷ For Franklin Hawley, the joy of hunting was “following the deer, and gaining a vantage point from which you MIGHT SLAY but DO NOT. The real sport lies in the conquest, not in the killing.”⁷⁸

While anti-modern social criticism was generated in elite circles, its central ideas about the degenerative effects of modernization and the regenerative power of wilderness had broad popular cultural appeal, in large part because of the reach and influence of a number of specialized magazines. At least ten emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to meet the growing interest in the outdoors, including *Canadian Athletic* (Toronto, 1892), *Rod and Gun in Canada* (Montreal, 1899), *Western Canadian Sportsman* (Winnipeg, 1904), *Outdoor Canada* (Toronto, 1905), *Canadian Alpine Journal* (Banff, 1907), and *Sports* (Halifax, 1908).⁷⁹ Of these, *Rod and Gun* was by far the most popular, with a circulation of some eighteen thousand in 1913.⁸⁰ Other important vehicles for popularizing anti-modern ideas included pulp fiction, juvenile literature, sporting goods companies, arms manufacturers, and – in Canada particularly – railways who advertised the country’s sport and scenery to prospective tourists.⁸¹ Organizations like Teddy Roosevelt’s Boone and Crockett Club, Baden-Powell’s Boy Scouts, and Seton’s Woodcraft Indians also prescribed the “strenuous life” of the outdoorsman as a preventive cure for the malaise of modernity. Circulated through these media, these ideas gave rise to a multi-million dollar industry designed to cater to the sporting tourist.⁸²

As much as they considered wildlife an economic resource, government conservationists also recognized its therapeutic power, and shaped management policy accordingly. The influence of Progressive conservation was apparent in the bureaucratic structure of management and the initiatives aimed at regulating and rationalizing the exploitation of wildlife. The scope of anti-modernism’s influence on conservation, on the other hand, can be measured by the extent to which management policy encouraged the non-consumptive use of wildlife, whether by making animals into tourist attractions, promoting sports hunting, restricting hunting for the market, or protecting and propagating certain species because of their recreational value. It is also reflected directly in the sentiments of Fred Bradshaw, Saskatchewan’s chief game guardian. Commenting on the importance of wildlife, Bradshaw observed that its value “is not so much as an article of food, although that is considerable in itself ... but as an inducement that attracts farmers from the monotony of their daily work, and clerks, tradesmen and merchants of the cities to the prairie and the woods.”⁸³ Even conservation bureaucrats like Gordon Hewitt

embraced anti-modernism's arguments about the value of the wild. "What man is there," he asked, "who, after months of unremitting toil, takes down his gun, rod, or camera, and seeking the silence of the open air for a week or two, does not come back physically and mentally refreshed and remade?" For this hard-headed scientist, "nothing calls for resourcefulness so much as the quest for wild life, when the beaten tracks of a more civilized life ... are left and one has to return to the primal competitive habits."⁸⁴ Provided such encounters with nature followed particular rules of engagement – the sportsman's creed – they reinvigorated the body and spirit. In placing a premium on reason and passion, they restored the balance of human nature.

In promoting the therapeutic power of recreational encounters with wilderness and wildlife, government conservationists were not offering a fundamental critique of the conditions of modernity. They were not calling for an end to its "unremitting toil" or the "high pressure of city conditions,"⁸⁵ nor were they arguing for a permanent return to the primitive. Instead, engaging with the wild was meant to allow people to go back to the city renewed and ready to do battle in jungles of a different kind. Conserving wildlife as "objects for over-worked men" was framed as a way of "increasing human efficiency."⁸⁶ It was thus a way to treat the symptoms of modernity without getting at their root causes.

Although Progressivism and anti-modernism pulled wildlife conservation in different directions, they did not, in the end, produce a set of management practices that were inconsistent or fundamentally at odds. Insofar as anti-modernism shaped a wildlife management policy concerned with efficiency and with reducing the frictions of modern life, its contribution was completely consistent with and indeed reinforced the general purpose and direction of Progressive conservation. Regulations and policies for the wise use of one resource – wildlife – made for the more effective development of another, namely, people. Hunted with a gun or camera, wildlife could cure nervous exhaustion and early-twentieth-century ennui and thus make men fit for the marketplace. When domesticated by Aboriginals, it could civilize savages, turning nomadic hunters into settled farmers who would be less of a drain on the state. Managed properly, wildlife was a corrective to over-civilization and barbarity.

Wildlife conservation in Canada was a modernist project aimed at

controlling nature and human nature, designed to temper the effects of modernity systematically by making a place for wildlife along Progressivist and anti-modernist lines.⁸⁷ Both these ideologies were responses to the effects of industrialization and both shaped the fundamental changes in wildlife conservation that began to unfold at the turn of the twentieth century.

As federal and provincial governments centralized control over wildlife in the early twentieth century, creating new bureaucracies dedicated to conservation, local participation in management was reconfigured. The game laws of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had left the details of policy to the representatives of local government – to justices of the peace and grand juries – and placed enforcement in the hands of private citizens. Twentieth-century game laws contained different provisions, placing the responsibility for the substance and enforcement of the laws in the hands of government-appointed game wardens and ultimately the civil servant who headed the provincial office of that name. Local input from individuals or fish and game associations continued, but was funnelled through a bureaucracy that established regulations for an entire province rather than particular areas.

These changes in the organization of conservation altered the nature of wildlife as a common property resource. As both levels of government involved themselves in conservation, Canada's wildlife shifted from being a "local commons" – a resource defined and regulated informally by resident users – to a more centralized one controlled increasingly by outsiders. While the trajectory of change it followed was broadly similar to that which occurred in the United States, Canadian wildlife did not become a "national commons," its regulation completely "delocalized." The division of powers in Canada meant that its wildlife could not be "federalized" to the extent that it was south of the border, particularly in the American west. Its regulation would always be somewhat fragmented. In Canada, government involvement in wildlife conservation resulted in the creation of not one, but several centralized commons controlled by the provinces and, in the first half of the twentieth century, administered by "practical men" often drawn from the very kinds of communities they policed. Thus, although it was rationalized at the turn of the twentieth century, the Canadian wildlife commons remained informed by localism.

This did not lessen the potential for conflict. The implementation of these conservation policies met with opposition. While local users took issue with the specific limits on killing and using wildlife, the root of the conflict lay elsewhere. As much as it was about limits and numbers, the program of wildlife conservation pursued by governments across Canada also aimed to promote a particular ethical relationship with nature that could be the basis for an environmental citizenship. Like all definitions of citizenship, the one embedded in Canada's game laws reflected certain views. Government wildlife conservation might have become less localistic in the first half of the twentieth century, but it remained firmly grounded in particular interests defined by class and race.



An Alberta game warden nabs a poacher near Hardisty (ca. 1912). Glenbow Museum and Archives, NA-2284-13