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Conservation in the National Parks

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The national park conception is an original contribution by the United States to the science of government. Fortunately, the national park idea was conceived comparatively early in our national life before the great scenic exhibits of the West had been homesteaded and developed beyond possibilities of redemption for public use. From this primary idea a great system has developed, comprising now 24 national parks, 1 national historical park and 67 national monuments, embracing a total domain of over 20,000 square miles or close to 13 million acres; in addition, the National Park Service administers several national military parks, battlefield sites, national cemeteries, and miscellaneous memorials. The wisdom of the early sponsors of the idea is best illustrated by the fact that last year these great inspira-

tional areas were visited by nearly 3½ millions of people. And in these parks and monuments true conservation is beginning to reach one of its highest pinnacles.

Conservation is a much abused and at times misunderstood word, but, as we define it, the conservation of an area permits its appropriate use, without abuse. In the parks it is proper that this generation should eat its cake, if we can provide that succeeding generations have that cake. The one primary and absolutely controlling necessity is that we do nothing, and that we permit nothing, to impair park value against the day that our successors in turn take over the responsibility.

Each of the parks is distinguished from the other members of the great family by certain salient characteristics; each park is the

most distinguished specimen of its type within the national boundaries. The Grand Canyon, incomparable in itself, is not to be compared with the Yellowstone, Crater Lake, the Yosemite, Rainier; for there is no basis of comparison in a galaxy where each is a star of the greatest magnitude. Not only is each park distinctive and of characteristic value geologically or otherwise, but each has its own wilderness features and wilderness values. The preservation of the flora and the fauna in each park is a major responsibility, a responsibility which we of the National Park Service are discharging better each year, partly because the Federal Government has been more and more generous in its attitude and appropriations for the parks, but also because the American people themselves each year become more protective in their viewpoints and in their habits while in the park. Increasingly, too, we benefit by the active participation in our councils and our administration by several influential groups and many individuals to whom conservation, particularly in the parks, is almost a religion.

There is a mistaken impression entertained by probably a majority that the National Park Service, when it was organized less than two decades ago, took over the administration of a group of areas which were then primeval.

Regrettably, this is not true, because the task would have been

much more simple. In Yosemite, for example, practically all of the human pageantry that led to the settlement of the West was enacted here, with consequent harmful effects. The Indians were here for unknown ages, working their will with the bow and arrow, the trap, fire, and other primitive instruments, all of which impacted upon both the flora and the fauna of Yosemite. Following them came soldiery, the discoverer, the explorer, the trapper, the hunter, the prospector, the miner; in turn there followed the settler the hotel man, the business man, the homesteader, the orchardist. For years the familiar cycle of plowing planting, and harvesting was accomplished in Yosemite Valley; countless thousands of sheep ranged the entire park for years, and the cattle men grazed a majority of the acreage of Yosemite until four years ago when through the generosity of John D. Rockefeller purchases of land and of equity eliminated cattle grazing, we hope forever. The logger, operating upon privately owned lands, felled millions of board feet of the world's best sugar pine and yellow pine from thousands of acres within the park. Countless pack horses and mules had been ridden over the entire area, scattering seeds of exotic plants. Indeed Yosemite has been only comparatively primeval these last four or five decades.

The task, then, to which the National Park Service necessarily has

addressed itself has been the restoration and preservation of every virginal aspect. Continuously the Service has been maneuvering against every influence that could further damage the natural features of each park. The suppression of the forest fire hazard was one of the first obvious necessities; the control of insect menaces which were taking heavy toll of some of the most distinguished forests has been a major preoccupation; protection of plant and tree life against the unwitting but ruthless destruction by hordes of people is a never-ending problem. Fortunately, Mother Nature is forgiving, so the ravages wrought by years of abuse are fast becoming repaired. In the four short years that have elapsed since the elimination of cattle grazing, the upland meadows are becoming lush and are fast restoring with amazing displays of wild flowers; and I have yet to find the man who recalls a time when the forests of Yosemite were quite so healthy and vigorous as they are in 1934.

Unfortunately, no scheme of management and no amount of resources can re-establish the wild life that once roamed the Yosemite mountains. The Sierra Grizzly is extinct. The Mountain Sheep have gone from this area. No one ever sees the Wolverine. In a domain even as large as Yosemite's 1,176 square miles there is not sufficient area or range of altitude to encompass the year-round protection

within the park boundaries of the various species that should have found a perpetual haven in California's great park. Deer breed in Yosemite, but in the fall they leave the protection of the park to drift below the snow line and are out of Federal keeping. And civilization spells no good to wildlife, because inevitably the pressure of development just outside the parks reacts toward the extinction of now this and now that species. An unbalanced unexpected unbalance elsewhere. The process of disruption is insidious, but continuous and ruthless. Unless by some fortunate chance additional protective safeguards are provided in areas surrounding certain of the parks, we Americans certainly may expect to see some of our most interesting wildlife pass over the horizon into extinction.

My space here does not permit even a brief resume of the innumerable devices invoked in the salvaging of park values. But I must mention briefly that our responsibility involves not only the prevention of harm through natural causes of the carelessness of people, but we also are vigilant against all of those nibbling processes which, though each might appear insignificant, yet in the aggregate would be ruinous. We ponder, too, every so-called improvement, to be certain that our own-over-zealousness may not lead to over-development. The construction of too many roads, trails,

hotels, and other similar facilities would in the long run completely wreck the conceptions of the founders and today's true friends of the parks. We are not interested in providing facilities to take care of such peak loads as visit the parks on holidays and big week-ends. The parks are not mountain Coney Islands, but are areas set aside for the benefit and enjoyment of the people—not merely our own generation, but for all time. And please let me underscore heavily the last phrase—for all time. For in the preservation to posterity of the enormous inspirational values that reside in these parks there resides our greatest responsibility.

In conclusion let me emphasize that the task breaks down into two phases of conservation. The first phase, the conservation of natural features, I already have briefly outlined. The other phase is the conservation of the morale and the health of the vast numbers of Americans who annually find a refuge from the cares of every-day life in such great areas as the Yosemite. Yosemite alone cares for nearly a third of a million people annually; last year they arrived from every state and territory over which flies the American flag, as well as from 37 foreign countries. To provide adequately for their safety and comfort is at once a duty and a privilege. The degree to which Federal resources are utilized in accomplishing this safety and comfort is best illustrated by the statement that there are close to 2,500

employees on the various payrolls in Yosemite of which about 500 are employed directly by the National Park Service the balance being CCC men, road contractors, and employees of the various park operators. The permanent Civil Service staff numbers only 71.

An enormous amount of planning and of minutia obviously is done by this small group. Such apparently simple things as the prevention of contamination of water supplies, traffic safety, public order, sewage disposal, sanitation, the generation and distribution of power and light, naturalist service, forestry, maintenance, etc., cover an enormous range of activities of which the users of the park are seldom conscious.

But even that is not the pinnacle of our effort or of our hope. Men and women jaded by their businesses and by the routine of every-day living may find in these wonderful areas a new freedom of spirit, a renewed sanity, a finer philosophy of living, and certainly a more perfect health. Life is lived almost entirely out of doors, and all of the recreations appropriate to a national park lead toward a better bodily tone. The days are stimulating and zestful, and in the evenings groups assemble in that warm friendliness created only by a camp fire in the wilderness. Our rangers and our ranger naturalists weave among all of these people to whom they are hosts, contributing a kindly and efficient service and a better understanding of all of the extra-

ordinary natural history revealed here. No man or woman, no matter how thick the veneer of indifference he or she may assume, can spend a day amid the wonders of a national park without responding to its influence. Every person who learns from our ranger naturalists something of the vast processes and vast ages that have gone into the making of Yosemite or of the Grand Canyon is certain to view even the ordinary vista from the window of his home with a new understanding. Each park, therefore, is in its final analysis not only inspirational and recreational, but educational in the most genuine sense possible. And toward this educational phase we are moving carefully but continuously to a bettered public service and a fuller park conservation.

Wildlife Policies in Yosemite

(By A. E. Borell, Naturalist)

When the Pilgrims arrived about 300 years ago, America was a great natural park. Magnificent forests covered extensive areas with streams and lakes of pure water adding their charm to this virgin wilderness. Deer, bears, wild turkeys, passenger pigeons and other mammals and birds were so numerous they played an important part in the food supply of the settlers. Fox, beaver, mink, raccoons and many other fur-bearing mammals provided not only robes and articles of clothing for the settlers, but such quantities of pelts were shipped to Europe that they furnished one of the main sources of cash income. Indeed, fur-bearing mammals were so important that quest for them resulted in the exploration and settlement of much of this country. These happy conditions were not destined to last. The aggressive white man brought about sudden and drastic changes. The forests were cut, the lakes and swamps drained, streams were dammed, ground was cleared and cultivated, and birds and mammals were killed or crowded out. It was obvious that unless something were done the following generations would be deprived of the wilderness joys which had meant so much to their forefathers. We are therefore fortunate that there were farsighted and public-spirited men who exerted the influence which resulted in the creation of National Parks, and Federal and State Wild Life Preserves. Among these areas the National Parks are outstanding as wild life refuges. Yellowstone National Park was created in 1872 and other parks followed until we now have 23, each of which is an absolute preserve for all forms of native flora and fauna. Each Park was chosen because of its outstanding scenic and scientific

interest and was set aside for the benefit and enjoyment of the people for all time.

One of the policies which governs the administration of our National Parks is the policy that they are to be maintained in as near their natural conditions as possible. Of course, grazing, logging, trapping and hunting are eliminated under this policy. It is easy to understand how many people, especially those living in the vicinity of the Parks, are opposed to any Park regulation which interferes with their individual privileges. Even to this day the National Parks' administrators have to fight continually to protect our Parks. The people who are thinking more of their personal gain than of the welfare of the following generations insist upon the right to graze domestic animals inside the Parks, to shoot the game, to cut the timber, to dam the streams and drain the lakes for power and irrigation. Many hunters and ranchers bring pressure to have the predatory birds and mammals eliminated from the fauna of the Parks.

Let us think about a few of the above objections to this Park policy. How can we graze Park meadows with domestic stock and not interfere with the welfare of the native wild life? Throughout the pioneer period thousands of sheep, cattle and horses were grazed without restriction and it is probable that this grazing was largely responsible

for the extermination of the mountain sheep within the area which is now Yosemite Park. In addition to taking the forage, domestic animals likely introduced certain diseases to the wild animals. A few individuals gained by the grazing privilege, but one of the Park's finest big game animals was exterminated, and thousands of visitors have been deprived of the privilege of seeing mountain sheep. I have mentioned the case of mountain sheep in Yosemite only, but similar examples are found in every section of the country.

In addition to competition with game mammals we must also consider the effects of grazing on the smaller animals and birds, on the wild flowers, upon forest reproduction, and upon water-shed protection.

It is hard to understand how any one with a feeling for the welfare of our National Parks or for future generations can expect the privilege of trapping fur-bearing mammals within any National Park. Many species of fur-bearers are near the point of extermination. The protection afforded by our National Parks is apparently the only hope of saving certain species, for example the grizzly bear. Those who see only the economic value of our wild life must remember that the Parks serve as great reservoirs for the fur-bearers which thrive therein and spread out to surrounding areas thus bringing a lasting income to the trappers in the vicinity.

The reasons for protecting the game birds and mammals, forest trees, streams and lakes are so obvious there should be no need for discussion.

Now we come to an issue which is a continual source of agitation. Why should the predatory birds and mammals (coyotes, foxes, mountain lions, skunks, weasels, bobcats, badgers, hawks, owls, etc.) be protected inside the Parks when they are persecuted continually outside? The fact that they are persecuted so continually outside the Parks is just reason in itself for setting aside certain areas where they can continue to exist.



Because certain animals interfere with our individual desires should any one generation have the right to say that they have no place on the face of the earth? Furthermore, there is much that we do not know about the food habits of our predatory animals and we may be condemning certain species to

extermination without just trial. We like to shoot thousands of our game birds and mammals and then lay their disappearance entirely to predators. I recently asked a rancher why there were so few cottontails and brush rabbits in a certain region. He replied that the scarcity was due to the presence of hawks, owls, coyotes and bobcats and added that the quail were becoming scarce for the same reason. During the next month I hunted quail several times in that vicinity and found that there were hunters in nearly every canyon carrying on a continual bombardment. The hunters scour these canyons daily during an open season of six weeks and then lay the disappearance of quail and rabbits entirely to the predators. They forget that the pioneers of the region found more predatory birds and mammals and also more quail and rabbits than we have today. Of course I know that predators destroy some domestic stock and game birds and mammals, but I feel also that predators play a part in the control of gophers, mice, jackrabbits and ground squirrels. They tend to keep down disease among our game birds and mammals by killing the sick ones, and thus assist in checking the spread of epidemics. We know that the predator does not get each bird or mammal which it attempts to kill. Mr. Jay Bruce, state lion hunter, says that a mountain lion gets, on the average only one of each three deer which it stalks. I

believe it is obvious that the more vigorous and more alert individuals will escape and live to reproduce their kind, thus keeping the species at a high state of fitness.



WIDE PACIFIC PHOTO

Therefore because predators help to keep down plagues of rodents, help to check epidemics of disease, and help to keep our bird and mammals at a high state of fitness they do have a definite place in the general scheme of nature. If natural enemies are killed off deer and ground squirrels become so numerous that they destroy wild flower displays. This has already occurred in Yosemite Valley.

Furthermore we must think of the thousands of people who have never seen nor heard a coyote. Occasionally a coyote comes to feed at the bear pits. Here many of the people in the crowd get their first view of the animal about which they have heard so much. They get a real thrill and remember it as one of the outstand-

ing features of their trip to Yosemite.

Every species of bird and mammal should be protected inside our Parks unless it is definitely known that one species is eliminating some other then it should be controlled but never exterminated.

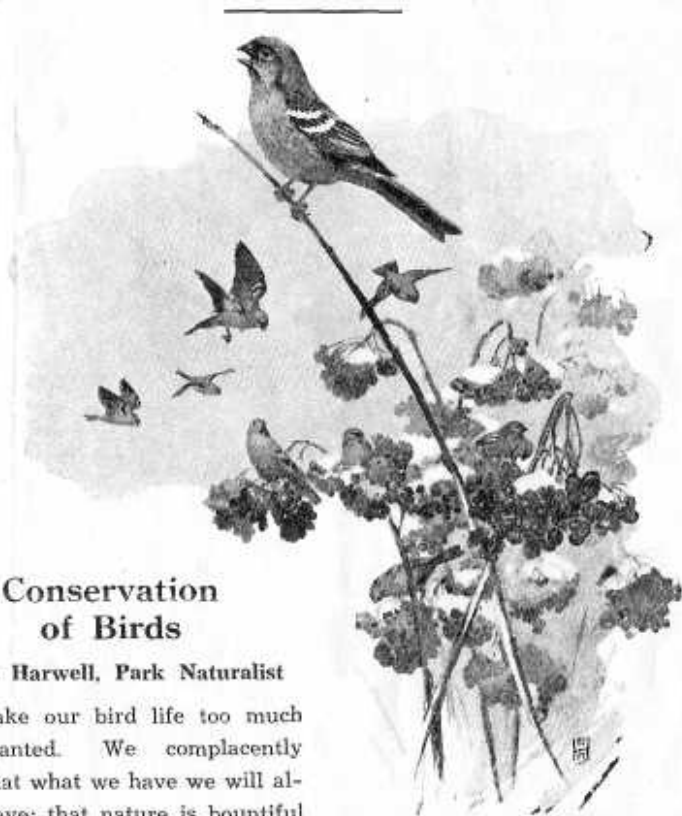
Even if it were advisable to eliminate a certain species, say the coyote, from our Park fauna there would be the difficult problem of how to do it without killing other desirable species. If traps were used, animals such as foxes, tree squirrels, and some birds would be destroyed. Poison is out of the question because of its indiscriminate destructiveness to wild life. Shooting is the only method and this is of little value because the coyote is primarily nocturnal and is usually wary. Shooting gets only a few of the tamer ones which are the individuals which should be protected as they are the ones which the visitor is most likely to see.

At one time grizzly bears were found in Yosemite but they were exterminated before the area was set aside as a National Park and now they are probably extinct throughout the state. We do not thank our ancestors for exterminating the grizzly bear. Neither will the future generations give us credit if we exterminate any species of the birds and mammals which we call predators.

It would seem that in so far as our National Parks are concerned the

harm or benefit of our birds and mammals should be disregarded. In a country as large and wealthy as the United States there should be at least a few places where all forms of animal life can continue to live for the pleasure and education of the many generations which will follow us. Some people argue

that the balance of nature has already been upset in some of our Parks through the elimination of certain species of plants and animals. Is this any reason why we should not exert every effort to conserve the native species which are in our Parks today?



Conservation of Birds

C. A. Harwell, Park Naturalist

We take our bird life too much for granted. We complacently think that what we have we will always have; that nature is bountiful and though some birds do grow scarce they will surely bounce back to normalcy. We refuse to admit that the destruction of bird life produced by hunting, trapping, poisoning operations, and our ruin of

nesting sites when coupled with natural causes like drought, storms, diseases and predators is very seriously reducing the numbers of many species, if not actually threatening their extinction.

Five species of American birds have been hunted to extinction in our time. The best known example is the passenger pigeon. In the memory of a number of readers of this article it was thought unnecessary to give this bird any protection for in their flight they darkened the sky. Hunted on their nesting grounds America soon found the destruction was beyond repair. The last known passenger pigeon died in captivity in 1914. The last great auk was killed on Eldery Island, Iceland, in 1844; a Labrador duck was last reported seen December 12, 1878; the last record of an Eskimo curlew was reported at Hastings, Nebraska, April, 1926; the last lone heath hen, carefully guarded at Martha's Vineyard since 1930, has passed on.

The whooping crane will perhaps be the next of the species to go. Trumpeter swans have been greatly reduced. Now a small nesting remnant is being carefully protected in Yellowstone National Park in an attempt to save the species. The California condor, the largest bird of flight on our continent, may be found now only in a very restricted mountainous region of southern California. Bird lovers of the world make long journeys to catch a glimpse of this rapidly vanishing master of the air. There are perhaps no more than a hundred left

The waterfowl of North America are now confronted with disaster. More birds were killed the last few

years than were produced. The drought of 1934 was the severest and the most widespread in the history of the United States Weather Bureau. Waterfowl are finding thousands of lakes and ponds dried up where formerly they could rest and feed. Our sportsmen should realize the seriousness of this crisis during the next few years and heed the slogan of the Isaac Walton league—"Take a little—leave a lot!"



In fact they should leave off hunting waterfowl entirely until there is sufficient stock to populate the idle breeding grounds of the north, now scarcely a tenth occupied according to studies of our Biological Survey.

We have introduced several species to take the place of rapidly passing or extinct native birds. English sparrows brought to New England to combat insect pests of city trees have themselves become pests to all of us westerners. They

are now establishing in Yosemite. Starlings liberated in New York in the nineties are rapidly spreading westward. Soon we will face them as a problem out here. Pheasants and partridges are being brought in to replace vanishing upland game birds but with what success it is too early to prophecy. How can we think that a balance established by nature through long ages of adjustment, suddenly disrupted by great decimation of some species and the extinction of others can now be restored by the importation of these alien species? What is to be done? Certainly the ten per cent of our population who are sportsmen know shooting will have to be decreased. As to waterfowl, we have it this year in a shortened season and reduced bag limit. The ninety per cent of us who are non-hunters, in fact all of us, should know the economic and aesthetic importance of bird life. We should know of nesting activities, feeding habits, and bird migrations. We should know of their friendliness and their need of friends. Such knowing will encourage protection.

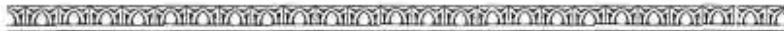
Certain hawks and owls now persecuted will be accorded our best friendship when it is known they feed almost entirely upon harmful rodents and insects. Every fish and game commission is organized not only to enforce protective laws, but to teach its citizenry these things. Our National Park Service now makes an educational program a

major objective. Through its naturalist service, by means of nature walks, illustrated lectures and talks around camp fires, through museum and trail-side exhibits, through nature notes now becoming widely distributed, through informative circulars and guide books, the public is being educated to appreciate the value of the smaller as well as the larger natural features which we are striving to preserve. We have demonstrated conclusively that to know is to protect. In this program birds are given due emphasis.

You may ask, "How can I know the birds?" I would say start observing those close at hand. Keep a note book. Check your observations with some standard book on birds and with study skins or mounted specimens available at museums. Learn of the bird banding program being carried out by two thousand banders under our Biological Survey. Cooperate with them or become one of them. Join an Audubon society or some bird study group. If there is none in your locality, organize one. By all means, conduct your bird study afield. Nature is the supreme teacher. Learn to know birds by their songs. Learn the thrill of shooting with a camera. Attract birds to your homes. The Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., has a number of helpful pamphlets available.

There are about one thousand

kinds of birds here in the west. find as you seriously study birds. Hundreds of them are marvelous and begin to know the thrill that songsters; all of them are distinct- comes with each new discovery you ly interesting. How many of them will find yourself becoming an ar- do you know? I am sure you will dent bird-conservationist.



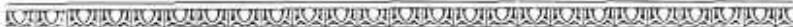
Membership Fee Reduced

At the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Yosemite Natural History Association on December 4, 1934 it was decided to lower the membership fee from \$2.00 to \$1.00 a year.

Membership in the Yosemite Natural History Association includes a year's subscription to Yosemite Nature Notes. Club offers with American Forests and Nature Magazine will be reduced accordingly, \$5.00 a year for all three or \$3.00 a year for either one with Nature Notes. Present members will have their subscriptions extended.

The policy of Nature Notes will remain the same except that more special issues similar to this January Conservation number will be attempted. In this way, we hope to build up a series dealing with all phases of Yosemite natural history which can be sold as separates at ten cents each.

We earnestly solicit your continued co-operation and in view of the reduced membership fee, will endeavor to interest your nature-loving friends in joining with us.





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Dan Anderson