

## GAME CONSERVATION IN THE NATIONAL PARKS

BY

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In the history of conservation of our natural resources, particularly such resources as scenery, unusual natural phenomena, forests and wild life, Yellowstone National Park occupies a conspicuous position. This national park, our largest and oldest park, was set apart from the public domain and dedicated as "a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" on March 1, 1872. It was the first national park created in the world and is today probably the best known reservation of its kind on the face of the earth.

While the park was set aside primarily to preserve from private exploitation the geysers, hot springs, and other such unusual phenomena, also the magnificent Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River, and the great water falls within this Canyon, it also proved to be in later years our greatest refuge of big game animals. Naturally, in 1872 conservation of wild life, particularly in the Rocky Mountains, was a matter that was given no consideration whatever. Big game animals were abundant everywhere in the park area. They were shot for food as elsewhere in that region. It was not until the buffalo, elk and antelope became scarce that the full importance of Yellowstone National Park as a game preserve became generally recognized throughout the Nation.

This brings me early in my discussion to an opportunity to pay a tribute to the work of sportsmen in game conservation as related to the national parks. The park had no sooner been created than the plans for its commercial exploitation were developed by interests who sought to turn the people's playground into a source of enormous profit to themselves. The most dangerous projects contemplated the construction of railroads within the park and these were vigorously fought from the beginning by George Bird Grinnell and his magazine "Forest and Stream".

In passing, it should be stated that this fight, first to get permission to operate railroads in the park, and later to have the park lines revised in order to permit the construction and operation of railroads, was conducted vigorously for more than fifteen years. George Bird Grinnell fought these projects at every turn year after year. Some of his writings on the subject of commercial exploitation of the park such, for instance, as his powerful brief entitled "Cooke City vs. the National Park" is among the most important documents on conservation of the national parks extant today. While this defense of the park was being conducted by Dr. Grinnell and his associates, with the aid in Congress of U. S. Senator Vest of Missouri, one of the early pioneers in conservation at Washington, big game animals continued to disappear from the western plains and mountains. In the early eighties the great buffalo herds ceased to migrate back and forth over the prairies beyond the Missouri and by 1890 the buffalo was believed to be a

species of American big game animal that would be wholly exterminated. Only three or four small bands of buffalo remained in their natural wild state and the largest of these groups was in Yellowstone National Park, in constant danger, however, of total destruction because of the absence of laws declaring the park to be a game preserve and providing penalties for violation of rules and regulations established to protect the wild life of the park.

It was in 1894 that George Bird Grinnell successfully completed the fight to secure the enactment of a law providing an adequate Government for the Yellowstone. He sent Emerson Hough, then one of his writers, to the park in the dead of winter with instructions to get on skis and gather all available data on the existing condition of the buffalo, in particular, and other big game animals in general. At this time the notorious buffalo poacher, Ed Howell, was caught in the wilderness of the park east of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone while in the act of skinning out a buffalo he had just killed. Four other buffalo lay about him and in his camp were heads and hides of six animals previously killed. The news of the capture of Ed Howell was broadcasted throughout the Nation by Dr. Grinnell and the details of the buffalo slaughter were later published in "Forest and Stream". The Nation was aroused to demand action through the news of this slaughter and the result was the enactment of the Act of May 7, 1894, under which the park was granted by Congress a complete system of Government and the entire area declared to be a game reserve. Thus sportsmen by securing the enactment of this one law forever closed the park to hunting and laid the foundation for its present status as our greatest game refuge.

The Boone and Crockett Club, that fine old organization of sportsmen and game conservationists, so dear to the heart of Theodore Roosevelt, and now presided over by Dr. Grinnell, has always maintained a Yellowstone National Park committee to keep a watchful eye on the park, and to start a fight at the first move to break down the barriers that keep it free from the destructive hand of commercialism.

Likewise, the American Game Protective Association, the Camp Fire Club, the American Bison Society and the National Association of Audubon Societies, as well as many smaller associations of sportsmen have vigorously fought every attempt to encroach upon our greatest game preserve. When irrigation interests sought to secure rights to build reservoirs in the park four years ago every one of these organizations sent able representatives to Washington to appear before Congressional committees and forcefully present arguments unalterably opposed to any encroachment upon the park. Many of these fighters are in this convention and know how successful were their efforts and ours to utterly defeat these irrigation projects, most of them not even getting out of the committee room on to the floor of Congress.

From time to time after the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, other parks were added to what might outwardly have appeared as a system, but which was really nothing but a list, as each was operated without any relation to the other, and each had radically different policies of administration. Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant National Parks were created in 1890, Mt. Rainier in 1899, Crater Lake in 1903, Glacier in 1910, largely through efforts of Dr. Grinnell, Rocky Mountain in 1915, and so on. Wild life had been abundant in all of these areas in early days, but, with the exception of Glacier, had been largely destroyed through uncontrolled hunting or excessive grazing by sheep. Yellowstone fortunately was created in the days of mining that preceded the establishment of the sheep raising industry, and it has never been grazed by domestic stock.

These other parks, while embracing ideal natural conditions for establishment of game preserves, could not be operated effectively as such because the respective states retained control of the game, that is, the Federal Government could not declare perpetual closed seasons on killing game, because the game belonged to the States. The Federal Government could only stop hunting in the national parks in the open seasons authorized by the States through ejection of hunters as trespassers. In several parks soldiers were maintained to keep trespassers from entering. On the other hand, soldiers were often careless in the exercise of their duties, and it was no uncommon thing for them to kill game themselves in the park when not under the closest supervision of their officers, who as a rule were interested in the game, as well as faithful in the performance of their duties.

There were other reasons why these parks could not be developed as satisfactory game preserves. Most of them had on their boundaries small communities having in their midst old timers who had always killed game and who intended to continue killing as long as they <sup>lived</sup> ~~lived~~, and who were so familiar with the mountains that they could hunt in the parks with little danger of detection. Again rules prohibiting dogs and cats from being allowed to run at large were indifferently enforced. The lack of state game preserves adjacent to the parks gave little or no protection to wild life in winter when driven from the higher elevations of the protected park to the lowlands for food.

In some cases adjacent Indian reservations were a menace to game in that the Indians could not be prevented from exercising what they regarded as their perpetual right to kill game as their ancestors had done from time immemorial.

Finally, many of the parks were in politics and the superintendents were incompetent men appointed as politicians.

Thus in 1915, when we had a dozen parks, Yellowstone was the only one that was truly a game preserve. Even it had soldier protection which was not regarded, by even the military superintendents, as adequate or satisfactory. A few years earlier a demand for a National Park Bureau had been so insistent that President Taft had requested Congress to enact a law creating such an institution. Congress however failed to do this.

When Secretary Franklin K. Lane became the head of the Department of the Interior, he immediately took a great interest in the National Parks, and in January 1915 invited his old friend Stephen T. Mather to come to Washington and as an assistant to him assume the administration of the national parks. Mr. Mather accepted the trust, and began his work with an idealism, an enthusiasm and unselfish public spirit that has seldom been seen in Washington official life since our Government began.

He at once recognized the necessity for a National Park Service and during the first two years of his incumbency worked unceasingly to that end. Taking everything into consideration Congress acted quickly on his recommendation and on August 25, 1916, President Wilson approved the National Park Service Act which expresses the duties of the new bureau as to game preservation in the following paragraph:

"The service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments and reservations hereinafter specified by such means and such measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

A close analysis of this paragraph shows that Congress intended that the National Park Service should be primarily a protective bureau. First it is stated that the national parks must be managed so as to conserve their natural and historic objects and their wild life, and then a restriction is placed on development of facilities for enjoying the parks in the provision that such facilities must be such as will leave these natural phenomena, historic objects and wild life unimpaired for future generations.

By law, therefore, the National Park Service is constituted a conservation bureau and it can never be anything else. Furthermore, it must be a 100% conservation bureau.

With the National Park Service established and ready to function, we were able to take over the management, and control of the various parks and monuments, and protect and operate them as a system in accordance with a general policy applicable to all. Soldiers were withdrawn from the parks where they still acted as guards, politicians were removed from the superintendents' offices and competent and trained men appointed to their places, ranger forces were organized to protect the forests and wild life. Immediate attention was given to game conservation.

Appeals were made to state legislatures to cede jurisdiction over national parks to the Federal Government and by 1920 all of the important parks except three or four were completely under our control, and the states, by their own action, completely divested of any authority over the wild life of these reservations. Acts of Congress, accepting tender of exclusive jurisdiction by



the states, were passed and in these laws the parks affected were declared to be game preserves, and heavy penalties were prescribed for violation of the rules and regulations promulgated to protect their wild life.

Strict enforcement of rules prohibiting the keeping of dogs and cats together with complete Federal control of game even on private holdings within the parks, soon began to show results. In parks where, a few years ago, it was very hard to catch a glimpse of wild game, deer and bear are abundant, and where sheep once were plentiful but had almost been annihilated, they too have increased wonderfully.

Campaigns to reduce predatory animals have also been conducted with the park rangers in all parks, and in some the hunters of the Biological Survey have cooperated with good results. These control measures to keep down the predatory species have had a marked effect in increasing deer and sheep in several national parks.

In the larger parks, particularly Yellowstone and Glacier, we have not sought to kill off the last mountain lion nor the last timber wolf, feeling that a very few of these animals, in great wilderness areas such as these parks are, we can afford the luxury of a few of even these cruel and destructive beasts. Today, therefore, the national parks of the West and also Lafayette National Park on Mt. Desert Island, Maine, are thriving game sanctuaries in charge of men deeply interested in wild life conservation, and under protection of fine ranger forces particularly devoted to their work of preserving the natural conditions of these great reservations.

Mt. McKinley National Park in Alaska was made a part of the system in 1917, largely through the efforts of the sportsmen organizations of New York. Charles Sheldon is one of the sportsmen who devoted a vast amount of time to this bill, and was more responsible than any other one man for its relatively quick enactment into law, although he was aided at all times by many sportsmen who are in the habit of giving unselfishly of their time and money to conservation projects. Mt. McKinley is one of our proudest possessions, and we are maintaining it as an effective game preserve despite the fact that Congress has not given us adequate funds with which to protect it, and in the face of a provision in the organic act creating the park, which permits prospectors to hunt within its boundaries when in need of food, which means all the time.

Protection of Mt. McKinley National Park has also been rendered difficult by the indifferent and inadequate game warden service of the territory. Often the game wardens were politicians but funds for this service were ridiculously small, and wardens were given such extensive areas to patrol that they never could have been successful in their work had they been the best wardens in the world. We hope that under the pending Alaska Game legislation, conditions will improve, and we have every reason to believe they will.

Alaska is not the only political unit in the United States that has insufficient game warden service. Many of the western states have so few game wardens that were it not for forest and park rangers, even their state game preserves would rarely see a warden. I was gratified the other day to see that a new game association in Wyoming is advocating a paid game warden for every county. At the present time there are only four or five game wardens for state game preserves with a total area of 3,000,000 acres, whereas in Yellowstone Park we have 31 rangers for 2,000,000 acres. Of course, forest service and park service rangers are commissioned as deputy state game wardens and assist the state in the enforcement of its game laws to a considerable extent.

All of the states having national parks in them should enact more or less legislation to protect park game that is driven down in the winter by storms. For instance, Montana should extend her Gallatin Game Preserve, Washington should set aside more county preserves in the national forests adjacent to Mt. Rainier, Oregon should assist us in protecting our Crater Lake bears and deer which early in the fall work down out of the park, and in California small state preserves would better protect the deer of Yosemite, Lassen and Sequoia Parks.

We are doing what we can to advance these projects at the present time.

Speaking of bears, no animal interests the visiting public in national parks as they do. In fact they seriously compete with geysers and waterfalls, and magnificent canyons. We in the National Park Service think the States should better protect beaver. Every state should enact a bag limit and a closed season law. J. A. Maguire, Editor of Outdoor Life has been working on this bear problem for years and deserves the support of every clean sportsman in America. But West some of us feel pretty chagrined when we have to admit that Pennsylvania is probably the best bear state in the Union. However, we know that in several states out beyond the Missouri, a John M. Phillips could be employed to the great advantage of wild game animals, the greatest of which I think is the bear.

It is hard to estimate the number of big game animals in the national parks, but our most recent census gives the following approximate figures:

Antelope.....	440
Black Bear.....	600
Grizzly Bear.....	120
Buffalo.....	1,010
Caribou.....	3,000 to 5,000
Elk.....	25,000 (including 3,500 of Jackson Hole Park)
Deer.....	20,000 (18,000)
Goats.....	1,850
Moose.....	540
Sheep.....	4,300 7,500

So, ladies and gentlemen, the National Park Service is a great factor in the West in game conservation. Our parks are great game sanctuaries, summer feeding ranges and breeding grounds. Game overflows into adjacent national forests where it is available under generally, not always, proper restrictions as to bag limits and open seasons fixed by state law. If the states cooperate with the National Park Service, the Forest Service and the Biological Survey, there will always be good hunting around several of the big parks.

Ultimately the Jackson Hole will be purchased and the elk problem permanently solved. There again will be the greatest big game hunting country in the Nation, as it was thirty years ago. All Government bureaus and conservation organizations should cooperate in advancing this project, which should be consummated with fairness and justice to the settlers of the Hole.

The National Park Service is doing educational work of immense value to game conservation in general. Its nature guide service is becoming very popular and is reaching hundreds of thousands of people each year.

The National Park Service is encouraging the publication of nature books and is pushing their sale wherever and whenever possible. It is doing everything consistent with its legal authority to encourage making of motion pictures of animal life in the parks.

The National Park Service is furthermore advancing the general cause of conservation of forests, wild life, scenery and historic places wherever opportunity is offered to do this, whether the areas are administered by us or not. Our officers are encouraged to join conservation and historical associations and to participate in their transactions, purely as a matter of unselfish public service. That is why I am a member of this great organization the American Game Protective Association and why I am here today.

The above paper was read on December 9th at the Eleventh National Game Conference of the American Game Protective Association, held in New York on December 8 and 9, 1924.