

NEW CHALLENGES FOR AN OLD
PROFESSION.

Remarks of Raymond F. Dasmann, President, The Wildlife Society, to the 6th Annual Western Students Wildlife Conclave, Oregon State University, April 10 - 11, 1970.

As you have perhaps heard I have recently been given the job of president of The Wildlife Society. This occurred as a result of various circumstances over which I should have had better control. In the first place I answered the telephone one day, when I should have been out in the field. Secondly, when I asked Russell Train if I should accept the nomination he was thinking of something else and made the mistake of saying yes. Thirdly, there are three Dasmann brothers, all in natural resources work, and many who voted for me thought they were voting for a different Dasmann. I could go on with other explanations of why I am here today, instead of in Florida, where I should be working, but it would be tedious. Nevertheless I am under no illusion that I have a popular mandate from The Wildlife Society to bring about changes and start them moving in a new direction. But since I am a particular kind of cat, and can't change my spots, it is inevitable that I will try to change the Society.

At the annual meeting of The Wildlife Society in Houston in March, 1968, the guest speaker was Charles Callison, vice-president of the Audubon Society. Extracts from his speech were published in The Wildlife Society News of April, 1968, under the title "Callison's Challenge". I would like to repeat a few of his statements:

"The first urgent hope that I have for my professionis that it reject the false prophets who would separate it from the mainstream of conservation. You've been told there is internecine warfare in conservation, and that the true conservationist must beware of the ilk to be known as the 'preservationists'.

"My second fervent wish for my profession is that it not conceive of its mission so narrowly, nor become so preoccupied with the harvestable game species, that it repels, and isolates itself from, all the people other than hunters and fishermen who should be mobilized in support of your programs.

"A review of the subject matter published in the four issues of the Journal of Wildlife Management of 1967 (Volume 31) reveals that 99 articles were about the game species or furbearers; 8 were about predators or other 'problem species' such as blackbirds, with respect to which the profession's approach is control; 5 were about rodent pests and concerned with control techniques; 6 were about game fish, and only 2 had to do with non-game wildlife other than the so-called pest species They [the editors] cannot publish papers on

non-existent research, nor can they publish broadly ecological or thoughtfully balanced resource commentaries unless you think them out and produce them.

".....Aldo Leopold's teachings were broader than game management, and he did not ignore the esthetic and recreational value of the predators nor did he belittle the dickey-bird. He could pen perfectly delightful essays about the chickadee and the western grebe.....

"My hope, or my challenge, for my profession is that it resist the strictures imposed on the mind by a narrow technology, that it quit choosing sides over hollow issues and misleading labels and that it broaden its purposes so that its professional organization may be truly, not a game-management fraternity, but The Wildlife Society that we very much need."

It is my belief that Charlie Callison managed to identify, in his speech, the glaring weaknesses of the wildlife profession that are reflected in The Wildlife Society. The feud between the "preservationists" and the "conservation-through-use" school of thinking has been around for too long already. Theodore Roosevelt, a hunter, and Gifford Pinchot, a forester, were among the founders of the "wise-use" school of conservation. Very early they came into conflict with such people as John Muir and Stephen Mather, who came to be identified as the "preservationist" group. The first major collision between the viewpoints came with the effort to prevent the City of San Francisco from constructing Hetch-Hetchy Dam in Yosemite National Park. The friction of that conflict produced heated feelings that persist today. Today the "preservationist"

school tends to be represented by the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and perhaps Dave Brower's new Friends of the Earth. The opposition side has too often included the Society of American Foresters, and unfortunately, The Wildlife Society. This is particularly ironical, since Aldo Leopold, a leader in the Society of American Foresters, and a founder of The Wildlife Society, was a person who in his writings and his action bridged the gap between both points of view. He was a strong supporter of national parks; he took the lead, in the Forest Service, toward the setting aside of wilderness areas, to be protected from use other than wilderness recreation, and at the same time he was a founder of scientifically-based game management, and an ardent hunter.

I have spent much of my professional career in natural resource schools and wildlife management departments. The atmosphere there was strongly colored by the belief that it is the duty of resource managers to make natural resources available for use, and to have disregard or even contempt for those who want to see areas protected and set aside, who want to watch, rather than hunt, wildlife. To look at trees and not cut them down. In such places I always felt that I represented a minority opinion. In January, 1966, however, I started work with the Conservation Foundation in Washington, and since then have been in touch with the broad-based environmental movement that has now become such a major force in this country.

In these circles, the majority opinion seems to regard logging and lumbering as a form of plundering of the environment; to regard hunters as psychological deviates with a blood lust, and think of conservation almost entirely in preservationist terms. Such an extreme point of view is, of course, wrong, but it is perhaps the majority opinion among today's environmentalists. We will not change it if natural resource professionals gravitate to the other extreme viewpoint, and continue to scoff at the bird watchers and nature lovers.

I believe that the Wildlife Society and wildlife profession have a duty to bridge the gap between these two forms of thinking. We will only begin to do it, however, when we begin to devote more time and effort to research on animals that are not hunted; to advocacy of complete protection, when such is called for; to studies of non-game wildlife and the problems involved in its preservation and management. The short-comings of the Journal of Wildlife Management in 1967 are still reflected in the 1969 journal. It is apparent that the research effort of our Society is still moving along the same old channels.

It is vital for us to realize that most Americans could not care less if there are more or less shootable pheasants on somebody's farm. The great doe-hunting controversy that has engaged the wildlife profession over the years and has split the managers off from many of the sportsmen leaves most people quite indifferent. Their only question is why we allow anyone to shoot deer at all, when these animals are so pretty to look at. Wildlife managers and the wildlife profession will begin to win popular support when we tackle

the challenge of managing for quality and diversity, instead of for quantity of production. A research project aimed at producing the greatest variety of visible wildlife in some suburban woodlot or county park will be far more attractive to the American public than one aimed at producing more shootable quail on Georgia pinelands, or attracting more mallards to public hunting areas.

If we look at the great environmental challenges that confront the world today we would have to recognize that the most serious, but the least amenable to any immediate solution, is the population problem. In truth, this is one of the single greatest causes of all other environmental problems, and deserves the greatest concentration of effort toward its solution. Wildlife research, to the extent that it is directed toward the dynamics of population growth and decline, to the concept of carrying capacity, and to the exploration of methods of population control that do not involve hunting (since this is frowned on as a method for controlling human population growth, even though it is widely used) can contribute toward the solution of human population problems. Indeed, it has already made many major contributions, although the profession receives little credit for these.

Second to population growth as a cause of our environmental dilemma is the uncontrolled expansion of technology. Even with zero population growth, the continued growth of technology and its impact upon environments would cause major problems. This is not to imply that there is anything

necessarily wrong with technology as such, but there is a great deal wrong with the ways in which it has been used. Most striking has been the tendency to consider only the engineering and economic aspects of its application. We have again and again engaged in projects that have brought the most serious repercussions upon human environment and on the quality of life for people, without ever once considering in advance what these effects might be. The dam builders and river-basin developers have been in the forefront of such environmental disruption; but the real-estate developers, the loggers, highway builders, and other smaller-scale operators have not been far behind.

The wildlife profession should take the lead in studying the environmental consequences of proposed economic development schemes, both in America and in the developing nations of the world. We should also be in the forefront in opposing vigorously those schemes that will have environmental effects of such a damaging nature that they override any expected economic benefits. In the past, we may have been engaged in some of this research, but we have not been noteworthy for leading public opposition. Some think we have been bought off; others just think we are afraid. I personally believe we have been indifferent.

Among the great issues of today, that of pollution receives the most publicity. This is partly because it is a visible problem in the areas where most people live, but also because it has the potential for causing the most serious damage to all life upon the earth. The difficulty about this

publicity for pollution is that it leads to the dissemination of a great number of half-truths and a fair share of untruths. In fact we have not done nearly the amount of research that we should have done, and not all of the results of this research have been made public. I believe it is a responsibility of the wildlife profession to direct far more time and attention to pollution research than we have hitherto done. What effect do exhaust hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxides and the like have upon natural environments and wildlife populations? What are the indicators of pollution problems among wildlife species, or in wildlife habitats? How serious a danger is presented by the continued use of herbicides in wild land management? One could list a thousand research projects that wildlife professionals should be engaged in.

To me one of the most serious areas of environmental concern is one that receives little publicity in today's environmental movement. This involves the preservation of natural ecosystems and wild species. I would give this area first priority among all of our environmental concerns, not because it is necessarily the most important, but because it is the most urgent. We have a couple of decades to get population under control, but have no time at all to set aside and protect some of the natural ecosystems of the world. We cannot say, for certain, that such preservation is essential for human survival, but neither can we say that it is not, and the weight of the evidence suggests that it may well be.

We can definitely say that the quality of living for man on earth in the future will depend upon our ability to maintain representative areas of relatively undisturbed wild country and the broad spectrum of wild species that still inhabit the earth. In this effort I believe that wildlife professionals have shown up rather badly, perhaps because of our too great involvement with management and production for use.

The lead in setting aside natural areas has been taken by others, such as the plant scientists. It is of course much easier to set aside small areas to protect samples of vegetation than it is to set aside the much larger areas needed for the protection of a complete ecosystem containing animal and plant life. It doesn't cost much to establish a scientific reserve in coniferous forest. It is another thing to set aside an area large enough to contain the home ranges of mountain lions, bear, deer and the representative mammals, birds, reptiles and other animal life of a coniferous forest. Yet it is the coniferous forest system that should be our concern, and not just the vegetation. Regretfully, there are very few areas left in the United States large enough to provide a home for the larger or more mobile animals - only some of our larger national parks and wilderness areas. Certainly, we in the wildlife profession should take the lead in demanding that these remaining samples of America's wild world should remain undisturbed, and not be opened up to meet the demands of mass recreation. We should also take the lead in the study of the ecology of wilderness. If we don't....who will?

Last, but certainly not least in the areas of major environmental concern, are the problems of maintaining our productive lands in condition to continue to produce the food, fiber, and all of the other things that we require for our existence or have need for to make that existence worthwhile. The management of complex natural systems to obtain the greatest balanced yield of forest products, range forage, wildlife, recreation, food crops, water supplies, minerals and fuels, without the impairment of their long-term health and productivity, is a challenge that faces all environmental scientists and managers. That we have scarcely begun to face this challenge is evidenced in continued soil erosion, in misuse of agricultural chemicals, both fertilizers and pesticides, in the scars on our landscape caused by strip mining, road building, and poorly planned residential developments, in plagues of pests and the dwindling toward extinction of valued species.

In the face of these challenges do you really think it is relevant to concentrate on growing two pheasants in place of one for sport hunters to shoot at? Should we really go on forever refining our knowledge of deer biology while the environments on which deer and people depend are falling apart? Or don't you think we should reorient our Society, our wildlife schools and our goals. What I am saying is what Charlie Callison said two years ago.

Let's stop concentrating on game management and start thinking about wildlife in the broadest sense. Let's stop emphasizing the training of game biologists and start producing some environmental ecologists, environmental managers, law-enforcers and technicians who will work together to keep our planet a place fit to live.