

## **Revolutions and Responsibilities - Wildlife Conservation's New Order**

Throughout time, man has been linked by inevitable interdependence with wild creatures. As both hunter and prey we have enjoined the miracle of wild death and resurrection, and from engaging the natural world developed our concepts of beauty, our talents for technical innovation, our art and our intellect. Wild nature gave us ourselves. We must return the gift.

This is exactly what a small group of dedicated leaders and a legion of hunter-conservationists did late in the last century. In what can only be termed a revolution, men like President Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell in the United States, and Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier and Gordon Hewitt in Canada, stood firm against a four hundred year old tradition of slaughtering North American wildlife for profit. In a cyclone of change the continent launched wildlife refuges and reserves, National Parks, National Forests, substantial and effective legislation for the protection of wildlife, and an ethic that reversed a culture's view of their right to abuse the natural world. The North American myth of superabundance had been shattered.

By the 1930's it was clear that even these great achievements were not enough. There was a deficit of knowledge. Some wildlife species were disappearing despite complete protection; others were prospering despite liberal hunting seasons. The shock wave of the first revolution had reached a foreign shore. But again there would be heroes; again the hunter-naturalists of North America would stand firm for conservation. In the United States particularly a new tide was running. With imaginative new legislation to provide funding (the Wildlife Restoration Act) and political and professional visionaries like "Ding" Darling and Aldo Leopold to guide the new wave of passion and concern, the age of wildlife management was born. A second revolution, incited and carried by the wise use philosophy of North American hunters, had occurred.

Now, in the first dawns of a new century, we are again challenged to rise in the name of wildlife. A web of social, environmental and political change, has ensnared the conservation movement, so forcefully led by hunter-naturalists and their allies. The achievements of the first revolutions, so hard won, so passionately defended and so successful for wildlife, are under siege. It is our time; the challenge has fallen to us. Nothing short of a massive mobilization of intellect and passion will safeguard the rare treasures of wildlife nor our cherished traditions in its use. We can watch this miracle of wildlife recovery die, and fail those who fought for our rights and privileges of enjoyment, or we can stand with pride and lead North American conservation yet again. The TRCA is a clear indication that many have made their decision. When all who struggle for the conservation of wildlife are united, let the forces of indifference and opportunism quake. The third revolution will succeed!

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