

Looking Back

The Various Causes of Elimination

The enemies of our wild animals are numerous and constantly increasing. (1) There is first the general advance of what we call civilization, the fencing up of country which principally cuts off the winter feeding grounds. This was especially seen in the country south of the National Park last winter. (2) The destruction of natural browsing areas by cattle and sheep, and by fire. (3) The destruction of game by sportsmen plays a comparatively small part in the total process of elimination, yet in some cases it is very reckless, and especially bad in its example. When I first rode into the best shooting country of Colorado in 1901, there was a veritable cannonading going on, which reminded me of the accounts of the battle of El Caney. The destruction effected by one party in three days was tremendous. In riding over the ground—for I was not myself shooting—I was constantly coming across the carcasses of deer. (4) The summer and winter killing for food; this is the principal and in a sense the most natural and legitimate cause, although it is largely illegal. In this same area, which was more or less characteristic and typical of the other areas, even of the conditions surrounding the national reserve in the Big Horn region, the destruction was, and is, going on principally during the winter when the deer are seeking the winter ranges and when they are actually shot and carted away in large numbers for food both for the ranchmen and for neighboring towns. Making all allowances for exaggeration, I believe it to be absolutely true that these deer were being killed by the wagonload! The same is true of the pronghorn antelope in the Laramie Plains district. The most forceful argument against this form of destruction is that it is extremely short-lived and benefits comparatively few people. This argument is now enforced by law and

by public sentiment in Maine and New York, where the wild animals, both deer and moose, are actually increasing in number.

Granted, therefore, that we have both National and State sentiment, and that National legislation by co-operation with the States, if properly understood, would receive popular support, the carrying out of this legislation and making it fully effective will be a difficult matter.

It can be done, and, in my judgment, by two measures. The first is entirely familiar to you: certain or all of the forest reserves must be made animal preserves; the forest rangers must be made game wardens, or special wardens must be appointed. This is not so difficult, because the necessary machinery is already at hand, and only requires adaptation to this new purpose. It can probably be carried through by patience and good judgment. Second, the matter of the preservation of the winter supply of food and protection of animals while enjoying this supply is the most difficult part of the whole problem, because it involves the acquisition of land which has already been taken up by settlers and which is not covered by the present forest reserve machinery, and which I fear in many instances will require new legislation.

Animals can change their habits during the summer, and have already done so; the wapiti, buffalo, and even the pronghorn have totally changed their normal ranges to avoid their new enemy; but in winter they are forced by the heavy snows and by hunger right down into the enemy's country.

Thus we not only have the problem of making game preserves out of our forest reserves, but we have the additional problem of enlarging the area of forest reserves so as to provide for winter feeding. If this is not done all the protection which is afforded during the summer will be wholly futile. This condition does not prevail in the East, in Maine and in the Adirondacks, where

the winter and summer ranges are practically similar. It is, therefore, a new condition and a new problem.

Greater difficulties have been overcome, however, and I have no doubt that the members of this Club will be among the leaders in the movement. The whole country now applauds the development and preservation of the Yellowstone Park, which we owe largely to the initiative of Phillips, Grinnell, and Rogers. Grant and La Farge were pioneers in the New York Zoological Park movement. We know the work of Merriam and Wadsworth, and we always know the sympathies of our honored founder, member, and guest of this evening, Theodore Roosevelt.

What the Club can do is to spread information and thoroughly enlighten the people, who always act rightly when they understand.

It must not be put on the minutes of the history of America, a country which boasts of its popular education, that the *Sequoia*, a race 10,000,000 years old, sought its last refuge in the United States, with individual trees older than the entire history and civilization of Greece, that an appeal to the American people was unavailing, that the finest grove was cut up for lumber, fencing, shingles, and boxes! It must not be recorded that races of animals representing stocks 3,000,000 years of age, mostly developed on the American continent, were eliminated in the course of fifty years for hides and for food in a country abounding in sheep and cattle.

The total national investment in animal preservation will be less than the cost of a single battleship. The end result will be that a hundred years hence our descendants will be enjoying and blessing us for the trees and animals, while, in the other case there will be no vestige of the battleship, because it will be entirely out of date in the warfare of the future.



THE VARIOUS CAUSES OF ELIMINATION

AN EXCERPT FROM PRESERVATION OF THE WILD ANIMALS OF NORTH AMERICA GIVEN BY THE LATE HONORARY LIFE MEMBER, PROFESSOR HENRY FAIRFIELD OSBORN, TO THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB ON JANUARY 23, 1904. HENRY FAIRFIELD OSBORN WAS A PROFESSIONAL MEMBER. IN THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS REPORT, PROFESSOR OSBORN STATES...

"As a special and perhaps somewhat novel argument for preservation, I wish to remind you of the great antiquity of our game animals, and the enormous period of time which it has taken nature to produce them. We must have legislation, and we must have it in time."

