

WILLIAM TEMPLE HORNADAY – The Great American Zoologist



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A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF MANY early Boone and Crockett members, William T. Hornaday was a pioneer in the American conservation movement. His campaign against excessive game limits and market hunting created many enemies, but he was relentless in seeking protection for the preservation of America's wildlife. Indeed, his book, *Extermination of the American Bison* (1887) is credited with helping preserve the bison from extinction. While Hornaday felt justified in killing animals for museums and accepted hunting big game for sport, he had no use for market hunters.

Born in Indiana in 1854, but raised in Iowa during his early years, Hornaday lived at the edge of the virgin prairie. He learned taxidermy, on his own, at an early age. While a student at Iowa State Agricultural College, he was given the job of preparing specimens for its museum. He became so proficient that before he was 19 years old he was put in charge of the zoological section at the University of Rochester. That led to many trips abroad to collect specimens for the University's collection and also for sale to other museums to help underwrite expenses. *Two Years in the Jungle* (1885) was his first book. It described his adventures as a hunter and naturalist in India, Ceylon, the Malay Peninsula, and Borneo.

With his reputation established, Hornaday was hired as chief taxidermist at the United States Museum in Washington, where he became a pioneer in the presentation of animals in a background that showed their natural habitat. From taxidermy he moved into the mainstream of his career, the conservation of living animals in zoos and in the wild. He

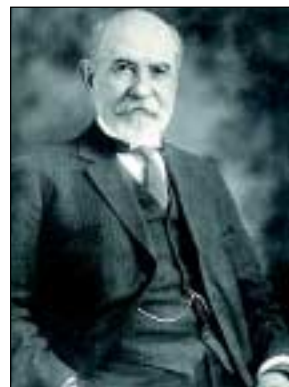
was appointed Curator of the Department of Living Animals, which led to the project for the founding of the Washington Zoo. He championed the idea that animals in captivity should be allowed to roam in a natural setting and not be confined only in cages.

A group of Boone and Crockett Club members led by Madison Grant is widely credited with originating the idea of a zoological park in New York City. As president of the New York Zoological Society, Grant led a group that had the political clout and money to get the project started. In 1896, William T. Hornaday was engaged as director of the project, which became popularly known as "the Bronx Zoo." He held that post for the next 30 years.

As a boy, growing up in New York City, I made many visits to the Bronx Zoo. One of the buildings I loved to visit was the Hall of Heads and Horns, which contained many specimens donated by Hornaday, Madison Grant, and others. The walls were covered with magnificent Rungius paintings and the building contained Dr. Hornaday's fabulous library of sporting and natural history books. Considered "politically incorrect," the collection was dismantled many years ago, and the building converted to other uses. I think there is a misunderstanding about Hornaday and his position on hunting. My copy of his book *Thirty Years War for Wild Life* (1931) contains an inscription by him dated 1933, "To ___ conscientious and successful hunter of big game. With the compliments of another hunter, W.T. Hornaday."

William Temple Hornaday died in 1937. His obituary noted that "with voice and pen he waged a militant battle in defense of the nation's

wildlife. He had an uncommon faculty for making enemies of men opposed to his ideas and methods, but the opposition only increased the vigor of his campaigns. Fearless beyond ordinary reckoning, he never minced words but spoke and wrote as his judgment dictated. This Boone and Crockett member and friend of Theodore Roosevelt gave voice to ideas only later accepted in the mainstream conservation movement, and distinguished himself as one of the brightest and most outspoken early conservationists. ▲



WILDLIFE & CONSERVATION BOOKS BY WILLIAM T. HORNADAY
<i>Two Years in the Jungle</i> (1885)
<i>Extermination of the American Bison</i> (1887)
<i>Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting</i> (1895)
<i>The Man Who Became a Savage</i> (1895)
<i>The American Natural History</i> (1904)
<i>Camp-Fires in the Canadian Rockies</i> (1906)
<i>Camp-Fires on Desert Lava</i> (1908)
<i>Our Vanishing Wild Life</i> (1913)
<i>Wildlife Conservation in Theory and Practice</i> (1914)
<i>The Statement of the Permanent Wild Life Protection Fund</i> (1915)
<i>The Statement of the Permanent Wild Life Protection Fund Volume II</i> (1917)
<i>The Minds and Manners of Wild Animals</i> (1922)
<i>Tales from Nature's Wonderlands</i> (1924)
<i>A Wild Animal Round-Up</i> (1925)
<i>Wild Animal Interviews</i> (1928)
<i>Thirty Years War for Wildlife</i> (1931)
OTHER BOOKS BY HORNADAY
<i>Popular Official Guide to the New York Zoological Park</i> (beginning in the late 1800s)
<i>Awake! America</i> (1918)
<i>Old-Fashioned Versus</i> (1919)

WILLIAM T. HORNADAY KILLED 24 BISON IN MONTANA IN THE FALL OF 1886 FOR SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES AND DISPLAY. INSET PHOTO: PORTRAIT OF HORNADAY FOUND IN HIS BOOK "THIRTY YEAR WAR FOR WILDLIFE".