

FROM THE CENTER

Boone and Crockett Club's Role in Conservation Then and Now



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This is the next to last issue of *Fair Chase* in the 20th century. It seems appropriate to review the role that the Boone and Crockett Club played in conservation during that century. It has been observed by historians that the period between 1890 and 1910 was a critical watershed for wildlife conservation in America. It seems likely that the period 1990 to 2010 will be equally critical.

The Boone and Crockett Club played a critical role in advocacy and action for wildlife and wild places at the turn of the last century when many species of North American wildlife teetered on the brink of extinction. In the story of the Club's performance during that critical period lie lessons for the present era. Determined citizens of influence operating in concert with others can achieve remarkable things.

The Club was founded in 1887 under the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt. The frenzy of western expansion and resource exploitation had brought the status of many wildlife species to low ebb. The Audubon bighorn sheep, the heath hen, great auk, and Carolina parakeet were extinct. Beavers had been essentially extirpated east of the Mississippi River and existed only in small pockets and low numbers in the west. Bison, estimated at some 4 million in 1880, had been reduced to less than 5,000. The southern herd was extinct and the northern herd had been reduced to small isolated groups. Turkeys, which may

have numbered 15 million in the early 1700s, had been wiped out over 90 percent of their original range and brought down to less than 400,000. Whitetail deer, estimated at over 24 million before 1800, numbered less than 500,000. Pronghorn had declined from some 10 million to 25,000 or less. Elk, which had once ranged from the Pacific to the Atlantic, were confined to isolated pockets in the mountains of the west. Numbers had declined from an estimated 10 million to less than 150,000. The eastern, plains, and southwestern subspecies were extinct. The passenger pigeon, which had once numbered some 4 billion, had been reduced to a few million. Twenty-seven years later the last passenger pigeon died in a zoo in Cincinnati.

The Club's first meeting in 1887 counted ten attendees. Represented were writers, scientists, explorers, military men, and industrialists. While different in profession they had some things in common. They were of the American aristocracy, each had traveled in the West, all loved the hunting of big game, and each had power, money, and influence. From that meeting grew the Boone and Crockett Club of 100 elected members and "what Professional Members may be appointed."

The early achievements of the Club began with the support for and the enhancement of the security of Yellowstone Park. This effort was lead by George Bird Grinnell, a publisher of hunting oriented maga-

zines, and the preeminent activist in the Club. General Philip Sheridan (later a Club member) afforded military protection to the Park in the early days. Congressman George Vest of Mississippi (later a Club member) pushed legislation that expanded the Park by 3,344,000 acres in 1884. The Club was successful in fighting off the "Segregation Bill" that would have given a large section of the Park over to the railroads.

In 1887, Club members were instrumental in slipping an obscure proviso into a bill titled "An Act to Repeal Timber Culture Laws..." that allowed the President to set aside and reserve lands from the public domain as "public reservations." One month later, President Benjamin Harrison set aside 1 million plus acres on the eastern and southern boundaries of Yellowstone Park.

Just how that happened is a classic example of how the Club's members influenced national conservation policy during this most critical period. Club member William Hallet Phillips, a lawyer practicing before the Supreme Court, convinced Secretary of Interior Lucius Lamar and a small nucleus of Congressmen, to add the amendment to the proposed bill. In 1889, John Noble (a Club member) became Secretary of Interior. Arnold Hague (also a Club member), Head of the Geological Survey, persuaded Noble to assist in influencing President Harrison to sign the Bill. Harrison ultimately set aside more than 13



YELLOWSTONE
ESTABLISHED

GEOLOGIST RAPHAEL POMPELLY (LATER A B&C MEMBER) PENETRATES THE "LAND OF WALLED-IN LAKES" IN NORTHWEST MONTANA. HIS DESCRIPTIONS ENTHRALL GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL.

- ▲ BISON HERDS REDUCED FROM 4 MILLION TO LESS THAN 5,000.
- ▲ WHITETAIL DEER NUMBERED LESS THAN 500,000.
- ▲ ELK CONFINED TO ISOLATED POCKETS IN THE WEST AND DECLINE TO LESS THAN 150,000.

1872

1877

EARLY 1880S

1884

LATE 1880S

CARL SCHURZ BECOMES SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR (LATER BECOMES FIRST B&C "ASSOCIATE" MEMBER)

CONGRESSMAN GEORGE VEST (LATER A B&C CLUB MEMBER) PUSHES LEGISLATION THAT EXPANDED YELLOWSTONE BY 3,344,000 ACRES.



million acres under the provisions of that Bill.

In 1894, John Lacey of Iowa (a Club member) shepherded a Bill through Congress ostensibly dealing with the management of waterfowl in Yellowstone Park. In reality the Bill set the precedent and policy for the protection of all National Parks and established the structure of the National Park Service.

Geologist Raphael Pompelly (later a Club member), in the early 1880s, penetrated the "land of walled-in lakes" in northwest Montana. His descriptions enthralled George Bird Grinnell, who in addition to being a writer and publisher, was a skilled anthropologist. Grinnell's classic descriptions of Blackfeet and Cheyenne cultures were to become classics in the anthropological literature. Grinnell's fascination with this landscape lead him to enlist support of key members of the Club lead to accomplish the establishment of Glacier National Park.

Carl Schurz (later the first Professional Member of the Club), who was once Senator from Missouri (1869-1875) became Secretary of Interior in 1877. He was the first advocate for the Forest Reserves and a professional agency to manage those lands.

Roosevelt, now Governor of New York, and Grinnell, who was now recognized as the foremost proponent of what ultimately would be called "conservation" (a term coined by Gifford Pinchot – later a Club

Member), continued to push for laws to protect timber and wildlife within the Forest Reserves. It was becoming clear that it would not be politically possible nor, perhaps, desirable to place all the reserves into park status. Faced with that reality, Roosevelt and Grinnell harked back to the earlier admonitions of Carl Schurz in their search for a middle ground – lands to be managed to produce timber and other resources in a sustainable fashion for the good of the people as a whole.

In 1896, Secretary of Interior Hoke Smith asked the National Academy of Sciences to establish a Forestry Commission of seven members to recommend management direction for the Forest Reserves. The Chairman of the Commission was Charles Sargent. But the dominant member of the Commission was Arnold Hague (a Club member). The first native-born American formally trained in forestry (in France) was engaged as the Secretary for the Commission – Gifford Pinchot (later a Club member). Hague and Pinchot did much of the "leg-work" for the Commission and, in the end, had the most influence on the Commission's recommendations. The Commission, before submission of its report, recommended thirteen extensive additions to the Forest Reserves. President Grover Cleveland, in the last week of his Administration in 1897, added 21.3 million acres to the Forest Reserves. The boundaries were hastily considered and included lands suitable for

agriculture and even a few towns.

Western politicians went berserk. The Senate attached a rider to the Appropriations Bill the very next day returning the Forest Reserves to the unreserved public domain. Congressman Lacey, with behind the scenes assistance from Pinchot and Hague, worked in the Senate-House Conference Committee to thwart the Senate action by declaring that the President was authorized to modify or abolish Forest Reserves. All mention of returning the Forest Reserves to the public domain were deleted. Later in that year legislation was passed that defined the purposes of the Reserves, that included protection, securing favorable water flows, and assuring a continuous supply of timber. This was to be the foundation of the National Forest System that was to come in 1905.

In 1899, Gifford Pinchot was appointed to oversee the Forest Reserves.

In 1900, William McKinley became President of the United States. His Vice-President was Theodore Roosevelt. The time seemed right for the opponents of the whole idea of the Forest Reserves to move to return these reserved lands to the public domain. Pinchot and Hague found it expedient to operate through Charles Walcott (a Club member), Head of the Geological Survey. Walcott had the confidence of Western Congressmen and convinced them that "the forest reserves properly managed could be

THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB IS FOUNDED BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND A NUMBER OF LIKE-MINDED ASSOCIATES.



JOHN LACEY PUSHES A BILL THROUGH CONGRESS THAT ULTIMATELY SETS THE PRECEDENT AND POLICY OF THE PROTECTION OF ALL NATIONAL PARKS AND ESTABLISHED THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.

IN THE LAST WEEK OF PRESIDENT CLEVELAND'S ADMINISTRATION, HE ADDS 21.3 MILLION ACRES TO THE FOREST RESERVE.

1887

CLUB MEMBERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR AN OBSCURE PROVISION TITLED "AN ACT TO REPEAL TIMBER CULTURE LAWS...". PRESIDENT HARRISON SETS ASIDE 1 MILLION PLUS ACRES AROUND YELLOWSTONE.

1889

JOHN NOBLE (B&C CLUB MEMBER) BECOMES SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR. ARNOLD HAGUE (ALSO A CLUB MEMBER) PERSUADES NOBLE TO ASSIST IN INFLUENCING PRESIDENT HARRISON TO SIGN THE BILL. HARRISON ULTIMATELY SETS ASIDE MORE THAN 13 MILLION ACRES UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THAT NEW BILL.

1894

1896

A FORESTRY COMMISSION IS ESTABLISHED TO RECOMMEND MANAGEMENT DIRECTION FOR THE FOREST RESERVES. MEMBERS OF THIS COMMISSION INCLUDE ARNOLD HAGUE AND GIFFORD PINCHOT (LATER A CLUB MEMBER).

1897

a significant asset to the development of the West.”

Simultaneously, the Club arranged for petition drives in the western states supporting retention of the Forest Reserves “as necessary for the preservation of the timber supply” and stream flows. This continued the strategy of assuring that the Forest Reserves would not be “locked up.” These actions mollified enough of the western congressional delegation to maintain the Forest Reserves intact.

By 1900, Boone and Crockett Club members and their allies (many of whom would become Club members over time) had won many battles and set the stage for battles yet to come. Many of these achievements came from actions by individual members rather than by overt actions in the name of the Club itself. Yet, these actions were facilitated and coordinated through the Club’s network of members and well-positioned, influential acquaintances.

Then, in 1901, President William McKinley was assassinated and Theodore Roosevelt, founder of the Club, became President of the United States. One of his first acts was to call in Gifford Pinchot to help him draft his inaugural speech.

Roosevelt backed Pinchot’s desire to transfer the Forest Reserves from the Department of Interior to the Department of Agriculture and appointed a committee to draft appropriate legislation. That committee was composed of four Club members – Gifford Pinchot, C. Hart

Merriam (Chief of the Biological Survey), T. S. Palmer (Assistant Chief of the Biological Survey), and John Lacey (Chair of the House Committee on Public Lands).

The first attempt to pass the Transfer Act failed. Pinchot countered by enlisting some fellow Club members to call for a Forest Congress. Roosevelt complied and called the First Forest Congress in 1905. The Congress endorsed the transfer of the 86 million acres of Forest Reserves to the Department of Agriculture, called for these lands to be managed to produce timber and other resources in a sustainable fashion, and authorized the establishment of the U. S. Forest Service. By the time Roosevelt left office in 1909 he had placed another 64 million acres into National Forests for a total of 150 million acres.

These are but some of the advancements in conservation in the period 1890 to 1910 in which Boone and Crockett Club members played a crucial role. Boone and Crockett Club members remained prominent figures in American conservation for the remainder of the 20th century. Excluding those members already mentioned, and those still alive today, the listing of only a few deceased members composes a mini *Who’s Who in American Conservation*.

Some names of deceased regular members are Albert Bierstadt, Victor H. Calahane, Edward P. Cliff, Jay N. “Ding” Darling, James H. Doolittle, C. R. “Pink” Gutermuth, Joseph P. Linduska, John M. Olin,

Francis Parkman, Kermit Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., Elihu Root, William Tecumseh Sherman, and Philip L. Wright. Names from the ranks of professional members include Carl E. Akeley, Durward L. Allen, Vernon Bailey, Charles William Beebe, Clarence Cottam, Ira N. Gabrielson, William B. Greeley, William Temple Hornaday, A. Starker Leopold, Aldo Leopold, Henry Cabot Lodge, C. Hart Merriam, Olaus J. Murie, John P. Saylor, W. A. Silcox, and James B. Trefethen.

Such achievements by such prominent American conservationists stand as a proud legacy for the Club and a challenge to Boone and Crockett Club family for the period 1990 to 2010 that will set the stage for conservation in the 21st century. And, reflecting on the contributions of such members as these examples remind us that truly significant achievements can be accomplished by only a few forceful individuals with a cause to which they are sincerely dedicated.

By 1987, 100 years after the founding of the Club and the ascendancy of the conservation movement in the United States, a dramatic reversal in the fortunes of many species of wildlife was apparent. Beavers had returned to the eastern states and were common throughout the west. Bison were no longer in danger of extinction and were increasing as the species was more and more valued as an American symbol and as a source of low-fat meat. Wild turkeys had returned to all of their original range and

WESTERN POLITICIANS GO BERSERK AFTER PRESIDENT CLEVELAND’S ACTIONS. CONGRESSMAN LACEY, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF PINCHOT AND HAGUE, STOP A RIDER THE SENATE ATTACHED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS BILL THAT WOULD HAVE RETURNED THE FOREST RESERVES TO THE UNRESERVED PUBLIC DOMAIN.

GIFFORD PINCHOT IS APPOINTED TO OVERSEE FOREST RESERVES.

PINCHOT AND HAGUE OPERATE THROUGH CHARLES WALCOTT (A CLUB MEMBER) TO RETURN THE FOREST RESERVES TO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.

MCKINLEY IS ASSASSINATED AND THEODORE ROOSEVELT BECOMES THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

1897 CONTINUED

LEGISLATION IS PASSED TO DEFINE THE PURPOSE OF THE FOREST RESERVES, INCLUDING: PROTECTION, SECURING FAVORABLE WATER FLOWS AND ASSURING A CONTINUOUS SUPPLY OF TIMBER.

1899



1900

MCKINLEY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. HIS VICE-PRESIDENT IS THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

1901

ROOSEVELT APPOINTS A COMMITTEE (COMPOSED OF 4 CLUB MEMBERS) TO DRAFT LEGISLATION TO TRANSFER FOREST RESERVES FROM THE DEPT. OF INTERIOR TO DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE. THE TRANSFER ACT FAILS.

thrived in areas where they were not originally present with numbers having increased to nearly 3 million. Whitetail deer had dramatically expanded their range and likely numbered more than 12 million. Pronghorn were back from the edge of extinction and prospered throughout most of their original range that had not been converted to agriculture.

Yet, in spite of those dramatic successes, other species (none of which were legally hunted) were slipping toward extinction largely due to diminution of habitat. The challenge for those interested in wildlife would come to focus on "threatened and endangered" species in the last quarter of the 20th century. Little known species such as the whooping crane, northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, golden cheeked warbler, dusky seaside sparrow, and spade-footed toad would become well known as efforts to prevent their extinction, as demanded by the Endangered Species Act, produced significant economic and social consequences. Attention began to focus more and more on the stated purpose of the Endangered Species Act "...to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered species and threatened species may be conserved."

Today, it seems obvious that wildlife policy in the United States is evolving rapidly and, it seems fair to say, is in some state of confusion and is causing increased acrimony and debate. This confusion results from the interaction of myriad laws

related to the environment, federal land management, fish and wildlife, and water. These individually well-intentioned laws passed by different Congresses at different times with little consideration of their interactions has led to increased confusion and struggles over "turf" between state and federal government and between federal agencies.

Authority over wildlife matters has shifted strongly from the states to the federal government with the broad scale application of the Endangered Species Act. Most states are severely limited in terms of fiscal resources devoted to wildlife issues as funding sources are largely limited to revenue from hunting and fishing licenses and federal aid originating from excise taxes on firearms and ammunition and fishing equipment. Congressmen Don Young (a Club member) and John Dingell have sponsored the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Act (CARA). This Act should help rectify that imbalance by directing one-half the annual federal income from offshore oil and gas leases – some \$4.6 billion per year – to three efforts each covered by a different Title in the Bill. Boone and Crockett Club President Dan Pedrotti has announced his support of Title III. That Title would direct funds to state wildlife agencies to benefit all wildlife – not just game species. That is a good start for the next millennium.

But, more will be required. How can the Club, given its relatively

small number of regular members, professional members, and associates, have additional significant influence in matters concerning wildlife and conservation as we move into the 21st century? One effort that is underway is to stimulate a "Summit" gathering of a number of groups of hunter-conservationists to determine if there are issues around which we can unite and develop the means to bring that influence to bear on critical conservation issues of the day.

One of most remarkable phenomenon in the conservation arena has been the rise of organizations centered on interest in and support for individual species of wildlife. Among these organizations are the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Quail Unlimited, The Ruffed Grouse Society, Pheasants Forever, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, Whitetails Unlimited, and Rocky Mountain Bighorn Society. Coupled with the more generally focused groups such as the Pope and Young Club, Safari Club International, Izaak Walton League, and the Wildlife Management Institute, these groups could greatly magnify their influence if they could forge agreement on a few select questions. Perhaps the Boone and Crockett Club can help stimulate a gathering of some or all of these groups plus others to draw a vision of the future for wildlife and hunting in America of the 21st century. That would be a good start for a new century. ▲▲▲

ROOSEVELT CALLS TOGETHER THE FIRST FOREST CONGRESS. THEY APPROVE OF THE TRANSFER AND ESTABLISH THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE.

1905



1909

BY THE TIME ROOSEVELT LEAVES THE OFFICE, HE HAS PLACED ANOTHER 64 MILLION ACRES INTO NATIONAL FORESTS.

GLACIER BECOMES A NATIONAL PARK.

1910



1987

**▲ BISON ARE NO LONGER IN DANGER OF EXTINCTION.
▲ WHITETAIL DEER NUMBER MORE THAN 12 MILLION.
▲ ELK NUMBERS HAVE MORE THAN QUADRUPLED.**

CAN THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB HELP STIMULATE A "CONSERVATION SUMMIT" TO DRAW A VISION OF THE FUTURE FOR WILDLIFE AND HUNTING IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

1999...