

FROM THE PRESIDENT

THE CLUB'S LEGACY — Conservation, Policy, Research, Education, and Outreach



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In the Summer 2008 issue of *Fair Chase*, this column focused on the records keeping system and record books issued by the Boone and Crockett Club

beginning in 1932. Our state and federal governments have used this continuing database as a barometer for professional wildlife management and scientific review across the North American continent. Game management and conservation techniques for habitat enhancement have been a continuing focus of the numerous chapters in the records book. In addition, the Boone and Crockett Club has championed the roles of fair chase and hunting ethics afield through the 19th-century sportsmen's code of conduct.

This focus since 1952, when the "first" records book was published using the Club's current copyrighted scoring system, unfortunately has established in contemporary America the notion that the Boone and Crockett Club's singular mission was records keeping, thus eclipsing the Club's historic legacy of establishing the five major cornerstones of conservation in America. These cornerstones included the enlargement and establishment of several national parks (Yellowstone, Glacier, Waterton in Canada, and Denali/Mount McKinley) and the National Park Service, the national forest reserves and the U.S. Forest Service, the wildlife refuge system, and the forerunner to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the model game laws used by our state and federal governments to establish harvest seasons, bag limits, etc., and many of the scientific management principles which underlies professional wildlife and habitat management today.

As our early founder George Bird Grinnell said in a brief Club history published in 1910:

"...since its establishment....The purposes and activities of the Boone and Crockett Club have wholly changed....Beginning as a Club of [hunting] riflemen...to promote manly sport with the rifle...[and] concerned only with their own recreation, it early discovered that more important work was to be done in the field of protection than in that

of destruction...It has not been the Club's practice to announce its purposes, nor to glory in what it has accomplished, but rather to move steadfastly forward, striving constantly to do whatever fell within its province which would tend to promote the country's welfare...which entitle it to the lasting gratitude of the American people... although not as yet wholly understood."

Grinnell's 1913 statement regarding the public's perception of the Club unfortunately remains true today, with the records book eclipsing what the Club does in the national conservation policy arena, wildlife and habitat research, and education from K through 12, to summer teacher workshops, to leadership immersion courses for mid-level career professionals in wildlife and public lands management at the state and federal level, and through postgraduate Ph.D. programs.

If you follow the money trail to measure the Club's conservation, research, education, and outreach programs, the Club in FY 2008 spent directly and through its generous member's contributions \$11.00 for every \$1.00 it spent for records keeping. The Club's focus today on conservation policy and programs is as great as it was in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

To put this in the Club's organizational perspective, the Club's affairs are managed through four operating divisions: The Administration, Communications, and Big Game Records Divisions are each headed by a vice president, who in turn reports to an executive vice president, currently Ben B. Wallace from Texas. The fourth division is the Conservation Division headed currently by Vice President William A. Demmer from Michigan, and Deputy Dr. Stuart D. Strahl from Illinois, who in turn reports to the division's own executive vice president, currently Edward B. Rasmuson from Alaska. Within the Conservation Division, there are seven separate committees or programs, each headed by a chairperson or designated liaison officer. Five of these are grouped under the Research and Education Committee, chaired by Dr. Harold Salwasser from Oregon. These five programs managed by Dr. Salwasser and his sub-chairs and/or liaisons include the following: Boone and Crockett Professorships; the National Conservation Leadership Institute; Conservation Grants Program; Conservation Education; and the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch.

The Boone and Crockett Professorships Committee is co-chaired by Dr. Daniel H. Pletscher from Montana, and Mary Webster, Esq., from Minnesota. Its responsibility is to manage existing postgraduate programs at five separate universities graduating Masters and Ph.D. candidates, plus future postgraduate programs initiated by the Club's members. Two more post-graduate university programs are currently on the horizon. Beginning in 1992, the first program was initiated at the University of Montana, and has since awarded 13 masters and 13 Ph.D. degrees. The four other existing programs are at Texas A&M, Oregon State, Michigan State, and Colorado State University, and are in varying stages of development. Two of our Ph.D. graduates are Presidential appointments in the current Bush Administration, one in the White House and one in the Department of Interior. The funding for each postgraduate program is the result of the generosity of local Club members who typically are alumni of a particular university.

The National Conservation Leadership Institute is an initiative conceived and developed by members of the Boone and Crockett Club in 2004. By the year 2010, it was determined that 77 percent of the senior managers of all federal and state wildlife and public lands agencies would be retiring. Moreover, it was determined that a measurable gap existed in the career agency employees next in the line of succession, thus leaving a devastating void in qualified senior-level managers to assume leadership responsibilities. The Club's response was to establish a two-week total immersion leadership training school to jump-start the qualified, available mid-career employees. The Management Assistance Team of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, working in cooperation with instructors from the Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts, began the program in 2006, and has graduated 38 "fellows" each year since then. Club member Dr. Steve Williams from Pennsylvania serves as the Club's liaison to this program, and is chairman of its Board of Directors.

The Conservation Grants Program is managed by Club Liaison Winifred B. Kessler from Alaska. Each year, the Club awards two to four grants for wildlife and/or habitat research to postgraduate students across the continent. The focus of scientific wildlife research goes back to 1902 when the Club

sponsored and funded the private study of the Black Mesa Forest Reserve in Arizona. The result was the later creation of pronghorn and mule deer refuges in the Arizona public forest reserve. This early activity led to the establishment of wildlife refuges across America, the first being Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge in Florida in 1903.

The longest running, continuous wildlife research project in America was funded initially by the Club in 1958, and led by Club member Dr. Durward Allen from Purdue University. The study was of the predator/prey relationship between wolves and moose on Isle Royale National Park located in northern Lake Superior, and continues to this date—its 50th anniversary! The size of each grant averages approximately \$7,500, and each requires a progress report part way through the project as well as two copies of the final report which may come in the form of a thesis, dissertation, or publication.

The Conservation Grants Program is making good progress on the two deer genetics studies that commenced in 2007. Both respond to high-priority needs of the B&C Records Program and, if successful, will provide important tools for deer conservation and management. One project seeks to develop a diagnostic genetic test to differentiate hybrids of white-tailed and mule deer from pure individuals of either species. Dr. Irving Kornfield of the University of Maine's Molecular Forensics Laboratory is examining 17 nuclear markers for their potential use in differentiating species and hybrids.

The second project seeks to develop a nuclear genetic marker to differentiate Coues whitetail deer from other whitetail deer. A first step is to complete the sample collection of genetic materials, primarily from Mexico. Dr. Carlos Alcalá-Galván is making great progress on this task, thanks to his excellent working relationships with Mexican landowners, hunting guides, and government.

The Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch and Research Station managed by Club Liaison Fred J. Hirschy is a 6,000-acre working cattle ranch near Dupuyer, Montana, and the base for the education programs described above. Additionally, it serves as the research station for the students at the University of Montana's B&C postgraduate program. Purchased in 1984 as a demonstration project, the ranch has become an integral part of many Club programs. Some 225 cows are maintained on the ranch, which also serves as a major winter range for wildlife that summer in the adjacent Bob Marshall Wilderness. A primary objective at the ranch is to demonstrate that a profitable commercial ranching operation can co-exist

with healthy and sustainable wildlife populations, and to define a model for the necessary management practices in this regard.

The Conservation Education Program is managed by Dr. Kaush Arha from Virginia. Within this program, operated out of the Elmer E. Rasmuson Wildlife Conservation Center at the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch, is a K through 12 component, utilized primarily for research and funded by the generosity of the Lee and Penny Anderson Endowment, a Conservation Across Boundaries (CAB) Program that offers training to secondary teachers from across the nation to help them develop wildlife and natural resource curriculum for application back home in their local schools and communities. This is operated in conjunction with the Welder Wildlife Institute in Texas, and each teacher receives continuing education credits from the University of Montana.

The Elmer E. Rasmuson Wildlife Conservation Center is also the home of the summer Outdoor Adventure Camp for elementary and junior high levels. It also serves as the base camp and entry level learning facility for Boy Scouts Montana High Adventure Base Camp (MOHAB). From the Center, Boy Scouts then enjoy an educational backpacking experience into the adjacent Bob Marshall Wilderness.

Separately within the Conservation Division is the Hunter and Conservation Ethics Committee co-chaired by Andrew L. Hoxsey from California, and Daniel A. Pedrotti, Jr., from Texas. The work of this committee, in partnership with Cabela's and the International Hunter Education Association, enabled 77,000 hunter education instructors from across the country to receive and show as a part of their training course a 22-minute DVD titled, *Chain of Respect*. This popular program focused on hunting ethics and fair chase, and orders continue to stream in to Boone and Crockett Club's national headquarters from state agencies wanting to further distribute the DVD to schools and other educational forums.

In addition to the four operating divisions described earlier, our national conservation policy work is carried out by the Conservation Policy Committee led by co-chairs Robert Model from Wyoming, and Stephen P. Mealey from Oregon. That committee, in turn, has two liaison groups it manages: the American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP) and the Wildlife Health Liaison. This group reports directly to the President of our Club. The Spring 2008 President's column fully detailed the national policy work of the Club.

In August of 2000, the Club was instrumental in organizing a historical

conservation summit at its headquarters in Missoula that has already proven to have a profound effect on the future of wildlife. This landmark meeting resulted in the foundation of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP)—a coalition of 40 wildlife organizations representing a voting block of more than 7 million hunter-conservationists. The AWCP was formed for the purpose of building unity, identifying key wildlife issues, addressing the continuing regulations and legislation from Congress affecting wildlife, and developing a vision for wildlife in the 21st century and beyond. In 2001, the Boone and Crockett Club was instrumental in the development of *Wildlife for the 21st Century*, an agenda of the country's critical national wildlife issues, and the AWCP presented this document to President George Bush. In 2005, the AWCP presented its sequel, *Wildlife for the 21st Century: II* to President Bush. The AWCP's "voice" has had a powerful and positive influence in Washington, D.C.

The major focus of the Club's policy work for 2008, pursuant to an Executive Order issued by the President of the United States, is to orchestrate a White House North American Wildlife Policy Conference this fall, working with our American Wildlife Conservation Partners, the President's Council on Environmental Quality, and congressional leadership from both sides of the aisle. The product of the conference will be development of a bipartisan comprehensive recreational hunting and wildlife conservation plan, setting a 10-year agenda for federal, state and tribal government's big game management plans to insure a diversity of wildlife populations, access and opportunity for hunting and fishing for the next decade. Moreover, through the Club's Liaison Officer Jeffrey S. Crane from Maryland and our AWCP partners, positions are formed almost weekly on key legislation in Washington that requires the constant vigilance of the group.

In the area of wildlife health, the Club's latest initiative was the development of the Chronic Wasting Disease web site early on when scientists across America needed a resource base to share research information on CWD. Management of the site was transferred to the Wildlife Management Institute last year, but is financially supported by the Club.

From this brief overview, you can readily see that the Boone and Crockett Club does far more than just keep trophy records. Public policy, conservation, research, education, and outreach have historically been its legacy and remains the essential focus of the Club today. ■