

After reading my recent column about the contributions of the Boone and Crockett Club to conservation in the United States during the period of 1895 to 1905, my old friend and colleague, Dr. Valerius Geist, took me politely to task for concentrating solely on the United States. He told me a story of the influence of the early Members of the Club on the development of conservation efforts in Canada. Truthfully, I was totally ignorant of those Members' contributions to the birth of wildlife conservation in Canada.

I thought the story that Dr. Geist related to me was fascinating and a real contribution to the history of the Boone and Crockett Club. I offered him the opportunity to tell that story in this column and he accepted. Dr. Valerius Geist, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science, Faculty of Environmental Design, the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, is a widely acclaimed wildlife ecologist with particular skill in the behavior of wild ungulates. Dr. Geist is a Professional Member of the Boone and Crockett Club. His story follows.

THE CLUB'S LEGACY: A CONTINENTAL SYSTEM OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

One of the great cultural achievements of North American society is the creation of a uniquely successful system of continental wildlife conservation. These efforts brought back wildlife from near extinction in the United States and severe depletion in Canada, a feat that may rank as the greatest environmental success story of the 20th century. These efforts not only met but exceeded the conditions of "sustainable development" of a natural resource (today's Holy Grail for conservation), because the wildlife resource steadily increased throughout the century.

When compared to the failures in managing offshore fish

stocks, conservation of terrestrial wildlife has been dramatically successful. These coordinated efforts utterly defeated Garrett Hardin's famous *Tragedy of the Commons*, wherein he hypothesized that resources owned in common would suffer from overuse. These efforts demonstrated how, in a capitalistic society, a natural resource cannot only be treasured by its citizens, but turned into a great public good through which the private sector generates unprecedented wealth and employment. Whatever the flaws of the conservation movement (and there are some), it is a system we can justly celebrate. And we should also celebrate those dedicated individuals, active so many decades ago, who spared no effort to make it so.

Our wildlife conservation system of today has emerged as continental in scope. That is, the same basic policies govern the fate of wildlife in Canada as in the United States. It is a truly remarkable achievement that Canada, a loyal, dedicated colony of Great Britain, followed the lead of the United States in wildlife conservation.

Canada did not embrace the policies and practices of wildlife ownership and management as accepted in the "mother country" of Great Britain. Foremost among the customs of dealing with wildlife in the mother country that were rejected was the tie of wildlife and hunting to landownership, including the sale of wildlife as a commodity in the market place. Even more remarkable is the fact that some of Canada's negotiators and movers who were instrumental in creating this new system of wildlife conservation were Englishmen and immigrants to Canada.

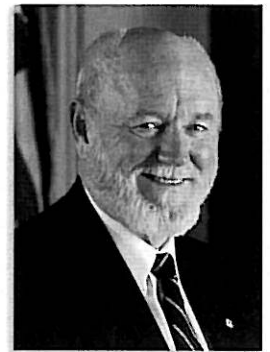
How is it possible that an untried system of wildlife conservation was embraced by both the United States and Canada, despite the conspicuous presence and ex-

ample of older European systems that boasted, at that time, of much larger wildlife populations?

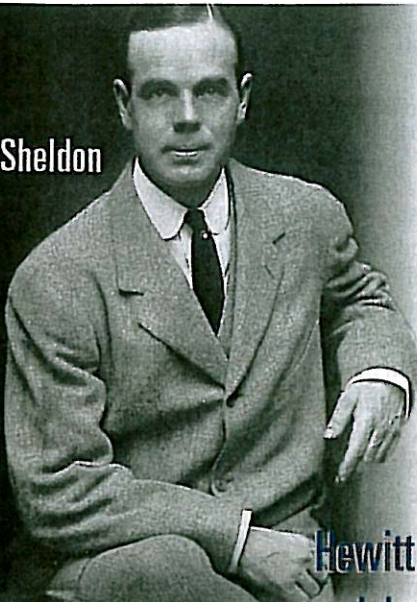
Apparently, at the turn of the 19th century, when both nations had become cognizant of wildlife's plight and grappled for solutions, a like-minded elite arose on both sides of the border to face the issue of diminution of wildlife. They knew and befriended each other, learned from each other's successes and failures and acted on such with insight and resolve.

The Canadian effort revolved around the Commission on Conservation that was constituted under The Conservation Act of 1909. The Commission was chaired from inception until 1918 by Sir Clifford Sifton, who was a lawyer, businessman, millionaire, and one of the ablest politicians that ever served Canada. He was knighted for his distinguished services in 1915. The Commission consisted of 18 members and 12 *ex-officio* members. The caliber of the Commission and the seriousness with which conservation of natural resources was considered may be judged by the Commission's composition. It included one knight besides the chairman, Sir Edmund B. Osler, four deans, chancellors or presidents of universities plus an additional five Ph.D.'s or professors, two members of parliament, one senator, and the business managers for one of Canada's most influential dailies, the *Toronto Globe*.

The *ex-officio* members were federal or provincial ministers of agriculture, lands, lands and forests, the interior, and mines. Also included were attorney generals and three provincial premiers, including Clifford Sifton's older brother, the Honorable Arthur L. Sifton, Premier and Minister of Railways and Telephones from Alberta. The Commission parceled out work to various committees, including



Jack Ward Thomas
B&C Professor of
Wildlife Conservation
The University of Montana



Charles Sheldon

Hewitt acknowledges his debt to four Canadians, four Americans, and one Englishman. Every one of the four Americans named by Hewitt were early Members of the Boone and Crockett Club.



Dr. Fairfield Osborn



William T. Hornaday

one on Fisheries, Game, and Furbearing Animals under the chairmanship of Dr. Cecil C. Jones, Chancellor of the University of New Brunswick. This was clearly an assembly of able men from Canada's elite. It is unfortunate that World War I (the "Great War"), that erupted in 1914,

overshadowed their productive, historic work.

Dr. Charles Gordon Hewitt is the hero of our story. Hewitt was the "father" of two pieces of legislation that are considered the greatest achievements of the Commission: the 1915 Migratory Bird Treaty ratified with the United States (later expanded to include Mexico by

1924), and the North West Game Act that applied to Crown lands. He was an immigrant and a Canadian, or more correctly a North American, by choice and not by accident of birth. He arrived in Canada from England in 1909 from a post as a lecturer at the University of Manchester to assume the position of Dominion Entomologist, to which was soon added the position of Consulting Zoologist. A first rate scientist and administrator, Hewitt was soon indispensable to the Commission in "getting things done."

The comments by Dr. Cecil Jones, chairman of the Committee on Fisheries, Game, and Furbearing Animals, in opening its meeting on November 1, 1915, are instructive of what the Committee faced and of its attitude. "We have all felt, I am sure, that it is rather pathetic that in a country as new as Canada there should be so little wild life, that wild life in Canada, especially bird life,

should compare so unfavorably with that of countries in Europe in the same geographical situation but which have been settled for thousands of years. Wild life is there far more abundant than it is in Canada even at the present time. With the example of the United States before us – a bad example, especially during their early history, and in the western states – the preservation of game and the proper administration of game laws in this Dominion would seem to be one of the very important things to which this Committee might devote its attention... We have all looked with a good deal of interest at the work that is being done at present in the United States towards retrieving the bad management of their early history and the effort now being made towards restoring their game and administering their game laws properly. We are now looking to the men there to advise us as to methods of best carrying forward the work of preserving game in Canada and of administering our laws properly here."

Most fortunately, members of the Boone and Crockett Club, as well as members of the Campfire Club and other persons of distinction, rose to the occasion. They cooperated with the Canadian Commission, made formal presentations, maintained a lively correspondence, and met to negotiate with delegates of the Commission upon a visit to the United States. Some of these activities are recorded in the proceedings of the Commission.

Requests for changes in the initial proposals of the Commission by conservationists from the United States displayed remarkable precision and knowledge of Canadian conditions. Perhaps this was because the Boone and Crockett Club's geographic area of interest as defined in Article 1, Section 1, of its founding charter was not the United States, but

North America. Section 3 defined North America as "all lands of the Americas north of the southern boundary of Mexico."

Hewitt's book, *The Conservation of Wild Life in Canada*, documents the close working relationship that these pioneers of Canadian and American conservation had with one another. Hewitt acknowledges his debt to four Canadians, four Americans, and one Englishman. Every one of the four Americans named by Hewitt were early Members of the Boone and Crockett Club. They were Dr. Henry Fairfield Osborn, president of the American Museum of Natural History, Dr. E. W. Nelson, Chief of the U.S. Biological Survey, Dr. William T. Hornaday, Director of the New York Zoological Gardens, and Charles Sheldon, a wealthy industrialist and influential conservationist. The Englishman acknowledged was none other than Rudyard Kipling.

Hewitt's book was decorated with paintings by the noted artist Carl Rungius, also a past Member. Rungius had illustrated earlier books by Theodore Roosevelt, founder and first President of the Club. William T. Hornaday and Charles Sheldon, in the name of the New York Zoological Society, commissioned works by Rungius, who did many of his studies in Banff, Alberta. Many of Carl Rungius's works are now displayed in the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta. An exhibition is being prepared for the summer of 2000 to honor Rungius not only as the premier painter of wildlife, but also as a hunter and naturalist.

Hewitt also made reference to other early Members of the Boone and Crockett Club in his book and in reports to the Commission. Such references included the noted zoologist Dr. J. A. Allan, who named the Stone's sheep and Osborn's caribou. Also mentioned was Henry Henshaw,

another Chief of the U.S. Biological Survey, Warburton Pike, the great British explorer of arctic Canada, and the provincial game warden of British Columbia and author Bryan Williams.

Frederick Vreeland, of the Camp Fire Club of North America, addressed the Commission on wildlife conservation policies. One may also mention as a source of Hewitt's information, Andrew Stone of Missoula, Montana, an able explorer and naturalist after whom the Stone's sheep was named, and who participated with Theodore Roosevelt in writing *The Deer Family*. William T. Hornaday and Gordon Hewitt were close friends and mutual admirers as is evident in their writings.

Despite its name, Hewitt's book, *The Conservation of Wild Life of Canada*, was not published in Canada, but in New York by Charles Scribner's Sons. It was an event Gordon Hewitt never experienced. Shortly after presenting a paper on fur-bearers at the meetings of the Commission of Conservation in Montreal on February 19-20, 1920, he fell ill with the dreaded influenza epidemic that swept the world. He died on February 29, 1920, six days after his 35th birthday, and a little more than ten years after first setting foot in Canada.

Wildlife conservationists in North America owe much to this able man who, tragically, died so young. The Royal Society of Canada paid him great tribute as did his friend William T. Hornaday. Ironically, in his brief biography in *The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, there is little mention of his far-reaching engagements on the international stage on behalf of wildlife and agricultural entomology. Tragically, much of what the founding fathers of wildlife conservation did early in the 20th century is forgotten. These achievements are hardly mentioned, if at all, in

current texts on wildlife management. Still, it is well to reflect on the contributions of such men early in the last century and to realize that today's conservationists stand on their shoulders.

Now, clearly, we shall have to revisit the old arenas and battlefields of policy debate as the new century dawns. For the battle for wildlife and hunting as part of culture never really ends. And, the battle even intensifies as human population pressures build. Our system of wildlife conservation is under attack on both sides of the border. Agricultural bureaucracies seem determined to enshrine game farming and re-establish markets in dead wildlife, contemptuous of the fact that this violates every policy that made wildlife conservation in North America a success. Debates rage over public access to wildlife, which becomes more and more restricted. Various urban interest groups are at work on diverse issues, enshrining animal rights, taking arms from the public, banning hunting, or eliminating wildlife from urban spaces.

Alas, Canada is further down these paths than the United States. The Club's legacy to conservation in North America was to bring to life a highly successful system of wildlife conservation spanning the North American continent. It is a legacy worth preserving and worth fighting for. ▲ ▲ ▲

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