

LANDMARK LAW CHARTS BRIGHT COURSE FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

President Clinton signed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, for the first time formally establishing fish, wildlife and plant conservation as the mission of the world's largest network of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife. The new law also gives priority to certain wildlife-dependent recreational uses of national wildlife refuges.

The only system of federal lands devoted specifically to wildlife, the National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of diverse and strategically located habitats. More than 500 national wildlife refuges across the United States teem with millions of migratory birds, serve as havens for hundreds of endangered species, and host an enormous variety of other plants and animals.

For nearly a century, the 92-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System has been managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under a variety of laws without an "organic act," or comprehensive legislation spelling out how it ought to be managed and used by the public. The legislation signed by President Clinton resolves these key issues, which had grown more complex as the Refuge System expanded and visitation increased to nearly 30 million people a year.

"This legislation marks a milestone in the National Wildlife Refuge System's history by making wildlife conservation its

overarching mission and ensuring sportsmen, bird watchers, and other wildlife enthusiasts ample opportunities to enjoy this magnificent collection of wild lands," said Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt.

The new law is a product of extensive negotiations over the last several months among Secretary Babbitt, Congressional sponsors Don Young (R-AK and B&C Club Member) and John Dingell (D-MI), and leaders of key

Representatives of sportsmen's and environmental groups who were key players in the legislation's development were Dan Beard, Senior Vice President of the National Audubon Society; Rollin Sparrowe, President of the Wildlife Management Institute and Professional Member of the B&C Club; Bill Horn, Legislative Director for the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America; and Max Peterson, Executive Vice President of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Professional Member of the B&C Club.

President Teddy Roosevelt, founder of the Boone and Crockett Club, established 3-acre Pelican Island in Florida as the first national wildlife refuge in 1903 by executive order because of concern over the widespread killing of birds for feathers used for hats and other fashions of the day.

Roosevelt went on to establish 51 more bird refuges during his presidency, as well as refuges for big game like buffalo and elk.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 defines clearly a unifying mission for the Refuge System, calls for enhanced consideration of certain wildlife-dependent public uses when compatible, and outlines a specific process by which compatibility determinations should be made. The act comes on the cusp of the 100th anniversary for the Refuge System, just in time to guide its management and public uses into the next century.

— U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

"In addition to upgrading hunting, fishing and trapping to priority uses of the nearly 100 million-acre refuge system, the bill will serve as its 'Organic Act,' providing guiding principles for the refuge system's management,"

said William P. Horn, director of National and International Affairs for The Wildlife Legislative Fund of America.

sportsmen's and environmental organizations. All joined forces to develop legislation to address varying concerns and interests on management and public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System, which had been the only major federal land management agency to lack an organic act.

Other Congressmen who were instrumental in building overwhelming bipartisan support for the bill were George Miller (D-CA), John Tanner (D-TN), Jim Saxton (R-NJ), and Neil Abercrombie (D-HI); and Senators John Chafee (R-RI), Dirk Kempthorne (R-ID), Bob Graham (D-FL), and Max Baucus (D-MT).

YOUNGSTERS CHOOSE TO HUNT; PASS ON FUND FOR ANIMALS BIKE OFFER

Seventy youngsters were given the choice between participating in the National Elk Refuge's youth elk hunt October 11-12 near Jackson or a \$1,000 mountain bike offered by the Fund for Animals. And 70 youngsters chose the elk hunt.

The anti-hunting group tried

to entice one of the 12 to 17 year-olds with the bike if they would turn in their refuge permit and promise not to hunt anymore in 1997. Several of the kids cited the role of the hunter in wildlife management as the reason the youth elk hunt was more important than a new bike.

This is the second year the youth hunt was offered on the opening two days of the refuge sea-

son. The big game hunting age was lowered to 12 this year by the Wyoming Legislature. Formerly the minimum age to hunt big game was 14.

The north portion of the elk refuge is open to elk hunting by special permit. The objective number of elk to winter on the refuge is 7,500. Last winter the refuge hosted nearly 12,000 elk.

— WYOMING GAME & FISH NEWS

AUTHOR SAYS, "HUNTING KEEPS WILD ANIMALS ALIVE"

Ten-year old Samantha likes the idea of a world without hunting but is astonished to discover that hunters are friends of wildlife! She struggles with this seeming paradox as heroine in Robert Warren's *How Could You, Danny?! – Samantha Challenges Hunting*.

Warren believes this is the first kids' book to dispute well-intentioned modern views about hunting that are actually damaging our environment and wildlife.

"Why do people want to hurt harmless animals for fun?" she asks, warming to her role as animals rights protagonist. "How can killing wild animals be a good thing? Can't we just let nature take care of them?"

Through her relatives' answers, the author presents a compelling case against emotional prejudice about animals and hunting in this exciting, illustrated adventure story.

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The first edition of *How Could You, Danny?! – Samantha Challenges Hunting* is available from the publisher, Natural Highs, at \$8.95 (each) with attractive quantity discounts to encourage resale by conservation and hunting groups that "keep wild animals alive."

HIXON GIVEN TOP NATIONAL CONSERVATIONIST AWARD

Tim Hixon must feel like a coal miner who just struck gold. Quietly, the San Antonio sportsman has been chip, chip, chipping away for years and now suddenly he has been showered with recognition.

Hixon this month received the Chevron Conservation Award, arguably the nation's most prestigious honor for conservation, as a tribute for his work on behalf of wildlife and the people who treasure it.

In May, Hixon, 60, who helps run his family's real estate development firm, was named the first Harvey Weil Sportsmen Conservationist of the Year by the Corpus Christi Rotary Club (*Fair Chase*, Fall 1997) in memory of the South Texas legend.

Modest to the extreme, Hixon responds to the attention like a stranger were standing on his foot.

"This," he said quietly, "is really great. Just great."

Ever restrained, Hixon may not be moved to cartwheels, but the campers, hunters and anglers of Texas should be. We've been the big winners all along.

In his decades of conservation work, Hixon has put the shoulder to many wheels – Audubon Society, Trout Unlimited, Game Conservation International, Ducks Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, International Game Fish Association, The Nature Conservancy,

African Wildlife Foundation and the Texas Bighorn Society.

The result for wildlife has meant everything from protection for fragile marine estuaries and wetlands to fund-raising for elk research.

Varied as his conservation and civic efforts may be, Hixon points to three career highlights:

▲ Chairman of the Conservation Committee of the Boone and Crockett Club: For ten years in the 1980's Hixon helped foster the careers of many wildlife professionals.

▲ TP&W Commission: Appointed by Gov. Bill Clements, Hixon served from 1988-1994 in what he called "the best job ever." With Chuck Nash of San Marcos as Commission chairman, the board established the annual Texas Wildlife Expo, and built Sea Center Texas and the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center.

▲ Government Canyon: At a time when the TP&W Commission was not buying land for parks, Hixon convinced the board that the tract of land just northwest of San Antonio "was too valuable to pass up."

After the acquisition, Hixon glued together the TP&W and San Antonio Water System to mold a low-impact park with minimum creature comforts, a visitor's center and trails for hiking and biking.

— SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS, MARK McDONALD

DR. KESSLER - ACADEMIC OF THE YEAR

Winifred B. Kessler, Professor and Chair of the Forestry Program at the University of Northern British Columbia, was named British Columbia's Academic of the Year by the Confederation of University Associations of British Columbia. Dr. Kessler was recognized for her efforts in building an innovative program in natural resource management at Canada's newest university. Since its opening in

August 1994, the program has grown to include over 500 students in 4 BSc majors (forestry, wildlife, fisheries and resource recreation) and the interdisciplinary MSc in Natural Resources Management. The award also recognized Dr. Kessler's contributions in developing a variety of integrated research and management partnerships with government, industry and communities of the north.

— THE WILDLIFER

FORESTERS PICK WILDLIFE MANAGER

Greg Schildwachter is the Intermountain Forest Industry Association's new wildlife program manager. He is a doctoral candidate in the University of Montana's Boone and Crockett wildlife program.

Jim Riley, IFIA's executive vice president, made the announcement saying Schildwachter's selection "reflects IFIA's ongoing commitment to promote win-win solutions for forest wildlife issues in the inland west."

Schildwachter will be the group's wildlife biologist, responsible for all wildlife and forestry programs.

He has a bachelor's degree in forest resources from the University of Georgia, a master's degree in wildlife and fisheries science from the University of Tennessee, and focused on voluntary agreements in wildlife conservation for his doctoral work at the University of Montana.

— MISSOULIAN, SHERRY DEVLIN

B&C PROFESSOR GIVEN FEDERAL AWARD

The "1997 Federal Statesman Award" was given to Jack Ward Thomas, former Chief of the U.S. Forest Service and current Boone and Crockett Professor of Wildlife Conservation at The University of Montana.

— THE WILDLIFER

B&C PROFESSIONAL MEMBER HONORED

Robert J. Robel, professor of Environmental Biology at Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, recently was named to the University of Idaho Hall of Fame as a Distinguished Alumni.

— THE WILDLIFER