

Building the B&C Portfolio for Conservation Leadership



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THE FUTURE AS WELL AS THE PRESENT OF HUNTING DEPENDS ON HEALTHY AND ABUNDANT GAME POPULATIONS PLUS THE SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY OF HUNTING AND HOW IT IS CARRIED OUT. SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY OF HUNTING DEPENDS CRITICALLY ON THE FAIR CHASE ETHIC IN HUNTERS, ON WHETHER HUNTING IS PERCEIVED TO BENEFIT OR HARM GAME POPULATIONS, AND ON WHETHER HUNTING IS PERCEIVED TO BENEFIT OR HARM THE WELL BEING OF PEOPLE AND ECONOMIES. WE ALL KNOW THIS. ITS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB EXISTS.

Healthy and abundant game depends on the full diversity of wildlife living in healthy and abundant habitats, that is, healthy and productive ecosystems. These depend on abundant open space with human uses of wild land compatible with wildlife needs plus game harvests within the renewal capacity of the harvested populations. We all know this too and its the other main reason the Club exists. These two lines — healthy and abundant wildlife and ethical hunting — come together in B&C's vision for wildlife, its strategic plan, and its programs for using the plan to bring reality to the vision.

These realities of hunting and wildlife conservation today were also realities 100 years ago. But, unlike today, the realities of 100 years ago included rampant and abusive exploitation of land and resources, especially overuse of game populations. B&C showed bold and courageous leadership to turn a corner and reverse those undesired conditions. Today's challenges are similar in nature but some are even more pressing than 100 years ago, such as population growth into shrinking habitats, the need for scientifically based resource management to meet growing needs for wood, water, food and fiber, and the need to find common ground on shared resource use among factions in our society who are at war over how to solve conservation problems. But the specifics of contemporary problems are different as well. Thus, the solutions needed today are also dif-

ferent. Like 100 years ago however, they still require bold leadership that empowers people to common action.

A prominent B&C member suggested in a meeting this past December that the Club has two main functions — the records and conservation programs — that all else was in support of those endeavors. It seemed to catch those present by surprise. But deep down this idea may be more right than wrong. Records keeping focuses the Club on three very important, inter-related and timeless goals: to promote hunter ethics through fair chase, to monitor trends in the characteristics

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— Margaret Mead



of game populations to ensure that they are not being degraded by hunting, and to pass along the great traditions of hunting in our culture. These timeless goals address both social and biological aspects of hunting.

The purpose of conservation activities is to make sure there are healthy, abundant and diverse game populations around so that our hunting tradition can continue. Thus, the Club's conservation program is intended to secure a foundation for its hunting oriented programs. This foun-

ation is provided through habitat protection, management and restoration; through scientific research into the ecology, sociology, economics, and politics of wildlife management; through education to build a knowledgeable and responsible citizenry regarding wildlife, conservation, and resource management; and through leadership in promoting and demonstrating the methods and benefits of wildlife conservation through shared uses of natural resources.

Leadership on these principles is the Club's legacy and single most important role in the diverse arena of conservation. To be effective, it must have a foundation of practicing what we preach — thus the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch, where we walk the talk. It must also be to the realities of the day yet inspire people to reach out for better solutions to problems than they now have — thus our involvement in (1) conferences such as Watchable Wildlife, International Wildlife Management Congress and the 7th American Forest Congress which is scheduled for February 1996 with B&C co-sponsorship, (2) workshops such as we will conduct next summer at TRM Ranch on ranching for shared uses and (3) policy activities such as the Keystone Dialogue on Ecosystem Management. It must be based in science and scholarship for maximum credibility and validity — thus our commitment to research through Grants-In-Aid and at the University of Montana (see the last *Fair Chase* column "From the Center" for a report on the UM Program). Yet it must also be continually tested in the crucible of practicality — so we have a guideline that our work is not done until it is proven useful and feasible for its expected customers.

Conservation leadership must work at all levels of society to set policy and to teach basic concepts and principles that can be applied to different problems — thus our extensive public service activities and work in conservation education to make sure that the

message about sustainable shared use and management of resources is added to the political debate and to school curricula as a better way than extremes of non use or mindless exploitation of resources.

These principles are now all basic to the B&C Wildlife Conservation Program, which started with the foundation of the Club 100 years ago in protection of habitats and populations through parks, forests, refuges and game laws; began promoting fair chase through record keeping 70 years ago; then moved to support wildlife research nearly 50 years ago; and now has broadened to what is emerging as a diversified portfolio of research, education, public service and demonstration — the four interlocking circles that depict our conservation program.

This past year the B&C conservation program topped \$500,000 in total magnitude as we leveraged through The University of Montana and Grants-in-Aid an investment of less than \$300,000 from the Club and Foundation into almost twice that amount of work. This next year we propose to take our investment to nearly \$400,000 and hope to leverage as much as \$800,000 worth of work. And we do not intend to stop there.

We are in the midst of renewing what conservation leadership means and our role in it. Thus, we are at a good point to ask ourselves: what kind of portfolio and image do we want when we level out? How big a slice do we want in research? In education? In public service? In demonstration? How big a slice of each of these do we want in big game? In endangered? In other wildlife? In the biology of animals? In the sociology and economics of wildlife conservation? In the ethics and politics of shared resource use? In ecosystem management and sustainable development? How big should our total pie be and how much of it do we want going through The University of Montana program and how much through other channels that we define;

that we define rather than others being the operative words here.

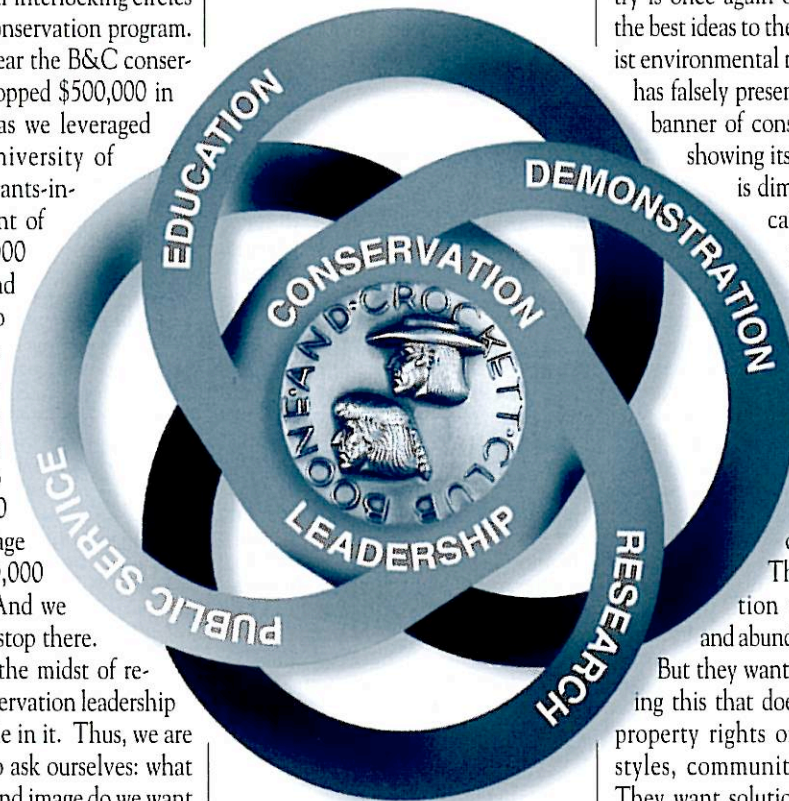
Dan Pletscher, Chair of the Club's Grants-in-Aid Program and I are working to bring the Club's Grants-In-Aid and University of Montana programs to bear on the Club's vision and strategic plan in a complimentary way. We are building a diverse portfolio of B&C supported and initiated activities, including support for work in wildlife that will influence but may not be immediately tied to big game hunting at the current time such as endangered species conservation and watchable wildlife. We believe that our portfolio should be such that B&C, in actuality as well as in perception, provides the leadership that is so des-

ahead in directions we have already started or strengthened. I and my students use columns in *Fair Chase* to tell you where the UM part of the program is heading. Jim Teer has a group working on B&C policy position statements. Bob Peebles keeps us informed about activities at TRM Ranch. Your support of these efforts tells us that you like where they are going. But we want to hear your thoughts and have options debated as well. The record of Grants-In-Aid tells us where that program has been. We need your help to flesh out the general dimensions of where we want to go because we are going to need your support and ownership.

Conservation leadership in the next few years or decades in our country is once again open for who brings the best ideas to the table. The extremist environmental movement — which has falsely presented itself under the banner of conservation — is now showing itself for what it is and is diminishing as a political force due its anti people bias, lack of vision for solving complex economic and social problems, and internecine warfare over how best to influence government agencies to do their will. The people of our nation want conservation and abundant, diverse wildlife.

But they want a model for achieving this that does not trample their property rights or destroy their life styles, communities or livelihoods. They want solutions that leave them and not the government in control. They want solutions based on sound science and rational economics rather than on emotional rhetoric and political coercion.

Leadership for the next era of conservation is going to come from the same place that leadership for the first era came from: its going to come from the people. It is not likely to come from government bureaucracies if they forget that they exist to serve the people. Boone and Crockett is just one small section of the people. But then we always have been small and as Mar-



perately needed now to show people that there is a way to develop our economies and communities with wildlife conservation, shared resources use, and ethical hunting as integral to the mix. In fact, we even go so far as to say that B&C's position is that wildlife conservation and shared use are essential to the sustainable development of economies and communities.

We offer an open dialogue within the Boone & Crockett family over the next year or so about where this Conservation program should go. While we talk, Dan and I will continue to push

ARTWORK BY WALKER GRAPHICS

garet Mead said "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has." Our track record shows that a small group of people, if it walks firmly and consistently toward a goal that others see as in their best interest to follow, can have an enormous impact on society as a whole. Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and George Bird Grinnell showed this in conservation 100 years ago. Mohandas Ghandi and M. L. King Jr. showed us this in social arenas during mid century. The way to lead in today's society is, in the words of our founder, to walk softly but carry a big stick. Walking softly means to be true to our principles, do what we say, and not shout a lot about what we or others should do. Carrying a big stick does

not mean a stick whose dimensions are measured in might or polarization or demagoguery or deception like the stick that others have used in the past several decades. The dimensions of our stick are measured in ethics, science, practicality, and common ground. Our walk and our stick have been our legacy to conservation but we have not used them effectively for leadership since the Club's early decades. Now it is time to take up the walk again, the walk that shows others that we practice what we preach — fair chase, shared resource use, and a ranch that shows what practical ecosystem management is.

Since 1986, B&C has made strategic investments in TRM Ranch, in The University of Montana Professor's program, in revitalizing new regular and professional members, in upgrading its

Associates Program, in restructuring its organization for management by results, and in publishing first-class books. All of this was in preparation to lead the conservation movement again. We are ready now. We are on the verge of having a structure, energy and set of programs that enable us to lead. Who should we take with us in leadership roles? How broadly do we want to speak for wildlife? How broadly do we want to speak for conservation and shared use of all natural resources?

During the next three to five years our actions will tell us and the world the answers to these questions. While we push forward with our actions let's keep the dialogue open and candid about what we'd like those answers to be and what it will take to make our vision for wildlife a reality.



FIELD NOTES FROM TRM RANCH

By THOMAS BAUMEISTER
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Since the late 1970s, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has surveyed mule deer on the Rocky Mountain Front to better coordinate harvest with desired herd conditions. Post-hunting season surveys determine the size and composition of these herds. This information has been valuable in adjusting hunting seasons for meeting management goals. For the past seven years, cooperation between the Boone and Crockett Club and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks coupled with the accessibility of the ranch has made TRM Ranch a significant sample point for these surveys. Each year, hundreds of mule deer are observed from vantage points on the Ranch, such as "Deerhill" and "Hightower."

Early January is the best time for these surveys as most deer have migrated from high country summer-fall habitats to concentrate on the low-elevation winter ranges. Determining herd composition is relatively easy at this time since bucks can be classified according to antler characteristics.

Unlike many mule deer surveys which are conducted in areas of dense cover, open habitats on TRM Ranch make observations much easier. This year I joined Gary Olson, a wildlife biologist for Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, in classifying deer on the Ranch. It took us less than a day to locate more than 500 mule deer on or in the vicinity of the Ranch. A few days prior to this Gary counted, via helicopter, more than 700 mule deer on the TRM Ranch.

The helicopter survey this year was conducted under excellent viewing conditions; it was a sunny day on the Front with 15 inches of snow on the ground and minus 22 degrees.

Under these conditions mule deer and elk tend to concentrate in large, easily located groups of up to several hundred animals. Mule deer show a preference for snow-free, east-facing limber pine slopes in the southeastern portion of the Ranch. Elk are most abundant on open windswept, rough fescue grasslands of the northwestern portion. Dupuyer Creek forms the common border. The "big alfalfa field" in the central portion of the Ranch is utilized by mule deer, elk and cattle.

By the time I arrived at the Ranch a few days later, the weather had changed dramatically. A Chinook had warmed the entire Front in a matter of hours, melting snow and raising temperatures to a balmy 55 degrees. Both mule deer and elk had responded accordingly and were now intermixed in all habitats on the Ranch, from the grasslands and riparian areas in the bottoms to the limber pine and Douglas fir forests on slopes and plateaus.

This year's herd composition is better than it has been in the previous two winters but not as good as it has been historically. Overall, about 2,300 mule deer are wintering on TRM Ranch

and adjacent areas this year. Based on counts taken in previous surveys it looks as if mule deer numbers fluctuate between 1,500 to 2,500. Gary and I were glad to see more mature, large antlered bucks (25-27 inch antler spread) and a good representation of younger three and four point bucks this year.

Overall, our counts averaged 18 bucks, including yearlings, and 78 fawns per 100 does. Accurate ratios for yearling bucks are harder to obtain since these animals are more difficult to identify, especially at a distance. The average ratio of 11 yearling bucks per 100 does is therefore only an estimated minimum. It is interesting to note that there appears to be a difference in the distribution of mature bucks (more than 2.5 years of age) on the Ranch. The "Hightower" area, for example, had the highest ratio of any area, 19 mature bucks per 100 does, possibly as the result of lower hunting pressure and higher quality of summer habitats.

Last year's hunting season was average in terms of weather conditions for harvesting mule deer. Deer migrated early out of the high country and dispersed widely across private and public lands due to mild weather in foothill habitats. Conservative harvest quotas on TRM Ranch continued to restrict the harvest of mature bucks.

Maintaining these quotas will assist the herd recover from 1992, when the majority of mature bucks in the herd were taken. Maintaining harvest quotas and conducting post-season surveys to monitor their effectiveness will help to better coordinate management strategies with desired conditions of mule deer on the Rocky Mountain Front.

DATA SOURCE: MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

MULE DEER HERD
TRM RANCH & ADJACENT PROPERTIES

