

WILLIAM T. HORNADAY THE GREAT AMERICAN ZOOLOGIST

A close associate of many early Boone and Crockett members, William T. Hornaday was a pioneer in the American conservation movement. His campaign against excessive game limits and market hunting created many enemies, but he was relentless in seeking protection for the preservation of America's wildlife. Indeed, his book, *Extirmination of the American Bison* (1887) is credited with helping preserve the bison from extinction. While Hornaday felt justified in killing animals for museums and accepted hunting big game for sport, he had no use for market hunters.

Born in Indiana in 1854, but raised in Iowa

during his early years, Hornaday lived at the edge of the virgin prairie. He learned taxidermy, on his own, at an early age. While a student at Iowa State Agricultural College, he was given the job of preparing specimens for its museum. He became so proficient that before he was 19 years old he was put in charge of the zoological section at the University of Rochester. That led to many trips abroad to collect specimens for the University's collection and also for sale to other museums to help underwrite expenses. *Two Years in the Jungle* (1885) was his first book. It described his adventures as a hunter and naturalist in India, Ceylon, the Malay Peninsula, and Borneo.

With his reputation established, Hornaday was hired as chief taxidermist at the United States Museum in Washington, where he became a pioneer in the presentation of animals in a background that showed their natural habitat. From taxidermy he moved into the mainstream of his career, the conservation of living animals in zoos and in the wild. He was appointed Curator of the Department of Living Animals, which led to the project for the founding of the Washington Zoo. He championed the idea that animals in captivity should be allowed to roam in a natural setting and not be confined only in cages.

A group of Boone and Crockett Club members led by Madison Grant is widely credited with originating the idea of a zoological park in New York City. As president of the New York Zoological Society, Grant led a group that had the political clout and money to get the project started. In 1896, William T. Hornaday was engaged as director of the project, which became popularly known as "the Bronx Zoo." He held that post for the next 30 years.

As a boy, growing up in New York City, I made many visits to the Bronx Zoo. One of the buildings I loved to visit was the National Collection of Heads and Horns, which contained many specimens donated by Hornaday, Madison Grant, and others. The walls were covered with magnificent Rungius paintings and the building contained Dr. Hornaday's fabulous library of sporting and

Boone and Crockett Club members have come from a cross-section of famous accomplished people whose lives and careers have written and recorded the history of this country since the late 19th century. They have been naturalists, scientists, explorers and sportsmen, writers and academics, artists, statesmen and politicians, generals, bankers, financiers, philanthropists, and industrialists. Their diversity of ideas and activities during their careers have made the Boone and Crockett Club rich in its fellowship and achievements.



READ MORE MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS

natural history books. Considered "politically incorrect," the collection was dismantled many years ago, and the building converted to other uses. I think there is a misunderstanding about Hornaday and his position on hunting. My copy of his book *Thirty Years War for Wild Life* (1931) contains an inscription by him dated 1933, "To ___ conscientious and successful hunter of big game. With the compliments of another hunter, W.T. Hornaday." ■

Hornaday at his office in the Bronx Zoo/National Collection of Heads and Horns, circa 1910.

