



Bulletin

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THE PRESERVATION OF CANADA'S WILDLIFE

The following is part of a recent address by Mr. Arthur Laing, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, to the Canadian Wildlife Federation in Ottawa:

...One of the objects of the national parks is to provide a sanctuary within which wildlife may continue to exist in a natural state. Wood Buffalo Park provides many thousands of square miles of sanctuary for Canada's buffalo herd. The mountain parks provide a setting of unparalleled magnificence within which the wildlife thrives in its natural habitat.

The pressures on the animal world continue to grow, and our parks systems do not yet provide for all the species which we ought to think about preserving. There is an ominous sound about the designation "vanishing species". What are we losing? Not only a physical entity but also the end product of irreplaceable years of evolution. The very thought that a whole species of animal could be lost to man forever is repellent. Yet we have in Canada a number of species which are in imminent danger of total extinction and a considerable number which are in some danger in so far as their existence on Canadian soil is concerned.

IMPERILLED SPECIES

There are six species and one group of birds which are in jeopardy today. The most famous of this embattled group is the whooping crane. There are now about 50 of these birds, including the young in the wild population, and another 12 being reared in captivity. Most of you are familiar with the Canadian Wildlife Service's egg-collecting mission last year. At that time, the Service collected one egg from each of the six nests in which there were two eggs. The collected eggs were taken to the U.S. Fowl Research

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Station at Patuxent, Maryland, where they were hatched. Four chicks have survived, all of which are doing well. One of the outcomes of the collection was not anticipated - all the eggs left in the nests in Wood Buffalo Park hatched and the chicks survived, a most unusual situation with whooping cranes which have a high mortality rate in the wild. It is unusual for both twins to survive.

There has been a lot of publicity about the whooping crane and the publicity is one of the reasons why it can be said that we can look forward to a small but growing population of this magnificent bird. There is less reason to be optimistic about the future of the Eskimo curlew - a bird once thought to be extinct but which has been sighted recently in both Texas and Barbados. This remarkable bird's breeding-grounds were in the MacKenzie area of the Northwest Territories. Up till the 1890s the birds were plentiful, and huge flocks would fly south down the Mississippi valley on their long flight to South America, where they wintered in Southern Chile and the Argentine. Man and the shotgun reduced the population dramatically. The last bird taken in Canada was reported to have been on the coast of Labrador in 1932. Shooting is now forbidden - as if there were any significant numbers left to shoot. The Canadian Wildlife biologists are seeking the breeding ground of the few which have been sighted and if found, there will be an attempt made to rebuild the flock.