

The first Canadians were not in the least worried about the protection of wild animals. As far as they were concerned birds and animals were provided by a bounteous God to give them food to eat and warm clothes to wear. Besides, man in those days was so thin on the ground and wildlife so thick that conservation scarcely mattered. There was no threat to any species.

Gradually this situation began to change, and as species became threatened so legislation was created to protect them. In 1794 Nova Scotia passed an act for the preservation of "partridge and blue-winged duck" (grouse and black ducks). Ontario introduced its first game laws in 1821, though it had no full-time wardens to enforce them until 1892. Prince Edward Island's first game laws came in 1906, and the North West Territories and British Columbia acquired them in 1913. But before this century conservation as we understand it was very much a minority interest.

That minority interest *did* exist. Naturalist societies were founded in Quebec City and Montreal in the 1820's, and in the late nineteenth century the first of Canada's great national parks were founded. The Glacier National Park in British Columbia was set up in 1886, and the Banff National Park which marches with it in Western Alberta followed a year later. In 1887 North America's first bird sanctuary was created at Lost Mountain Lake on the Canadian Prairies.

In 1916 conservation was recognised as a matter of international concern when Canada and the United States signed the Migratory Bird Treaty to protect hunted birds which divided their time between the two countries. Individual provinces still 'owned' the birds, but the federal government now assumed superior jurisdiction and took responsibility for them on their international journeys—rather as they did for their human travellers.

By now conservation was becoming a matter of more general and official concern. The national parks which had begun life as a mere 9 square miles around the mineral springs in Banff were increasing all the time. Four more had been established by 1911, and under an Act of Parliament that year a Commissioner of National Parks was appointed. Under his direction a further nine national parks were set up in the next twenty years, so that by 1930 when the National Parks Act was passed there were 29,000 square miles of park. Today there are more than 50,000, and some of the individual parks are bigger than some of the individual countries of Europe. A sobering thought.

Alongside the National Parks there has grown up a complex system of provincial parks, where wildlife is either rigorously and totally protected or at least subject to strictly interpreted game laws. Some of these are

huge. Lord Tweedsmuir Park, named after John Buchan, the former Governor-General, is 2,299,500 acres of wilderness in British Columbia, and Algonquin Park, only 140 miles from Toronto and 100 from Ottawa, is 1,754,240 acres.

Nature however is not so easily ordered that it can be conveniently protected in parks and left to fend for itself in the rest of the country. There is plenty of wildlife outside the park system and it has to be safeguarded. In 1916 the Government established an Advisory Board on Wildlife Protection composed of scientists and administrators. In 1922 there were enough wildlife and conservation officials around for the first federal-provincial conference to be held. Such conferences are now a major annual event.

In 1947 the Canadian Wildlife Service was formed and continues to be the main conservation agency of the federal government. The federal government is responsible for managing migratory birds, marine animals and all wildlife in the national parks, and the CWS also works closely with provincial authorities. Among its many responsibilities it runs 94 migratory bird sanctuaries across Canada.

Marine mammals—mainly seals and whales—come under the jurisdiction of the Fisheries and Oceans Department, whose territory is infinitely greater now than Canada, along with several other countries, has extended for conservation purposes, its territorial waters to 200 miles. Canada has been acutely conscious of the dangers of marine pollution, and in 1970 passed the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act to enforce anti pollution standards on ships passing through the Arctic and make their owners legally responsible for cleaning up any environmental damage the ships might cause.

Since 1966 when it was tabled in the House of Commons, Canada has had a fully coordinated National Wildlife Policy, under which the Federal Government is pledged, unequivocally, to make every attempt to enforce sound conservation policies for all wild species, whether whooping crane or prairie gopher.

*"The young man looks at our abounding Canadian wildlife, and thinks that we have a precious heritage; the old man looks back at his youth and mourns for the vast numbers of wild things that now exist in a mere shadow of their former abundance; and whether young or old, we need to keep this matter constantly in mind, and be prepared to do our bit to hand on to our successors as full a measure as possible of the wildlife that we have enjoyed."*

—William E. Saunders, "Canadian Science Digest," 1937