

Help Us Save

Our Big Game

and

Fur Bearing Animals



ISSUED BY

The Vancouver Angling and Game Association
VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

*Compiled by The Chalder
for the Association*

Vancouver, B. C., April, 1920.

BULLETIN

(Issued by The Vancouver Angling and Game Association)

This pamphlet is addressed not so much to the sportsmen, who know and deplore the disastrous way in which the protection of game has been carried on for the past couple of years, but to the business men of the Province of British Columbia as an urgent appeal to save from complete destruction what is one of the Province's biggest assets.

In order to explain the necessity for this appeal, a short history of the struggle to protect game may be given for the benefit of those not already acquainted with the facts.

No serious attempt was made to protect game until the year 1890; from then on there was a continuous struggle. For a number of years certain well-known sportsmen worked in vain to educate the public and induce the members of the local Legislature to take an interest in the matter. Year after year the Game Act was forced before the Legislature, only to be treated as a joke to wind up the session. For fifteen years the struggle went on, during which time the enforcement of the Game Act was solely in the hands of the Provincial Police with few results. But few prosecutions took place, and those that did were nearly always through the efforts of a few enthusiasts of the Game Association, who not only laid the information, but, at their own expense furnished counsel for the prosecution. Even when a conviction was obtained it usually resulted in the offender being let off with a warning or a very light penalty.

Finally in the year 1905 the Government at last awoke to the fact that game was an asset worth looking after, and in the session of that year introduced legislation establishing a Game Department and appointed a qualified man to act as Provincial Game Warden.

This was the first real step in the right direction, but still matters continued in a bad way; there were no funds to work with other than those subscribed by the Game Associations, who still continued to foot the bills.

Gradually, year by year, improvements were made, increasing amounts were voted by the Legislature for the enforcement of the laws, though these amounts were so small that but little could be done.

To provide funds sufficient for the purpose the sportsmen offered to pay a licence on firearms, and several largely signed petitions were presented to the Government only to be rejected, though by degrees more and more members of the Legislature became alive to the fact that it was a necessity.

Finally in the year 1913 the Gun Licence became an accomplished fact, the understanding being that the funds derived from it were to be used for the protection of game and for no other purpose.

At once the whole situation changed. During the first year, in spite of the fact that the law had only just been passed and there was no time to organize a proper system for the collection of fees, it was amply proved that sufficient funds could be collected to put the Department on a thorough working basis. The following figures give the receipts for a number of years:—

1913.....	\$107,154.00	} decrease due to the war.
1914.....	90,948.00	
1915.....	71,592.00	
1916.....	65,000.00	
1917.....	67,000.00	
1918.....	75,000.00	
1919.....	108,000.00 — approx.	

After the introduction of the licence fee everything went well, the laws were better enforced, the public became used to the change, paid the fee

willingly and strongly appreciated the improved conditions. Above all things, it was not long before both game and fur bearing animals showed signs of benefitting under the new conditions.

Alas! the dark days of March, 1918, which proved so disastrous to the Allies in Europe, were also fatal ones for the game of B. C.

Notwithstanding the protests of the sportsmen and delegates from the Board of Trade, the Government saw fit to introduce legislation which abolished the game wardens and put the whole enforcement of the laws back into the hands of the Provincial Police. They did this apparently on their own initiative, without any knowledge of the subject or consultation with any persons capable of giving them proper advice, and re-introduced a system which had already been proved a failure in this Province and in every other country in the world. Numerous authorities could be quoted to show how utterly impossible it is for police to attempt to administer the game laws, but the fact has been so obvious here that it is not necessary to do more than lay before you some of the disasters which the change has brought about. Before doing so, however, a few statistics may be given to show why the business men, who are not sportsmen themselves, should take an interest in the matter.

CONSERVATION OF GAME AS A NATIONAL ASSET

The following is abstracted from an article in "Forest and Stream" of March, 1920, written by the well-known authority on Alaskan and British Columbian game, Charles Sheldon, of the Smithsonian Institute, who writes on the question of Alaskan Big Game. The game and fur-bearing animals of Northern British Columbia and Alaska are identical, and the conditions are much the same, so that his arguments are applicable to both countries:—

"The problem of game conservation is too often considered as a simple one, whereas it is really very complex, and both local opinion and that of outsiders is often formed too hastily, from too narrow a point of view which is lacking in foresight. For this very reason the Western States lost most of their game only to discover when it was too late that it could not be restored and that an asset of great value had been lost for ever. We all agree that in order to provide great grazing areas for cattle most of the buffalo had to go. But what would it mean to the Western States to-day if antelope, mountain sheep, deer, wapiti and bears had been intelligently preserved so that a proper amount of shooting could now attract to these States the very large amount of funds and employment which sportsmen might bring them? The States are now advertising widely to invite the sportsmen to hunt the slender remnants of the game that is left. The vast waste areas of these States have been denuded of game and are now of no economic value. They remain as monuments of the lack of foresight in establishing in time sound methods of game conservation. The game of Alaska should be viewed as a great permanent economic asset to the territory. The stock of game should be increased when necessary, or maintained in its present abundance where the numbers are now sufficient. Exactly as there is a yearly surplus of cattle or horses or sheep on a ranch, or chickens on a chicken farm, this surplus should so be used for the maximum economic gain as not to impair the full numbers necessary for breeding stock. This breeding stock will always satisfy those who regard game from an aesthetic point of view. The yearly surplus should be used, first, to satisfy, when conditions require it, the food necessities of the local people; second, to attract outsiders for sport, and thus bring into the country the net profits resulting from sport. Indirectly along with these the new country will be benefitted by attracting to it people who will advertise it and make its economic possibilities widely known. Thus if wisely handled, under sound laws which shall be properly enforced, so long as parts of Alaska remain a wilderness the game supply can be maintained and continued as a great asset both for local food supply and for the profit and indirect advantages resulting from sport."

FUR TRADE

From enquiries made from different fur dealers in the Province it is proved that in the year 1905 the fur trade was dead and did not produce more than \$50,000, to \$70,000, per annum. It is now worth at least Two Million Dollars per annum to the Province and about \$500,000, of that to the city of Vancouver. The fur dealers say that the increase of trade is entirely due to the protection of fur-bearing animals received, and all agree that the commencement of improvement began after protection came into force. In 1917 the trade had improved so much that representatives from every fur trading firm on the Continent; came to Vancouver to attend the monthly sales. These sales, though only lately organized, averaged some \$20,000, a month.

The improvement in the fur trade was so marked in B. C. that a succession of articles appeared on the subject in the U. S. magazines.

INDIRECT PROFIT TO THE PROVINCE FROM ITS GAME

The indirect profit to this Province is not less than \$3,000,000. This is only a small amount to what it would be in a few years if game and fur-bearing animals continued to receive the protection they were getting prior to 1918. To prove this you have only to see what the States are making out of it. From the Washington Game and Fish Association Report for the year 1903, we find that in 1902 the State of Maine realized \$6,000,000, out of its fish and game privileges. That is to say, that amount of money went into the treasury of the State on account of hunting licences and other privileges granted by the State. This takes no account of the amount spent on equipment, travel and other incidentals of outing trips.

According to the report of the U. S. National Association of Fish and Game Commissioners, Mr. Carleton, Chairman of the Commission, estimated that \$15,000,000, is left in Maine every season by non-resident sportsmen who visit the State in quest of sport.

If this is true of a State like Maine, what might be the results in this Province, with all its splendid variety of game, in future years. Is it not an asset which should receive every attention and not be allowed to run the slightest risk of depletion?

RETROGRADE LEGISLATION

From the time of the introduction of the gun licence until the year 1918, throughout the whole of the North American Continent, as well as in many other parts of the world, the British Columbia Game Department was regarded as the most up-to-date and properly administered Game Department on the Continent, and was often the subject of most favorable comment both in sporting and commercial papers. The game laws were well enforced by a competent staff of game wardens; game birds and animals were steadily increasing, and there was every reason to expect that the Province would retain its reputation of being the best hunting country on the Continent if not of the world.

At this time the Game Department, in spite of the war and all the depression, was financially in a flourishing condition, in fact there was a profit that year of some \$14,000.

Then came the legislation of 1918 which completely undid the work of years, the Provincial Game Warden and his staff were dismissed, the Superintendent of Provincial Police appointed nominally Provincial Game Warden and the policy of the Department put in the hands of a number of honorary Game Commissioners, none of whom had the slightest knowledge of big game or fur bearing animals, and very little knowledge even of game birds.

The plea for this, what may almost be called suicidal folly, was economy, and this in spite of the fact that the Department could show a profit of over \$100,000 since the introduction of the gun licence.

The result was as disastrous as was expected. The Game Commissioners, with no previous experience and only the help of the Provincial Police and one or two of the old staff who were subsequently taken on again, were totally unable to cope with the situation. For six months game was practically at the mercy of the law-breaker who was not slow to take advantage of the opportunity. A perfect orgy of law-breaking resulted from one end of the Province to the other, and particularly to the south of the 56th parallel.

Even if the Commissioners had been competent they would have been able to accomplish but little, as the amount of money at their disposal was next to nothing. Even that which they had was expended in, to say the least of it, an ill advised manner. A detailed statement of the amount expended in the years 1918 and 1919 would prove most interesting and instructive reading. It would undoubtedly show that only a very small proportion of the money collected from gun licences was expended on the protection of game.

A FEW OF THE DISASTROUS RESULTS.

Wapiti Herd Ordered to be Got Rid of.

In the Winter of 1918, the Government, without any warning, gave orders that the herd of Wapiti, which had been imported at a good deal of expense some years ago for the purpose of re-stocking certain districts, and which had thrived to such an extent that the yearly increase was almost sufficient for the proposed purposes, was to be got rid of. The orders were that there was to be no expense attached to the matter; they could either be given away or destroyed, but be got rid of they must. The Government refused to keep them over the Winter and refused to pay their transportation into Lillooet, and for a time it appeared likely that they would all be given to the Dominion Park at Banff.

Once more the sportsmen put their hands in their pockets and saved the situation and the Wapiti were sent to Lillooet. It was the wrong time of year to handle these animals, but there was no choice, it had to be done, with the result that two fine bulls killed themselves while being crated.

It is only fair to say that the people of Lillooet, not only white but Indians also, assisted in getting the animals to the place of their release.

THE STONEY INDIAN AFFAIR.

For many years the Stoney Indians came over from Alberta and slaughtered our finest big game, mountain sheep, moose and wapiti, until it became evident that East Kootenay was to be as barren of game as these Indians had rendered Alberta.

The very first work done by the Game Department in 1905 was to get the aid of the N. W. M. Police to drive these Indians out of B. C. back to their own reserves. From then on, no stone was left unturned to keep these Indians out of the Province, and a great proportion of the limited money available was used for this purpose.

The result of this policy was an enormous increase of game. Last year there were open seasons for both moose and wapiti in East Kootenay, whereas both these species were almost extinct when the first steps for their protection were taken.

After all these efforts the authorities actually issued licences to a number of these Indians and this, in spite of the fact that there is special legislation to the contrary.

The mere fact that such a thing should have taken place, whether done through ignorance or from some other cause, is sufficient evidence of the utter unfitness of the present system.

BIGHORN SHEEP IN THE SIMILAKMEEN.

This district had formerly one of the finest ranges of sheep country in the Southern part of the Province, but on account of its accessibility and consequent overhunting it became in danger of being ruined. Realizing this, the old Department closed the season for a number of years and had special wardens to enforce it. At certain times when there was danger of poachers from the United States crossing over, which was one of the chief causes of the depletion, one or more of these deputies would stay right up on the range and see that the sheep were not molested.

The result was excellent, the sheep increased and there was every prospect of the range once more attaining its former stock.

All this work of years was done away with within the space of a few months by the new Government, who, upon coming into power, at once dismissed not only the special warden, but the regular one too. Since then the sheep have received absolutely no protection. Whether there are any now left to protect is a matter of considerable doubt.

GAME RESERVES NEGLECTED

The three game reserves which had been established under the old Department and so carefully preserved that the stock of game in them had not only increased but become quite tame also, were absolutely neglected.

They are now openly hunted, and visitors report that they are locally assured that it is no longer necessary to keep outside the boundaries, and that they would be foolish if they did not avail themselves of the opportunity to have a good hunt on forbidden ground.

Again the work of years was undone.

CLOSE SEASON FOR SHEEP IN THE SOUTH

After leaving all game at the mercy of the law-breakers for months, the authorities show their inconsistency by declaring an additional close season for sheep in the Lillooet and Kootenay districts. Probably after allowing the poachers to have their way for a sufficient length of time, this was necessary, though before the dismissal of the old staff there were numbers of sheep at any rate in East Kootenay.

As, however, there was no enforcement of the regulation, the only result was that Indians and irresponsibles hunted at will, while the regular big game hunters would not, of course, do so.

EXPORTATION OF GAME HEADS

Under the old regime the transportation laws had been rigidly enforced with a view to doing away with the disastrous traffic in game trophies.

These laws are now broken with apparent ease, and the old sale of heads seems to be carried on without any effort to stop it.

PHEASANTS.

Having allowed an open season of one month for hen pheasants in 1918, and almost annihilated the stock under great pressure the authorities continued the raising of pheasants in an effort to undo some of the mischief.

The result was that a number of birds were reared, but at a cost almost treble what it should have been (in fact it would have been probably cheaper to have bought the birds), and then to cap it all, they were turned out just before the shooting season started. Most of the birds must have been quite tame, some of them hardly able to fly. Of course they fell an easy prey to the pot hunters.

WHAT THE INDIANS THINK.

The Indians were almost reconciled to the enforcement of the game laws. Now they are under the impression that as the game wardens are no longer in evidence they can do as they please, and if half the reports have an element of truth in them, they certainly are doing so.

GUIDES.

The behaviour of some of the Indian Guides from Telegraph Creek was the subject of most unfavorable comment last year. One party of tourists going as far as to say that they intended to advertise the way they had been treated, and endeavor to stop other intending hunters from coming.

After the introduction of the guides licence, nearly all trouble with Indian guides was done away with, as they were aware that their licences would be cancelled if they were not satisfactory. The Indians now have no fear of the present authorities, hence the dissatisfaction.

Only in places are guides compelled to take out licences, at least they seldom seem to have to show them. And yet to show how utterly inconsistent the policy of the present authorities is, while neglecting most of the guides, they prosecute one man and spoil the trip of a whole hunting party in a most ill advised manner. The facts of this case are such that they are worth telling.

A party of visitors from the United States, outfitted at Banff, Alberta, and came to Kootenay for a hunt and took out their big game licences in due course. Unfortunately the guide did not consider it worth his while to take out a guide's licence for British Columbia, a thing that would never have happened under the old system and the visitors, as is usually the case, either did not know a "guide's licence" was necessary or forgot to ask to see it. Anyway, after the party had got a big outfit together at enormous expense, and actually reached their hunting grounds, the matter reached the ear of the authorities, who thereupon decided to show how well they were enforcing the laws, and promptly arrested the whole party. Both guides and visitors were heavily fined, and the latter prevented from hunting at all. Possibly they broke the letter of the law and were liable to a fine, but nobody with a grain of sense would have allowed a whole hunting trip to be spoilt for what, at any rate on the part of the visitors, was only a very minor offence and could easily have been dealt with on their return. As it was, it simply resulted in the party leaving the country in utter disgust and with a very poor idea of British justice.

INFRACTIONS OF THE LAW.

Owing to the general public being under the impression that game protection is a thing of the past, and that the present administration is a non-entity, they are breaking the game laws in a wholesale manner. Men who would never have done such a thing before, do it because they see that the days of game are numbered and think they may as well get their share while it lasts.

Conditions were bad enough when the Game Department was first organized, and it took a number of prosecutions and some very heavy fines to reduce it to the minimum it was eventually brought down to. Never, however, has there been such a wave of law breaking, from one end of the country to the other as there is to-day. The few game wardens of the old staff who were taken on, only under great pressure from the Game Association, have had their hands full and cannot begin to cope with the situation. In addition they have no one with any knowledge to advise them in their work or to assist in the prosecuting. The result is that many cases are brought into court which never should have been, and more harm than good is done.

At the time the old staff was dismissed, the work of the deputies was well organized, a proper patrol carried on regularly, with the result that

