

## Conserving Our Wild Life

By J. N. DARLING  
Chief, Bureau of Biologic Survey

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THE BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY is the custodian of all of the wild life species that exist. Noah started it. I think he must have been the first member of the Biological Survey! He built the ark to save a pair of all wild life. The only difference between Noah and my personal experience is that he started out in a flood and I started out in a drought. And we have had some problems of this year with keeping even a balance of the already depleted ranks of our game species, our song birds and all of the interesting elements of our natural endowment.

It isn't altogether the sportsman and the hunter that we have to contend with in maintaining a fair population of game. We have invaded all of the national ranges, the homes of our wild life species. We have evicted them and spread ourselves out with all of our paraphernalia and our implements and civilization now reigns where game used to live. In fact, we have thrown nature's cradle out the window and made our home where nature used to cradle its wild life species.

We have driven game back to the river margins, the raw ragged edges of this country. We did the same thing to the Indians, pushing them out on the deserts and about the only difference between our treatment of the Indian and wild life is that we have quit shooting the Indians. We go on taking our ducks and geese and game species just as if nothing ever happened to them, and every game commissioner and custodian of wild life in the country is berated when people go out for their recreation and don't get their full bag limit of game or catch all of the fish they want in that day! Therefore, the job which I have is to save what we have, to make a plan to put it back.

You may say "what relation does that have to our problem of recreation?"

Well, I don't suppose they called it recreation in the early pioneer days of this country. If they didn't get their game, the table was empty, and the stories they told at bed time were not the stories of little Johnny Possum and so forth, in those days, but they were about the narrow escapes that father had when he went out to get the meal for the family.

We have changed from the old period when game was a part of our life, but the instinct still remains with us. We have traded our old hunting stories for bed time stories, but there is a certain fineness of mind, a certain fineness of coordination of the body and the eye and the mind in adjusting oneself and pitting one's wits against wild life. It is natural that we should have that instinct. We are only one generation removed from it.

I don't advocate that you tell people to go out and kill game but I do think that if you are going to build trails, if you are going out on a trip through good roads through the forests, there ought to be some of the remnants to look at.

If you like to hunt with a camera, you must have something worth going out to see, and if we don't protect our wild life, there will be nothing to photograph. As a matter of fact I believe that all recreational games are built on the instincts which grew out of our original sustenance. Even following a gold ball around has some semblance of the old contests of putting your wits against the wild life which you had to conquer. If you made a better bag and a better shot you stood well in the community.

I don't like to see those old elements of natural life pass out of the picture, and still, with the constant encroachment upon nature's areas, with agriculture pulverizing all of the natural fields where our upland birds used to live, with the effort to drain all of the old marshes and lakes in order that we may make more farm lands, with the pollution of the rivers and all the careless, thoughtless things that we do, we are gradually taking out of our lives this element, which I think is well worth preserving. I doubt whether any youth who goes forth will be as much interested in any subject as in the natural life to which he is entitled and of which we have robbed him.

We have taken it as a matter of course that nature provided us with a free gift of all of the ducks we wanted. We have never had to worry about the myriads that have gone North in the spring, and South in the fall. Now we know that if we don't watch out we won't have any. Some of the very choicest species are on the verge of extinction.

You can't control the natural enemies of game, and the only thing you can control is man's habit of taking it. That is why we are out of favor just now with the huntsmen, because of the extra restrictions we have been forced to put on them to keep the killing of game down. We never thought about hatching more ducks. We have robbed them of seventeen million acres of natural nesting areas in the North Central States of the United States, once the most prolific hatching ground in all of our migratory water fowl in this country. Seventeen million acres we have taken out to no prime purpose.

That doesn't seem like a well-planned civilization, does it? Especially since we find by actual records that the old nesting areas of ducks made more money from the muskrat skins every year than we have made from a farm product since. I think it takes something like a depression, and a period like this to teach us our follies, and we are commencing actually to do some planning.

We are planning what we may do to take the pollution out of the rivers and my particular job right now is to get back those old marshes, to stop up the drainage ditches, put water in where it formerly made a pleasant picture on the landscape, to restore the old lake bottoms, to divert streams that have been hurried off down the river, and impound water in those North Central areas.

You, perhaps, that is all of you who live East of the Mississippi, for instance, noticed a peculiar phenomenon last summer. For several days a great cloud appeared in the sky, moved eastward, until the lights in our buildings here in Washington, and in New York City had to be turned on in the middle of the day that we might see. They called it here a dust storm. It was a sign in the sky of the folly of man in his haste to get rich, destroying the covering of vegetation that kept the dirt where it belonged.

Now, those problems of conservation, perhaps are not wild life, but in that great prairie area where that dust comes from, first the grass and the covering had been gnawed to the roots, the wind came and blew the grass away, then it took the top soil, and now it must be restored.

I have \$8,500,000 for the Bureau's work -- not a vast amount, but it represents the first money that has ever been put into nesting areas to restore our game. I hope that some day the \$8,500,000 will produce about one million and a quarter acres of old nesting ground. That ought to produce about 8,000,000 extra ducks and geese and migratory water fowl to pass backward and forward.

That is not all. The new program of wild life management includes the restoration of environment. We are putting on erosion control; we are planting the raw hillsides. We spent too much time clearing up all of the underbrush, and we have no place for our wild life to live.

We are not doing all this for the hunters. I should not be here if all that I was doing was making it possible for people to go out and kill game. My chief interest lies in restoring America to itself.