

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Pan American Convention

The United States is already party to migratory bird protection treaties with Canada and Mexico, ratified in 1916 and 1936, respectively. The Pan American Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Protection in the Western Hemisphere is a step toward a similar, but more inclusive, treaty between the United States and the South American nations. The following account is quoted from *Wildlife Review*, No. 29, January 1941: pp. 54-55.

On October 12, 1940, plenipotentiaries of six Latin American governments and the United States signed the convention on "Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere" when it was deposited and opened for signature at the Pan American Union in Washington.

The Convention was drawn up by a Committee of Experts from the 21 American Republics, which met in Washington May 13 to 16, and was approved by the Governing Board of the Pan American Union at its June meeting. The formulation of the Convention was recommended in one of the resolutions of the Eighth Pan American Conference, held at Lima, Peru, in December, 1938.

The Convention consists of twelve articles. Article 1 defines the terms used in the Convention. Under Article 2, the contracting governments undertake to create national parks, national reserves, nature monuments, and wilderness reserves within their territories as soon as possible. They are to notify the Pan American Union of the establishment of any such parks, etc., and of any legislation adopted in connection therewith. Under Article 3, the governments agree to prohibit the destruction of the fauna and flora in national parks except under the direction or control of the proper authorities. Wilderness reserves, according to Article 4, are to be kept inviolate except for duly authorized scientific investigations or government inspection.

Under Article 5, the governments pledge themselves to adopt legislation which will assure the protection and preservation of the natural scenery, striking geological formations, and regions and natural objects of aesthetic interest or historic or scientific value. Cooperation among the contracting governments in promoting the objectives of the Convention is provided for in Article 6, and the adoption of appropriate measures for the protection of migratory birds, in Article 7.

Article 8 declares the protection of certain species to be of special urgency and importance and urges that permission for their killing, capturing or taking, be granted only in order to further scientific purposes. Rules for the regulation of the importation, exportation and transit of protected flora and fauna are set forth in Article 9. Articles 10, 11, and 12 deal with protocolary matters, and stipulate, among other things, that the Convention will come into force three months after the deposit of not less than five ratifications with the Pan American Union.

Gabrielson's "Wildlife Conservation"

Conservation in the United States is holding a pre-season inventory.

Natural resources used to be the concern of relatively few organizations and individuals; now that the cat is out of the bag, the general public is becoming interested. Two results have followed, almost together: the demand that something be done about it, and that the public be told what and why. Education, compulsory or otherwise, is thus definitely a part of the new order. Pre-digested materials have been lacking, hence the many new books which take stock of present conditions and make recommendations for the future.

Of these, the latest is Ira N. Gabrielson's "Wildlife Conservation" (The Mac-Millan Co., N. Y., 1941, xv + 250 pp., illus., \$3.50). Quite apart from the book's authority as a statement of the Chief of the Fish and Wildlife Service, it is required reading on the basis of content alone.

The purpose of the book, as stated in the preface, is not to give a complete analysis of all factors affecting wildlife conservation, but to present the basic

facts and to emphasize that conservation of soil, water, forests, and wildlife are phases of a single problem—the restoration and future wise use of renewable natural resources. The first seven chapters deal with these interdependences, the rest with the special problems of certain groups of wildlife to show that all must have suitable environment and that any use of wildlife must not remove more than the annual increase if populations are to hold up. The chapter headings give an idea of the ground that is covered: conservation of renewable resources, soil erosion and wildlife, water conservation, life of the waters, forest conservation, relationship between forestry and wildlife, grassland conservation and its relation to wildlife, some basic facts in wildlife conservation, resident game, migratory birds, fur animals, non-game birds and mammals, rare and vanishing species, predator relationships, wildlife refuges and their place in conservation, surmounting the obstacles to conservation.

Gabrielson has done an outstanding job of selecting and organizing materials from a field which is difficult to appraise at best, and which has become cluttered with odds and ends of incomplete data. To this essential winnowing he has added a distinctive interpretative ability and a clear, simple style of writing which are uncommon in the literature of conservation. Particularly good are the discussions of the inter-relationships of all renewable resources, the dependence of animals upon their environment, and the role of insect-eating birds, for example. The many photographs are unusually fine, although not well distributed through the text.

He may be criticized justly—and severely—for his failure to include an adequate bibliography. It might be argued that it was impossible to list every reference which contributed to such an inclusive synthesis, but a selected bibliography would have discharged his obligation much better than the eight footnote references which are given. This is all the more true since the book will doubtless be used as a text-book, as suggested by the publishers. On the same grounds, the index is also inadequate.

Occasionally, Dr. Gabrielson seems to have condensed too much. Fishes get less attention than is their due, and no inclusive discussion of fish populations is complete without reference to the work of Thompson and others of the Illinois Natural History Survey; the influences of large dams upon wildlife are passed over too lightly; only Federal refuges are shown in the figures, although others are included in the text; the problem of survival and recovery of small populations is treated only as affected by predators; the distinction between the mere presence of wildlife and its presence *in numbers*—a critical point, particularly in game management—is often not drawn. There is no treatment of farm wildlife comparable to the sections on forests and wildlife and grasslands and wildlife. Gabrielson does not propose that we give the country back to the Indians, nor does he ignore the problem of farm wildlife: but I suggest that farmlands as wildlife environment deserve as specific treatment as forests and grasslands. The sorts of forest management which Gabrielson describes—multiple use, sustained yield, selective cuttings, logging rotations—cannot be used in woodlots as readily as in large forests. Nevertheless, the main discussion of forest-wildlife relationships hinges upon such methods of large-forest management, even though his statistics (p. 55) show that about 41 per cent of the total acreage of “private commercial forest lands” is in units averaging about 40 acres each. In the same way, “grasslands” are primarily the Western range, leaving small pastures and meadows for incidental treatment elsewhere.

A few of his interpretations will probably be challenged. For example, the treatment of predation is unusually sane, taking equally to task the sportsman, conservationist, and biologist for the distortions of view particular to each, but I would question a few points of detail. In his summary of predation, Gabrielson

gives six principles (pp. 209-210). The first states that predators generally live on surplus populations, the last, that hunting may disturb the numerical ratio of game to predators, so that some reduction of predators may be necessary. I do not see why the mechanics of the removal of the surplus—whether by predators or by hunters—should greatly affect the predator-prey relationship of the remainder. Experimental work has indicated no such effect on Iowa Bob-whites, for example. And in his scrupulous care to present all aspects of the question, Gabrielson has perhaps left too much room for the argument that any case, anywhere, is one of the exceptions that permits—or demands—the killing of predators.

In one instance, Gabrielson has been dangerously lax in his use of "common names" of plants. "Wild camass" is cited as a food of early American Indians. According to Britton and Brown, "camass" relates to two genera, one of which (*Toxicoscordion*, with about seven North American species) is composed of poisonous perennials, the other (*Quamassia*, with about four species) of edible bulbs.

In the main, there is a refreshing absence of the sweeping generalities so common to the promotional literature of conservation. There are a few exceptions, as: "By conservative use, all the forest resources can be maintained and at the same time utilized for the benefit of the human race" (p. 55), and "As a matter of fact, good farm management alone, particularly where there is some waste land, will almost automatically improve conditions for the quail and other species that have somewhat similar food and cover requirements" (p. 122). His opinion of the results of wildlife management to date (see particularly p. 246) seems rather optimistic.

Most conservationists and ornithologists are still using the old so-many-birds-eat-so-many-insects argument for bird protection. It is significant that Gabrielson, as Chief of the Bureau which fostered it, so frankly admits its weakness. No equally flashy rallying call has yet been found. Gabrielson offers a more sober basic principle: the function of animals (i.e. wildlife) as "part of nature's age-old mechanism for building and maintaining soils and waters" (p. 131).

This same thing has been his aim throughout the book—to strip the problem of wildlife conservation down to its essentials in preparation for the work that must be done, instead of diverting attention from these fundamentals by a flourish of trumpets. He has done it remarkably well.—F. N. Hamerstrom, Jr.

Audubon Society Campaigns to Curb Feather Trade

The recent popularity of quills and other feathers in the millinery trade and the resulting threat to many wild birds has stirred the National Audubon Society and other conservation organizations to the most active bird protection campaign since the close of the earlier effort of this sort in 1913. "Massacred for Millinery", (the title of Circular No. 45, written by Richard H. Pough,) reports very vividly the threatened reduction of numbers of such birds as cranes, condors, the osprey, and eagles, unless the trend of fashion, public attitude, and corrective legislation can promptly be geared together in a sensible, effective manner to prevent current and threatened abuses.

In brief, the present crisis arises from the popularity of quills on hats and from certain defects in the customs regulations. A loophole in the tariff law permits hat feathers to be brought into this country as "fishing fly" feathers. Also it seems plain that many feathers of wild birds are entered falsely as "raised in domestication". New legislation is sought to help stop these leaks; but probably the best answer lies in the educational program to discourage the use of feathers. Even ornithologists cannot tell the origin of most feathers without extensive comparative material, so obviously the average buyer cannot be expected to discriminate.