

## WILD LIFE ADMINISTRATION AND THE FISH AND GAME COMMISSIONER.

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THE administrative details of business and the intricacies of practical politics are usually regarded with impatience by those engaged in scientific research. This likewise applies to those who desire to contemplate a given situation or view an interesting work of art free from interruptions and common places.

Each of you is interested in studying one or more species of those animals which are given the group designation of wild life. Your field is more particularly the birds. Other groups are primarily interested in the mammals—and so throughout the list. But even among the birds you have your favorite species, and often your particular field within which to make research. Some of you cover a wide range and others are content to concentrate within a narrow limit.

For many generations our people were content to consider the wild life of our country in a detached sort of way. It is true that in all states from early to late the government has asserted ownership in all the wild life on behalf of all the people. But it has only been within recent years that our state governments have come to realize that ownership carried with it responsibilities.

The American Ornithologists' Union has performed a great service throughout its existence in bringing home to the governments, both state and federal, the need of discharging their responsibilities as the owners of this wild life. In many respects the Union was the pioneer. It has made important studies and amassed a wealth of valuable data which has been of great usefulness to the agencies set up by state and federal governments in connection with the discharge of their responsibilities.

For over two hundred years the several states did little more than pass desultory laws from time to time, and let it go at that. It was only during the latter half part of the last century that the

older states started to set up state agencies to care for the wild life stocks within their respective borders.

It has only been within the last few years that the governments, both state and federal, have come to understand that the wild life stock should be administered as a business proposition. The country at large is only beginning to be wild life administration minded.

In all the states (with the exception of Mississippi) there is now a state department, or division, or commission which administers its wild life. There is a great variety of combinations in the set-up of these agencies. Administrative details have in no respect been standardized. Various underlying considerations control the activities of the directing heads. In some states the spoils system in government still flourishes luxuriantly. In such instances, the personnel of the fish and game department changes with each administration. Political expediency of necessity often controls the actions of the administrative head of the fish and game department—as it is generally referred to. In a few cases the tradition obtains that if an administrative head renders good service he is reappointed from time to time irrespective of his politics.

In some states the civil service system does not exist, with the result that the spoils system extends down through the fish and game departments and the directing head is subjected to great political pressure in the appointment of those to carry on the work.

The title "fish and game commission" is a misnomer, but undoubtedly had its origin in the fact that at the beginning of things the protection and propagation of fish and game were the chief purposes in setting up state activities. It has only been in comparatively recent years that these state agencies extended their scope to include the administration of all the wild life within their boundaries.

Today, the financing of game administration by any of the above methods through state appropriations is being based increasingly on the revenues which the fish and game department produces. Years ago hunting and fishing licenses were required in most of the states that are leaders in wild life administration. The underlying theory of the license system is—that whereas all the wild life of a given state belongs to all the people, that group generally des-

ignated as the fishermen, hunters and trappers should pay for the privilege of appropriating to their own use a part of the property owned by all the people.

Today in some states, and Massachusetts is a notable example, the appropriation to administer all the wild life of the state (excepting the marine fisheries) is based almost entirely on the revenues from licenses sold to the fishermen, hunters and trappers.

The inconsistency of this theory lies in the fact that in effect it is asking a limited group which exploits only a limited portion of the wild life of the State to supply the funds to administer *all* the wild life. It is quite safe to say that at least sixty per cent. of the total volume of wild life in any state, includes the song, insectivorous and non-game birds and the quadrupeds which are not classed as game or fur-bearers. It is quite safe to say that the protection of and increase in this sixty per cent is of greater interest and importance to all the rest of our people than to the group known collectively as the sportsmen—who today are supplying the funds to administer it. Wild life administration in any state will never be adequately financed until the appropriating powers clearly perceive this situation and appropriate sums greatly in excess of the revenues provided by this special group.

There are two generally accepted formulas in wild life administration—(1) the enactment of laws to prohibit the pursuit and possession of certain species and to restrict the taking of others; and (2) the artificial propagation of certain species of fish, game birds and game quadrupeds, for restocking purposes.

Organizations like yours are reluctant to enter the field of legislation and are little interested in the problems of propagation. The term "legislation" is used to cover the mechanics from the drafting and filing of proposed laws through all the intricacies of practical politics involved in getting a measure through a Legislature and having it signed by the Governor. The average scientific man or woman instinctively recoils from the sweat and striving and the personal contacts of practical politics. He or she is inclined to believe that if a law appears desirable, the mere calling of it to the attention of a legislative body should be sufficient and the measure should be adopted as a matter of course. There is a hesitancy to attend legislative hearings and testify. There is a reluct-

ance to participate in a vigorous campaign of education of legislators, together with the preparation and submission of data. The public at large as a rule is indifferent. Often the administrative head is compelled to go it more or less alone.

In a properly conducted wild life administrative department, the head should not be expected either to carry the responsibility of enacting desirable legislation, or the obtaining of adequate appropriations. To do these things he is compelled to request legislators and others to supply the necessary votes. The effect is to put him under obligation. To properly administer his affairs he must be free from such obligations in order that he can say NO when the necessity arises.

No administrative head is stronger or more efficient than the volume of public sentiment behind him. It is useless to advocate protective laws if the public has not been educated to accept those laws and obey them. He can be a factor in creating such sentiment, but the responsibility in the final analysis rests with the thinking people of the country who are interested in wild life administration.

There is no group upon whom this responsibility rests more heavily than the members of the American Ornithologists' Union. For example, we know that a system of properly administered wild life sanctuaries, geographically scattered over a given state, is the surest guarantee of maintaining an abundant supply of wild life. These sanctuaries should be of sufficient size that a superintendent and additional help should occupy them throughout the year. Poachers should be excluded, and war on vermin should be kept up 365 days and nights throughout the year. Adequate food supplies for as many species as possible should be provided. The area should be worked over to make it increasingly attractive to the largest possible number of species of desirable wild life. Many more administrative details will occur to all of you.

We also know that in proper game administration the predators must be kept under adequate control. None of us would favor the extinction of any species.

You can individually and collectively advance the cause by advocating, publicly and privately, the establishment of such sanctuaries. You carry great weight in your several communities for

you are recognized as among those who are devoting a great deal of their time and energy to the scientific study of wild life.

The foregoing are only some of the more important high lights that must be recognized by the administrative head of any state agency that administers its wild life. They are supplementary to the remarks of Dr. John C. Phillips in his excellent paper entitled "Naturalists, Nature Lovers and Sportsmen."

He has made it plain that in the broad field of wild life administration there is plenty of room for all of us to work. But an essential part of this team play is that we be mindful of the interests of all other groups. There is no place in the set-up for the confirmed killer. Neither is there a place for the person who would stop all hunting throughout the country. There is a middle ground upon which we can all meet. And if we gather there and labor shoulder to shoulder on a give and take basis there should be no fear for the future welfare of our wild life stock.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As expressing still another side to the problem discussed by Dr. Phillips and Mr. Adams *cf.* Dr. Pearson's announcement in *Notes and News* of this issue. Also 'Auk,' 1930, p. 210 and 'Auk,' 1926, p. 140 and 1929, p. 190.