

WILDLIFE PROFESSIONALISM*

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Officers, members and guests of the Society, I would like to speak with you for a few minutes this evening concerning Wildlife Professionalism. In a moment I will define several terms, but I will first briefly outline some of the points of discussion that I want to cover this evening. Number one will be the term "professionalism". Another, the term "amateur". Another, "responsibility". Responsibility to the profession as well as to ourselves and those we serve is all important. We will also discuss communications. Under communications or selling, let us consider the following points: Knowing our subject, knowing the people that we are trying to sell, timeliness and compromise. These last four can fairly well be covered by one term, political astuteness. Now, before everyone quakes and has a stroke at that last term let's go into the subject in more depth. How many in this room have tried to sell projects or programs and had them rejected by the public or your superiors? I am sure that every person in this room has experienced such a failure. Now, how many of us have honestly tried to analyze why we were not successful? I think that many of us have attempted to rationalize such failures by stating that, "well, no one understood me" or "I don't know why I have to work with people like this who just do not understand me or understand what I am trying to do for them", or "they do not understand my terminology that I must use as a professional", or that "they don't understand my reasoning for using this technique". How many of us have

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actually accepted the full responsibility for such failures? I think that those who have been able to finally formulate a successful means of selling their programs or achieving acceptance have had to learn that they must be salesmen as well as lab technicians, field biologists, wildlife managers or any of the other titled positions within our profession. Accepting responsibility for failures as well as successes is a mark of a professional. I believe further that a professional must be marked by the ability to reconcile the differences between success and failure and to attempt to profit from his failures so that he can be successful in future selling endeavors. In other words, a professional must have learned to get back into the air after being shot down. As a field biologist for 12 years and a wildlife administrator for the last four, I observed many in our profession who got off the ground at least once before being shot down; however, many didn't bounce back. I have heard that one should not be fearful of being shot down unless you are being shot down constantly, for to be shot down you have to at least be off the ground. One makes no mistakes if he does nothing. There are many in our profession today who are fearful of using their professional wings.

Let's take a look at the definition of the term "professional". Some have described this term as that being of professional character, spirit or methods. Also, as the standing, practice or methods of a professional as distinguished from an amateur. Now, let's see what it says about an amateur. Some have said that an amateur on the other hand has been defined as one who cultivates any study or art or other activity for personal pleasure instead of professionally, or for gain. He is sometimes referred to as a dabbler. Please remember these two definitions.

Since I always prefer to express myself in a positive rather than a negative manner, I will mention a few things that professionals are, although I may have to use some negative terms to explain what professionals are not. To me a professional is one who has the profession, the resource, his agency or his company welfare at heart, even above that of his own, but he must have pride in himself and his co-workers as well. A professional is not constantly concerned that he did not think of a particular method or project first. If he is to ultimately gain a responsible position in our field he

will have to be willing to work with and sell projects that are not necessarily of his invention.

I have personally observed the rejecting of projects that could have been put into effect simply by exerting a little bit of salesmanship. I am sure that some of you recognize that salesmanship is a very important factor to our profession. The mark of a professional especially among administrators is the ability of that administrator to sell programs and put them into effect although they might not be the most popular. Such promotion and final acceptance depends upon his or his staff's advance preparation of the public, and this requires statesmanship as well as salesmanship.

To me another mark of a professional is to render judgment when it becomes one's responsibility to do so without concern for personal gain. Another mark of a professional in our field would be one of attempting to surround oneself with those of greater ability than our own when the opportunity presents itself.

Selfishness, vainness and the human process that we know as being naive are not characteristics of a professional in this field. I am very much concerned with not only our recent graduates being naive as a result of a lack of training in the sociological endeavors but also with those within our profession who prefer remaining naive concerning the "environment" within which they must work. By that I mean, how many of you in this room know of people within our profession that have been offered the opportunity of advancement into the field of wildlife administration which would necessitate their leaving a comfortable little niche and then observed those people turning down such promotions? Most of us in this room know well such situations. If everyone in, for example, the automotive business, dealt only with the laboratories and other safe and secure little niches, they wouldn't have a product to put on the market to create an income with which to perpetuate the business including additional research and "creativity". In the automotive industry, some of the finest administrators are people who have moved up the ladder of their profession. When he began to practice his profession he was perhaps working in a lab, on the test track, or he was trying to determine a better means of selling the product in the field, but he did accept a promotion somewhere along the line. This is a critical aspect of any profession. Advancement is not just an

opportunity, it's a responsibility. In our profession, I very definitely feel that it is the responsibility of any man who calls himself a professional wildlifer to accept opportunities for advancement, especially in the field of administrative endeavor. If our trained people do not accept such responsibility we can expect to have untrained people in these administrative rules and we deserve them. In such an event are you the professional going to sit back and say "I did my job, but that administrator couldn't sell water on the desert". No, you can never say that, not if you are going to display any integrity within your profession because you shirked your responsibility by not accepting that which would have put a trained man in that administrative position. I can tell you that the acceptance of these additional responsibilities and so-called opportunities for advancement are not all joy and roses. You give up certain of the niceties of your old job, your old buddies, your old working territory, but if you are to strike a blow for wildlife conservation on a level that we as professionals want it struck, we must get the qualified man up the ladder and into these positions of responsibility. It is to me exceedingly important that our instructors and professors in our institutions of higher learning so motivate, and encourage undergraduates thusly when they are undergoing their basic training in the wildlife profession.

Speaking of responsibility, I am not one to "Duck" mine. And, speaking of duck; Ducks Unlimited has a responsibility also, and we within Ducks Unlimited have accepted this, not just those of us who are professional employees on our very small staff, but those who are our volunteer workers all across this continent. These volunteers, such as some of you in this room tonight, have accepted the responsibility of attempting to impart facts to the public and to build an active and dynamic conservation organization upon truth and common sense. Ducks Unlimited personnel are also attempting to bring before the public the entire scope of the waterfowl conservation picture. We are trying to point out how important it is to have waterfowling as an activity to go along with waterfowl conservation. Who historically has paid for virtually all waterfowl conservation but the waterfowler? The waterfowler does not have to be a hunter, although he is in about 99% of the instances, but we have both types supporting DU, those that enjoy the esthetic benefits of waterfowling and those that enjoy the hunting aspect alone. We feel that all of us within Ducks Unlimited

have a responsibility to be concerned with rates of utilization, that we should be interested in factors affecting the total waterfowl environment, whether it be nesting, transiency or wintering. It so happens that we can best deploy our money directly to the greatest advantage of the waterfowl into areas north of the U. S. border where 80% of the birds are produced. Not only because the massive numbers of birds are produced there, but because we get more out of our dollar than if it were spent elsewhere. Ducks Unlimited buys no land, we lease our land free from private individuals and the Provincial and Dominion governments of Canada. This has been going on for thirty years. The U. S. dollar, once it is sent to Canada grows by almost 7% as a result of the difference in the rate of exchange. When we spend a dollar to move earth in Canada we are getting about four times what we could get for that dollar if it were spent in the United States. We move earth in Canada for 25, 35 and 17½¢ a cubic yard. Try and move it for that price here in the United States. Our average over the years for the development of an acre of wetlands has been \$16.00 or less. We feel that we have the responsibility to speak out on all matters affecting our waterfowl resource on this continent for the simple reason that we have invested \$12,000,000.00 in Canada during the last thirty years to do the production job where it has to be done for waterfowl.

Ducks Unlimited during its thirty years of operation has developed or improved a million and a quarter acres of waterfowl habitat. This is contained within 800 duck factories and also includes about 8,000 miles of shoreline. Some one of you is probably thinking, "big deal, this is like a grain of sand out here on one of these California beaches", and you are correct. Our greatest claim to fame is not the amount of work that we have been able to accomplish, although it is more than anyone else has done in this particular area of endeavor in the primary nesting grounds of these birds, but we claim much of the credit for the current interest in waterfowl management exhibited by the private citizens and the governments of Canada. I would also like to direct your attention at this time to the fact that the need to protect, develop, renew and perpetuate wetlands in the prairie provinces of Canada is greater today than ever before. The Canadian economy is expanding quite rapidly. Their interest and desire to expand their economy has been mounting by tremendous proportions during the past five years. They have upped their wheat quotas to the extent that they don't know how they can reach them.

Their timber pulping operations have increased. Lands are being cleared in northern and central Canada to an extent that they have not been before. Agriculture has been expanded into areas further north than ever before and with the clearing of timber and the draining of muskeg a lowering of water levels occurs. In many of those areas when the water level drops a foot, large acreages of prime nesting territory are lost. Our current and future opportunity to benefit waterfowl in Canada is becoming greater each year. The programs of the Canadian Provincial and Dominion Governments are such that Ducks Unlimited has already been invited to come in and help with the development work on many of the lands that will be acquired through easement. Many of our current projects will compliment those programs now being undertaken by the various governments of North America, but make no mistake, Ducks Unlimited will be watching with a very critical eye all aspects of management that could or will affect the waterfowl population anywhere from the breeding grounds to the wintering grounds.

We are also interested in the sociological aspects of management that might adversely affect the private land owner who now provides the vast amount of wintering grounds used by these birds. It was recently suggested to me by a wildlife administrator that we might not need all of the wintering grounds that we currently have because, "you can concentrate a lot of birds on a small area". I answered, "sir, when you gathered eggs as a youngster on the farm, did your father encourage you to place all the eggs in one basket?". To concentrate our birds on too few areas could be disasterous.

We in the private end of the wildlife conservation business must constantly be aware of the need to sell programs, to orient the public, to fulfill our obligation to our profession by being forthright, factual and able to compromise in such a manner so as to maintain an operating level that will not infringe upon our personal or professional integrity. In summing up selling, I can say that we must all learn and practice constructive communication. We in the private portion of this profession must also be very much aware of timeliness, when to move, how to move, how to deal with people, how to talk with people and we most certainly must be aware of that which is politically astute. I want now to say a few words concerning this subject. Political astuteness is not one that requires

that we have a particular brand of politics. It is the art of compromise; of timeliness being associated with selling; who to sell to, where to sell, when to sell and what to sell. All organizations, Federal, State and private, require funds with which to operate. All must be funded and you do not get money to accomplish projects or programs by tucking your head into the sand, or in a test tube or beaker and assume that "someone" whose job it is will come up with the money. That someone probably isn't nearly as qualified as you to sell your program. To assume such funding will occur just because it is a good program and has to be activated is the reason for so many failures in the final execution of many programs. Salesmanship, political astuteness and professional responsibility are usually required to provide funding for our programs.

It should be needless to point out that one of the basic requirements inherent to our profession is integrity, both personal and professional integrity. Such integrity involves that which we were basically taught as children, it is not just what we learn in an institution of higher learning. In other words, it is a personal integrity that is a direct reflection upon our professional integrity, but beyond that each of us have a responsibility to maintain a professional integrity within our own areas of endeavor. This does not mean however that "test-tube integrity" should be accepted as a replacement for common sense and therefore preclude practicing the art of compromise. Our professional integrity precludes our presenting exaggerated papers based upon limited data, dealing with outright falsifications of data and deliberately attempting to be devious in dealing with the public or fellow professionals. We must also be very much concerned with the fact that what we are able to glean in the way of new information or what we are able to provide in the way of programs based upon data that have been collected, must be done in a forthright manner. We all serve the public. We cannot talk down to those we serve. We cannot continue to hide behind the excuse that these people won't understand our methodology or our terminology. If we feel thusly let's get off our high horses and do so rapidly.

Let us also consider that we must have people manning the ivory towers of our profession. We have got to have people in the laboratories. This is important, but it is not all important. We also must provide for productive management.

In summation, it can be said that we can continue to berate those individuals, agencies and organizations that do not properly, in our opinion, recognize the wildlife profession and those within it. We can continue to ponder why we are not invited to serve on advisory boards, hold offices of key position in the conservation field, or command attention when we speak or act. Of course, we can take steps to change all this. We can recognize that we as individuals must be known for constructive work and not just shuffling papers or doing "work" that entertains or "pacifies" us. We can strive to be "tigers" when our profession and resources are tampered with instead of being the "pussy cats" that many of us choose to be because it is easier to recline on our favorite chair in front of the hearth and let someone else do battle for us than to jump onto the battle ground of Wildlife resource management ourselves.

We can also stand by as members of a profession while some instructors at our institutions of higher learning continue to spoon-feed our future wildlifera a diet of "soft-sell principals", "test-tube integrity" and "table-spoon doses of L. S. E." That's Let Someone Else do the dirty work of dealing with the public and other sectors of our profession requiring us to make personal contact with the true realities of resource management.

Curriculums can be improved to include "people management" courses. Universities can be staffed with instructors experienced in "people management" and resource management at a level beyond the written word stage. Yes, these can be done and as professional wildlifera we must demand that it be done now and assist with the doing. Remember, an amateur is one who cultivates a study or activity for personal pleasure rather than for gain and is sometimes referred to as a dabbler.

I am sure that you and I prefer to work with wildlife professionals-- don't you wish that "everybody" did?