

MAN AND WILDLIFE--THE COMPETITION FOR SPACE

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Good morning, friends. It's great to be with you, to see some good Auduboners and a lot of agency acquaintances from days of yore!

I think you probably need cheering up and cheering on, this morning.

First, you have a really big job. There's only, and I'm guessing now, fewer than 20,000 bona fide professional fish and wildlife biologists running around this country, trying to provide for the needs of over 200 million Americans . . . particularly the 100 million persons who participate actively in one kind or another of wildlife-associated recreation.

That means for every one of us, there are 5,000 of them--expecting to see or catch or shoot something furred, feathered or finned, when they go afield. Given all the adverse trends and pressures, we really have our work cut out for us, don't we?

And to make matters more difficult, there's California's most recent gift to the Presidency, Ronald Reagan, and the deaf ear he has turned to our concerns.

We'll eventually pull out of the tailspin we're in now, with regard to the failure of policy-level executive agency leaders to appreciate the importance of fish and wildlife. There will be other, more supportive administrations--and meanwhile the resource will survive because dedicated professionals from The Wildlife Society and the American Fisheries Society, here and elsewhere, "hung in there" when times were tough, to see that adequate habitat and protection were provided.

In the West, your Societies in particular, and the conservation movement in general, are blessed with outstanding leadership. The Wildlife Society and the National Audubon Society have mutual objectives of conserving wildlife populations and their habitat, and Audubon's staff has appreciated working closely with many of you here today. Through these joint endeavors we have developed a deep respect for you, your organizations and your leaders.

Thank goodness we have such leadership. It was never more important that we have such "backbone" to stand up to the Philistines than today, when the Reagan Administration would like to cut our programs to the bone . . . or into the bone.

Let us look briefly at the factual record of the Reagan Administration, for as Churchill warned, "You must look at the facts because they look at you."

1. The Reagan Administration called for virtually a complete halt to habitat acquisition under the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It slashed \$250 million in funds already appropriated and cut President Carter's \$520 million 1982 request to \$45 million to pay obligatory court awards. In the face of over \$3 billion in authorized parks, refuges and national recreation and forest areas, the proposed 1983 budget contained only \$60 million in court awards for the National Park Service, and less than \$1 million for the Fish and Wildlife Service for two tiny endangered species parcels.

2. The Reagan Administration requested only \$1.25 million to acquire wetlands under the Wetlands Loan Act, when over \$50 million of wetland authorizations will expire if funds aren't appropriated. While publicly proclaiming the protection of wetlands as a keystone of Interior policy, the Administration's budget request was sufficient for the

purchase of a mere 1,000 acres nationwide, while 600,000 acres of wetlands are lost each year to development.

3. The Reagan Administration revised our national rangeland policy to allow livestock breeders to overgraze public rangeland, over one-half of which already meets only 20 percent of its potential due to overgrazing.

4. The Reagan Administration implemented accelerated plans for oil and gas leasing in wildlife refuges in Alaska and cut comprehensive conservation planning for these same refuges 50 percent. It tried to take Matagorda Island out of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and give it to the State of Texas. Interior is also trying to open the wilderness and refuge system to allow an oil development staging facility on St. Matthew Island, an isolated wilderness National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, and breeding ground for millions of seabirds.

5. The Reagan Administration placed a moratorium on the listing of endangered species and has prevented the listing of over 70 species for which all the preparatory scientific analysis and rulemaking paperwork was completed a year ago. It has cut the listing program budget by 50 percent, the recovery program by 20 percent, and eliminated the \$4 million endangered species grant program with all 39 cooperating states. This represents the loss of the single most important component of the endangered species recovery program.

6. It proposed a reduction of the endangered species law enforcement staff by 15 agents out of an already inadequate 203, despite increased killing of bald eagles and an increase in the illegal wildlife trade.

7. The Reagan Administration proposed to cut all the funding for the National Wildlife Health Laboratory at Madison and to close this world-renowned facility. This research station protects millions of birds from loss to disease epidemics which often decimate hundreds of thousands of birds at a time.

8. The Reagan Administration rescinded the 10-year-old Executive Order issued by President Nixon that banned the use on the public lands of Compound 1080, a highly toxic poison used to kill coyotes and other predators, which often eliminates hawks, eagles, owls and other species as well.

9. The Reagan Administration cancelled the new comprehensive regulations implementing the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and is developing amendments that will eliminate the Fish and Wildlife Service's capability to protect wetlands under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

10. President Reagan cut 276 full-time personnel and \$42 million from the resource management programs of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and in 1983, he again requested elimination of the Cooperative Wildlife Research Units, the training academies of the majority of our wildlife researchers and managers, which are located at 31 locations in 29 states.

11. In our National Parks, the Reagan Administration has authorized the killing of mountain lions in Carlsbad Caverns and Guadeloupe Mountain National Parks; it has authorized the extension of grazing leases in Capitol Reef National Park; and it has opened Everglades National Park to commercial fishing at a time when research indicates that the fishery can barely sustain itself and the dependent wildlife community.

12. Throughout every agency, including the Forest Service, the Reagan Administration has systematically cut funding for vegetative and invertebrate inventories, habitat evaluations, instream flow studies, environmental analyses, environmental contaminant studies, and programs which identify the carrying capacity of public lands to sustain fish and wildlife.

And I haven't even mentioned the impacts of the gargantuan Outer Continental Shelf leasing and drilling program, the enormity that is Interior's revised coal policy, and the Administration's refusal to acknowledge the existence of acid rain.

These adverse political developments only serve to exacerbate long-term adverse trends and pressures summed up in the theme of this conference: "Man and Wildlife--The Competition for Space." As you all know, economic pressures on our land, for undirected, intensive development and quick profits for investors are resulting in the mining and wasting of precious topsoil and land resources . . . the loss of irreplaceable genetic diversity . . . and a dramatic decrease in acreage suitable and accessible for fish and wildlife propagation, appreciation and harvest. Eventually, I'm afraid, only those areas set aside by federal or state law as wilderness or natural areas may remain undeveloped. Given mounting demands for energy development and commodity extraction in general, on public as well as private lands, it will become increasingly difficult to deny access for such purposes to areas once administered principally for fish and wildlife . . . such as the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Of course areas can be managed successfully for both wildlife enhancement and oil and gas development. The National Audubon Society's own 26,000-acre Paul J. Rainey Sanctuary in Louisiana is an example. The point, however, is that opportunities for wildlifery to be left alone, to manage vast public or private areas only for fish and wildlife propagation and enhancement, with no conflicting activity permitted, will become fewer and fewer in the years ahead. The multiple-use slogan misused as a passkey into areas formerly off-limits to commodity exploration and development, currently is being used in Washington to mean assured access to practically all wildlands by the energy and metal industries in the name of national security.

Wildlifery, therefore, will not be calling their own shots. They will find themselves routinely serving on interdisciplinary land- and resource-use planning teams. In that setting, they will be expected to be able to both predict what the habitat changes proposed by others will result in, with respect to wildlife populations, and to effectively advocate practical alternatives representing satisfactory solutions as far as fish and wildlife resources are concerned. The fight for a "no action" alternative, simply to protect the fish and wildlife status quo, will become much harder to win.

In addition to this intensified competition for space--for the use of land and its resources--an important change in the wildlife manager's own constituency is occurring. The recent national study of "Public Attitudes Toward Critical Wildlife and Natural Habitat Issues" by Stephen Kellert of Yale for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service discovered, for example, that while 85 percent of those surveyed who lived in communities of less than 500 were in favor of hunting for recreation and meat, only 46 percent--a minority of those sampled--who lived in cities of more than one million population favored hunting for recreation and meat. And most Americans now live in cities. Overall, 40 percent of the 3,100 persons surveyed flatly objected to any form of hunting, mainly because they felt hunting to be morally wrong. On your trend-setting West Coast, 57 percent opposed hunting. Only 6.2 percent had hunted in the past two years. Meanwhile, memberships of organizations supported largely by non-hunters or inactive hunters, such as National Audubon, now at over a half-million members, rise every year. It's been estimated that some 20 million Americans buy birdseed for their window and backyard bird feeders. That's two and one-half million more than the seventeen and one-half million who buy hunting licenses. Many of us do both, of course.

In summary, my crystal ball shows a heightened competition for space between man and wildlife--more people, and less wildlife; more competition for the dominant use of wildlands, and fewer single-use wildlife areas; more birders, photographers and other non-consumptive users interested principally in so-called nongame species, and fewer hunters and others interested in the taking of traditional game species.

This suggests to me--as it has to many others--the desirability of taking a hard look at how we prepare, and retrain, professional wildlife biologists to be sure they can cope effectively with their changing world. Wildlifery must be ready to deal with interdisciplinary land-use planning teams and with all manner of non-hunters, clamoring both for help in enhancing their urban environments for wildlife and for access to the refuges and wildlife management areas, some of which were paid for with hunters' duck stamps, excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment, and license fees.

You may recall that President Carter signed into law in 1980 a bill establishing the United States' first comprehensive program for the conservation of nongame wildlife. The measure authorizes very little money to implement the program, but it does include provision for a study to determine how it might be funded more adequately--perhaps by a birdseed tax, as proposed by National Audubon.

We all know that government wildlife conservation efforts traditionally have been weighted heavily toward game species such as deer, trout and pheasant. Between 88 and 95 percent of state and federal wildlife dollars are going into programs for game species, while most wildlife is classified as nongame. This is certainly understandable because sportsmen have anted up to pay for most of these programs.

But for four years National Audubon helped lead a fight to bring wildlife conservation efforts into better balance. The bill Mr. Carter signed is a first step toward establishing such a policy--providing funds for states to inventory nongame species, assess their problems, and draw up plans to implement them. It authorizes the appropriation of \$20 million over four years, beginning with fiscal 1982. At the same time, it directs the Secretary of the Interior to determine whether there might be a better way of funding the program. An excise tax was specifically suggested. In testimony at hearings on the bill, National Audubon noted that an excise tax paid by hunters and fishermen pays for conservation programs for the game species, and we proposed a tax on birdseed, feeders, birdhouses and birdbaths to help support the nongame wildlife conservation programs.

OK, then: you face a deteriorating habitat base, which threatens the very existence of your birdies, beasties and fishies . . . and you face a changing constituency, which is just as skeptical of monoculture-oriented fish and wildlife management as it is skeptical of monoculture forestry . . . with good reason, I might add.

The critters are threatened, and where is your political support base to assure you the policy direction and the wherewithal to cope successfully with this emergency?

Think of that. Budgets and manpower and green lights to go ahead with habitat protection and enhancement programs are not your automatic inheritance, just because you know you are doing the Lord's work.

Without a vigorous supportive political constituency, your programs--just like any other public programs--are dead.

So, how should biologists be trained to deal with political situations, which they inevitably face? And in particular, how should biologists cope with adverse trends and decisions made within their own organizations and agencies . . . what should they do when they find themselves at odds with their employer over a particular program or project decision?

I am not a philosopher, a specialist in the field of ethics, or a psychiatrist . . . just a practicing administrator, who of course sympathizes with every employer's desire for employee loyalty . . . but who gives the survival of our ecosystem priority over the survival of an agency or a political administration.

Let's address those questions, first, from the standpoint of the employer, who expects his biologists to work within the system, to go through channels . . . taking their lickings occasionally, and not cry.

My data base for these answers is the responses I received to a set of questions regarding biologist performance that I asked every Forest Service regional forester and every Soil Conservation Service state conservationist four years ago, when I was Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. I think you'll find those USDA field administrators' opinions to be of interest. (Zane Smith was one of the respondents, of course.) Many USDA field administrators commented that their wildlife and fisheries biologists had been exceptionally well prepared. As one regional forester put it, "These suggestions are only offered as the most constructive places to consider change to strengthen the skills and performance of wildlife and fisheries professionals being received from the universities."

All nine Forest Service regional foresters and a majority of the SCS' state conservationists contributed their thoughts to my compilation; and, considered in the aggregate, their message to their wildlife biologists is: broaden your training, improve your skills in ecology, economics and communications; adopt a more open-minded attitude toward the views of others; and look for positive opportunities to enhance fish and wildlife values, rather than always hanging tough for the status quo so often. Listen to one regional forester's plea, for example:

Our biologists are receiving an excellent formal education. However, the education is irrelevant. There is some, but not much, variation depending on the institution the biologist graduates from. Basically the biologist is well versed in the biological details of animals, and usually in depth about one species of animal or one class of animals. However, his knowledge of habitat and habitat requirements related to populations of "wildlife" in total is sadly lacking. The largest deficiency I see is the biologist's unwillingness to "take the ball and run." When asked to design a wildlife program that other programs can be responsive to, the biologist appears lost. Their response is usually along the lines of "tell us what your other programs are and we'll help you design them so wildlife isn't adversely impacted." When pressed to propose a wildlife habitat program for the purpose of benefiting wildlife, in terms of lateral and vertical diversity, increased numbers, improved distribution, and quality conditions rather than merely protecting the status quo, only a relatively small percentage appear to even want to respond. Their reaction is a laundry list of reasons they can't. They are not equipped to lead, but only to respond. Objective setting, decision-making, and integrated planning appear foreign to the biologist.

And four SCS state conservationists echo that complaint:

- Wildlife biologists tend to have a reputation of being able to point out the problem, but lack the skills to help solve it in a manner that achieves the multiple objectives of preserving wildlife values while also attaining social needs. They are unwilling to engage in and become part of the resource planning process. They prefer to wait until a plan is completed and decision-making under way. Then they come forward and begin to publicly point out all the things wrong with the effort. Unfortunately it tends to cast them as obstructionists, when it is entirely possible for them to make significant contributions to good resource planning, management and conservation that reflect multiple resource uses and values.
- Biologists could be more effective if they would improve their negotiation skills, especially eliminating defensive behavior. As defenses are reduced, listeners become better able to concentrate upon meanings.
- Wildlife staff people have stated many times, "We do not intend to develop detailed data nor innovate potential plans; our only responsibility is to react to plans developed by others." The extremely strong bias for fish, wildlife and environmental preservation that exists with many wildlife staff people creates a defensive barrier from which decisions and/or negotiations begin. Thus lines are drawn and the battle begins, which is a poor and ineffective means of interdisciplinary participation.
- Wildlife staff people should improve their skill in planning. Frequently, they approach planning from a negative view. Their major thrust seems to be to increase the amount of mitigation included in the plan. This results in neglecting many opportunities to preserve, protect, or enhance wildlife resources by including positive plan elements.

Of course, these comments are from foresters and soil conservationists who are not totally in sympathy with your concerns. But their views are important; I have no doubt they would prefer their wildlifers to be effective, successful negotiators. One SCS state conservationist observed that--

Wildlife staff members should be willing to get beyond their preference for no project action and look for the least damaging solutions to the problem, or for enhancement opportunities. They should not be so strong in their environmental convictions that they take uncompromising positions which will make them ineffective in plan formulation.

And another said:

While the biologist's success in influencing project actions may depend on how aggressively the individual biologist pursues his beliefs, mere zeal is not enough. As an effective member of an interdisciplinary team, he must speak up for what he believes is right. But he must understand other viewpoints, other values, and other evaluations, and thus help decision-makers reach workable solutions.

Now, how would USDA field managers suggest modifying existing academic wildlife curricula? Here's a sampling of their suggestions, as regards biological courses:

- To be an effective team member, a fisheries or wildlife biologist should have a good working knowledge in other fields, such as outdoor recreation, plant materials, forestry, agronomy, limnology, and landscape architecture. He or she should be able to recognize opportunities and potentials, as well as problems.
- The education of biologists is often deficient in ecological concepts. Few schools have directed their curricula toward total ecosystem management, so often the biologist has pieces of the puzzle but not enough of them to see a clear picture. Individual biologists have been trained to deal with one species of animal or one class of animals and appear to be insecure in dealing with wildlife and particularly with habitat in total.
- Elevate the knowledge and understanding of habitat relationships to the animal species. A knowledge of species relationships with vegetation and successional stages would give the biologist the ability to predict wildlife species composition and density changes resulting from modification of forest stand structure.
- They can predict and articulate the impact of projects on "game" but not on "wildlife" in total . . .

I know these comments are painful to your ears. But if we as wildlifers are going to be influential at the land use planning bargaining table--if we're to succeed in intra-agency politics--we'll have to be respected planning team partners. Many of us, they say are too narrowly specialized, and don't even like people!

Training in economic analysis skills also seems to be lacking among today's wildlifers, my former USDA lieutenants reported. Said one regional forester:

- Skills in benefit/cost analysis and related economic analysis processes apparently are not taught at some of the institutions offering programs in fish and wildlife management. Such analyses are, of course, essential in the decision-making process.

And he was echoed by others, two of whom said:

- As a group, wildlife biologists are not generally well trained in the development of cost/benefit analysis. This is a problem with the profession as a whole.
- The biologist usually tries to shy away from benefit/cost analyses when comparing alternatives which produce different arrays of resource outputs.

Some of my respondents stressed the need for additional training in rural sociology. Others asked for more human relations skills and skills in the management of people. Practically all who responded to my questions identified improved communication skills--especially the skill of listening--as very important. They said, with evident feeling:

- The additional background that most fish and wildlife biologists seem to need lies in their ability to sell their thoughts and ideas. Additional courses in such things as public speaking and technical report writing would be helpful.
- Perhaps the most important skill of all is the skill of communication, both in writing and oral presentations. Somewhat related is the ability to get along with people.
- The interdisciplinary team member needs to be able to express his views understandably to others and listen to the view of others and understand them. He must be a translator, and relate scientific jargon and biological theories and technical data in a form understandable to other people and disciplines. He must be not only technically competent, but also capable of educating the audience (colleagues, general public, other specialists, project sponsors, administrators, and managers) on the issues of concern. And the wildlife specialist must be creative, in that few problems have but one solution.

Their final set of curriculum recommendations dealt with the law and the social sciences. It is extremely helpful, they noted, for an individual to understand the political process and the way in which legislation is formulated and enacted. Basic courses in law, social, political and governmental processes, public resources administration, and communication skills were suggested. Today's wildlife specialist should be "educated," not "trained," one respondent contended, noting that "the day has passed when the biologist can be concerned with only wildlife or fish and their needs, and can take an evangelical approach to their management."

Summarized another, "The specialist that views his role as guardian of the environment responsible for preserving everything in its present state is not likely to be a very successful team member."

Well!

Remember, I said I was going to give you the bosses' perspective first, and then move on to some other alternatives.

Before I suggest you all become "deep throats," and keep the Audubon Society informed of every example of back-sliding in your agency that you discover, let me say for the record that I agree with the foregoing assessment of the foibles--the Achilles heels--of the fish and wildlife management professions . . . and that I place much of the blame for our shortcomings on the academic curricula which molded us.

Our major professors were species specialists; research was their hobby; politics to them was a dirty, irrelevant game; economics was for foresters; journalism and public speaking were taught in some unknown part of the campus called the Lit School; real men don't take speech!

If we seek such improvements in our university curricula as suggested above and win, our successors will be more successful negotiators on I-D teams. That still leaves us with what to do as concerned, public-spirited citizens when we see important fish and wildlife programs on the verge of going down the tubes because of insensitivity, stupidity, cupidity, illegality, or whatever.

You have several options, in addition to rolling over and playing dead, also known as going along to get along:

They include sharpening your own negotiating skills and arguments and trying once more to turn things around to your own satisfaction based on the logic and weight of the evidence you can bring to bear on your colleagues. Politics, no matter where it's practiced, is the art of the possible. Demanding the perfect solution, because it's so often unattainable, can harm prospects for a good solution. Take your best shot "within channels" first--including discussions with your immediate supervisor, and perhaps his or her supervisor, according to whatever standard appeal process your employer offers.

That failing . . . and given your cause is just . . . consider whether you have good reason to suspect wrongdoing of the legal variety (not just a difference of opinion, within the agency's administrative discretion). If the hanky-panky is contrary to the public interest because it involves waste of public funds, kickbacks, fraud, embezzlement, sweetheart deals, gross immorality, conduct unbecoming a public employee, or something else tough and hard and bad and provable . . . and you have the evidence . . . BLOW THE WHISTLE! That's what the Offices of Inspector General are for. Use them . . . and stay within channels if you win a positive internal response.

But if you don't . . .

Don't go to strangers. Come to us.

Frankly, the professional staff members of the National Audubon Society are on the telephone with friends in the so-called bowels of the public natural resources agencies every day, taking soundings, keeping abreast of developments. Preparing to sue Secretary Watt if he doesn't list obviously endangered species. Ready to rebut congressional hearing testimony before it's ever delivered. On top of a lot that's going down that we're not supposed to know about.

There's no way Watt and Co. can keep you from talking to us when you need help. And that's what Audubon and our sister environmental groups are for--to help you succeed.

So if you have to, go to friends "on the outside" like Audubon. We'll protect your confidence . . . and we'll work together to stymie those who would dismantle our carefully built environmental-protection agency and program structure.

Audubon now has a well-organized local chapter in practically every Congressional district . . . and tens of thousands of self-selected volunteer activist hell-raisers who only need to be given the raw meat--the evidence of another planned attack on the well-being of our fish, wildlife and other environmental resources--and they'll attack like mad dogs!

There's a fine degree of coordination and cooperation these days among the environmental conservation groups, so the word is spread quickly throughout the environmental community, and everyone gets into the act--Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Wildlife Federation--whoever relates to the cause at hand.

Remember, we're all on firm ground when we advocate a clean environment, a healthy ecosystem, species diversity, diversity of recreational opportunities, and sustainable resource development.

So next time you're feeling blue about what's happening around you, take heart. You have many friends who wish you well and want you to succeed.

Some of us work under Dick Martyr's direction on Audubon Place in Sacramento; some of us can be found in Skyscraper National Park, at Third Avenue and 57th St. in midtown Manhattan. In particular, our Director of Wildlife Legislation in Washington, D.C., Amos Eno, often can bring fast, fast, fast relief. Just call (202) 547-9009 and ask for Amos.

Political administration come and go. I know. I came and went!

Meanwhile, America needs a strong, competent, dedicated corps of public servants in key positions in its natural resources agencies . . .

So I don't advise you to quit in protest.

You'll outlive the wrecking team now in power in Washington. And there will be better days ahead.

Thanks for all you've done to assure the rest of us of a beautiful, enjoyable human environment!