

## THE PROPHETS OF DOOM

*By Ray Henry*

Those of us who live and work in the southeastern part of the United States, who love nature and the great out-of-doors, are the most fortunate people in the world. Within the area that makes up this association may be found the most infinite variety of out-door recreation. There are rugged mountains with cold swift, tumbling rivers and streams gentle rolling land with quiet valleys and slow meandering streams, and flat, level lands with swamps and marshes. Natural and man-made lakes in addition to the free-flowing rivers make this area unique for water-oriented activity.

We can hunt for deer, bear, boar, turkey, grouse and numerous small game species. We can fish for trout, muskellunge, walleyed pike and a great variety of warm water species native to each region. We can swim, ski and enjoy boating on some of the cleanest, most beautiful lakes to be found. We can camp, picnic, hike and enjoy nature on federal and state parks, federal and state forests, Tennessee Valley Authority, Corps of Engineers and other public lands in addition to the numerous private facilities. The Game and Fish agency in each state maintains wildlife refuges and wildlife management areas where all wildlife is managed and protected.

Yet, with all these things, almost daily I read in a book, a newspaper or magazine, hear on the radio or see on television that the air, lakes and streams are polluted and in the near future will not be suitable for human needs—that most desirable wild birds, fish and animals are nearing the point of extinction, and that future generations will not have an opportunity to hunt and fish and enjoy nature as we have—that woods and fields are being destroyed to make way for shopping centers, highways and subdivisions which will eventually not only eliminate all wildlife, but deplete the air of the oxygen necessary to sustain human life—that at the rate the human population is increasing there will not be enough space on earth to accommodate the people, to say nothing of the wild birds and animals.

To these prophets of doom, I say, you are wrong—**YOU ARE WRONG!** Sure, we have pollution—sure, we have changing habitats for wildlife—sure, we have a population explosion, but just as surely, we have intelligent men and women working on each of these problems.

As the pendulum swings in the direction of a particular need, or a particular problem, the human mind—the greatest thing in all creation—begins to function and a solution is forthcoming. With the power of rational thought, man will gain the wisdom to control his environment. The history of man is a continuing story of thinking and learning, profiting by mistakes, solving problems and making improvements. In his comparatively short history, man has transformed and will continue to transform the world to fit his needs.

Most of us forget that a few short years ago most of our cities and factories dumped all their waste materials into rivers or streams without any thought of a treatment facility; the outhouses were built over creeks or drained directly into them. Wild birds and animals were hunted and sold commercially—traffic in hides and carcasses was extensive with little or no protection for the wildlife. The primary source of energy for industry, railroads and heat was coal, the smoke from which not only clouded the sky, but blackened the land as well. Woods and fields were burned annually, destroying the timber, the wildlife, the humas in the soil, and when the rains came, eroding the land.

The Water Quality Act of 1965, which established the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration and the Clean Water Restoration Act of 1966 turned the tide of water pollution. The Water Quality Act gave the Federal Government the authority to establish uniform basic requirements for a

nationwide water quality program, and the much needed authority to correct the pollution of interstate streams. Working from these basic standards, each state sets the criteria for the purity of its lakes and streams. Before approving state standards, the Pollution Control Administration insists that the state regulations are adequate to insure that the quality of water in any lake or stream will not deteriorate from its present status. This requirement practically eliminates all new sources of pollution and nullifies the once valid excuse of cities and factories that they would be noncompetitive with other cities and factories if they expended funds to correct their pollution when others did not.

The Water Pollution Control Administration, the states' pollution control boards, public health organizations and Game and Fish agencies have made an all-out effort to investigate and pinpoint every source of water pollution. Once a source of pollution is established, the city, industry or individual must take immediate action to correct the problem. The enforcement of the laws and regulations applying to water pollution are in the primary or corrective stage, with each state enforcing its own standard. The courts have been exceptionally cooperative. In those cases where prosecution was necessary, the courts have imposed heavy fines, enjoined the offenders or awarded damages in almost every case brought before them. When all aspects of the state and federal laws become effective, the only thing lacking will be enough enforcement people to insure compliance.

The Clean Water Restoration Act provided federal aid to cities for the construction of sewage plants. Under this program thousands of treatment facilities have been constructed which clean the water before it goes back into the streams. Much progress has been made in the field of water pollution and even with more people and more industry, we can expect better water quality in the future.

Correction of air pollution is following a definite schedule, with 1975 set as a deadline for industry and automobile manufacturers to meet new rigid standards. The enforcement of recently enacted laws will heal the wounds of our mountains caused by strip mining and restore the streams to their original state. The Environmental Protection Agency has placed a ban on D.D.T., and is reviewing other pesticides that are harmful to fish and wildlife.

Those of you who saw the cities of Copper Hill and Ducktown in southeast Tennessee in the late 1940's and early 1950's after sulfuric acid fumes had killed all the vegetation for miles around and could see the results today of an effective reforestation program with a beautiful golf course, green lawns everywhere and trees growing where once there was only barren land, could not doubt the ingenuity and ability of man to work with nature.

The prophets of doom, sitting on their patio constructed under a tree whence the droppings from the passenger pigeon once rained, and grilling a steak and sipping bourbon that came from the land where the buffalo once roamed, get moist eyes when they talk about the twenty-six species of mammals that have become extinct since the turn of the century. They never mention the inevitable fact of species extinction as a natural phenomenon, and when spread over a long period of geologic time is essentially positive when considered from an evolution standpoint, or the species adaptability. I know of no one who prefers bison to beef, hooch to bourbon, and the droppings from the starling will suffice for most of us. A dinosaur or a saber tooth tiger could serve as an attraction in a zoo, but would be a nuisance in your own back yard.

Although it is true that some species of wildlife suffer as man's needs for food, space and recreation increase--at the same time provisions are being made to insure the perpetuation of each species. The Federal Government initiated an endangered wildlife research program in 1965. Under this program the endangered species is offered maximum protection. Improvements are made in habitat or environment, or the species is moved to a place where suitable habitat ex-

ists. As a last resort, some species are pen-reared under simulated natural conditions until sufficient numbers are obtained before they are re-introduced to the wild.

In addition, over 186 million acres of U.S. Forest Service lands came under the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960. Under this Act the Forest Service must manage these lands, not only for timber, but recreation, wildlife and watershed protection on a sustained yield basis. Sustained yield, when used in this Act simply means forever. The 27 million, 870 thousand acres of land administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service are managed primarily for the benefit of wildlife. The 24 million acres owned by the U.S. Park Service serves as an inviolable refuge for all species of wildlife. On the remaining 625 million acres owned by the Federal Government, wildlife is given prime consideration. Every state in the Nation owns and maintains forest areas, state parks, wildlife refuges and wildlife management areas where all species are protected and managed. It has only been in recent decades that the states have assumed the broad responsibilities of game and fish management which was inevitably theirs. Land acquisition for wildlife management purposes, construction of lakes for fishing, management rights on private lands, improvement of habitat on farm lands, promotion of better landowner hunter and fishermen relations and adequate protection is only a part of the efforts by the states to insure each species suitable habitat in which to live and reproduce like kind, and at the same time provide the sportsmen of today and future generations a place to hunt and fish.

The population explosion we hear so much about with the predictions that before very long there will nor be even standing room for the people on earth reminds me of the prophets of doom who 50 years ago prophesied that man would starve—that it would be impossible to produce enough food to feed the human population—but, what are the facts? More food is being produced by fewer people on less land, and the surplus continues to increase. And, what effect will the small question that precedes bedroom conversation or activity have on the population explosion, "Honey, did you take your pill?" Is the population explosion really as critical as some would have us believe? New projections by the Census Bureau of the United State population in 1985 have been revised downward by eight million people. The birth rate dropped last year to a 31 year low, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. The percentage of increase becomes smaller each year, with more and more people living in metropolitan areas and fewer people living in rural areas. The human population density certainly is a major factor in wildlife populations. With the trend toward concentration of people in metropolitan areas, it would seem the rural and mountainous area would be available for the production and harvest of wildlife. This assumption has merit until you consider the amount of land that has been or will be taken away from the average hunter and fisherman by the so-called "Purist" in the 1964 Wilderness Act. The "Purist" is a self-styled conservationist with at least a college degree, the intellectual and financial elite of the Nation, comprising less than one percent of the total population. He is convinced that anyone who disagrees with his philosophy desires to rape the land, destroy the scenery and the wildlife. At the present time 10.3 million acres are covered under the Wilderness Act. Between 17 million and 27 million are being administered as if they were under the protection of this Act. More than 70 million acres are being reviewed or proposed by various federal agencies for classification as wilderness or primitive areas. What has happened to the theory that timber, fish and wildlife are a renewable natural resource that not only can, but should be harvested...? And, what of the remaining 99 percent of Americans whose taxes acquired and maintained these areas? Should they be deprived the use of these lands just because an elite group has decided they are irresponsible?

Many of us in the Law Enforcement Section of the Southeastern Association are nearing the age of retirement. To the young people who are working now and those who will replace us, I think I am speaking for all of us when I honestly say,

it has been a good life. You will find there are new challenges, new problems and new crises with each new day. The rewards are not monetary, but rather a sense of belonging—an integral part of natural things that brings peace and understanding.

The Good Lord, in His infinite wisdom and loving kindness, when planning Heaven, hell and earth, surely set aside a place for old game wardens where the wildlife and poachers abound, the Judge trying the cases assesses all the violators with a heavy fine and a stiff jail sentence and on the officer's day off, using red tape for fuel, he can fire the furnace where the prophets of doom, the purists, the chiefs and the biologists are getting their just rewards. With this possibility, do not feel bad at our leaving. Seriously, the people who replace us will have to contend with the prophets of doom and the purist, but they will not be deceived. They will know that it is not the Ralph Naders, the Gordon Taylors or the Rachel Carsons who find solutions to our continuing problems. They serve only to make people aware of the problems. It is the persistent, hard working, intelligent people in both government and the private sector who produce answers and solve problems.

I have no apologies to make for the people of my generation. More has been accomplished and more progress has been made during my lifetime toward a better life than in all the aeons of time; not only in the field of science and industry, but conservation as well. Vast amounts of land have been set aside for timber and wildlife; rivers and streams have been set aside as scenic rivers where their natural beauty will be preserved; trees are managed as a crop to insure a continuing source of paper and building materials; but, even more important they will continue to provide a source of the oxygen we breathe, and a place for wildlife. Federal and state laws have been enacted and agencies created to correct the abuse of our environment. Doubt not that intelligent people will find the ways and the means not only to provide the necessities of life but to make life more enjoyable.

With all the progress that has been made, naturally there are problems—many my generation is working on, or has solved, but the solution to many of them will be left to the people who follow us and to future generations. My grandson will be a part of the generations to wrestle with some of the problems we have created. If I had a choice of a legacy to leave to my grandson, it would not be money, property, insurance policies, stocks or bonds. It would be a legacy more meaningful—more fulfilling and more rewarding.

I want my grandson to be able to teach his son the way I taught his father—to count the eggs in a robin's nest—to know that the horrible looking work in the ugly cocoon will one day emerge as a beautiful butterfly, that the tadpole will become a bullfrog—to watch the squirrels store food for the winter—to understand why the warm days and cool nights of autumn bring out the intensity in the leaf coloration—to observe as nature releases her seeds of reproduction from the wildflowers and trees and covers them gently with the leaves that have nourished their growth—to know and understand the laws of nature and apply them to his own thinking. The weak are devoured by the strong—the strong are overcome by the stronger and the strongest are consumed by time—that there is a reason for everything in nature and that everything fits into the whole scheme—that he must find his place—that his life must be molded into the scheme according to the dictates of reason.

As the trees stretch forth their branches to receive the most sunlight, which is their environment; so must he extend himself to reap all the benefits of his environment; and, as the roots of the plants and trees search the earth for water and minerals, so must he search for knowledge and understanding. As the wild plants and animals compete for food and space, so must he compete—so must he compete.—This is nature—this is life. This would be my legacy to my grandson, your grandson, and all the grandsons in the world.