

A NEW HORIZON

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Abstract: America's heritage is borne not only on the genius of its people, but on its creatures of the forest and streams. All too often these wildlife species will disappear unnoticed and we are then the losers. "A New Horizon" reminds us that now, and not tomorrow, is the time to take notice of the needs of wildlife.

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This nation is blessed with a wealth of fish and wildlife resources; and man, charged with their stewardship, must realize that to utilize this resource wisely will not only increase his own enjoyment and pleasure, but also will assure, beyond a shadow of doubt, the renewal of this we have come to love for our present and future generations.

Predicting the future, of course, is difficult and uncertain. We can never be sure of what will be, only of what is now and has been. The future destiny of a democracy such as ours must obviously depend to a great degree on the positive attitude, the will and the spirit of its people.

As we leave our past with only memories to recall, let us now recall those 3 elements that helped shape and mold this nation to her greatness. In a significant way, these elements portray the history of wildlife conservation, law enforcement and the men that served it. Their goals and objectives have been made through severe hardship, awesome challenge and unfortunately, death. Yet, history records that they were born.

Let us not rest easy on the laurels and progress of years past. Frankly, we are more than a little fearful of losing the battle or to convey the message more elegantly, the great naturalist William Bebe said, "When the last individual of a race of living things breathes no more, another heaven and another earth must pass before such a one can be again".

Try to imagine a future when people know about eagles, cougars and alligators only in the way people today know about dinosaurs and passenger pigeons; as pictures in an encyclopedia or synthetic skeletons in a museum. Our thoughts can scan the seas without whales, the rivers without fish, the skies without songbirds and the forests without fox or bobcat.

Some will say, "What of it?"; after all, thousands of animal species vanished from the earth long before man's arrival through the inevitable working out of the evolutionary law. We are not worse off because Carolina parakeets or wood buffalo no longer walk the earth. Would deer or turkey be missed any more keenly?

The most common answer is that these animals must be preserved for cultural and aesthetic reasons and for sheer pleasure of seeing them and knowing they exist. But more is at stake here than human pleasure. Honestly, it is from a different perspective entirely that one must now make the case of conservation. For each of these species has its own niche in the earths living scheme and man cannot eliminate a single species without potentially affecting the whole tightly knit fabric of life.

It is difficult to imagine what the status of many species of fish and wildlife would be without the enforcement efforts of our dedicated officers. It is doubtful that we could claim a thriving deer population if the illegal gun was not controlled. It is equally doubtful that many of the small game species would be as abundant as they are without closely regulated taking. These and many others could have easily become a part of our "lost heritage" rather than an intricate part of its natural beauty.

It may well be that just as the enforcement efforts of the early game warden would be useless against the problems of today, perhaps our current enforcement efforts will be useless against the environmental and political adversities of tomorrow. It is easy to find oneself so busy trying to meet the rigors of historical responsibilities demanded by the public that it is difficult to recognize the day when priorities should be re-examined and even altered.

Obviously, law enforcement in its status-quo can not be the sole answer to the versatility of the current problems. However, enforcement of the laws designed to protect the resources will be an essential part of any effective long-range program. The im-

portant point is that we are eager to examine and assess the worth of present enforcement priorities and seek a direction that will fulfill our responsibility to natural resources sought by sportsmen, hikers, campers, canoeists, bird watchers and others.

We will be able to continue effective enforcement of the bag limits placed on game, but how do we deal with the culprits of water pollution that may destroy thousands more fish than a navy of irresponsible fishermen? We can protect the deer from the destructive tendencies of an unethical hunter, but how do we combat the indiscriminate and illegal use of pesticides that may kill thousands?

The creator in all of this, in His infinite wisdom and knowledge, will provide the New Horizon of understanding that our conservation officers will need to work the harmony of nature and man in its constant struggle for survival.