

Introduction

More than half a century ago George Wright sent the National Park Service down a path toward recognition and understanding of the discrete resources that make up our national park lands and waters. Today we continue the struggle to advance the knowledge necessary just to make any valid policy choices regarding the intricate and complex web of life we strive to manage. While accepting the sheer hubris of asserting any right or ability to manage the natural world at all, we must nonetheless persevere in our attempts to meet our land management mandates.

The National Park Service is an agency whose mandate is to preserve and protect in perpetuity. The agency has recently recognized the need for strategic planning and is moving forward within the context of the planning that our societal and governmental structures allow. An agency whose mandate is perpetuity, however, should plan in terms of centuries. Decades should represent the time frame allotted to accomplish their short-term goals. I understand how ludicrous this seems within the realities of a partisan and chaotic political world, but only by proposing grand visions can a bureaucracy transcend the petty and the mundane.

What are the things we wish to preserve for those who follow us? Among them is certainly the sight, the sound, and the feeling of knowing free-ranging wildlife. The song of the warbler or the sight of the wolf taking down a prey are a heritage as every bit as great as the pyramids or the acropolis. Perhaps they are greater still, since they are things we cannot create, but can only destroy or help to

preserve.

The great wilderness we strive to preserve, without the wildlife as we know it today, will seem an epic poem with only every other word extant. It will be a temple where we once spoke to the gods, but today are heard no more. That is why this issue of the FORUM opens a discussion of the single most endangered of all national park attributes: free-ranging wildlife populations.

For almost a century, we have attempted to match a philosophy based on managing wildlife as a renewable economic and recreational resource with a system that reveres its wildlife as treasures to be preserved for future generations. It has never worked well and this basic paradigm conflict will continue to focus unwarranted—as well as justified—criticism upon an agency that is simply trying to implement its own mission.

In light of the fact that many of us consider wildlife, as we know it, to be the single resource most at peril in the next century, I have gathered a distinguished group of forward-looking

individuals to spur us all into an intellectual discourse on this very subject. John Freemuth will share with us his views on policy formation and the place and validity of science in that process. Freemuth is a prolific writer on park preservation and land management issues. Like many of us, he has often wondered why many scientists believe their view is more than a tool for managers to use along with the other tools at their disposal.

Frank Buono, a retired National Park Service manager shares his thoughts on the evolution of laws regarding wildlife and analyzes where they may take us in the next century. Buono has spent much of his time with the agency as an instructor at the Albright Employee Development Center in Grand Canyon National Park. In that role he has inspired thousands of young Park Service employees with his rabbinical dissertations on environmental laws and issues.

Dan Huff, Assistant Director for Natural resources and Science in the NPS Intermountain Field Area, has two decades of experience in planning, compliance, resource management, research and science administration in the NPS. Huff provides an overview of the NPS views and experiences with these issues. His extensive experience and knowledge are matched by his determination to match the best from traditional wildlife management with the true needs of the agency.

Allen Rutberg melds his biological background in wildlife and habitat

protection with a genuine concern for animal welfare. His compatriot Wayne Pacelle, Legislative Director for the Humane Society of the United States, has proven to be an effective protagonist for views about animal rights and welfare. The views that they espouse are held by an ever-increasing segment of the American population. Their article defines a particular perspective of what is humane and what the public in the future may expect from humane wildlife managers.

As the guest editor, I have also contributed an article based on my combination of field experience with various species, review of wildlife projects across the National Park System, and my own personal perspective of NPS policy, history, and legislative mandates. I will not pretend that all points of view are represented herein. However, some who were invited were unable to participate, and the more traditional and critical views of the NPS wildlife policies and actions seem to have plentiful outlets for their opinions. This compilation of articles is intended to instigate discussion of more than one train of thought on this issue, and I am confident the following articles will accomplish that goal.

Our greatest desire for this issue of THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM is that it stimulate some debate that will perhaps lead to policy formulation and implementation—helping to preserve wildlife as we know it today in the coming centuries.

As the burgeoning human popu-

lation continues to move closer to the once-remote and pristine parks and forests, the issues involving wildlife, carrying capacity and wildlife movement corridors become increasingly important. As the human interaction with wildlife becomes more frequent, the conflicts between them will inevitably increase. This is not simply an issue for hunters, animal rights groups, or land managers, but for every person who wishes to leave behind a legacy rich in those things that make life worth living.

These lands, set aside as remnants of nature in its wild state, will become increasingly attractive to human populations sharing an ever-decreasing supply of raw materials. We cannot blame the people of the future if

they fail to preserve open space, and wildlife which is the critical measure of wilderness. If our heirs are forced to choose between their own survival and the survival of wildlife it will be the legacy of our failure to plan for the future. The time to plan for the twenty-first and twenty-second centuries is upon us now. Let's not let the people of the future down.

Stimulating honest intellectual debate about the rigors of conservation is the heart of THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM. I for one am certain that George Wright would be proud to know that a journal bearing his name continues to instigate debate about the very issues he cared most about. I am very proud to assist in that endeavor in some small way.

