

44th Annual Meeting of the National Wildlife Federation

Thomas L. Kimball

This year marks my twentieth as National Wildlife Federation's Executive Officer. During that time, our team of officers, Board Members, and affiliate organizations has built the Federation into the largest and most effective conservation organization in the world. Our work together has been an enjoyable, exciting, and productive experience. I firmly believe that our present strength and growth over recent years are directly related to our accomplishments, because actions and achievements create the image that NWF projects to members and potential supporters. The Federation now has a total of 4,601,950 members and supporters. Broken down this includes 842,595 associate members, 824,820 Ranger Rick members, 1,499,860 affiliate and associate club members, 3,464 life members, and 1,431,211 contributors and supporters. This number of members should tell you how well NWF's achievements are accepted and appreciated by the public.

The Federation is a citizens conservation education organization whose primary objective is to disseminate knowledge and information for the purpose of achieving the conservation and *wise use* of wildlife and all the other natural resources on earth. Our principal means of developing the clout to meet those goals is to pursue vigorously all individuals, groups, societies, and organizations who believe in our cause and to enlist them in the Federation. Since 1960 we have been doing just that, and very effectively. During the past 20 years, our membership has quadrupled.

Much to our consternation, anti-hunting sentiment has been growing slowly but steadily in the last decade. There are roughly 200 million non-hunters in the United States. That is about 90% of the total population. It should, therefore, come as no great surprise that approximately 75% of current NWF members are non-hunters; most of our increased membership has a great appreciation for wildlife, but few hunt. You will note that I said they are non-hunters, *not anti-hunters*; there is a great difference.

On November 30, 1979, the initial findings of a 3-year study on public attitudes about wildlife were announced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Among the study's important findings was the fact that public attitudes toward hunting depend on the purpose of the hunt. People overwhelmingly supported hunting for subsistence, translated into outdoor jargon—meat on the table. And the public was little concerned or troubled about who did the killing. More specifically, 64% approved hunting for recreation, if the meat was used; but, about 60% opposed hunting simply for sport or recreation, and over 80% opposed hunting exclusively for a trophy.

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Editor's Note: This is a condensation; a copy of the full report is available from the author at: 1412 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, Phone 202-797-6800.

This report shows how one non-profit organization grew and prospered. Perhaps there is something in it to encourage and benefit members of Society for Range Management.

On January 17, 1980, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released a national survey of public attitudes on resource conservation conducted by Louis Harris and Associates. In my view, the most significant conclusions of this study were:

- 1) Ninety-two percent of the entire adult population of the United States wants the federal government to make sure that the natural homes of fish and wildlife are protected.
- 2) Ninety-three percent wanted the federal government to inform people about the need to protect resources like land and water.
- 3) Ninety-five percent desired that a national effort be directed toward keeping our water clean.

The summary findings of these public attitude studies have been cited to illustrate a very significant conclusion. Whether or not sport hunting continues in America as an acceptable avocation will *not* depend upon the very small—but growing—well financed, and vociferous band of anti-hunters. It will depend upon the 200 million non-hunters, and whether or not the majority of them can be convinced that:

- 1) hunting will not impair or adversely affect variety and optimal breeding stocks of wildlife;
- 2) hunters are willing to put forth the time, effort, and money to qualify themselves to pursue their sport as experts, proficient in the use of their weapons and knowledgeable about their quarry;
- 3) hunters will continue their active support of wildlife habitat conservation and restoration programs, including those for non-game wildlife.

These conclusions confirm a wise decision the Federation made in 1960, to set as a principal objective the conservation of wildlife habitat, the key to wildlife variety and abundance. We thereby broadened the base of our membership, which has resulted in the enviable and unsurpassed growth record of our organization and provided the financial stability which has permitted us to approach our objectives.

Now, our detractors say that National Wildlife Federation is protectionist. If by that they mean that we see protection as a tool of scientific wildlife management, yes; it is time to protect threatened and endangered species of wildlife, and we most assuredly need to protect the pitifully small remnants of wetlands and other important wildlife habitats. Preserving, conserving, improving, and restoring wildlife habitat is the glue that binds the hunter, the resource conservationist, the birdwatcher, and the environmentalist firmly together. Applying that glue has not meant that NWF has abandoned its support for hunting as one of the many tools of scientific wildlife management. It has meant that in the true American tradition, the Federation allows the individual to make the choice as to how wildlife will be enjoyed.

There are those who accuse me personally of having contracted Potomac Fever and, the greatest heresy of all, of not adequately supporting the sportsmen's cause. For those who may have these thoughts, let me allay your concern. I stand before you today as a wildlife professional of 43 years

experience. I have spent 23 years in the service of two State Wildlife Agencies, with a combined tenure of 13 years as executive Director in Arizona and Colorado, and 20 years as National Wildlife Federation's Chief Executive Officer. I am a confessed and still practicing hunter, birdwatcher, wildlife photographer, habitat protectionist, and environmentalist. I have devoted all of my professional career to serving the wildlife resource and all those who appreciate and use it, particularly the hunter. With that preface, let me now turn to the problems the hunter-sportsman faces in the coming decade and what NWF has been doing to help solve those problems.

Let's begin with the premise that all 220 million Americans appreciate and enjoy wildlife in one way or another, and that they all support a real effort to maintain and enhance the variety and numbers where possible—a premise that has been verified by all recent public opinion polls. What has NWF done? What affirmative action has been taken to educate the 200 million non-hunters to the fact that the role played by the true sportsman does not adversely affect wildlife populations? Our first action has been the recognition that protection, as well as surplus harvest, is a proper and accepted tool of the professional manager. NWF has supported the enactment of a Threatened and Endangered Species Act. The Federation was the first to test that law in the courts, and it stood up.

NWF has gone to court to defend professional wildlife

management and the role hunting plays in the management regime. When deer in the Great Swamp Refuge of New Jersey became so numerous they were diseased, dying, and invading the adjoining urban areas, destroying ornamental shrubs around homes, state officials opened a hunting season. The removal of a designated number of deer by hunting was designed to bring the numbers of animals with their food supply back into balance. The anti-hunting groups sued the appropriate agencies and individuals to prevent the hunt. NWF attorneys joined with government officials in court and won the case. The hunt was held and the deer herd is back to a healthy, normal population in harmony with the ability of the land to sustain those numbers. Anti-hunters sued the Secretary of Interior to prevent waterfowl hunting and to eliminate the funds derived from taxes on arms and ammunition from being allocated to the states for wildlife restoration under the terms of the Pittman-Robertson Act. NWF joined those suits and won.

I am proud of National Wildlife Federation's accomplishments during the past year and the past 20 years too. But the victories we seek in the future will be harder to come by. The U.S. economy is faltering. Citizens have less disposable income. Efforts to solve the energy crisis will bring on repeated attempts to abandon environmental standards and circumvent environmental law, and impair or destroy wildlife habitat. We will need the help and cooperation of all to continue the Federation's history of progress. ●

Bobwhites and Brush Control

Fred S. Guthery

Few ranchers want to lose their bobwhites to brush control, but neither do they want to lose their grasses to brush invasion. Fortunately, the woody cover needs of quail are modest. These birds can be a bountiful by-product of profitable rangeland management.

Woody cover plays a small but vital role in the lives of bobwhites. Nesting, for example, takes place in clumps of perennial grasses, tall and thick enough to hide incubating birds, but not so tall and thick as to impair their movement. Too much brush can degrade nesting habitat because woody plants decrease the vigor of important grasses. Newly hatched broods seek plant communities with many forbs such as sunflower, sumpweed, ragweed, and doveweed, where protein-rich insect foods about. At night, coveys may "circle up" on bare ground. Thus, bobs spend most of their lives out of brush. But without it, Whistlin' Robert is quieter than Whistler's Mother.

Trees and shrubs do supply nutritious foods. Bobwhites have been shot near Glen Rose, Texas, (40 miles southwest of Dallas) whose crops bulged with live oak acorns. Indeed, quail from the Rio Grande Plains to the Northern Great

Plains relish acorns. Mast from cedar elm, ironwood, hackberry, lotebush, algerita, and other woody plants is eaten. But bobwhite populations can and do prosper without a single food from trees and shrubs.



Bobwhites need little brush cover, but without some they cannot survive on rangelands.

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