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On the destiny of deer camps and duck blinds: the rise of the animal rights movement and the future of wildlife conservation

by Robert M. Muth and Wesley V. Jamison

Abstract As we enter the new millennium, wildlife professionals, hunters, and trappers are increasingly challenged by an influential animal rights movement opposed to many of the values and behaviors associated with traditional wildlife harvest and management. We argue that the emergence of the animal rights movement is related to profound sociocultural and demographic shifts occurring within modern society. It is a product of broad macro-structural conditions that, having converged in advanced industrial societies of the late twentieth century, provide fertile ground for the rapid rise and powerful influence of this philosophy. We begin by tracing the development of the philosophy of sportsmanship and the rise of the North American conservation movement. We then discuss animal rights values within the context of 4 social precursors necessary for the widespread adoption of animal rights ideology: 1) an urban epistemology (or world view) disconnected from the reality of wild nature; 2) a popularized interpretation of science which, for many people, provides evidence for a belief in animal rights; 3) anthropomorphism, or the projection of human traits and characteristics onto nonhuman animals; and 4) egalitarianism, in which the concept of rights is extended to the nonhuman animal world. Finally, we discuss the implications of the animal rights movement for the future of hunting and trapping.

Key Words animal rights movement, hunting, social values, trapping, wildlife conservation

Regulated hunting and trapping have been cornerstones of wildlife management in the United States since the advent of wildlife conservation in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In addition to being important management tools, hunting and trapping over the last 100 years have provided benefits to millions of participants,

subsistence harvesters as well as sport hunters and trappers. Among the direct benefits of hunting and trapping are meat for the table, supplemental income from furbearer pelts, and trophies mounted over the fireplace that keep alive the memories of special experiences in the out-of-doors. Proponents of hunting and trapping also

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assert that participation in these activities provides broader sociocultural benefits, such as the bonding that occurs among members of kinship and friendship groups; the teaching of values such as patience, self-reliance, and discipline; and educational experiences that allow people to become more knowledgeable about wildlife habits and habitats.

In light of what they see as this venerable tradition, many hunters, trappers, and wildlife conservation profes-

sionals are genuinely perplexed over the state of siege in which they often find themselves at the present time. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the largest of the animal rights organizations, sponsors an anti-fur campaign which receives widespread publicity; anti-hunting and anti-trapping protests are occurring with increasing frequency; and animal rights activists have taken to "liberating" mink (*Mustela vison*) from ranches where they are raised for fur.

Challenges posed by animal protection organizations have forced conservation professionals to engage in collective introspection, often stimulating them to re-examine the validity and usefulness of long-held values and beliefs. These challenges to the status quo are healthy for the conservation professions.

Perhaps most disturbing to many, because it reflects the fact that anti-hunting and anti-trapping values resonate with a broader cross-section of the American electorate than just extremist fringes, the animal rights movement has achieved several recent successes at the ballot box (Minnis 1998, Pacelle 1998). From California (where hunting mountain lion [*Puma concolor*] was outlawed) to Massachusetts (where hunting black bear [*Ursus americanus*] over bait and with dogs was prohibited and the use of body-gripping and leghold traps was outlawed), animal rights activists have become increasingly effective in using the policy process in advancing their agenda.

But public sentiment often ebbs and flows on hunting and trapping issues and the sporting fraternity has not been without its successes. Recent attempts to pass anti-hunting measures in Idaho, Michigan, and Ohio failed at the polls. Several states have passed laws against hunter harassment, and voters in North Dakota and Virginia recently approved constitutional provisions establishing the "right" to harvest fish and game.

If it seems that the public is ambivalent about wildlife issues, conservation professionals appear to be conflicted

about them as well, as reflected in a recent survey ($n=3,127$) of members of The Wildlife Society, the American Fisheries Society, the Society for Conservation Biology, and the North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Officers Association. Significantly, conservation professionals were divided over the appropriateness of certain wildlife harvest and management activities. Although only 6% of the respondents favored outlawing the hunting of upland gamebirds with dogs, 57% favored outlawing hunting black bear with dogs; and though approximately 46% of the respondents felt that the use of leghold traps to capture furbearers should be outlawed, 39% opposed outlawing the use of leghold traps (15% had no opinion, Muth et al. 1998).

As the conservation profession enters a new millennium, it's timely to assess the future role of hunting and trapping. Discussions concerning the future of these activities are appearing more frequently in the professional literature (e.g., Brown et al. 1987, Heberlein 1991, Decker et al. 1993, Gilbert 2000) as well as the popular press (e.g., Baker 2000, Beauchaine 2000, Brister 2000, Reiger 2000). In this period of questioning and change, it is imperative that wildlife professionals provide leadership to American society on wildlife conservation issues. To effectively do so, they must participate vigorously in the public debate about the future of hunting and trapping.

The North American Wildlife Conservation Model

In the United States, the conflict between the contemporary animal protection movement and traditional wildlife conservation that includes regulated hunting and trapping is rooted in the nineteenth-century origins of wildlife conservation. The concept of "the king's deer" and the English legacy of private game preserves exclusively reserved for the hunting pleasure of the nobility were incompatible with the democratic precepts of the American Revolution. As the European tradition became transplanted to the New World, the need became manifest to "democratize" access to wildlife harvest (Sherwood 1981). Visions of unlimited abundance of wildlife and the democratization of hunting from the preserve of the aristocracy to an activity of mass participation gave rise to predictable results (Sherwood 1981, Tober 1981). Certain wildlife species had become scarce enough that 12 of the 13 colonies had passed one kind or another of wildlife laws (Sherwood 1981).

The American conservation crusade was born in the last half of the nineteenth century in reaction to the waste, fraud, and abuse that characterized land and resource exploitation. Wildlife conservation, in particular, arose out of widespread concern over the extinction of some species, such as the passenger pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*) and the heath hen (*Tympanuchus cupido cupido*), and the near extinction of many others, including the American bison (*Bison bison*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), and bird species pursued by commercial hunters (Trefethen 1975, Dunlap 1988, Reiger 1986).

Despite the early establishment of game laws, disregard for them was widespread and enforcement was often understaffed, lax, or nonexistent (Warren 1997). It gradually became clear that laws alone were insufficient to stop the "excesses of democracy" imposed on wildlife by mass participation in wildlife harvest. What arose to restrain these excesses was a philosophy called "sportsmanship." Promulgated by social elites, including people such as George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt, this philosophy, in the words of Sherwood (1981:20), "aspired to curb the harmful effects of democracy on wildlife, which were unavoidable with the population pressures, new technologies, and American commercialism..." that threatened many game and nongame species in the United States.

With the tenet of sportsmanship replacing market hunting and unlimited harvest as a governing norm, political support for wildlife conservation continued to accelerate into the twentieth century. When viewed in its most comprehensive form, wildlife conservation in the United States has been referred to as the North American Wildlife Conservation Model (S. P. Mahoney, Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Division, and J. F. Organ, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, unpublished report). Wildlife conservation came to include regulated use by hunters and trappers based on sportsmanship and fair chase; funding support provided through license fees, duck stamps, and excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment; acquisition and rehabilitation of important habitat; intensive management based on professional training and scientific research; species introduction and restoration through stocking and trap-and-transfer programs; protection of species perceived to be in danger of becoming extinct; and enforcement of wildlife laws and regulations.

For the last 100 years, wildlife conservation has served society well. It has not been perfect by any means. Well into the twentieth century, for example, it was commonplace to indiscriminately kill animals (e.g., grizzly bear [*Ursus arctos*], wolf [*Canis* spp.], coyote [*Canis latrans*], hawks, owls) that prey on domestic livestock or game animals (Dunlap 1988). In addition, wildlife management tended to focus on game species that provided benefits to the hunting and trapping public, often with little regard

for the values and desires of the growing numbers of non-consumptive and animal protection stakeholder groups. Criticism offered by Pacelle (1998:44) that wildlife agencies emerged as "extensions of the hunting industry" that "rarely deviated from their role as service agencies for hunting, trapping, and fishing interests" reflects the views of many people who neither hunt nor trap.

Despite these and other criticisms, however, it can be argued that conservationists were perhaps too successful. As a result of sound management and strong public support, declining wildlife species that were once a cause of deep concern have returned, in many cases to a point of such abundance that wildlife management agencies increasingly concentrate some portion of their efforts ameliorating the conflicts among wildlife and people that range from white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and black bear depredation on agricultural products to collisions between automobiles and deer or moose (*Alces alces*) to complaints of nuisance Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*), beaver, deer, and even wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) invading our suburbs. In light of the successes of wildlife conservation over the last century and the strong tradition of hunting and trapping, it is ironic that the crest in public support for traditional wildlife conservation coincided with a momentous event that changed forever how Americans would view the consumptive use of wildlife: In 1942, Walt Disney Studios released the animated film, *Bambi*.

The rise of the animal rights movement

Animal protection values have existed in the United States at least since 1866, when Henry Bergh founded the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The humane movement gathered momentum through the Victorian era with the rise in opposition to vivisection and it percolated along throughout the early half of the twentieth century. In 1928, for example, South Carolina outlawed the use of steel-jaw traps, followed in 1930 by Georgia and Massachusetts (Reiger 1978); in the 1930s and 1940s, the American Humane Society regularly sponsored competitions to invent traps that reduced pain and suffering. However, during this time, mainstream society often regarded the humane movement as a group of individuals who were overly sentimental and unrealistic.

Walt Disney, Bambi, and the rise of anti-hunting sentiment

The release of Walt Disney's film *Bambi* in 1942 changed things dramatically. In our view, *Bambi* serves as a major point of departure for the rise of the modern

animal rights movement as it relates to the blood sports. Rather than initiating anti-hunting sentiment, *Bambi* gave voice to inchoate and diffuse values residing in a midcentury American society characterized by a profound sense of unease and anxiety. Although not deliberately designed as such, *Bambi* is perhaps the most effective piece of anti-hunting propaganda ever produced (Reiger 1980; Lutts 1992, 1996; Cartmill 1993a, b).

What makes *Bambi* so powerful? First, although the movie conveys an anti-hunting message very effectively, Disney was far from the first to portray hunted deer as victims or deer hunters as cruel. But through a skillful marketing campaign and through the media of film and, later, television, *Bambi* was the first to convey an anti-hunting message to a mass audience of millions of people in the United States and around the world (Lutts 1992, Cartmill 1993b). Over the last 60 years, *Bambi*, along with other Disney animals, has truly become "a part of our cultural DNA" (Ringel 1988:M1, quoted in Lutts 1992).

Although *Bambi* is the first instance of an anti-hunting message that became available to the general public through the mass media, its dramatic impact is also due to a second factor. Americans who saw *Bambi* in the 1940s and 1950s were (perhaps unconsciously) receptive to the 2 inescapable messages of the movie. The first message is that wild nature, left free of man's intrusion, is a garden of Eden where animals are seen as innocent playmates, reposing in a state of harmony in which the lion lies down with the lamb (or, in *Bambi's* case, where Friend Owl, the great horned owl [*Bubo virginianus*], cavorts joyfully with Thumper, the rabbit (*Sylvilagus* sp.), and Flower, the skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), instead of dispatching them for an easy meal).

The second message is that human beings are violent, cruel, dangerous, and corrupting (Cartmill 1993b). Man (as symbolized by the hunters) sets his vicious dogs on the harmless forest animals; lets a campfire get away that turns into a raging forest fire; shoots Bambi, nearly wounding him mortally; and, in the most powerful moment in the film, kills Bambi's mother. The misanthropic mood of the film is captured in the foreboding response of *Bambi's* mother to his questions, "What happened, Mother? Why did we all run?" She ominously replies, "Man . . . was in the forest." Human beings are seen as responsible for the fear, violence, and death found in an otherwise Edenic nature. (For an extremely insightful analysis of the extent to which these themes are held by more contemporary animal rights activists, see Dizard 1999.)

The public reaction to *Bambi* demonstrated that large segments of the American public were increasingly receptive to animal protection values and an anti-hunting

message. Indeed, "The Bambi Syndrome" is now part of our cultural lexicon. However, it wasn't until the publication over 30 years later of Peter Singer's (1975) book, *Animal Liberation*, that an intellectual rationale was presented which served to galvanize people to coalesce into institutionalized forms of social and political organization that we refer to as a mass movement.

The contemporary animal rights movement

Animal rights versus animal welfare. The animal protection movement is an overarching term that includes people who subscribe to a philosophy of animal rights as well as those favoring one of animal welfare (Jasper and Nelkin 1992). Animal welfarists are those who support such things as treating animals with compassion and avoiding animal cruelty. Their strategies often include reformist legislation and humane education, funding of animal shelters and animal birth control programs, and cooperation with existing agencies in program development and implementation. Animal rightists, in contrast, argue that animals have absolute moral and legal rights to personal autonomy and self-determination with equal rights across species (especially higher vertebrate species). They seek total abolition of all animal exploitation and use civil disobedience and direct action to protest the use of animals (Jasper and Nelkin 1992, Jamison 1996).

Animal protection organizations concern themselves with an agenda that includes most animal-related domains, including use of animals in biomedical research, zoos and aquariums, animal entertainment (circuses, dog and horse racing), the care of pets and companion animals, all farmed animals, anything to do with the exploitation of animal parts and products (e.g., silk, wool, leather), and wildlife and fisheries management. However, advocates of animal rights often have severe disagreements with proponents of animal welfare over objectives, strategies, and tactics (see the discussion by Francione [1996], an avowed animal rights proponent, for an articulate condemnation of the animal welfare perspective). One value position they hold frequently in common is a strong antipathy to trapping and hunting for sport and recreation. Animal welfare advocates more readily subscribe to the view that when intervention is necessary to manage a wildlife population, humane methods (such as sharpshooters and nonlethal box-cage traps) should be used instead of traditional hunting and trapping by sportswomen and sportsmen. Animal rights activists, in contrast, would disagree with the notion of human intervention at all. Because of this position, animal rights organizations often find themselves in conflict with environmental organizations, such as the National Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, which support the

use of lethal methods (where they view it as appropriate) to protect endangered species from predators or to maintain biodiversity.

Since 1980, animal protection organizations have grown dramatically in membership and especially funding support. As reported to the Internal Revenue Service, the combined budgets of 22 animal protection organizations totaled \$168 million for 1998. Among the largest are The Humane Society of the United States (\$36,633,759), the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (\$30,127,460), and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (\$25,623,669). The budget of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) increased from \$10,681,269 in 1997 to \$14,543,860 in 1998 (Animal Industry Foundation 2000).

Along with larger budgets, the animal protection movement has grown in political sophistication and influence. Movement representatives are especially skilled in using the mass media to advantage. In 1990, 1996, and 2000, to publicize a variety of animal issues, animal protection organizations staged a "National March for the Animals" in Washington, D.C., that brought activists together from every state in the union and several foreign countries.

Attitudes, values, and demographics. Beginning in the 1970s, pioneering research conducted by Kellert (1978a, b) has systematically documented the emergence of anti-hunting and anti-trapping attitudes and values in American society. More recently, research results reported by the consulting firm Responsive Management (Duda and Young 1998, Duda et al. 1998) have identified the continuing existence of anti-hunting and anti-trapping values among the general public in the United States. In one nationwide survey, 22% of the respondents disapproved of legal hunting and 16% either moderately or strongly disagreed with the view that hunting should continue to be legal. Trapping is rated even more unfavorably. Nationwide, only 34% of the respondents supported legal trapping and 59% disapproved of it (Duda and Young 1998).

Although approximately 79% of a national sample agreed that using animals for human benefit is acceptable as long as the animal doesn't suffer undue pain, around 15% subscribe to attitudes favorable toward animal rights—i.e., animals should not be used by humans under any circumstances. However, validating the fact that attitudes do not always predict behavior, it is interesting to note that while 15% of Americans purport to hold an attitude favoring animal rights, only 3% report actually not using any animals for any purpose (Duda et al. 1998). In summarizing the results of several studies examining ani-

mal issues, Duda et al. (1998:293) conclude that while "most Americans feel animals have some rights, few believe in absolute rights for animals." Furthermore, they remind us that considerable variation exists among respondents based on demographic variables such as education, ethnicity, urban-rural residence, age, and income, and they wisely advise that it can be dangerous and misleading for conservation agencies and sportsmen's organizations to "paint all such groups with the same brush."

Demographically, recent studies (Richards and Kranich 1991, Jamison and Lunch 1992, Jamison 1998) suggest that American animal rights activists tend to be female, overwhelmingly Caucasian, between the ages of 20 and 40, employed in professional occupations, and have middle-class incomes. In addition, they have achieved higher levels of education than their counterparts in the general population, are apt to be well-educated and informed about wildlife management issues, and possess the will and the ability to influence the policy process.

Wildlife-related goals and objectives. The principal objectives of animal rights organizations are probably familiar to most wildlife professionals. Although animal rights activists represent a variety of perspectives and positions on individual issues and many will disagree with the generalizations presented below, we feel that the following statements represent the views of the majority of people who would classify themselves as active participants in the animal rights movement. (Readers are advised to consult Minnis [1997] for a comprehensive typology of anti-hunting beliefs.)

Animal rights activists object to categorizing wild animals as a "resource," because this implies something to be managed and used for human benefit. Rather, they feel that animals should be allowed to live their lives free of human-caused pain and suffering. Some activists believe that Native Americans forfeited their rights to hunt and trap for subsistence when they adopted high-powered rifles and steel-jaw traps and when they began to sell wildlife parts and products in the commercial economy. Wenzel (1991: 5) quotes one activist protesting seal hunts in Canada as saying, "To me, Inuit culture is a dying one. I see my job as helping it go quickly."

Animal rights activists are nearly unanimous in feeling that hunting, trapping, and (to a lesser extent) fishing for sport and recreation are inappropriate uses of wildlife. Activists feel that these activities should be, if not outlawed, so heavily restricted that they will gradually disappear. They feel that an animal's "natural" death, whether by starvation, disease, accident, or nonhuman predation, is preferable to a death caused by bullets, traps, or fish hooks. They find especially egregious those

activities viewed as frivolous, unnecessary, or gratuitous, such as trapping for pelts, competitive fishing tournaments, guided ("canned") hunts, trophy hunting, catch-and-release fishing, and varmint hunting.

It's interesting to note that in many parts of Europe, where hunting is heavily regulated and trapping for sport is either outlawed or very restricted, wildlife conservation issues are often on the agenda of animal protection organizations. For example, Germany has outlawed catch-and-release fishing because of the pain and suffering it is presumed to induce in fish. Fishing tournaments also are against the law. In England, deer hunting has been outlawed on Crown lands and protests against red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) hunting are becoming increasingly violent. Although a measure to outlaw fox hunting was recently defeated in Parliament, human marathon runners are increasingly replacing foxes as the quarry pursued in traditional fox hunts. European animal rights activists are devoting more and more attention to international issues, such as stopping efforts to legalize elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) harvests in Africa.

Although trapping furbearer species for sport and recreation is either outlawed or under severe pressure in many European countries, large numbers of animals are often taken by trapping for pest-control purposes (muskrat [*Ondatra zibethicus*], for example, to protect the Dutch system of dikes against damage). European Union (EU) regulation 3254/91, passed in 1991, prohibited the use of leghold traps in EU member countries. It also contained a provision prohibiting imports of fur from countries that have refused to ban leghold traps or adopt internationally agreed upon humane trapping standards (Hamilton et al 1998).

Representatives of animal rights organizations use a variety of methods to advance their agenda with wildlife conservation agencies. These methods include 1) challenging the assumptions and biological data used to justify harvests, seasons, bag limits, and other regulations; 2) reviewing agency compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (and related state and federal laws) and monitoring agency implementation of guidelines established under the Animal Welfare Act; 3) protesting use of lethal techniques in programs promoting individual (often endangered) species (e.g., opposing the use of sharpshooters to eliminate nonindigenous mountain goats [*Oreamnos americanus*] from Olympic National Park, which was part of an effort to protect endangered botanical species); 4) sponsoring protests of lawful hunts and regulated trapping, hunter-harassment campaigns, and sabotage efforts; and 5) organizing ballot measures in the form of initiatives and referenda to outlaw or restrict hunting and trapping.

Four social precursors to an animal rights movement

As can readily be seen, the challenge posed by the animal rights movement to wildlife conservation agencies and organizations is formidable. As Decker and Brown (1987:599) have perceptively observed, "The animal rights movement is particularly disconcerting for most wildlife professionals because it opposes not only the activities that management makes possible (e.g., hunting and trapping) but also the underlying assumptions and precepts upon which the profession has been based. It questions what wildlife managers do professionally, how they do it, and why they do it. Some wildlife management professionals believe that the animal rights movement is one of the greatest threats to wildlife conservation faced by the profession...."

Many wildlife conservation professionals are mystified by the pervasive influence of the animal rights movement. We believe that the existence of 4 social precursors, or social conditions, helps to explain the persistence and widespread adoption of philosophies, values, and ideologies related to animal rights. These social precursors are 1) an urban epistemology (or world view) disconnected from the reality of wild nature; 2) a popularized interpretation of science which, for many people, provides evidence for a belief in animal rights; 3) anthropomorphism, or the projection of human traits and characteristics onto nonhuman animals; and 4) egalitarianism, in which the concept of rights is extended to the nonhuman animal world.

Urban epistemology

As the United States went through the transition from an agrarian society to an industrial society, participation in agricultural and resource-extraction sectors of the economy declined while employment in the manufacturing and service sectors increased. One of the outgrowths of this shift was the concentration of people in cities. As people moved from farms and rural communities to cities and suburbs, they underwent a dramatic change in how they experienced nature. Vialles (1994:19), in a study that just as easily characterizes the United States, documents the gradual relocation of slaughterhouses in France from the city to the countryside, where the killing was far removed from the emerging urban sensibilities that increasingly viewed animals as "lesser brethren."

Rather than procuring their food directly by killing game or slaughtering farm animals, most urbanites buy meat prepackaged in shrink-wrapped Styrofoam containers. In addition, their direct links to animals as wild creatures, as prey, and as sources of food have been lost. Similarly, rather than experiencing wild animals and wild

nature as “red in tooth and claw,” urban dwellers experience them through socially constructed filters and highly stylized settings, such as zoos, aquariums, petting zoos, public parks, and one’s own backyard bird feeder.

Finally, and perhaps most important, there is what some people refer to as the cult of the pet (Szasz 1968). For many urban people in modern society, pets are increasingly assuming roles in human relationships that were once reserved only for other humans. Pets are increasingly experienced as best friends, surrogate spouses, and replacement children—friends who love us unconditionally, spouses who won’t divorce us, and children who don’t grow up, get married, and move to some other part of the country. In Pacelle’s (1998:44) view, the growth of the humane movement was accelerated by the “increasingly significant bond between Americans and their pets.”

One consideration that makes societal attitudes toward pets relevant to contemporary wildlife conservation is that people in advanced industrial societies increasingly experience wild animals as domestic, either as livestock or as housepets. Society is redefining what is wild and what is domestic. American bison, elk (*Cervus elaphus*), and ostrich (*Struthio camelus*), among others, are now raised on ranches and farms and their meat is more commonly available in restaurants and supermarkets. Other wild animals—ferrets (*Mustela putorius*), for example—are now legally available in many locations for purchase as house pets. Managing wild animals increasingly perceived as domestic poses problems because it violates prevailing sociocultural norms against hunting animals viewed as livestock and trapping animals kept as house pets (Muth et al. 1998).

Popularized interpretations of science

The second social precursor is the rise of science, specifically the theory of evolution and the practice of evolutionary biology. This is extremely important, because for many people belief requires evidence. But we are not talking about the same science published in scientific journals. It is not our intention to disparage or discount the rigorous, carefully controlled studies of animal behavior, intelligence, and emotion conducted by serious scientists. Rather, we are referring to a science that is so heavily interpreted and popularized that conservation professionals may not even recognize it. It is the science that has been mediated through television “documentaries,” news magazines, and popular books; a science that tells us that elephants weep from emotional deprivation (Masson and McCarthy 1995).

The Judeo-Christian heritage asserts that Man was created in God’s image and was granted dominion over all the animals. In this cosmological perspective, humans

are separate from the nonhuman animal world. With the advent of the theory of evolution, the lines between humans and other animals became blurred. The theory of evolution dethroned humanity from its privileged status at the center of the biological world. Instead, many people in modern society have come to view humans as simply a product of random processes, processes of blind variation and genetic retention.

Evolution has been interpreted as dissolving the boundaries between humans and the nonhuman animal world (Farber 1994). After all, as evolutionary biologists tell us, humans are descended from apes and share approximately 98.6% of our DNA with chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*). When this scientific fact gets popularized, humans no longer appear to be superior to our nearest relatives in the animal world; we are perceived to be virtually the same. In fact, Pacelle (1998:44) acknowledges that the emerging humane movement was given added impetus by “the increasing knowledge of the emotional and physical similarities between people and animals.”

Anthropomorphism

Collapsing the distinctions between humans and animals in this way makes the third social precursor, anthropomorphism, irresistible. Anthropomorphism simply means the projection of human attributes, values, and personality characteristics upon nonhuman entities. The projection of human qualities upon animals is nothing new. From jackals (*Canis* sp.) and cats in early Egyptian beliefs, to the raven (*Corvus corax*) who created the world in Tlingit Indian culture, to the Lamb of God in Christian cosmology, animals have always been vested with very powerful meanings.

Throughout history, animals have often symbolized that which is gallant, noble, and beautiful in human beings. However, they also have represented a full array of negative human attributes, including the lust, danger, and deceitfulness we often see in ourselves (Campbell 1959). In reviewing the literature and art of the medieval and Victorian periods, for example, Mason (1995) concludes that in the past, animals often symbolized some human sexual or sensual trait, usually lust, lechery, or promiscuity, and notes that animals dominate many of the notions of feminine evil that were common in late nineteenth and early twentieth century art.

But the way animals are anthropomorphized in advanced industrial society today has undergone fundamental change (Lansbury 1985). As we have seen, by successfully anthropomorphizing Bambi, Walt Disney dramatically changed how hunters are regarded in American society. From *Bambi* to *Free Willy* to *Babe*, the noble pig, animals appear not as humans imbued with frailties,

complexities, and failings but as idealized, simplified versions of humanity. There is nothing ambiguous about what is now projected on animals. Animals are loving, loyal, caring, sincere, and trustworthy. Indeed, they are perceived by many people to be all those things that are increasingly in doubt about humanity in the modern age. Not only are animals perceived as people, they are perceived as good people.

It is little wonder that people in modern society—having experienced pets as family members, having witnessed killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) at Sea World kissing their trainers, having read newspaper accounts of a gorilla (*Gorilla* sp.) saving a toddler who accidentally fell into her cage—empathize with a northern river otter (*Lontra canadensis*) caught in a leghold trap or oppose hunting bison as they range outside of Yellowstone National Park.

So far we've seen that animals are experienced as members of the family, they are anthropomorphized as possessing human qualities, and a heavily interpreted and popularized science provides evidence that animals are truly like people. For many people, this raises a question: Why don't animals deserve to be treated like people?

Egalitarianism

The final social precursor necessary for animal rights values to take root is egalitarianism or the notion of equal rights. The animal rights movement has masterfully captured one of the most potent symbols in American society, the language of rights (Wildavsky 1991). Animal rights refers to the fight to extend rights, defined as state protection of individual autonomy and self-determination, outward from humans to nonhuman animals (Nash 1989, Silverstein 1996).

In many respects, modern history has been the history of the extension of rights (Nash 1989). Looking at historical examples from the United States—from propertied white males at the time of the American Revolution, to freeing the slaves during the Civil War, to the passage of child-labor laws, to the nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution giving women the right to vote—the moral umbrella has been expanding outward and has become more inclusive (Nash 1989).

The debates continue on into the present-day conflicts over the extension of full and equal rights to the disabled, the mentally ill, gays and lesbians, illegal aliens, and unborn human fetuses. The animal rights movement may be viewed as simply one more stage in this history. Only now, for the first time, people are advocating extending the legal protection of rights to the nonhuman animal world. (For a thought-provoking critique of this perspective, see Dizard 1999.) In fact, when describing the cruelty, suffering, and death visited upon animals at the

hands of humans, animal activists often invoke rights-laden terms such as "holocaust" and "slavery." For a discussion that compares the plight of animals with human slavery, see Spiegel (1988).

The animal rights movement as a moral crusade

In summary, these 4 social precursors have come together to provide fertile ground for the emergence and persistent staying power of an animal rights ideology and supporting social movement marked by the passionate involvement of very committed, true believers. The rhetoric and persistent staying power of the movement leads most people in the conservation community to believe that the animal rights movement is about animals. However, several scholars who have studied animal rights activism advance convincing arguments that this movement is about something more. They argue that it is less about animals than about larger issues and cross-currents being played out in modern society, of which animals are merely the symbols (Sperling 1988, Jasper and Nelkin 1992, Dizard 1999). From this perspective, the animal rights movement can be accurately characterized as a moral crusade, the major objectives of which are to transform human society and individual human beings.

As our colleague, Jan Dizard (Dizard, personal communication), is fond of reminding us, "There is something about advanced industrial society that leaves us hungry." Many people feel empty and are searching for meaning. They are disaffected and deeply dismayed with the direction in which modern society is headed. They are searching for things that make sense of their lives and give them meaning and a sense of purpose. Especially during times when society is undergoing dramatic macro-social change, many people are drawn to fundamental movements to explain and interpret the changes they are experiencing (Sperling 1988). And just as some people may continue to find meaning and fulfillment in their families, in their religion, or in their passion for hunting and trapping (e.g., Miller 1992; Stange 1997; Brady 1990; Dizard, in press), others may seek it by joining militia movements, searching for extraterrestrial aliens, or in the Hale-Bopp comet and the cult of Heaven's Gate. But an increasing number of people in advanced industrial societies are finding meaning and a sense of purpose in the new frontier of liberating animals (Herzog 1993; Jamison et al., in press).

Thus, the animal rights movement is as much about modern society and its discontents as it is about animals (Franklin 1999). It is about reforming society, and animals are simply the symbolic vehicles through which this reformation is to be actualized (Sperling 1988, Jasper and

Nelkin 1992). If that's true, animal rights activists will not be placated when someone invents a more humane leghold trap or markets a more accurate and lethal bow and arrow, or when agencies ban all but catch-and-release fishing with barbless hooks. Unless we can "fix" what millions of people perceive to be wrong with modern society, there will continue to be people who see fighting for the cause of animals as a source of meaning and salvation (Sperling 1988, Jasper and Nelkin 1992).

In addition to conflicting beliefs about the appropriate use and treatment of animals, animal rights activists and conservationists who support hunting and trapping also hold fundamental differences regarding what it means to be human. These are conflicts over whose vision—the vision of St. Francis of Assisi, the Patron Saint of Animals, or the vision of Orion the Hunter—is going to prevail in terms of what it means to be human in the twenty-first century. In the minds of animal rights adherents, the question is: Are we going to be humans who pursue and kill animals for our own sport and personal recreation, humans who enslave and exploit our animal brothers and sisters, or are we going to be humans who treat animals with the love and respect they deserve, such that we humans are finally able to lie down with the lion and the lamb?

Implications of the animal rights movement for the future of hunting and trapping

There can be little question that societal values and meanings regarding wildlife are dramatically changing and will continue to do so (Muth 1991). The sociocultural landscape that has given rise to the animal rights movement is extremely complex; many conservation professionals and sportsmen and women find the movement and its influence very bewildering. Some people are frustrated or angry over the fact that animal rights activists have achieved some measure of success in their campaigns against the traditional harvest and use of wildlife. What is the wildlife conservation community to make of this movement? How should conservation professionals respond to it?

Responding to challenges posed by animal rights

Despite some fundamental differences between animal activists and the conservation community, it will be important to guard against throwing the baby out with the bath water. Challenges posed by animal protection organizations have forced conservation professionals to engage in collective introspection, often stimulating them to re-examine the validity and usefulness of long-held

values and beliefs. These challenges to the status quo are healthy for the conservation professions. As a result, the attitudes and values of the conservation community also are changing, allowing conservation professionals to identify and respond to changing social values and in many cases to come into closer alignment with them.

Perhaps among the most challenging questions raised by the animal rights movement are those that have to do with the very viability of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model itself. Is this an outmoded model or does it simply need to be revised and updated to reflect modern values and sensibilities? If it is to be rejected, what should replace it? What should be the role of hunting and trapping in the future of wildlife conservation, regulated hunting and trapping by licensed sportsmen and women or hunting and trapping by agency sharpshooters and private pest-control firms? And what is more acceptable from a moral perspective, hunting and trapping that provide benefits to humans through regulated use or discarding into incinerators and landfills beaver carcasses trapped by pest-control firms? The conservation community in general and conservation professionals in particular would do well to engage one another in dialogue over these and related issues.

In addition to pondering these questions, the conservation community needs to decide what role it should play in an era of increasing social conflict over wildlife. Is it the role of conservation professionals simply to react to changes in social values? Or should they work to help shape the course of change in social values and public policies? If a more proactive leadership role is adopted, conservationists would do well to remember the model upon which wildlife conservation was founded. Wildlife is managed for the public and by the public in such a way as to provide benefits from public uses of wildlife, whether for food, lifestyle, or culture. The benefits of use reinforce the public's self-interest to conserve wildlife and pay for wildlife conservation (Hamilton 1998).

In the view of many professionals, the North American Wildlife Conservation Model is still useful. One challenge, however, will be to broaden the wildlife policy umbrella such that it provides benefits and is more responsive to a broader array of wildlife stakeholder groups. In so doing, it will be important that conservation professionals and sportsmen and women work to forge a middle ground on wildlife management issues that is responsive to evolving public sentiments. One avenue for achieving this goal is for the conservation community to identify common ground with moderate organizations in the animal protection movement and to work together with them toward progressive accomplishments in advancing the cause of wildlife conservation.

If, as a result of introspection and dialogue, the conservation community subscribes to the view that hunting and trapping should be retained as instruments of conservation, wildlife professionals, hunters, trappers, and their organizations need to position themselves as mainstream conservationists. Most Americans, although they oppose cruelty to animals, also oppose granting equal rights to animals. In developing a middle ground responsive to the attitudes and values of most Americans, the conservation community will need to communicate the importance of hunting and trapping in wildlife conservation. Too often in the past, "educating the public" has either relied too strictly on the basis of science alone or has simply been a euphemism for trying to convince people to support hunting and trapping. In the future, communicating with the public must be conducted in such a way that the conservation message resonates with people's values.

In communicating with the public, conservationists need to be responsive to changing public sensibilities. They need to be aware, for example, of the changing connotations of "sport" and "recreation." Organ et al. (1998) have discussed how the concept of sport has shifted from the "unalterable love of fair play" held by George Bird Grinnell and other early conservationists to the emphasis on competition and winning at any cost typified by modern professional athletes. As long as conservationists continue to justify hunting and trapping based on the idea of sport, these activities will remain abhorrent to animal rights activists in particular and to a growing segment of the American public in general, to whom hunting and trapping animals for sport, for recreation, for "fun" is anathema.

The future role of traditional hunting and trapping in wildlife conservation is dependent on many factors, not the least of which is the challenge posed by the animal rights movement. If regulated hunting and trapping become severely restricted or eliminated as components of wildlife conservation, it is worth reflecting on the potential consequences that may obtain for wildlife and for the many people who depend on them for consumptive and nonconsumptive uses. Should wildlife overabundance result in escalating conflict between wildlife and people, wildlife management may, out of necessity, shift from a conservation model to a pest-management model. In our view, this would be cause for grave concern. Not only would it potentially weaken the support that the American public has traditionally invested in wildlife conservation, but it would surely diminish the respect, wonder, and awe with which many people in modern society presently regard wildlife.

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