

“Ontario’s Future -

Reviewed by

C. STUART FRANCIS, TORCH RIVER, SASK.

This booklet on Conservation is distributed by the Conservation Council of Ontario and is, in the opinion of this reviewer, a very valuable booklet on the subject. It tells without wasting of words and in a very appealing manner why we should all be vitally interested in the conservation of all our natural resources. It explains that the fundamental principle of Natural History is that all life, animal and plant, can exist only by conforming to the laws that govern the general pattern of nature.

Man is inclined to forget that this principle applies as much to himself as it does to all living organisms, and while he has learned to modify these laws to suit his own purposes, this modification has only been possible within certain quite inelastic limits. History and Geography are replete with illustrations of what invariably happens when these limits are exceeded.

When we speak of “Conservation” we usually refer to our renewable natural resources — the forests, the soil, water and wildlife. While these resources are renewable, if well tended, we must always bear in mind that they are also exhaustible.

It has been said, “First the axe, then the plow, then the rain and the wind, then erosion — and finally, the desert.” History records the fate of many people and many vast areas of our earth, which have been obliterated because of undue exploitation of natural resources. Here in North America in the relatively short time since it has been settled we have broken all records in the rate of destruction of natural resources, for altogether on this continent well over one hundred million acres of fertile soil have already been made useless. In Canada, from coast to coast, we are living dangerously through the exploitation of natural resources. Therefore we must learn — before it is too late — to harvest our resources wisely, always considering the future needs as well as the present.

This booklet asks us to examine our past and present **treatment of**

each of the natural resources of our land, firstly, the forests. It shows how we have cleared land of forests which was never fit for any other use, as the soil was not fertile enough, or was too stoney for agricultural crop production. It shows how, in trying to clear good productive soil the easy way, with uncontrolled fires, we have injured the good soil before ever taking a crop off it, and have so ruined the poor soils that they can scarcely grow even trees or wild grasses. Then in showing the interrelation of natural resources this booklet shows how the loss of widespread forest cover has also seriously affected our other natural resources — water for example.

Water has been described as the life blood of the earth, for without it, no life is possible. With too much forest cover removed, the land is left bare and exposed to the direct action of sun and wind. Snows melt too rapidly and the water runs off instead of soaking in, causing floods and erosion. The quick runoff in spring results in lower underground water levels which means dry wells. Our crops also suffer because of inadequate water supplies from below, for no vegetation can exist without water. Also water is needed to dissolve the mineral elements of the soil which feed the plants.

Next comes “Soil.” The topsoil which produces our crops is, on the average, only a few inches deep, yet from it springs all of our agricultural wealth, as well as forest trees. Improper farming practices such as tilling up and down steep slopes, pulverizing the soil structure, burning of crop residues, and the using up of our soil nutrients, all reduce the value of and help to destroy this valuable resource.

Then, what about wildlife? It is the product of the forests, hedges, fields, marshes, streams and lakes where wild creatures have their homes. With the depletion of our forests, water, soils and fertility, the natural habitat of our wildlife is being destroyed. Present-day conditions are becoming hostile to wildlife. However, given a suitable habitat and

Conservation or Else"

protection, wildlife can maintain itself, not only to provide us with material benefits but also equally important aesthetic values and benefits.

Now, in summing up this valuable booklet, the fact is stressed that, "Conservation is the concern of everyone," and it has shown the complete interrelationship of all resources, and how civilization is upsetting the balance that existed before civilization took place. While a lot of harm has already been done, we must now look to the future, and realize that it is our duty to repair, conserve, maintain and improve our natural endowment which we hold in trust for future generations.

This obligation is not confined to any given area, or a group of persons, but to everyone, as citizens of the whole world. With world population increasing at the rate of twenty-four million each year, the need for conservation must be apparent to everyone. In other words Conservation is the concern of everyone; it is the concern of farmers, foresters, trappers, commercial fishermen, miners,

hunters and anglers. Even business and professional men must realize that there is no form of business, industry or finance which does not owe its prosperity, if not its very existence, to the wealth that springs from the earth—from the farms, the mines, the forests, water, and wildlife.

It is basic that every individual of each generation recognize his obligation to future generations, and to the land on which we live. I am sure that every nature lover and conservationist will find this booklet invaluable and interesting. The address of the Council is as follows: Conservation Council of Ontario, 85 King St., East, Toronto.

The writer of this review, along with others, believes that we need a similar organization here in Saskatchewan, and that members of the Natural History Society should give it serious consideration. Whether the set-up should be inside the Saskatchewan Natural History Society or independently is a matter that should be discussed at length by everyone interested and concerned.

Foot Print In Stone

Andrew Wautier, Esterhazy, Sask.

I just read the interesting article by Allan J. Hudson, dealing with artifacts. My neighbor has a stone with a foot print. I have seen the one in the museum at Regina, but this is different. It is much smaller, and perfect as to details. I am sure it is genuine. It was found on a stony hill among countless other stones of glacial deposit. I think it dates beyond the glacial age, and so would like an expert to see it. I am not able to convince the owner to send it in. The owner made a plaster cast of the print and sent it, along with a sample of the stone, to the Smithsonian Institute. Their answer was that the print, although it looks like the real thing, cannot possibly be human, as the stone formation, when in the mud stage, was before the advent of human life.

My idea is that the sample upsets some of their theories, and they are not willing to admit it. (Not a likely action for any scientist.—Ed.)

The Return of the Hawks

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ber by the Rough-legged. But most of the others were also there — Marsh, Goshawk and Cooper's and Swainson's. During the afternoon they kept coming over the hills continually moving from East to West. At one time, besides the ones in actual flight low over the hills, there were two huge flocks circling — one to the west and the other to the south-east. The larger one was well spread out and contained 58 birds at various altitudes. The other had 47 in it. It took three countings of each flock to get the number because they were continually circling and at times seemed to be mere dots in the sky.

We have never seen such a congregation of hawks in this district before, and, although most of them have left, we still seem to have a large number around.