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1890-1900



*Silver Cascade--White Mountains*, Currier & Ives, [between 1840 and 1880]. LC-USZC2-3001

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**1890s**

In a time of growing awareness of the potential benefits of scientific forestry, the forestry movement shifts its emphasis from saving trees to promoting scientific forest management.

Photographer A.P. Hill uses his photographs of the California redwoods to publicize them as part of campaign to prevent their destruction.

**1890**

In less than a week, Congress passes legislation establishing Sequoia National Park, California (in a bill enacted September 25), and Yosemite and General Grant National Parks, California (in a bill enacted October 1).

In a letter published in the March 5 edition of *Garden and Forest*, Boston-based landscape architect Charles Eliot makes the innovative proposal that a private association be created for the purpose of protecting and preserving regional scenic treasures through permanent trusteeship: "As Boston's lovers of art united to found the Art Museum, so her lovers of nature should now rally to preserve for themselves and all the people as many as possible of the scenes of natural beauty which, by great good fortune, still exist near their doors."

At the behest of editor Robert Underwood Johnson, and as part of their campaign to make Yosemite a national park, John Muir publishes two landmark articles on wilderness preservation in *Century* magazine, "The Treasures of the Yosemite" and "Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park."

## **1891**

Congress passes "An act to repeal timber-culture laws, and for other purposes", known as the Forest Reserve Act, repealing the Timber Culture Act of 1873 and empowering the President to create "forest reserves" (later known as national forests) by withdrawing land from the public domain; this creates the legislative foundation for what became the National Forest system.

President Benjamin Harrison issues a Presidential Proclamation setting aside a tract of land in Wyoming as the nation's first forest reservation, the first unit in what eventually becomes the National Forest system.

The effort to establish a privately-funded tax-exempt association to protect Massachusetts's natural and historical treasures, spearheaded by Charles Eliot, culminates in the incorporation of the Trustees of Public Reservations by act of the Massachusetts legislature; this organization is the nation's first land trust, and the immediate inspiration for Great Britain's National Trust.

First International Irrigation Congress meets in Salt Lake City, promoting the cause of large-scale irrigation in the West.

## **1891-1902**

Charles Sprague Sargent publishes his fourteen-volume *The Silva of North America; A Description of the Trees Which Grow Naturally in North America Exclusive of Mexico*, the seminal work of American dendrology.

## **1892**

In San Francisco, John Muir and a group of associates meet to found the Sierra Club, which is modelled on the Appalachian Mountain Club and explicitly dedicated to the preservation of wilderness.

New York State creates the Adirondack Park, including both portions of the Adirondack Forest Preserve and private holdings, explicitly recognizing the region's value as wilderness.

President Benjamin Harrison issues a Proclamation setting aside a tract of land in Alaska as a forest and fish culture reservation (known as the Afognak Forest and Fish-Culture Reserve), thus creating what is in effect, if not in name, the first national wildlife refuge.

Lafayette Houghton Bunnell publishes the third and final edition of his memoir *Discovery of the Yosemite, and the Indian War of 1851, Which Led to That Event*, first published in 1880; it offers readers a striking account of the powerful impact of Yosemite's grandeur on one of its earliest white visitors, while also pointing to the intimate and complicated connection between the roots of preservationist sentiment and the course of violent conquest.

### **1893**

Historian Frederick Jackson Turner publishes an essay entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," claiming that American character and democracy have been decisively and positively shaped by the continuous experience of the frontier, which has now--according to the 1890 census--finally disappeared beneath the last waves of settlement.

### **1894**

Congress passes "An Act To protect the birds and animals in Yellowstone National Park," known as the National Park Protective Act, which establishes the principle that national parks exist in part to protect wildlife and are not to be used for hunting.

Revision of the New York State Constitution strengthens protection of the Adirondack Forest Preserve by declaring that these lands "shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed, or destroyed;" this provision marks a triumph of the preservationist aspect of conservatism.

Bird Day first observed, on May 4, on the model of Arbor Day and at the initiative of Charles Almanzo Babcock, Superintendent of Schools in Oil City, Pennsylvania. By 1910, Bird Day is observed widely, often in conjunction with Arbor Day; together, Bird Day and Arbor Day provide an important opportunity for formal conservation training and reflection in the nation's schools.

John Muir publishes his first book, *The Mountains of California*; it eventually sells some ten thousand copies.

### **1896**

In an appropriations bill for the Department of Agriculture, Congress establishes the Division of Biological Survey within the Department; it succeeds the Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy, and is renamed the Bureau of Biological Survey in 1905.

The Massachusetts Audubon Society is founded at the instigation of Boston society matron Harriet Lawrence Hemenway, launching the permanent Audubon movement in the United States and providing a grass-roots model outlet for activity by the increasing

numbers of Americans concerned with birds and bird protection; by the end of the following year, there are Audubon Societies in ten states and the District of Columbia.

The American Academy of Sciences establishes a committee on forests, chaired by Charles Sprague Sargent, with Gifford Pinchot as its youngest member, which takes a census of the nation's forests and calls for their active management.

## 1897

As part of an appropriations bill, Congress passes what is known as the Forest Management Act, or Organic Act, making explicit the purpose of Forest Reserves (later National Forests) as resources for lumbering, mining, and grazing and providing the blueprint for their management until the 1960s; this act also places Federal forest administration under the jurisdiction of the General Land Office, Department of the Interior.

This year and the next, John Muir publishes two articles in the *Atlantic Monthly*, "The American Forests" (1897) and "The Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West," which reveal the shift in his thought from compromise to absolute opposition on the question of "use" of protected resources; these articles are later republished in his book *Our National Parks*, in 1901.

A classic work of nature-writing for young people, *Citizen Bird*, the joint creation of an ornithologist (Elliott Coues), a nature-writer (Mabel Osgood Wright), and a wildlife artist (Louis Agassiz Fuertes), suggests the conjunction of science, aesthetics, and moralistic pedagogical enthusiasm which inspired both the surge of popular ornithology in this era and much of the grass-roots support for preservationist conservation measures.

## 1898

Gifford Pinchot appointed chief of the Division of Forestry in the Department of Agriculture; begins crusade to convert the public and forest industry to support for scientific forest management.

Ernest Seton Thompson (later better known as Ernest Thompson Seton) publishes his best-selling *Wild Animals I Have Known*, the first entry in a new genre of anthropomorphic wild-animal stories by Thompson Seton and others; scientific accuracy in these works was always suspect, but their vast popularity, and capacity to engender fascination with and sentimental concern for American wildlife, was never in doubt, and Thompson Seton himself was genuinely concerned with the moral obligations of humans toward wildlife.

Exemplifying the links between sport and the conservation movement, ardent conservationist George Oliver Shields, founder, editor and publisher of *Recreation* magazine and (from 1905) of *Shields' Magazine*, founds the League of American Sportsmen to advance the cause of conservation through members of the sporting public; Shields is the League's only president and guiding force, and it declines along with his personal fortunes after 1908.

## 1899

Frank M. Chapman founds *Bird-Lore* magazine as the organ of the nation's Audubon Societies; it becomes the leading popular journal of ornithology and nature study in this era, and exerts incalculable influence on the growth of conservation knowledge and popular support; today it continues under its later name, *Audubon*.

Congress passes a bill establishing Mount Rainier National Park, Washington.

The Harriman Alaska Expedition explores coastal Alaska by boat throughout the summer. The Expedition is undertaken by a group of distinguished citizens, many of whom are actively involved in conservationism, including numerous scientists under the direction of C. Hart Merriam (Chief, U.S. Biological Survey), John Muir, John Burroughs, photographer Edward Curtis, forester Bernhard Fernow, George Bird Grinnell, and artists Frederick Dellenbaugh and Louis Agassiz Fuertes, funded and accompanied by railroad magnate Edward H. Harriman and members of his family. The Expedition produces a remarkable private Album of "Chronicles and Souvenirs" that captures much of the spirit and outlook which animated the conservation movement in this era, while the major results of the Expedition's scientific and ethnological investigations fill fifteen volumes published between 1901 and 1914.

## 1900

Congress passes the first comprehensive Federal legislation designed to protect wildlife: the Lacey Act, so called in recognition of its chief sponsor, Rep. John F. Lacey, which outlaws the interstate shipment of any wild animals or birds killed in violation of state laws.

At the urging of the California Club, a San Francisco women's organization, Congress passes a Joint Resolution authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to purchase two endangered groves of *Sequoia gigantea* in California; though the effort is not successful, it highlights the increasing private and public commitment to protection of the nation's natural wonders, and the role of women's groups in the conservation movement.

William E. Smythe publishes *The Conquest of Arid America*, an ardently optimistic vision of the future for an irrigated West, linking democratic opportunity to the large-scale technological control of natural resources; at a time when irrigation was understood to be an integral aspect of conservation, this work exemplifies the mentality which created popular support for the Newlands Reclamation Act in 1902.