

"THE GOOD OLD DAYS"

A Review of Game and Fish Administration in Oregon

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On May 11, 1792, Captain Robert Gray sailed across the bar of the Columbia River, and from the log of his ship we find the first written reports concerning the fish, game and fur resources of what later became the state of Oregon.

Gray was a Yankee trader and the primary purpose of his trip was to trade with the Indians for furs. From his rather detailed log we find that he traded not only for numerous furs but also for salmon, elk meat and deer meat. It is interesting to note the prices that he paid in trade goods. He reported that he traded one nail for two salmon. Beaver hides were slightly higher, in fact the going rate was two spikes for one beaver hide. At this bargain rate he was able to pick up 300 beaver hides. Gray also reported that he was able to obtain 150 sea otter hides but the price was a little higher as he had to trade a small piece of copper or a fairly large piece of cloth for each sea otter hide. Incidentally, sea otter hides in the China market at that time brought \$100 apiece.

Quite possibly the next record concerning fish and game for this area comes from the journals of Lewis and Clark during the years of 1805 and 1806. From a fish and game standpoint it is interesting that these hardy explorers were probably more impressed with the numbers of salmon in the Snake and upper Columbia than by any other one thing. They also reported that they grew so tired of eating salmon that they purchased dogs from the Nez Perce Indians to vary their diet. One is inclined to wonder where all the elk and deer in the northeastern part of Oregon were at that time. Lewis did mention that one day, in an effort to vary their diet and menu, they went on an extended hunting trip but were able to secure only one teal duck. This sounds almost like some modern hunting trips.

After Lewis and Clark arrived at the present location of Astoria, they mentioned they became as tired of elk meat as they had been of salmon earlier in their trip. In fact, while camped at Youngs Bay, they lived for five months almost entirely on elk meat.

The fur trade, of course, was responsible for much of the early exploration of the Oregon country. Much of this was headed by the Hudson's Bay Company, which in 1821 established its headquarters at Vancouver under the capable leadership of John McLaughlin. Of particular interest to us today, I believe, is the fact that the Hudson's Bay Company operated under a stated conservation policy. This policy stated that the fur catch should be limited each year to the natural increase. It seems amazing that a company in those early days, when furs were thought to be unlimited, would operate with such a policy. Of course, to make this policy workable the company needed a monopolistic control

of the trade but this they were able to accomplish. Today it can give us food for thought that quite possibly this policy had much to do with the fact that the company was eminently successful for over half a century in the fur trade.

In 1848 when Oregon became a territory we find that our founding forefathers also had great foresight because in Section 12 of the Constitution we find the following: "The rivers and streams of water in said territory of Oregon in which salmon are found or to which they resort shall not be obstructed by dam or otherwise, unless such dams or obstructions are so constructed as to allow salmon to pass freely up and down such rivers and streams."

The first actual game law passed by the legislature of the state of Oregon went into effect in 1872. This law set a closed season for the killing and selling of deer and elk from February 1 to June 1. It further made it illegal to take deer and elk for the sole purpose of obtaining hides and horns. It also set the period from April to July as a closed season for the taking and selling of swans and certain ducks. A closed season from April to June 15 was set for the hunting of grouse and sage hens and a closed season was set for sharp-tailed grouse and partridge from April through July. Along the fish line they passed legislation that made it illegal for explosives or poisons to be used in the taking of fish and they further stated that no dams could be constructed without fishways. In the actual line of fishing they set up a three-year closure on black and striped bass.

After passing all of this fish and game legislation, the legislature adjourned before they had appropriated any funds or delegated any person to enforce these laws. We can only assume that enforcement was at least extremely casual. Actually, the first funds appropriated by the legislature were for the building of a fishway at the Oregon City Falls and this was done in 1882. Prior to this time, however, a fish hatchery had been built in 1877 by the U. S. Fish Commission and a few other attempts at building fish hatcheries had been made by private industry.

A milestone for hunters in both Oregon and all of the United States was set in 1881 and 1882 when, through the efforts of Judge Owen N. Denny, the Chinese pheasant was first successfully introduced. In his capacity as U. S. Minister to China, Judge Denny had become very interested in Chinese pheasants and he shipped 70 pheasants to Oregon on a British tramp steamer from Shanghai in 1881. Through poor treatment only 17 birds survived the trip from Port Townsend to Portland. These were released on George Green's farm on the lower Columbia. A shipment the following year, however, was successful and 50 birds arrived safely and were released at Judge Denny's home on Peterson Butte in Linn County.

The late Gene Simpson, Oregon's well-known pheasant breeder, stated in one of his reports that the introduction of Chinese pheasants from China to the Willamette Valley proved to be the most successful naturalization of a foreign game bird in the world's history. In fact, this introduction was so successful that a season was opened on them in 1891 and the old records show that hunters took 30,000 pheasants in one county. This was probably Linn County. Another record showed that 1,200 dozen ringnecks were shipped to San Francisco markets in that same year.

This success, of course, stimulated introduction of many other exotic birds including Reeve's, gold, silver, and Lady Amherst's pheasants. Unfortunately, these introductions were not marked by the same success. One other introduction in the year 1882 has been regretted ever since. This was the introduction of carp into Oregon waters. These fish were distributed by the U. S. Fish Commission for food purposes.

The first state Fish Commission in Oregon was set up in 1878 and apparently operated until 1887 but reports on this Commission's operations are extremely meager. We do know it leased a fish hatchery on the Clackamas River that had been built with private funds. The 1887 legislature established a State Board of Fish Commissioners. This was a three-man Commission and consisted of Mr. F. C. Reed, Mr. E. P. Thompson, and Mr. R. C. Campbell. Their main duty according to the law was to enforce the fish and game laws. However, no one was given the job and there were no funds to pay him anyway. In 1887 this Commission also leased a fish hatchery, this one being from the Oregon and Washington Fish Propagation Company. But again this Commission had no money with which to operate the hatchery so in 1882 they turned the hatchery over to the U. S. Fish Commission for operation.

The year of 1893 turned out to be one of the milestones in fish and game management in the state of Oregon. This was the year when the first state fish and game protector was appointed and the appointment was indeed a happy one. The first man to hold this position was Hollister McGuire, who was not only a very diligent and active man in his job but who was also a man far ahead of his times in terms of thinking along the lines of fish and game management. One of his innovations that he started in 1895 was the fin clipping of salmon to try to get some indication of the returns from artificially propagated fish. His reports show that 5,000 salmon were clipped and that they had authenticated reports of 32 returns from this group in 1898. The legislature in 1895 also passed a number of other game laws for him to enforce. One of these set a limit of 20 game birds that could be sold during one season. The shipping of live pheasants by private breeders was also authorized. The business was brisk with a going price of \$5 a pair.

Evidently Mr. McGuire's activities favorably impressed the people of Oregon for the legislature in 1898 set up the Board of Fish Commissioners that consisted of the Governor, the Secretary of State, and a Fish Commissioner who was the same Mr. Hollister McGuire. Unfortunately, shortly after his new appointment he was drowned in the Umpqua River while searching for a hatchery site.

As was the usual procedure in the early days, about every time the legislature met a new type of organization was established. The legislature of 1899 was no exception. The new organization established at this time was the creation of the position of game and forestry warden. The man that filled this job was Mr. L. B. W. Quimby and his duties were primarily the enforcement of the game and forestry laws. This same legislature also passed a number of new laws in the game field. The beaver season was closed and the season on elk was closed until 1910. Actually, this closure lasted until 1933. This session also set the first bag limit for deer, being five deer of either sex, and provided an open season from July 15 to October 31. The first season was

also set for duck hunting and extended from September 1 to January 1 although no bag limits were established for waterfowl at this time. An open season for upland game birds was fixed from October 1 to November 30 with a 10 a day bag limit.

With the job of enforcing all these laws, it is interesting to notice the budget that was established for Mr. Quimby. His first year's budget consisted of \$2,200 and it was allocated as follows: \$1,200 for his salary, \$500 for his office expenses, and \$500 for deputy wardens. Mr. Quimby was concerned that no publication existed of all these laws, making it very difficult for people to obey them if they did not know them. With this in mind, he requested permission to print some copies of the hunting regulations with the \$500 set out for office expenses but this permission was refused. As a result he had 5,000 copies printed at his own expense.

The following session of the legislature, in 1901, established the first bag limit for trout. This was quite a liberal one, being 125 fish a day. They also set a bag limit of 50 ducks a day and 100 in any one week and Mr. Quimby reported that there were very few violations of these bag limits. This year also saw the first actual license. This license, however, affected only non-resident hunters and the fee was set at \$10.

Some of Mr. Quimby's reports seem a little odd to us today. In one of these he stated that the sharp-tailed grouse were doing fine and probably would be widespread throughout the state before many years. In the same report he also reported that sage hens were very scarce and would undoubtedly become extinct in a very few years. He did make one statement in this report, though, that has been echoed throughout reports ever since that time. This statement was as follows: "There are 20 fishermen in Oregon where there was 1 ten years ago." Another of his odd recommendations was that the bag limit on ducks be reduced from 50 to 25 but that all limits and restrictions be removed on the hunting of geese. But a step toward the future was made when he urged the screening of irrigation ditches throughout the state.

The first liberations of Hungarian partridge were made in the Willamette Valley in 1900. These birds had been shipped from England. Liberation in eastern Oregon started in 1912 and a few years later the birds appeared to be well established.

Another milestone came in 1905 with the establishment of the State Game Fund. To put some money into this fund beside that derived from the few non-resident hunting licenses that had been purchased up to that time, a resident hunting license was established. This cost \$1. It was, however, not until four years later, in 1909, that a resident angler's license was established. At that time \$1 would buy a resident angler's license; and \$5, a nonresident angler's license.

The selling of game was prohibited finally in 1905 and the first buck law was passed in 1909.

In 1911 the Fish and Game Boards were again merged and the State Board of Fish and Game Commissioners was established and for the first time it was

permissible to raise trout in the fish hatcheries of the state. This reorganization took place under the leadership of Governor Oswald West, who was very interested in fish and game matters. William Finley was the first game warden under this 1911 Commission. This new Commission, looking to its finances, requested an audit of its funds as a beginning. The audit showed a \$21,000 shortage. Up until this time the counties had printed and sold the licenses and turned the funds over to the state game fund. However, as a result of the discovery of this shortage, the Commission decided it should print, number, and sell the licenses. The funds available to the Commission were shown in the audit to be \$28,000 in the game fund, \$14,000 in the game fish hatchery fund, and \$87 in the commercial fish hatchery fund. Back bills from contracts amounted to \$11,000 so we see this new Commission had its work cut out for it.

Two other events in 1911 quite probably have significance. The first of these was the much publicized liberation of 15 head of elk, that had been shipped from Wyoming, in Billy Meadows of Wallowa County. The second was the leasing of Gene Simpson's bird farm located near Corvallis and the hiring of Mr. Simpson to run that farm for the Commission. Mr. Simpson, of course, remained on for many years as head of the bird propagation program for the Game Commission.

Further restrictions and bag limits came along in 1913 with the deer bag limit dropping from five to three, the trout bag limit being dropped to 75 a day, and for the first time geese were included in the 30 a week bag limit for waterfowl. This year also saw the first establishment of large legislative refuges. In fact, in this one session of the legislature, over a million and a half acres of refuges were established in the state.

A quick recap of organizational changes during these years is as follows: In 1915 the Board of Fish and Game Commissioners, established four years before, was abolished and a Fish and Game Commission was established. In 1920 a Board of Fish and Game Commissioners was established with an overall chairman for the Board and a chairman for the Fish Commission and one for the Game Commission.

In 1917 Carl Shoemaker, who is still quite active in national conservation circles, took over as state game warden and William Finley was the state biologist. Shoemaker transferred to the Fish Commission in 1920 and the Game Commission then appointed A. E. Burghduff as state game warden. The same year Matt L. Ryckman was transferred from the McKenzie Hatchery to take over the newly created position of superintendent of trout hatcheries.

During the period from 1917 to 1921 quite a bit of effort was expended on fishways and screens and different types of screens were tested. However, at this time the Commission was not actually engaged in building screens as under the law it was the duty of the landowner.

With the beginning of trout production in the hatcheries, transportation immediately became a problem and the famous car "Rainbow" made its appearance in 1916. This was an express car equipped with milk cans and an aeration system and which could be attached to any train traveling throughout the state. The train would be met at various stations. A few fish would be set off where they were immediately picked up by buckboards and early vintage automobiles to move them to the adjacent streams. Actually stocking by packhorse started as

early as 1913 and there were many interesting reports of these early day pack trips into Waldo and Cultus lakes in the Taylor Burn group. The trout packed on these early trips were shipped by train to Oakridge. There they were transferred to pack horses for the three-day trip into Cultus Lake. Overnight camps were made by streams and the fish were held in the stream overnight in an ingenious type of pack can that allowed the current of the stream to flow through it. A great majority of the Cascade lakes had been barren of fish up to this time.

The next major reorganization in game and fish management came in 1921. At this time the state legislature set up two separate Commissions, the Fish Commission of Oregon and the Oregon State Game Commission. These two Commissions have continued in more or less that state until the present time. The duties of the Fish Commission of Oregon, of course, are primarily concerned with food fish, commercial fishing, and shellfish; and the Game Commission's duties and responsibilities are with game fish, game animals, game birds, and furbearers. The new Game Commission retained A. E. Burghduff as state game warden and Matt L. Ryckman as superintendent of hatcheries. Mr. Ryckman remained in that position for many years and made many contributions along the line of trout propagation in the state of Oregon.

From statements in the reports of this time we find the first concern as to water shortages in the state. The Commission was also worried about increasing pressures on fish and game due to the extensive use of automobiles. The reports did add a cheering note when they mentioned that they probably would not need to go into an artificial propagation program for deer.

A quotation from the Commission's annual report of 1925 has a familiar ring today. It follows: "Every section of Oregon is continually asking for more fish, more game, more patrol, and more protection. The progress and problems of the Game Commission become more numerous and more difficult to solve each year."

In 1928 the Commission made one of its first steps toward a scientific approach to game management. This was done through cooperative agreement with the state veterinarian to study deer losses in Douglas and Curry counties. Oregon Agricultural College was also requested to study the food habits of the Chinese pheasant.

One interesting side light is how legislative thought has changed over the years regarding who qualifies as a pioneer. The first pioneer hunting and fishing license placed into effect by the legislature required the pioneer to have lived in Oregon before 1860. In 1926 the legislature changed the date to 1870. The present law provides that persons born later than 1899 are not eligible.

Turnover in the position of state game warden was rather rapid as Ed Averill took over in 1925, Harold Clifford in 1927, Harvey Moreland in 1930, Charles McClees in 1931, H. L. Kelly later in 1931, Harvey Moreland again in 1932, and Frank B. Wire later in 1932. Mr. Wire, who, of course, is known to many sportsmen of the state, stayed in the position for many years -- in fact until 1947.

Under Ed Averill's administration we find the first mention of pollution as a problem. Wild turkeys were also introduced for the third time, the first introduction having been made in 1899. None of these or subsequent introductions have been marked by great success.

With the organization of the Oregon State Police in 1931 the task of game law enforcement was turned over to that agency, which is the situation at the present time.

The year 1933 saw the first elk season after many years of closure. This was a three-day affair and only in Baker, Union, Umatilla, and Wallowa counties. This season was followed by seasons in 1934 through 1937 when checking stations were operated in conjunction with the elk seasons. The reported kill was 747 in 1934, 692 in 1935, 547 in 1936, and 620 in 1937.

Very gradually over the years the state legislature had been giving the Game Commission some authority for setting seasons and bag limits but it was not until 1941 that the Commission received complete authority. In years prior it had been able to further restrict in some cases but not to set seasons and bag limits.

Quite possibly 1938 should be mentioned as a new era in fish and game management in the state of Oregon. The reason for picking this date is that it was the year of the first graduating class in fish and game management from Oregon State College. Prior to that time many of the students had been used in seasonal capacities during the summer but this was the first class of four-year men graduated and many of them have had careers with the Oregon Game Commission.

The Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit was established at Oregon State College in 1935. This Unit not only handled many research problems for the Commission but also trained many men who have served both with the Oregon and other Game Commissions.

Another man who had lasting effect on fish and game management in Oregon was E. E. Wilson, who was appointed to the Commission in 1935. He became chairman in 1939 and served in this capacity until 1949. Mr. Wilson's keen interests in strong budget control and a scientific approach to fish and game management certainly were of great benefit to these resources in Oregon.

The Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act, commonly called the Pittman-Robertson Act, was passed in 1937 and Oregon received their first appropriation of these funds in 1939. The first large project with the use of these funds was one for the trapping and transplanting of beaver to re-establish them throughout the state.

During 1937 and 1938 range depletion due to overgrazing by big game started becoming a serious problem and the first special season was held in the Murderer's Creek area. Simultaneously, the Ochoco, Canyon Creek, and Myrtle Park game refuges were opened to hunting. A limited type antelope season was held with 275 tags being issued and a reported kill of 175.

The year 1940 saw a marked change in production policies, concerning both trout and pheasants. These policy changes emphasized quality rather than quantity in both fish and game bird production. Along with this, trained biologists were placed in charge of the liberations of both birds and fish. This period also saw the first large scale stream and lake survey inaugurated. The first efforts were made in the Deschutes National Forest and on the Rogue River. The Game Commission also inaugurated an intensive in-service training program during this period and although this program has changed in form, it has been carried on since that date.

The first effort at lake rehabilitation through the removal of rough fish took place in 1942 and the scene of this rehabilitation was South Twin Lake. The legislature had just given the Game Commission permission to construct, install, and maintain screens in irrigation ditches that were under eight feet in width, and as a result a screening program was started, the first efforts being in Jackson and Josephine counties. World War II had a very definite effect on the operations of the Game Commission as it lost 50 men to the armed services in the first year of the war.

Surprisingly enough, hunting and fishing pressure did not slacken during the war years and as a result of the loss of manpower the funds of the Game Commission were not completely expended during those years. These monies, shortly following the war, were applied into a carefully arranged capital improvement program, most of the funds going into renovation and modernization of the fish hatchery facilities. In 1946, the Game Commission started, for the second time, a regular publication for public distribution. The first of these was the Oregon Sportsman, which was published from 1913 to 1918 and from 1924 to 1927. The publication started in 1946 was the Oregon State Game Commission Bulletin which has appeared monthly since that time.

At this same time a formal Game Division was established and the state was divided into game districts with qualified biologists acting as district game agents. The Summer Lake Game Management Area and public shooting grounds were started in 1944 and the first public shoot was held the same year. The number of hunters using the area in 1944, its first year of operation, was 2,201; in 1945, 4,102; but by 1946, 5,202 hunters availed themselves of the facilities. The success of this operation encouraged the Commission to make a start on Sauvie Island near Portland, the first acquisition being made in 1947. The same year saw the start of a more intensive information and education program and this has been expanded through the years on up to the present time.

In 1947 C. A. Lockwood became director.

A new emphasis in the game program got its official start in 1948. This was toward the improvement of habitat. This operation has been gradually increased during the past ten years.

A major internal reorganization occurred in the 1949-1950 biennium. This change decentralized the supervision of all operations of the Game Commission and established five regions with a regional supervisor in charge of operations in each region. These regions have remained practically the same since they were established.

By this time lake rehabilitation had become one of the major programs of the Fishery Division and partial control operations were taking place at Diamond, Paulina, East, Fish, Davis, and Crescent lakes and Wickiup Reservoir. Total eradication operations were attempted at Big Lava, Little Cultus, Meacham and Bradby lakes and Ochoco and Unity reservoirs.

The Information and Education Division had also expanded its activities to a program in youth summer camps with Game Commission employees attending youth group camps and teaching conservation of fish and game resources on the ground. Each year since this time the program has been expanded.

By the next biennium the E. E. Wilson Game Management Area was added. The Pittman-Robertson program had been gradually expanded and extended and by this time projects included Sauvie Island Game Management Area, North Fork Winter Range Area, Klamath Game Management Area, and development projects on the E. E. Wilson Game Management Area, Fern Ridge Reservoir and Malheur Reservoir along with pheasant studies at Summer Lake.

In 1951 a plant for the fabrication of screens for irrigation ditches was built at Central Point, Oregon. By the following year 510 rotary screens had been installed by the Game Commission and were in operation. Besides Jackson and Josephine counties, by this time screens were operating in Wasco, Hood River and Crook counties.

Due to the complexities of water development, a Basin Investigations Section was established by the Commission at this time. Some of the problems faced immediately were planning and operation of temporary and permanent fishways at McNary Dam and planning of The Dalles Dam fishways. In the Willamette system there was planning and construction of the Leaburg Hatchery by the Corps of Army Engineers and future plans for power development on the McKenzie River by the Eugene Water and Electric Board. This section was also studying Copco hydroelectric developments on the upper North Umpqua River and, in addition, was working with the Bureau of Reclamation on plans for the Rogue, Grande Ronde and Walla Walla rivers. On the Deschutes River, the Pelton Dam of Portland General Electric Company was in the planning stage.

In 1951 Phil Schneider, who at that time was assistant director, took over the directorship and still serves in that capacity.

In the fish hatcheries we now find rainbow, eastern brook, steelhead, cutthroat, silver salmon, chinook salmon, brown trout, lake trout, and kokanee. The stocking emphasis has changed to legal size in streams and fingerlings in lakes.

The year of 1950 also saw the passage of the Dingell-Johnson law by Congress and Oregon received the first of these funds in 1951. With the receipt of this match money, the acquisition of fishing access was started.

Game damage to both agricultural crops and winter ranges was becoming an increasingly serious problem. Fencing, stack paneling, hazing, repellents, and special seasons were employed in attempts to meet the situation.

In 1952 the first general short period either-sex hunting was started for deer. This was revised into the Unit Hunt System in 1958.

In 1952 large-scale liberations of the chukar partridge were initiated. Actually, back in 1931, a few chukars were being held at the Corvallis Game Farm and small liberations were made in southwestern Oregon in 1940 and 1948. However, results had not been encouraging until the '50s when liberations were started in the eastern part of the state. These liberations did prove successful and the bird was well established by 1956 when the first open season was held.

In 1959 there was a revision of the Game Commission's research program. Previously all research had been handled by the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at Corvallis, but feeling the need for placing a greater emphasis on fish and game research, the Commission established a research division within its own organization. A state-wide hunter safety training program has also been inaugurated this year.

In any brief look at the history of fish and game management in Oregon, only the high spots can be touched upon and this is certainly true with the above. One should, however, look at the use of these resources before ending. Probably the best way is to review license sales for fishing and hunting over the years.

In 1915, 99,000 fishing and hunting licenses were sold. Through 1940 the increase was steady and gradual as 111,000 were sold in 1920 and 125,000 in 1930. By 1940 total licenses had reached 176,000.

The next ten years, however, showed a rapid increase as 388,000 persons were licensed to hunt and fish in 1950. Last year the number was 579,000 and we can only guess at what it will be in 1970.