

Sportsmen Push for Laws to Conserve Wildlife

1850 - 1870

Recognizing the disastrous outcomes of exploitation of wildlife and natural resources, sportsmen, writers, and legislators began touting the ideals of conservation and land preservation with dedicated clubs, widely dispersed writings, and federal laws on the matter.

1850:

SPORTSMAN'S CLUBS: Sportsman's Clubs form to crusade against game-law violations and market hunting.

1851:

WILDERNESS IDEAL: Henry David Thoreau delivers an address in Concord, Massachusetts declaring that "in Wildness is the preservation of the World."

1852:

FIRST CONSERVATION LAWS: California passes the first laws against the killing of pronghorns and elk.

1864:

MAN AND NATURE: Man and Nature, by George Perkins Marsh, was published. Historian Lewis Mumford called it "the fountain-head of the conservation movement."

YOSEMITE VALLEY RESERVED: Yosemite Valley, California, is reserved from public land as a state park to preserve the area and the wildlife inhabiting it.

1867:

ALASKA PURCHASE: The U.S. purchases Alaska from Russia.

1867-1868:

POWELL SURVEYS: John Wesley Powell surveys the Rocky Mountains and Grand Canyon for Smithsonian.

1869:

PASSENGER PIGEONS PROTECTED: The first law protecting passenger pigeons passes in Ohio.

FIRST WILDLIFE RESERVE: Pribilof Islands is set aside by law as the first wildlife reserve, specifically for the protection of fur seals. (protected by Russians since 1834)