

Lecture #11: Hunters and Hunted

Suggested Readings:

Peter Matthiessen, *Wildlife in America* (1959)

John F. Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (3rd ed, 2001)

Louis Warren, *The Hunter's Game* (1997); Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature* (2001)

Dan Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy: The Southern Plains from 1800 to 1850," *J Am Hist* (1991)

Andrew Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (2000)

Outline:

I. The Passing of the Bison

theme: expansion of 19th c market networks (von Thunen) increasingly affected wildlife

bison herds in 1865 est at 15 million; note role of herding as survival behavior

Indian hunting shifted from foot to horse with arrows & guns; horses competed for grass; not in balance??

growing evidence that there had already been substantial declines in bison herds, perhaps by 50%, by 1850

two additional key changes: market in buffalo hides developed with improved tanning in 1870s, and arrival of railroad shifted transportation costs to make sale economic: bison market

professional hide hunters feed railroad workers, sell meat east; 4 mill killed/yr 1871-2

by 1883, virtually no animals left; 1889, only 85 in wild, 1091 left in world; bones sold

II. Extinction: Passenger Pigeons

passenger pigeon flocked in ways similar to bison's herds: billion birds to a flock, collective nesting that made capture extremely easy, flights darkened sky

easy to kill several with single gunshot, netting techniques brought in millions

well-organized market: telegraphic communication of prices, location of nesting areas

destruction of habitats as one source of decline: loss of deciduous forests

but vast hunting pressure during nesting made reproduction difficult, bird evidently needed critical mass to sustain breeding population. last pigeon died in zoo 1914

not alone: cf. Carolina Parakeet, Great Auk, Dodo; last heath hen dies 1933

III. Flesh Markets

note implication of market expansion: free good converted to privately-owned dead animal

meat market among most important reasons for hunting: rural demand for subsistence in frontier and poor areas (cf southern common rights; urban demand for wild meat, with \$500,000 worth of game sold in

Chicago alone in 1873, handling game to NY and Europe

individual market hunters killed thousands of birds per year, sold by wagonload

game also for clothing, esp millinery and feather trades: women's hats, songbirds

also: taxidermy, stuffed trophy bodies and heads, leading us toward sport hunting

IV. Sportsmen and their Code

hunting and angling had long been popular aristocratic activities in England & Europe

American blood sports complicated by additional icon of individualist frontier hero

key promoter of new ethic of sportsmanship: Henry William Herbert (1807-58), born England, migrated NY 1831, wrote *Field Sports in the U.S. and British Provinces of America*, 1848 under pseudonym Frank Forester, followed by several other manuals before suicide

sport hunting a leisure activity done for the love of fair play, shoot only on wing, use proper technique, seek to display noble manhood, chase only worthwhile if done with style, risk, dash; unfair advantage of quarry a sign of unethical hunter

sportsmanlike values promoted by sporting press in post-Civil War era, esp. Charles Hallock and George Bird Grinnell's *Forest and Stream*, 1871; also *American Sportsman*, 1871; *Field and Stream*, 1874; *American Angler*, 1881

rise of press accompanied by wave of new sport organizations at local and state level: rod and gun clubs, private game preserves protecting lands for game and for members

game preserves as retreats for wealthy elite, in some areas eroded common rights of lower classes to do subsistence hunting as supplement to farming and other food

upstate NY emerged as center for game preserves in much same way as for picturesque

Adirondacks begin to get attention: Emerson, Lowell, & Agassiz's Philosophers' Camp, 1858

post-Civil War, large estates emerge for truly wealthy, and railroad access and hotels for less well-to-do.

lodges as centers for hunt, rustic architecture as urban retreat

V. Conserving Game

romanticism again: reencounter nature outside city to revive spirit; add vigorous manhood

assault on market hunters now began in earnest: destructive of sport hunters' game, wasteful because (Grinnell) killed capital **and** interest on principal; unfair methods

Grinnell & Roosevelt form Boone & Crockett Club, 1887: promote manly sport, save game

game regs: closed seasons, bag limits, ethical techniques, regulate sale, transport

1st Audubon Soc. 1886-89; Mass Audubon Soc, 1896; Nat. Assoc. Aud. Socs, 1905: songbirds

1900: Lacey Act (Iowa Rep John F. Lacey) provided interstate regulation of game sales