



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

National Conservation Training Center

Conserving the Nature of America



Search NCTC

SEARCH

Training

Priorities/Initiatives

Resources/News

Campus

History and Heritage

USFWS History

Conservation Museum

Exhibits

Conservation Heroes

Fallen Comrades Memorial

Public Lectures

Conservation Archive

Historic Images

Historic Documents

Historic Films

Oral Histories

History Resources

Podcasts

FWS History Articles

History Links

Heritage Committee

Timelines

Lists

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USFWS History

A Timeline for Fish and Wildlife Conservation

- 1871: U.S. Commission on Fish and Fisheries created. Charged with studying and recommending solutions to decline in fisheries. Commission was given an initial appropriation of \$5000. Spencer Fullerton Baird (1823-1887) is the first Fish Commissioner.
- 1872: Fish hatcheries authorized by Congress for propagation of food fishes, initial appropriation is \$15,000. Baird Station in northern California used to collect, fertilize and ship salmon eggs by rail to East coast. Deep-sea exploring vessel Albatross launched August 19 to survey offshore fishing, serves as an ocean-going marine biology laboratory for 39 years.
- 1885: Office of Economic Ornithology created in Department of Agriculture with a \$5000 appropriation. C. Hart Merriam (1855-1942) heads new section and begins survey of geographic distribution of nation's birds and mammals. Early work centers on role of birds in controlling agricultural pests.
- 1896: Division of Biological Survey was formed out of Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy. In 1905, it was renamed the Bureau of Biological Survey.
- 1900: Lacey Act passed.
- 1900: Division of Biological Survey is given responsibility of enforcing the Lacey Act preventing illegal shipment or importation of wildlife. Beginning of law enforcement role for agency. American Ornithologist's Union hires first "wardens" to foil plumage hunters. Audubon National committee formed to coordinate efforts.
- 1903: President Theodore Roosevelt establishes nation's first wildlife refuge on March 14 at Pelican Island National Bird Reservation. Pelican Island is assigned to the Division of Biological Survey. American Ornithologist's Union agrees to pay warden, Paul Kroegel. Commission on Fish and Fisheries renamed Bureau of Fisheries and moved into new Department of Commerce and Labor.
- 1905: The Bureau of Biological Survey established in the Department of Agriculture, replacing the old Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy. The new bureau becomes responsible for managing new bird and mammal reservations and "set-aside" areas.
- 1906: Game and Bird Preserves Protection Act (Refuge Trespass Act) gives regulatory authority for public uses on reservation.
- 1909: President Roosevelt establishes 26 Bird Reservations, Mount Olympus National Monument in Washington for elk, and Fire Island, Alaska for moose. The Yukon Delta Bird Reservation in Alaska is 15 million acres.
- 1913: The Federal Migratory Bird Law gives federal government authority over hunting of migratory birds and the first migratory bird hunting regulations were adopted
- 1916: Treaty signed between U.S. and Great Britain (representing Canada) to protect migratory birds.
- 1920s: Bird banding programs started (When were flyways officially designated?)
- 1918: Migratory Bird Treaty Act passed by U.S. Congress implementing the convention between the U.S. and Great Britain (Canada) for the protection of migratory birds.
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- 1924: Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge established by Congress
- 1929: Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge established by Congress
- 1929: Migratory Bird Conservation Act passed authorizing the appropriation of \$7.9 million for the purchase or lease of refuges for waterfowl and establishing a Migratory Bird Conservation Commission to approve areas recommended by the Secretary for acquisition with migratory bird conservation funds.
- 1931: Animal Damage Control Act provides broad authority to control predators, rodents and birds under U.S. Department of Interior.

- 1933: Aldo Leopold (1886-1948) writes Game Management.
- 1933: Civilian Conservation Corps crews and Works Progress Administration employees build infrastructure and improve habitat on over 50 national wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries throughout the 1930s.
- 1934: Original Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act authorized the Secretaries of Agriculture and Commerce to "provide assistance to and cooperate with Federal and State agencies" on issues involving the protection and production of fish and wildlife.
- 1934: Thomas Beck, Aldo Leopold, and Jay "Ding" Darling are appointed to a special Presidential Committee on Wildlife ("Beck Committee") to make recommendations to improve national wildlife resources.
- 1934: President Franklin Roosevelt appoints "Ding" Darling to head the Bureau of Biological Survey. Darling and his Chief of Refuges, J. Clark Salyer II, expand the Refuge System to nearly 14 million acres over the next 20 years.
- 1934: Congress passes the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp Act) providing a source of funding for the acquisition and management of waterfowl habitat.
- 1934: Division of Game Management was created in the Bureau of Biological Survey for wildlife law enforcement.
- 1935: Federal Power Act is enacted and requires the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to accept the Service's prescriptions for fish passage.
- 1935: Lacey Act amended to prohibit foreign commerce in illegally taken wildlife.
- 1936: Convention between the U.S. and Mexico for the protection of migratory birds and game mammals is signed.
- 1935: The Waterfowl Flyways of North America. In 1935, relying on data from waterfowl banding, Frederick Lincoln developed the Flyways concept. The concept gained widespread credence and is still applied in an administrative context with the annual development of migratory bird hunting regulations.
- 1936: Bureau of Fisheries hires Rachel Carson (1907-1964) as a biologist.
- 1937: Congress passes Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson Act). The Act makes federal funds available for state wildlife protection and propagation. The funds are derived from taxes on rifles, archery equipment and ammunition and are used for purchasing game habitat and conducting wildlife research.
- 1940: Fish and Wildlife Service is created by combining the Bureau of Fisheries and the Bureau of Biological Survey within the Department of Interior. Ira Gabrielson named first Director of Fish and Wildlife Service
- 1940: Western Hemisphere Convention signed by the U.S. (Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere). – Under this 1940 treaty, the governments of the United States and 17 other American republics expressed their wish to "protect and preserve in their natural habitat representatives of all species and genera of their native flora and fauna, including migratory birds" and to protect regions and natural objects of scientific value. The nations agreed to take certain actions to achieve these objectives, including the adoption of "appropriate measures for the protection of migratory birds of economic or esthetic value or to prevent the threatened extinction of any given species."
- 1940: Bald Eagle Act enacted.
- 1942: Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters Office moves to Chicago for the duration of World War II.
- 1942: First Refuge Field Manual issued addressing a variety of organizational, personnel and management topics.
- 1946: The Service's River Basin Studies Program was founded in response to amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and growing demands for more protection of fish and wildlife resources threatened by large federal water projects. Created a growing network of field offices that would become our Ecological Services field offices of today, bringing fish and wildlife technical assistance to the public and state agencies throughout the country.
- 1946: Albert Day becomes FWS Director.
- 1949: A Sand County Almanac published.
- 1949: Duck Stamp Act increases fee to \$2 while allowing up to 25% of any refuge's area to be used for hunting.
- 1951: Administrative Flyway system for waterfowl management adopted.

- 1953: John Farley becomes FWS Director.
- 1955: The Continental Waterfowl Population Survey Program begins standardized cooperative surveys performed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Canadian Wildlife Service, state and provincial biologists, and non-governmental cooperators. The survey program is believed to be the most extensive, comprehensive, long-term annual wildlife survey effort in the world. The results of these surveys determine the status of North America's waterfowl populations; play a significant role in setting annual waterfowl hunting regulations; and help to guide the decisions of waterfowl managers throughout North America.
- 1956: The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 established a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and broadened the authority for acquisition and development of refuges.
- 1956: The Fish and Wildlife Service re-organized into the United States Fish and Wildlife Service consisting of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and Bureau of Commercial Fisheries.
- 1957: Daniel Janzen becomes FWS Director.
- 1958: Amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act require coordination between Federal and State agencies and consideration of fish and wildlife impacts, thereby laying the groundwork for the creation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and portions of the Clean Water Act.
- 1960: Arctic National Wildlife Range established
- 1962: Recognizing new public demands for recreational activities after World War II, Congress passed the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 which authorized the recreational use of refuges when such uses did not interfere with the area's primary purposes and when sufficient funds were available to conduct recreational activities.
- 1962: Rachel Carson publishes Silent Spring.
- 1962: Bald Eagle Protection Act amended to become the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
- 1964: John Gottschalk becomes FWS Director.
- 1964: Congress passes the Land and Water Conservation Fund and provides a dedicated funding stream for land acquisition.
- 1964: Wilderness Act creates National Wilderness Preservation System which includes national wildlife refuges.
- 1966: Congress passes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act for the administration and management of all areas in the system including "wildlife refuges, areas for the protection and conservation of fish and wildlife that are threatened with extinction, wildlife ranges, game ranges, wildlife management areas, and waterfowl production areas."
- 1967: Bald eagles declared an endangered species
- 1969: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) passed by Congress and becomes the principle tool for assessing the impacts of major federal development projects on fish and wildlife. NEPA planning is now the center piece of nearly all federal resource planning and mitigation.
- 1970: Spencer Smith becomes FWS Director.
- 1970: The Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969 became effective prohibiting the importation into the United States of species "threatened with extinction worldwide," except as specifically allowed for zoological and scientific purposes, and propagation in captivity.
- 1970: Bureau of Commercial Fisheries is moved out of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and transferred to Department of Commerce, renamed National Marine Fisheries Service as part of new National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- 1970: The peregrine falcon is listed as endangered, a victim of the pesticide DDT, which caused eggshell thinning and prevented breeding success
- 1970: First Earth Day celebrated on April 22.
- 1971: The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), an outgrowth of the Alaska Statehood Act, authorized the addition of immense acreages of highly productive, internationally significant wildlife lands to the Refuge System.
- 1971: Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitats; adopted in Ramsar, Iran, on February 3, 1971, and opened for signature at UNESCO headquarters on July 12, 1972. On December 21, 1975, the Convention entered into force after the required signatures of seven countries. The United States Senate consented to ratification of the Convention on October 9, 1986, and the President signed instruments of ratification on November 10, 1986. The Convention maintains a list of wetlands of international

importance and works to encourage the wise use of all wetlands in order to preserve the ecological characteristics from which wetland values derive. The Convention is self-implementing, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service serving as the U.S. administrative authority for the Convention, in consultation with the Department of State.

- 1972: The Environmental Protection Agency bans the use of DDT in the U.S. because of its potential danger to both people and to wildlife, including the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and brown pelican.
- 1972: U.S. and Japan signed the Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds and Birds in Danger of Extinction, and Their Environment. The Convention addresses the conservation of migratory birds in the U.S., its territories, and Japan.
- 1972: The Marine Mammal Protection Act was enacted, prohibiting the take (i.e., hunting, killing, capture, and/or harassment) of marine mammals, and enacting a moratorium on the import, export, and sale of marine mammal parts and products.
- 1973: Lynn Greenwalt becomes FWS Director.
- 1973: Congress passes the Endangered Species Act and puts Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service in charge of enforcing it. Over 25 refuges have been established for the specific protection of an endangered species, including the Attwater Prairie Chicken, Mississippi Sandhill Crane, and Crocodile Lake Refuges.
- 1975: The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is ratified, regulating the importation, exportation, and re-exportation of species.
- 1976: Convention Between the U.S. and the USSR Concerning the Conservation of Migratory Birds and Their Environment, signed in Moscow on November 19, 1976. The Convention provides for the protection of species of birds that migrate between the United States and the Soviet Union or that occur in either country and "have common flyways, breeding, wintering, feeding or moulting areas."
- 1977: The first plant species are listed as endangered—the San Clemente Island Indian paintbrush, San Clemente Island larkspur, San Clemente Island broom, and San Clemente Island bush-mallow.
- 1978: The U.S. Supreme Court finds the Tennessee Valley Authority in violation of the ESA by building a dam that would threaten the continued survival of the snail darter.
- 1978: The U.S. Supreme Court finds the Tennessee Valley Authority in violation of the ESA by building a dam that would threaten the continued survival of the snail darter.
- 1980: Congress passes the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, creating 9 new wildlife refuges including the 18 million acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and expanding 7 other units. The law adds 54 million refuge acres in Alaska, tripling the size of the Refuge System.
- 1980: Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act enacted protecting non-game species.
- 1981: Robert Jantzen becomes FWS Director.
- 1984: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Establishment Act creates the Foundation as a federally chartered charitable, non-profit corporation to aid Service conservation efforts.
- 1985: Animal Damage Control moved from Fish and Wildlife Service to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service in United States Department of Agriculture.
- 1986: Frank Dunkle becomes FWS Director.
- 1986: North American Waterfowl Management Plan signed. Recognizing the importance of waterfowl and wetlands to North Americans and the need for international cooperation to help in the recovery of a shared resource, the U.S. and Canadian governments developed a strategy to restore waterfowl populations through habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement. The strategy was documented in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan signed in 1986 by the Canadian Minister of the Environment and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, the foundation partnership upon which hundreds of others would be built. With its update in 1994, Mexico became a signatory to the Plan.
- 1988: The African Elephant Conservation Act became law, providing additional protection for the species, whose numbers had declined by 50 percent in the last decade. The Lacey Act was amended to include, among other things, felony provisions for commercial guiding violations.
- 1989: John Turner becomes FWS Director.
- 1989: Congress passes the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. The North American Wetlands Conservation Act was passed, in part, to support activities under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an international agreement that provides a strategy for the long-term protection of wetlands and associated uplands habitats needed by waterfowl and other migratory birds in North America. The Act provides

matching grants to organizations and individuals who have developed partnerships to carry out wetlands conservation projects in the United States, Canada, and Mexico for the benefit of wetlands-associated migratory birds and other wildlife.

- 1989: The National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory was dedicated in Ashland, Oregon, providing expertise to assist in investigations, ranging from species identification to technical assistance such as surveillance and photography.
- 1990: Northern Spotted owl listed as threatened species.
- 1993: Mollie Beattie becomes first female FWS Director.
- 1995: Bald eagle upgraded from endangered to a threatened species.
- 1997: National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act strengthens the mission of the Refuge System, clarifies priority public uses, and requires comprehensive conservation plans for every refuge.
- 1997: Jamie Clark becomes FWS Director.
- 1997: The National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia is officially dedicated.
- 1998: Reauthorization of the Rhinoceros-Tiger Conservation Act prohibited the import, export, or sale of any product, item or substance containing, or labeled as containing, any substance derived from tigers or rhinos.
- 1999: The peregrine falcon delisted following recovery.
- 2000: Congress passes the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act to protect and conserve neotropical migrants both in the U.S. and in their winter homes in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- 2002: Steven Williams becomes FWS Director.
- 2004: The California Condor reproduces in the wild for the first time in 17 years.
- 2005: H. Dale Hall becomes FWS Director.
- 2006: White nose syndrome first discovered in a single cave in New York. The fungal disease has since spread to 19 states and four Canadian provinces, and killed more than 5.7 million bats.
- 200: Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument—the first marine national monument—was established by Presidential proclamation under the authority of the Antiquities Act of 1906. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, which extends 1200 miles from Nihoa to Kure Atoll in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, is the largest protected area in the United States.
- 2007: As a result of the banning of DDT and ESA protection, the bald eagle is delisted due to recovery.
- 2009: Sam Hamilton becomes FWS Director.
- 2009: Three additional marine national monuments were established in the Pacific. In total, these 4 marine monuments protect the biological and geological heritage on nearly 214,777,000 acres of small islands, atolls, coral reefs, submerged lands, and deep blue waters.
- 2009: As a result of the banning of DDT and ESA protection, more than 650,000 brown pelicans could be found across Florida and the Gulf and Pacific Coasts. Therefore, it is removed from Federal protection as an endangered species.
- 2010: On April 20, the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded and sank in the Gulf of Mexico, triggering the largest oil spill in history. Oil gushed from the sea floor until the well was capped on July 15. About 4.9 million barrels of oil are estimated to have been spilled during these 87 days. During the response and continuing in the damage assessment FWS employees worked to rescue oiled wildlife, patrol beaches, wetlands, and estuaries, relocate sea turtles, assist the States and local landowners, and evaluate the ecological impacts of the spill.
- 2011: Dan Ashe becomes FWS Director.
- 2013: On November 14, 2013, the United States destroyed its six-ton stock of confiscated elephant ivory, sending a clear message that the nation will not tolerate wildlife crime that threatens to wipe out the African elephant and a host of other species around the globe. The destruction of this ivory, which took place at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Property Repository on the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge near Denver, Colorado, was witnessed by representatives of African nations and other countries, dozens of leading conservationists, and international media representatives.
- 2014: On February 5, 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed delisting the Oregon chub from the Endangered Species Act. If finalized, it would be the first ever fish removed from the ESA due to recovery, a

monumental success for the Service and the many partners who worked together to make this happen, and for all Americans concerned about the health of our nation's wildlife.

Last updated: March 7, 2014

National Conservation Training Center | 698 Conservation Way | Shepherdstown, West Virginia | 25443-4024

Webmaster email: NCTC_webmaster@fws.gov

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