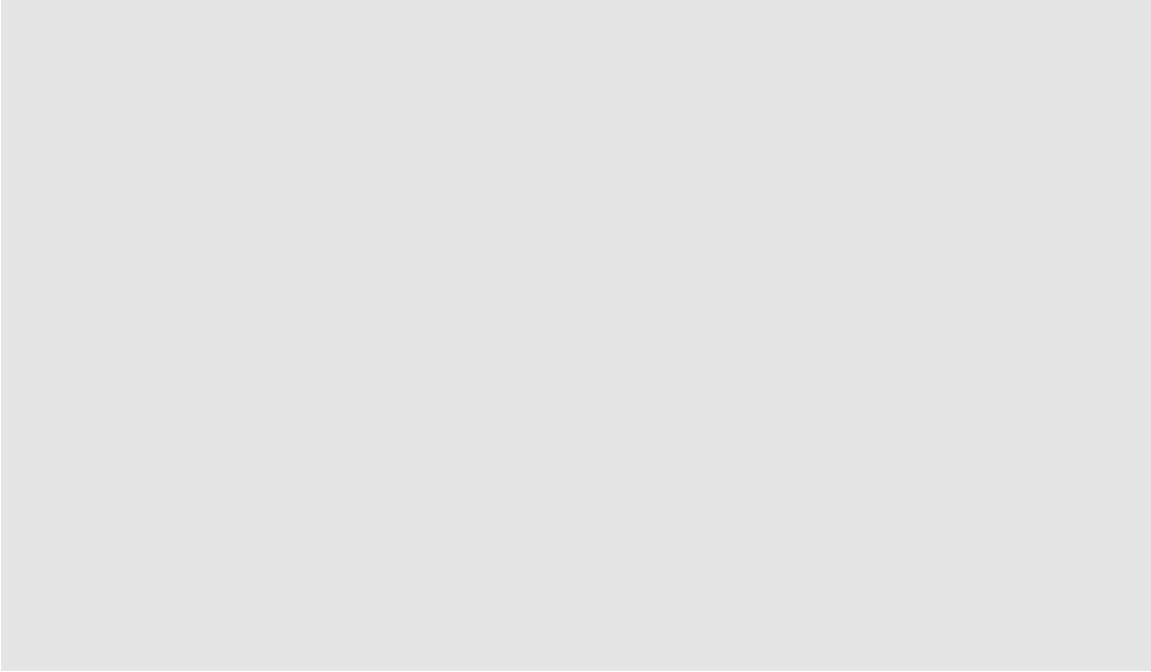




CHAPTER TWO

Bison Conservation and
Buffalo National Park

1908–1920



ALL EARLY NATIONAL PARK POLICIES WERE INFLUENCED by the experience of Canada's first national park, Rocky Mountains Park (now Banff National Park). As this park was established during the heyday of the Conservation Movement, its development was influenced by the utilitarian spirit of this movement and its motives of control and exploitation to benefit the nation. Rocky Mountains Park was founded in 1887 in order to profit from the discovery of the Banff Hot Springs; all ensuing policies governing this park during this early period were driven by economic motives, with an emphasis on commercialism and the development of resources. Despite these motives, however, the *Rocky Mountains Park Act* of 1887 still laid the foundation for a preservationist policy for national parks in general, and specifically for game animals.¹ Historian Sid Marty argues that "Canadian legislators tried to frame an act that would make the reserve a commercial success, but save it from the abuses of the ignorant and the avaricious."²

When Buffalo Park Reserve, later to become Buffalo National Park, was established in 1908, the national park system in Canada was only two decades old. The experience of this park, however, seems at first to be a departure from the commercial motives inherent in the establishment of the other early mountain parks. As a prairie park, Buffalo National Park had little to offer in terms of exploitable resources or commercial potential. Whereas game in the mountain parks was preserved and propagated because it brought revenue to the park, the Dominion government's purchase of the Pablo bison herd was devoid of profit-making motives.

Those administering the effort at Buffalo National Park, first the Department of the Interior and then, in 1911, the Parks Branch, did not intend to profit from the bison. However, they did not foresee the management problems and expense that accompanied the rapid growth of the herd. Within the first decade, the Dominion government had the largest bison herd in the world and

the Parks Branch was forced to rethink the management of the herd and the direction of the effort. They quickly realized that the bison could not be saved on sentiment alone. Just like the game in the mountain national parks, the Parks Branch needed to make the bison profitable to sustain the effort at Buffalo National Park.

In 1885, the Banff mineral hot springs were discovered by two prospectors and a Canadian Pacific Railway employee. In the spirit of progress and development that dominated this period, the Dominion government annexed the area before these individuals could lay any private claims.³ The Dominion government knew that such natural wonders were profitable. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald boasted:

They are the only hot springs so far as I know yet discovered in the Dominion and their value in my opinion can scarcely be estimated and should not be allowed to go into the hands of a private speculator but should be owned by the government as a National Sanitarium in the same way as the hot springs of Arkansas are...for the United States.⁴

Similar policies drove the establishment of other national parks along the Canadian Pacific Railway line. Glacier and Yoho reserves were set aside the following year to make the railway through the mountains in British Columbia more popular and profitable.⁵

Given that the early national parks in Canada were established during, and influenced by, the Conservation Movement, it is not surprising that a more utilitarian approach is apparent in their development and in the safeguarding of resources in them for the Dominion. The movement began in the United States in the 1860s, when individuals, prompted by the near obliteration of natural resources through exploitive measures, called for efforts to ensure that resources be available for future generations. Advocates like painter George Catlin, ornithologist and painter John James Audubon, and writer Henry David Thoreau, started to lobby for the preservation of wilderness. The beginning of the movement is marked by the publication of George Perkins Marsh's book *Man and Nature* (1864), which prompted North Americans to rethink society's relationship with the natural environment.⁶

The Canadian movement, which began in the late 19th century and continued until the early 1920s, started in the forestry sector in Ontario and Quebec, where it was realized that sustainability of the industry hinged on careful management of natural resources. The movement started to solidify

when lumbermen from Quebec and members of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association, who were concerned with the how deforestation had affected the agrarian environment, were invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the American Forestry Congress in Cincinnati, Ohio, in April 1882. At this congress, a second meeting of the association was planned for Montreal in August of the same year, an event that historians Peter Gillis and Thomas Roach mark as the beginning of the Conservation Movement in Canada.⁷

In the American Conservation Movement, two different schools of thought emerged. A more preservationist school, whose followers advocated that nature should be safeguarded from development and left unaltered, was led by writer and nature enthusiast John Muir (1838–1914).⁸ Gifford Pinchot and other professional foresters, however, believed wise use, efficiency, and rational planning could ensure the permanence of resources in the future.⁹ In Canada, the Conservation Movement followed this latter, more conservationist, stance. One reason for this was that the movement was led by scientific farmers and lumbermen. In fact, Canadian civil servants looked to American forest industry trends to help define their conservation policies. In particular, Gifford Pinchot, chief forester in the Roosevelt government, provided advice to Canadian government officials, such as Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton and Superintendent of Forestry Elihu Stewart, based on economic arguments and trends in scientific forestry and land management in the United States.¹⁰ Furthermore, the “myth of superabundance,” the belief that the natural wealth of the country was inexhaustible, was much more prevalent in Canada given that the country had a larger wilderness area than that of the United States and a much smaller population.¹¹

The Conservation Movement was certainly influential in the establishment of the early Canadian national parks. In his theory, the “doctrine-of-usefulness,” historian Robert Craig Brown argues early national park policy was “a continuation of the general resource policy that grew out of the National Policy of the [John A.] Macdonald government. Underlying parks policy was the assumption of the existence of plentiful natural resources within the reserves capable of exploitation and the principle of shared responsibility of government and private enterprise in the development of those resources.”¹² Control and exploitation of natural resources, however, were not in conflict with the development of national parks. Rather, the two concepts were tied closely together.¹³

While motives of control and profit were driving forces in the establishment of the early mountain parks, it would be wrong to assume that early

national park philosophy had no preservationist ideals. The 1887 *Rocky Mountains Park Act*, which officially created Rocky Mountains Park (now Banff National Park), addressed the general preservation and protection of game, fish, and birds.¹⁴ The seemingly antagonistic concepts of preservation and development brought the whole area into usefulness. Thus, although the hot springs were initially the “most easily exploitable asset,”¹⁵ other resources of the Rocky Mountains reserve were also considered valuable. Mineral deposits and timber were jewels that if harvested would profit the Dominion crown.¹⁶ Even scenery became a valuable commodity, indispensable to creating tourist demand. J. B. Harkin, Commissioner of Dominion Parks from 1911–1936, calculated that the mountain scenery was worth \$13.88 an acre, much more than the wheat-producing Prairies, which were valued at only \$4.91 an acre.¹⁷

Historian Alan MacEachern notes that politicians who created Rocky Mountains Park were not only interested in profiting from the area’s resources, but were also concerned with protecting timber and other resources that were aesthetically valuable to the park. Furthermore, setting aside areas for parks placed restrictions on how the land and resources could be used.¹⁸ Sid Marty argues that the Canadian national park system, although influenced by the example set by the United States, was more functionally preservationist. While Yellowstone National Park’s was established to protect that wilderness area, in reality it suffered neglect for fourteen years. In fact, the United States Army had to take control of the area in 1886 to halt destruction of the land and wild animals.¹⁹

It is interesting that the value of game was recognized almost immediately after the establishment of Rocky Mountains Park, given that it was initially overlooked in the Canadian Conservation Movement, which was more concerned with forestry and other natural resources.²⁰ In fact, wild animals were not even overtly acknowledged until around 1917, when Clifford Sifton in the *Review of the Work of the Commission of Conservation* introduced the new branch devoted to conserving animal populations as an “unusual interest.”²¹ The term “wildlife,” in fact, was not even used in the first part of the 20th century.²² This neglect is no doubt related to the close connection between conservation and economic utility and the difficulty in making the argument for game preservation based on utility. While there are isolated examples of conservation measures, for example, the 1894 *Unorganized Territories Game Protection Act* passed to protect the wood bison and other game as a food supply for the local native populations,²³ on the whole it

seems that initially the Dominion government did not consider wild animals to have the same value as other resources.²⁴

In North America, sportsmen, interested in preserving their own recreational opportunities, were some of the early advocates for the welfare of game. In the United States, the Boone and Crockett Club, founded by Theodore Roosevelt in 1887, was a means for sportsmen to preserve big game populations that were rapidly being depleted by overhunting. In fact, hunters, concerned to preserve animal populations for sport, became involved in ensuring Yellowstone National Park remained a refuge for big game.²⁵ Similarly, the near annihilation of the plains bison motivated American sportsmen to make protection of wild animals a public issue.²⁶

In Canada, concern for game arose among regional and local organizations in the central and eastern provinces. Having witnessed the destruction of their populations, natural history societies and fish-and-game clubs successfully lobbied their respective provincial governments to take responsibility for game resources as early as the 1890s for both aesthetic and recreational reasons.²⁷ George Altmeyer points out that while the Conservation Movement in Canada had a pragmatic side, it also had a moral and aesthetic dimension—a philosophy of “unselfishness.” One event that accelerated the wildlife Conservation Movement was the near extinction of the plains bison.²⁸

Even before its establishment of Rocky Mountains Park, the Minister of the Interior asked former Commissioner of Fisheries W. F. Whitcher to examine the proposed park area and make recommendations for the protection of wild animals, birds, and fish. Whitcher recommended strict control of hunting and fishing to help increase the species that had been depleted by hunting during the railway construction. His recommendation was incorporated into the *Rocky Mountains Park Act*.²⁹ Unfortunately, protection of various species was nearly impossible to regulate until 1909 when the first year-round warden service was implemented.³⁰

While the *Rocky Mountains Park Act* was one of the earliest moves to protect and preserve game in the federal jurisdiction, proponents of this preservation in the early national parks shared the motives of the regional and local advocates. Game was a commodity: it was protected to ensure its availability for aesthetic and recreational purposes and to enhance scenery inside the park and sport outside. Ultimately, everyone connected with Rocky Mountains Park (the railway, the federal government, the park, and the businesses inside the park) had vested interests in game both from its

conservation inside the park and its depletion outside park borders.³¹

Wild animals in Rocky Mountains Park and the other mountain parks quickly became one of the most valuable resources. During his administration (1897–1912), Park Superintendent Howard Douglas strengthened the park's conservationist stance and implemented more stringent regulations to protect game.³² Not only did he increase the indigenous animal populations during his administration, but he also established the first park zoo in 1907 to draw tourists.³³ Douglas's enthusiasm for the growing animal populations in Rocky Mountains Park can be seen in his annual reports, wherein he took every opportunity to "draw the Minister's attention to the increasing wildlife numbers within the park, particularly the buffalo, which were reproducing steadily, and to emphasize their growing importance as a tourist attraction."³⁴ This emphasis on animals as an economic asset was necessary: "Douglas knew... that the way to win [government] support was to demonstrate that both parks and wildlife were valuable attractions, that policies for their care and protection could become commercially viable propositions."³⁵ By 1906, Douglas had achieved this goal: "Wildlife was accounting for much of the park's growing popularity and thus paying for itself many times over."³⁶

While the mountain parks were able to profit from their scenery and natural resources, the first two prairie parks, Elk Island Reserve, established in 1906, and Buffalo Park Reserve, established in 1908, could not be commercially exploited in the same way. There were no resources considered of value in these parks when they were established. The Beaver Hills area was continually ravaged by fire in the 1890s, which destroyed much of the timber and severely damaged the landscape. The destruction of this region by fire was the main reason that Cooking Lake Forest Reserve, a 170 square mile area in the Beaver Hills locality, was established. A portion of this reserve was later set aside as Elk Island Reserve (1899).³⁷

The land south of Wainwright was appropriated for Buffalo Park Reserve because the area was considered undesirable for agriculture. In fact, the act of using this land as a sanctuary for the plains bison was initially the sole exploitive action; there were no known resources in the area when the park was established. Even though the Wainwright area later proved to be rich in oil and gas, development of these resources did not begin in the region until the 1920s and they were never tapped while the area was under park jurisdiction.³⁸

Furthermore, the scenery of Buffalo National Park did not have the same potential to lure tourist dollars as did the mountain parks. The sandy,

dune-covered parkland simply could not compete with the sublime landscape of the Rocky Mountains. Buffalo Park Reserve's recreational area, Mott Lake, opened as a resort in the northern part of the park in 1917. This "much celebrated picnic spot with booths, change houses, swings, and a sandy beach patrolled by a lifeguard,"³⁹ however, could hardly compete with the recreational opportunities available in the mountains. Moreover, although the park was on the Grand Trunk Pacific line, it was not close to a larger centre. Consequently, it is unlikely that the government established the park with motives to exploit or even control the resources within.

Rather, it appears that these first two prairie parks were established for the purpose of preserving endangered species, a departure from the resource exploitation inherent in the establishment of the mountain parks. Elk Island Reserve was founded because of a genuine concern for the elk in the area, which, before 1906, were threatened by hunters and wild fires. Local citizens took the initiative. W. H. Cooper, a North-West Territories game warden from Edmonton, informed the local member of Parliament, Frank Oliver, of the peril the elk in the area faced unless measures were taken to protect them. After local residents lobbied the government, Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, set aside a portion of Cooking Lake Forest Reserve as a wildlife sanctuary.⁴⁰

From the moment the Dominion government had the opportunity to purchase the last and largest free-ranging herd on the continent, it was clear that the plains bison were viewed very differently from other wild animals because the species was threatened with extinction. Wanton hunting and the encroachment of settlement in the West caused the virtual disappearance of the plains bison on the Canadian Plains.⁴¹ In the United States, they existed only in small pockets. Their uncertain fate made the species iconic.⁴² In the United States, the plains bison became equated with the disappearance of the "Wild West." It was believed that if bison were not saved from extinction, other icons and symbols of American culture would also disappear.⁴³ In Canada, the tone was more muted, but the sentiment was unmistakably similar. According to I. S. MacLaren, the bison operated as a symbol of western wildness. To early Europeans, the animal came to represent the Canadian West itself: "the buffalo acts synecdochically: the buffalo *is* the prairie."⁴⁴ C. Gordon Hewitt, writing in the 1920s, noted that "[t]he history of the buffalo in North America constitutes one of the greatest tragedies in animal life in historical times."⁴⁵ These popular and nostalgic sentiments would play an influential role in the establishment and management of Buffalo National Park.

The near extinction of the plains bison also signalled the fate that might await other wild animals.⁴⁶ The disappearance of game populations in the United States with the onset of settlement was enough to evoke the fear of a similar trend in Canada. Janet Foster writes that North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) started to record rapidly declining game populations in the Canadian West in the 1880s. The NWMP were concerned not only because animal species were in danger of becoming extinct, but also because the disappearance of game would result in the elimination of a food source that was vital to the survival of many Native populations.⁴⁷ Thus bison symbolized more than the disappearance of a bygone era. They were a vivid reminder of humanity's destructive and greedy character.

The purchase of the Pablo bison by the Dominion government and the creation of Buffalo Park Reserve was also a departure from the motives of control and exploitation inherent in the founding of the early mountain parks. The plains bison's near-extinct status and their symbolic importance to the region may have motivated the purchase of the Pablo herd. By the time of the purchase, wild plains bison had been absent from the Canadian Plains for almost two decades. Although most of the remaining bison in the United States were in private herds, contemporaries considered the Pablo herd to be the last free-ranging plains bison herd on the continent. These animals represented a link not only to the region's past, but also to the Canadian West as a whole.

Civil servants in the Dominion government have been credited with the forethought given to saving the species.⁴⁸ Alex Ayotte, a Canadian Land Agent working in Montana, was the first to see the potential opportunity of the purchase of the Pablo bison herd. The United States government had applied the *Dawes Act* in the Flathead Valley, and the reservation where Pablo grazed his bison was being thrown open for settlement.⁴⁹ J. Obed Smith, Commissioner of Immigration, forwarded Ayotte's suggestion to W. W. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration in Ottawa, in late 1905. It stated that Michel Pablo was "anxious to move his herd of buffalo, consisting of 360 head, from Montana to Western Canada." and suggested that the government might want to acquire more bison for Banff National Park.⁵⁰ Initially, W. W. Cory, the deputy minister, turned down the proposal, likely because he had been informed that Howard Douglas believed the Banff herd was as large as that park could accommodate.⁵¹

The Dominion government, however, quickly changed its mind, evidence that competition for the herd was one of the stronger motives driving the

purchase. In March 1906, Benjamin Davies, another Canadian Land Agent in Great Falls, Montana, reiterated Pablo's plea for a location in Western Canada on which to graze his bison herd. Pablo was also open to selling the bison to the Canadian government for a reasonable price. Despite some government resistance, Douglas fought for the acquisition of the herd. Eleanor Luxton, a former resident of Banff, stated in an interview that when Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, delayed making a decision for six months, Douglas carried on "quite a fight to get the buffalo purchase through."⁵² Sid Marty notes that it was only after Douglas sent Deputy Minister W. W. Cory a newspaper clipping revealing the plans of the American Bison Society to buy up the private herds of plains bison in the United States that he received word to close the deal.⁵³ By the end of March, W. W. Cory was inquiring after details of Pablo's asking price and by June, Howard Douglas, later to be one of the main movers in this bison preservation effort, had gone to Montana to inspect the bison herd.⁵⁴

Rivalry is also apparent in the government's efforts to acquire all of Pablo's bison when it was found that the herd was larger than originally thought.⁵⁵ Clearly the cost was secondary to purchasing the bison before the Americans could. When there was news that some Americans were attempting to offer Pablo more money for his bison, Douglas showed the Dominion government's contract called for the entire herd less the ten heifer calves and two bulls Pablo wanted for himself.⁵⁶ The Dominion government did not need more bison to save the species. Rather, as Douglas confirms, the government was more interested in spiting those in the United States who wanted the herd: "as our contract calls for the whole herd, I think we should take every hoof. If you knew the amount of bluff the Americans are putting up you would feel like giving them a lesson."⁵⁷

The purchase of the Pablo bison herd was also an opportunity for the Dominion government to advertise Canada in line with the spirit of boosterism that marked this era—when conservation of game populations promoted the idea that Canada was a wealthy nation with a superabundance of resources.⁵⁸ Howard Douglas stated that, with the purchase of the herd, "Canada would own 8/10 of all the Buffalo living" which would be a "great advertisement for Canada."⁵⁹ He believed the herd to be very cheap, and he anticipated "a great howl from the Americans should the [Dominion] Government decide to purchase them."⁶⁰

Keeping the negotiations for the herd's purchase secret became more urgent when the American Bison Society made known its intention, in

January 1907, to purchase all the remaining bison in the United States and Canada and present them to the United States government.⁶¹ The Dominion government also became anxious to sign the deal with Pablo when details of the sale of his bison to the Canadians were prematurely leaked to the *Great Falls Daily Tribune* by Billy Gird. Gird, it was reported, was a “cow puncher” who claimed “he was sent on official business by the Canadian Government to inspect the herd and tally them.”⁶² Even though Pablo had signed an agreement with the Dominion government by March 1907, there was fear that the United States might step in and prevent the transfer.⁶³

The Dominion government was very willing to spend extra money on the effort, proof that the profit motive was not driving the purchase. The decision to move the bison to a new park south of Wainwright could not have been economically beneficial, especially when Elk Island Reserve lay much closer to Edmonton and had greater tourism potential. Establishing a new park was a substantial investment because the reserve needed to be fenced and the area prepared for the bison. Extra money was spent to transport the first two shipments from Elk Island to the new park. The third shipment from Montana—the first to go directly to the Wainwright park—also proved costly. The Grand Trunk Railway had not yet been completed west of Wainwright because the Battle River Trestle was still under construction. Instead, Howard Douglas decided to ship the bison via Regina and Saskatoon to arrive at the park from the east on the Grand Trunk Pacific line.⁶⁴ This decision cost more because the distance was “some four or five hundred miles further than would otherwise be necessary” and the Department of the Interior needed to pay the balance of freight charges and wages for Pablo’s men that exceeded the initial agreement.⁶⁵ When it became apparent that capturing and moving the bison from the Flathead Valley, Montana, to Alberta would take much longer and cost more than anticipated, Parliament approved an extra \$75,000 on top of the original funding of \$100,000.⁶⁶

The Dominion government continued to purchase as many of Pablo’s bison as it could until 1912, when the contract was officially closed. Even then, the Parks Branch informed him that it was still open to news of further shipments.⁶⁷ Thirty bison were also purchased from the C. E. Conrad Estate in Kalispell, Montana,⁶⁸ and some were transferred to Buffalo National Park from Rocky Mountains Park (see Table 1).⁶⁹

TABLE 1: PURCHASE DATES AND SHIPMENT LOCATIONS		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Shipment Location</i>	<i>Number of Bison</i>
16 June 1909	transferred from Elk Island Park	325
3 July 1909	3 rd shipment from Montana	190
17 October 1909	4 th shipment from Montana	28
31 October 1909	transferred from Banff	77
12 June 1910	5 th shipment from Montana	46
17 October 1910	6 th shipment from Montana	28
23 November 1910	1 st shipment from Conrad Herd	15
20 April 1911	2 nd shipment from Conrad Herd	15
30 May 1911	7 th shipment from Montana	7
30 June 1912	8 th shipment from Montana	7
31 March 1914	transferred from Banff	10
<i>Total</i>		748

Source: LAC, A. G. Smith, “Statement of Original Shipments of Buffalo into Buffalo Park, Wainwright,” 14 Sept. 1926, Parks Canada Files, Buffalo National Park, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 3. On the dates Oct. 31, 1909 and Mar. 31, 1914, the original document reads “Transferred ex. Banff,” which suggests bison were exchanged with Buffalo National Park on these two dates.

Although competitive motives drove the purchase of the Pablo herd, the Dominion government showed some preservationist ethic. Douglas ensured the bison were healthy. For example, for one of the early shipments he reported to W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Interior, a herd of about 220 head was said to have been inspected by a veterinarian who “found them all in good Condition and free from any disease.”⁷⁰ When Michel Pablo raised concerns about the suitability of Elk Island Reserve as a sanctuary for bison,⁷¹ the government took his advice and immediately made efforts to secure a new location south of Wainwright. This new reserve, Buffalo Park Reserve in 1908, would become Buffalo National Park in 1913.⁷²

In the early years of the effort, there was no clear policy for managing the bison herd. The bison-saving effort was treading in new territory. At the time the Pablo bison herd was purchased, there was little knowledge of, or precedent for, effective means to save and propagate wild animals other than in the mountain parks. Not until the 1930s did the study of relationships of species with each other and their environment and ideas such as carrying capacity, what we today call wildlife science, start to surface among park and wildlife managers.⁷³ The growth of the bison herd population, however, appears to have been one indicator of the saving effort’s success. When Howard Douglas first viewed the Pablo bison in Montana, he seemed pleased to find that the herd had increased with little attention. He estimated the herd numbered 350 and believed “there should be 1000 head in five years with ordinary good luck.”⁷⁴ The nucleus herd of 748 bison imported into the park increased very rapidly. In 1916, four years after the final shipment of the Pablo bison, the herd at Wainwright already exceeded 2,000 head. Newspaper headlines began to boast that Canada now had the largest bison herd in the world.⁷⁵ Gordon Hewitt, the Dominion entomologist and consulting zoologist, was pleased with the successful growth of the herd:

Under these eminently natural conditions the buffalo have increased annually. In the spring of 1913 the numbers had increased to 1,188 head; a year later there were 1,453 buffalo. When I visited the buffalo park in 1915 there were over 2,000 buffalo. In June, 1919, the herd had increased to 3,830 animals. In other words, there are at the present time in the Buffalo Park at Wainwright, Alta., under the care and protection of the Canadian Government, more buffalo than existed on the whole North American continent eight years ago, and by far the largest herd of buffalo in existence.⁷⁶

While Hewitt was impressed with the Dominion government's role in bringing back the bison, he also raised concern over what was to be done with surplus. In an earlier article he wrote, "In the Buffalo Park at Wainwright, Alberta, this question is becoming a serious one as they will soon occupy as much range as is capable of sustaining them."⁷⁷ As early as 1916, the Parks Branch showed concern about the cost of maintaining the rapidly increasing bison herd. J. B. Harkin, commissioner of National Parks, feared that

[w]hile the maintenance of this herd for the time being I believe has the full backing of public opinion this condition may [not] always continue. At present the backing is the result of sentiment alone. This sentiment arises out of a natural desire to preserve specimens of the original dominant animal of the plains and I think is accentuated by a national pride with respect to the coup which resulted in the transfer of the Pablo herd from the United States to Canada. Sooner or later, however, as time goes on I anticipate an increasing number of people will question why a considerable amount of money should be spent annually upon the preservation of the buffalo.⁷⁸

The same concern was emphasized in a letter to Maxwell Graham, Chief of Park Animals, likely also written by Harkin: "sooner or later sentiment alone will not be sufficient to hold public opinion with us in the matter of very large expenditures upon the buffalo here when the people of the country are not getting any clearly tangible benefit therefrom."⁷⁹ His suggestion that the cattalo experiments, which were moved to Buffalo National Park in 1916, would "help in this connection" shows the department was beginning to search for ways to make the bison herd useful.⁸⁰ Clearly the thinking of the Parks Branch had shifted to more a more conservationist stance, when, in 1920, Harkin expressed, "We naturally want to dispose of them to the best advantage for the country, and the heads and hides of course have a definite value."⁸¹

Initially the bison-preservation effort at Buffalo National Park stood as a departure from the exploitive management applied to the game in the mountain parks. The rapid increase of the herd in the first decade and the accompanying expense forced the Parks Branch to make an about-face, however. This is perhaps best illustrated by the offer the department received to purchase the Scotty Phillips bison herd from South Dakota. When they were first considering the offer of 430 bison in 1914, the same competitive spirit which drove the

Pablo purchase is unmistakable in their reasoning: “the Dominion acquiring the last large herd of good buffalo left in the United States [would] thus not only [improve] its own herd, but [leave] the United States that much the poorer.”⁸² Yet, they did not purchase the herd, and in 1920 it was still available. This time, however, it is clear that J. B. Harkin was no longer swayed by such competitive or sentimental justifications. He wrote, “We now have the dominating buffalo herd of the world and I scarcely think our aim should be to have *all* the buffalo in the world. Our own herds are increasing so rapidly that we are perilously near our range limitations.”⁸³

As was proved by the time the Park’s first decade ended, the bison-saving effort at Buffalo National Park could not survive on sentiment and aesthetics alone. While the purchase of the Pablo herd and the establishment of Buffalo National Park had not been driven by a concern for profit initially, as the expense of the effort increased, the Parks Branch began to explore ways to exploit the only resource of value in the park—the bison. With no other form of revenue, the department began to consider a more conservationist management method, similar to the policies applied to the game populations in the mountain parks. This decision, however, opened the door for the government to pursue even greater exploitive measures to profit from its new-found resource.

Notes

1. Foster, *Working for Wildlife*, 26.
2. Sid Marty, *A Grand and Fabulous Notion: The First Century of Canada's Parks* (Toronto 1984), 64.
3. Foster, *Working for Wildlife*, 19.
4. Foster, *Working for Wildlife*, 18–19.
5. Kevin McNamee, “From Wild Places to Endangered Spaces: A History of Canada’s National Parks,” in Philip Dearden and Rick Rollins, eds., *Parks and Protected Areas in Canada: Planning and Management* (Toronto 1993), 21.
6. Peter Gillis and Thomas R. Roach, “The Beginnings of a Movement: The Montreal Congress and Its Aftermath, 1880–1896,” in Chad Gaffield and Pam Gaffield, eds., *Consuming Canada: Readings in Environmental History* (Toronto 1995), 131; Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4th ed. (New Haven 2001), 104–105.
7. Gillis and Roach, “Beginnings of a Movement,” 131–132, 135, 140, 148.
8. Nash, *Wilderness*, 122.
9. Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890–1920* (Cambridge 1959), 2, 266.
10. R. Peter Gillis and Thomas R. Roach, “American Influence on Conservation in Canada,” *Journal of Forest History* 30 (Oct. 1986) 160–161, 162, 163, 171–173
11. Gillis and Roach, “Beginnings of a Movement,” 132; MacEachern, “Conservation Movement.”
12. Brown, “Doctrine of Usefulness,” 48–49.
13. C. J. Taylor, “Legislating Nature: The National Parks Act of 1930,” in Rowland Lorimer et al., eds., *To See Ourselves/To Save Ourselves: Ecology and Culture in Canada* (Montreal 1991), 126.
14. *Rocky Mountains Park Act*, S.C. 1887, c. 32, s. 4.
15. Brown, “Doctrine of Usefulness,” 49.
16. Brown, “Doctrine of Usefulness,” 48.
17. Marty, *A Grand and Fabulous Notion*, 98.
18. MacEachern, “Conservation Movement.”
19. Marty, *A Grand and Fabulous Notion*, 64.

20. Foster, *Working for Wildlife*, 31.
21. Clifford Sifton, *Review of Work of the Commission of Conservation* (Montreal 1917), 5–14.
22. Tina Loo, *States of Nature: Conserving Canada's Wildlife in the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver 2006), 4.
23. This act prohibited the killing some animals, like the wood bison, and imposed restricted hunting seasons for other less threatened species. Barry Potyondi, *Wood Buffalo National Park: An Historical Overview and Source Study* (Parks Canada 1979), vii, 64.
24. In the Department of Agriculture report *Canada: Its History, Productions and Natural Resources*, the chapter entitled “Animal Life and Hunting Grounds” in both the 1886 and 1904 editions are exactly the same, showing that in nearly twenty years, little thought had been given to investigating the importance of wild animals. *Canada: Its History, Productions and Natural Resources* (Canada 1886; rev. ed. 1904, 1906).
25. John F. Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (New York 1975), 26, 52; James B. Trefethen, *An American Crusade For Wildlife* (New York 1975), 81, 84.
26. Thomas R. Dunlap, *Saving America's Wildlife* (Princeton 1988), 6, 7.
27. Tina Loo, “Making a Modern Wilderness: Conserving Wildlife in Twentieth-Century Canada,” *Canadian Historical Review* 82 (March 2001), 96–97. Quebec was unique in that private fish-and-game clubs, and not the provincial government, began to carry out measures to manage wildlife. Beginning in 1883, Quebec allowed clubs to lease crown land at a low price. In exchange, these clubs were to take responsibility of managing the wildlife and fish stocks on their leaseholds. Loo, “Making a Modern Wilderness,” 97.
28. George Altmeyer, “Three Ideas of Nature in Canada, 1893–1914,” in Gaffield and Gaffield, eds., *Consuming Canada*, 107–108.
29. W. F. Lothian, *A History of Canada's National Parks*, vol. 4 (Ottawa 1981), 16.
30. Lothian, *A History of Canada's National Parks*, 17.
31. Karen Wonders, “A Sportsman's Eden: A Wilderness Besieged,” pt. 2, *Beaver* 79 (Dec. 1999–Jan. 2000), 31–32.
32. Robert J. Burns, *Guardians of the Wild: A History of the Warden Service of Canada's National Parks* (Calgary 2000), 3–4.
33. Marty, *A Grand and Fabulous Notion*, 83.
34. Foster, *Working for Wildlife*, 57.

35. Foster, *Working for Wildlife*, 62.
36. Foster, *Working for Wildlife*, 62.
37. Graham MacDonald, *Science and History at Elk Island: Conservation Work in a Canadian National Park: 1914–1994* (Calgary 1994), 9–10.
38. F. A. Wyatt and J. D. Newton et al., *Soil Survey of Wainwright and Vermilion Sheets* (Edmonton 1944), 9. From 1914 until at least 1920, the Dominion government granted the Town of Wainwright the right to make test borings for natural gas within Buffalo National Park. It does not appear, however, that any strikes were made. Extract from LAC, Gas Report, J. B. Harkin to J. G. Mitchell, 11 Mar. 1914 and Commissioner to W. J. Blair, 14 Jun. 1919, Commissioner to Messrs. Shouldice and Farthing, 2 Sept. 1926, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 983, File BU29, pt. 1.
39. Marsha Scribner, *Transitions: Commemorating Camp Wainwright's 50th Anniversary* (n.p.: Jostens, 1990), 28.
40. MacDonald, *Science and History at Elk Island*, 15.
41. Michael Clayton Wilson, "Bison in Alberta: Palaeontology, Evolution, and Relationships with Humans," in John Foster, Dick Harrison, and I. S. MacLaren, eds., *Buffalo* (Edmonton 1992), 5–6.
42. John E. Foster, "Introduction," in Foster, Harrison, MacLaren, eds., *Buffalo*, viii.
43. Andrew Isenberg, "The Returns of the Bison: Nostalgia, Profit, and Preservation," *Environmental History* 2 (April 1997), 181, 182.
44. I. S. MacLaren, "Buffalo in Word and Image: From European Origins to the Art of Clarence Tilenius," in Foster, Harrison, MacLaren, eds., *Buffalo*.
45. Hewitt, *Conservation of the Wild Life of Canada*, 113.
46. Marty, *A Grand and Fabulous Notion*, 80.
47. Foster, *Working for Wildlife*, 57–59.
48. Foster, *Working for Wildlife*, 66–73.
49. Lott, *American Bison*, 188; "Flathead Reservation Timeline," *Flathead Reservation Historical Society*, Montana Heritage Project, 2004 <<http://www.flatheadreservation.org/timeline/timeline.html>> (14 June 2004).
50. LAC, J. Obed Smith to W. D. Scott, 20 Nov. 1905, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.
51. LAC, Perley Keyes to W. W. Cory and 1 Dec. 1905, W.W. Cory to Perley Keyes, 8 Jan. 1906, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.

52. Coder, "National Movement," 187.
53. Marty, *Grand and Fabulous Notion*, 85.
54. LAC, Benjamin Davis to Superintendent of Immigration, 6 Mar. 1906, W. W. Cory to W. D. Scott, 24 Mar. 1906 and Howard Douglas to W. W. Cory, 15 Jun. 1906, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.
55. LAC, D. W. Johnson for Commissioner to Michel Pablo, 17 Jul. 1913, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 3.
56. LAC, Howard Douglas to W. W. Cory, 1 Mar. 1907 and Howard Douglas to W. W. Cory, 27 Jul. 1907, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.
57. LAC, Howard Douglas to W. W. Cory, 27 Jul. 1907, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.
58. George Colpitts, *Game in the Garden: A Human History of Wildlife in Western Canada to 1940* (Vancouver 2002), 103–104.
59. LAC, Howard Douglas to W. W. Cory, 15 Jun. 1906, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.
60. LAC, Howard Douglas to W. W. Cory, 15 Jun. 1906, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.
61. LAC, "Protect the Buffalo," Newspaper Clipping, n.d., Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.
62. LAC, Benjamin Davis to W. W. Cory, 2 Apr. 1907 and "Canada Buys Buffalo Herd," Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.
63. LAC, Howard Douglas to W. W. Cory, 1 Mar. 1907, W. W. Cory to Howard Douglas 7 Mar. 1907, and Howard Douglas to W. W. Cory, 15 Jun. 1906, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1. Even if the Canadian government had not agreed to purchase the entire herd, it likely would have had nothing to fear. Pablo distrusted the United States government, especially after a representative approached him with an offer of \$25 per head for his bison, and only begrudgingly increased his offer to \$75 per head. Coder, "National Movement," 178–79. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that when Pablo was informed shortly after this meeting that the Flathead reserve would be thrown open for settlement, he made a reasonable connection between this decision and the government representative who had pressed him to sell his bison at a low price; this act "greatly exasperated Pablo and clinched his decision not to sell his buffalo to Uncle Sam at any price." *Edmonton Bulletin*, 8 Nov. 1907, 11, D. J. Benham, "The Round Up of the Second Herd of Pablo's Buffalo," quoted in Coder, "National Movement," 187.

64. LAC, Commissioner to John Halstead, 7 Aug. 1908, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 52, File BU209, pt. 5.
65. LAC, Howard Douglas to Secretary of the Department of the Interior, 12 Aug. 1908 and F. H. Byshe to Deputy Minister, 19 Aug. 1908, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 2.
66. LAC, Rodolphe Boudreau to Minister of the Interior, Extract from the Report of the Committee of the Privy Council, approved by the Governor General on 31 Aug. 1907, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.
67. LAC, D. W. Johnson for the Commissioner to Michel Pablo, 17 Jul. 1913, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 3.
68. LAC, Howard Douglas to the Secretary, Department of the Interior, 23 Nov. 1910, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 3. The American Bison Society reported that Charles Conrad and his brother established their herd of buffalo with the purchase of 36 head in 1901 from Charles Allard's widow. George Bird Grinnell and Charles Sheldon, eds., *Hunting and Conservation: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club* (New Haven 1925), 405–06. Therefore, the bison purchased by the Canadian government from Mrs. Conrad were originally Pablo-Allard bison.
69. Foster, *Working for Wildlife*, 66.
70. LAC, Howard Douglas to W. W. Cory, 22 May 1907, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.
71. LAC, Howard Douglas to W. W. Cory, 11 Jun. 1907, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1, and RG 84, Vol. 981, BU2[548608], pt. 1.
72. LAC, Clerk of the Privy Council to the Minister of the Interior, 27 Mar. 1913, RG 84, Vol. 982, File BU2[548608], pt. 2.
73. MacDonald, *Science and History at Elk Island*, 31.
74. LAC, Howard Douglas to W. W. Cory, 15 Jun. 1906, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 51, File BU209, pt. 1.
75. For example, *Montreal Weekly Witness*, 13 Jun. 1916, "World's Greatest Buffalo Herd is Now in Canada, at Wainwright Park, Alberta," and *Toronto Telegram*, 30 Jun. 1916, "Canada's Big Buffalo Herd," in LAC, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 53, File BU232, pt. 1.
76. Hewitt, *Conservation of the Wild Life of Canada*, 135.
77. C. Gordon Hewitt, "The Coming Back of the Bison," *Natural History* 19 (Dec. 1919), 560.
78. LAC, J. B. Harkin to W. W. Cory, 4 Feb. 1916, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 53, File BU232, pt. 1.

79. LAC, Memorandum to Maxwell Graham, 17 Jan. 1916, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 53, File BU232, pt. 1.
80. LAC, Memorandum to Maxwell Graham, 17 Jan. 1916, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 53, File BU232, pt. 1.
81. LAC, Commissioner to W. J. Blair, 23 Jun. 1920, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 53, File BU232, pt. 2.
82. LAC, Memorandum to J. G. Mitchell, 7 Mar. 1914 and John E. Sloat to Dr. Roche, 25 Feb. 1914, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 155, File U209, pt. 1. The Scotty Phillips buffalo bison were progeny of the Frederick Dupree herd. Coder, "National Movement," 26.
83. LAC, Note from J. B. Harkin on Letter, Commissioner to J. G. Mitchell, 19 Feb. 1920, Parks Canada Files, BNP, RG 84, Vol. 155, File U209, pt. 1.