

Saving America's Wildlife. THOMAS DUNLAP. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988. xvi, 222 p. ISBN 0-691-04750-2 \$24.95 (US).

In Canadian academic circles, environmental history has yet to make a breakthrough as a specialized field of study. American historians have progressed further but are still struggling with the intellectual confines of this field. *Saving America's Wildlife* is an important attempt to raise many of the issues that should be the focus for environmental historians. In this book, Tom Dunlap explores "American nature myths" or "the things we never learned but all know" (p. 9) by examining wildlife policy and attitudes toward wild animals from the end of the nineteenth century (following the introduction of Darwinism) to the mid-1970s. In doing so, he describes how North American ideas about ecology have been shaped. Finally, the book is also a study of the professionalization of biology.

Although it describes and analyzes the American experience, *Saving America's Wildlife* offers valuable information of relevance to Canada. Ecological issues, after all, transcend international boundaries. The author is knowledgeable about Canadian history and does not hesitate to draw parallels between the experiences of both countries. Among others, the writings of Charles G.D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton, the migratory bird acts, and Farley Mowat's much-talked-about career with the Canadian Wildlife Service are discussed.

The period covered in this book has been marked by the unwillingness of humans to accept nature as a unique force capable of shaping our environment. In this context, Dunlap demonstrates how environmental problems have often evolved into greater social issues which have been resolved more by emotion than by sound reasoning — with varying degrees of success. Attitudes towards the wolf and the coyote, the species used as examples in this book, illustrate our shifting attitudes. Wildlife policy has been shaped by "myths" such as the following: wolves are scarce while coyotes are abundant; wolves arouse more emotion while coyotes are at most a romantic symbol of the West; or wolves are either horrible creatures who must be exterminated or resident spirits of the wilderness (p. 164). Depending on whether the animal was looked upon favourably or unfavourably, it could be protected or exterminated.

Much of the book concentrates on the work of the Biological Survey of the American government (now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). The Biological Survey, similar to the Canadian Wildlife Service, was mandated to do scientific research on birds and mammals. This expanded into a policy making role and the survey became the main mouthpiece of the "professional" wildlife bureaucracy. One is surprised, however, to discover how little control these scientists had over government wildlife policy. We tend to believe that scientists shape beliefs and attitudes, forgetting that they work in a specific social context that confines their freedom of action: they are often forced to react to pressures exerted by interest groups or bend in the face of popular myth. The American situation, as explained by Dunlap, is comparable to the Canadian experience. The attitude of the government to the Jack Miner Bird Sanctuary near Windsor, Ontario, is a case in point. When first established, the sanctuary benefitted from generous federal government grants to buy feed for the birds. With the increased professionalization of the Canadian Wildlife Service, however, official support of the sanctuary wavered. Wildlife scientists recognized that the feeding of the birds disrupted normal migration patterns and consequently

was harmful to the birds' well-being. They also questioned the accuracy of the Miners' "teachings" to the general public. Their attempt to stop all government funding to the sanctuary, however, was not as successful as they expected. They were soon involved in a messy public debate with the Miners and a compromise had to be found to put an end to the controversy (National Archives of Canada, Records of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, RG 22, vol. 98, file B2-3-8B, pt. 2).

As with most books touching the recent past, the work is weaker when dealing with the 1970s. While an adequate amount of information is provided, it understandably lacks the analysis that only time can bring. The Nixon years are remembered almost nostalgically when compared with the Reagan period.

The primary and secondary sources consulted in the writing of this book are wide-ranging and thorough. Furthermore, Dunlap has imaginatively used his sources. In addition to the usual references to government and private records, and scholarly works, there are citations from nature essays and stories, sporting magazines, and scientific journals. A variety of such documents, coming from myriad interest groups, has enabled the author to paint an accurate picture, at all levels, of the ecological debate. The citations reveal the extent to which records, when supported by related materials, may contain the essence of the debate on a particular issue. For example, the extermination of animals called for powerful arguments from all groups, including scientists. One is struck by the rigorous attempts by all participants in this debate to record their own beliefs.

In an era in which society is attuned to ecological issues, *Saving America's Wildlife* succeeds in transcending its scholarly framework to reach a general audience. Neither a scientific treatise nor a purely historiographical work, the book explores the many sides of ecology in the North American context. This is not to be taken as the definitive work on wildlife policy, but as one that should generate further activity into what is still a "délaisé" field of research. Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of this book is that it reveals how Americans, and possibly North Americans, have matured in their understanding of the environment. Starting from the belief that a god created the earth in six days and "made humans the crown of creation and [gave] them dominion over nature" (p. ix), we have come to recognize the need for a balanced interaction between humans and their environment.

Gabrielle Blais

National Archives of Canada

Dictionnaire de l'Amérique française. CHARLES DUFRESNE, et. al. Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1988. 386 p. ISBN 2-7603-0216-4.

Cet ouvrage représente le résultat concret de plusieurs années de travail de la part de l'équipe de direction (Charles Dufresne, Jacques Grimard, André Lapierre, Pierre Savard et Gaétan Vallières) elle-même assistée par un nombre de chercheurs, de rédacteurs et d'un coordonnateur de projet. L'équipe de direction a aussi fait appel à un certain nombre de conseillers de part et d'autre du pays, comme le souligne l'avant-propos du *Dictionnaire*.