

# *Awakening: The Environment and Conservation*

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**A**FTER COMPLETING MY THESIS on *The Evolution of Radical Black Leadership from MalcomX to Black Panthers*, I turned down my first job offer (arranged by my thesis advisor) to work for Mayor Thomas Bradley in L.A., changed my focus to conservation and spent my first year out of college doing bird surveys on St John, Virgin Islands, tracking tigers and rhinos in Chitwan National Park, Nepal and trekking to and subsequently writing the park proposal for Lang Tang Valley NP in the Himalayas. I ended my first year's peregrinations in Kenya and Tanzania where I spent weeks with David Western in Amboseli, Kenya learning the lessons of designing conservation with local people, in this case, the Maasai.

Thence to Washington D.C., where late in 1973 Pierce Dunn introduced me to Assistant Secretary of Interior, Nat Reed, as Pierce Dunn departed for law school, and thus I worked for the Office of Secretary of Interior until late 1976. These were the years—1969-1974—of the Cuyahoga River catching fire in Cleveland, Ohio, long lines at the nation's gas stations, and—in the space of five years—passage of virtually all of our foundational environmental laws and agencies.

These were febrile times. Recalling them, I am reminded of Nat Reed's office, where I was to spend almost four years and where I worked on the corridor that produced the Endangered Species Act as well as playing a major role in designating all of our Alaska Conservation Lands portfolio. Nat Reed was part of a stellar crew of progressive Republican leaders in the Nixon/Ford administrations that included:

Russ Train '41  
Rogers C.B. Morton  
Bill Ruckelshaus '55  
Don Rumsfeld '54  
E.U. Curtis Bohlen  
Douglas Wheeler  
And Jack Horton '45

...the likes and caliber of which have not graced Washington, D.C. before nor since. And may never again in my opinion.

Larry Morris '69 talked me into applying to Cornell for a mid-career master's degree. So in September 1976 I landed in Ithaca for what turned into a nine-month master's program in Natural Resources before embarking on an 11-month world-girdling odyssey to examine environmental concerns.

I hitch-hiked from Nairobi to Capetown, South Africa, traversing Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Botswana and Namibia. During this trip, I participated in the first leopard radio-tagging program with Patrick Hamilton and Iain Douglas-Hamilton's aerial survey of elephants in Ruaha, Tanzania, among other adventures.

Leaving Africa I headed eastward to the Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, Australia and New Zealand. Then it was across the Pacific to Tahiti, Chile, Peru, Bolivia Paraguay, Brazil, Trinidad, and Bequia. And finally homeward to address ten months of acute dysentery.

In 1978, I was back in D.C. as Assistant to the Chief of Endangered Species, part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where I spear-headed recovery efforts for the:

Bald eagle  
Whooping crane  
Sea turtles  
Peregrine falcon

California condor and  
Grizzly bear, among other species

Having previously been a political appointment, I knew the ropes. Thus, I had little trouble slicing through the bureaucracy in those days. However, today it is worth noting that the days of sabre hewing through red tape are now long gone with the bureaucratic strangulation that has crept into place over the last four decades.

In 1980 with the appointment of James Watt as President Reagan's Secretary of Interior (Jim used to report through me to Assistant Secretary Nat Reed in the early 1970's), I fled to **National Audubon Society** becoming its Director of Wildlife Programs. There I was confronted with what began in the late '70's under President Carter and became embedded during the Reagan years. This was when—in my opinion—the entire NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) environmental field became a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Democrat party. This is my conclusion, based on personal experience.

Still...during my first week at Audubon the senior VP, Rupe Cutler (a former Carter administration USDA official) told me not to work with any Republican Senators in the newly Republican-majority Senate.



How then, I asked, are we supposed to get anything done toward the goals of the Audubon organization? It did not end well, and I'll just leave it at that. With the help of Congress, notably Representative Silvio Conte of Massachusetts, and Senators McClure of Idaho and Stevens of Alaska we arranged for sponsorship of hundreds of millions of dollars for conservation projects. During my Audubon years, I instigated the creation of the **Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee** which led to a recovery of the grizzly population in the 48 contiguous states by 2007. (The Grizzly is presently listed as threatened.) I drafted the legislation for the **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation**, now the largest conservation funder in the U.S., and created and published the

*Audubon Wildlife Reports* which are still a teaching staple at all our state land-grant universities.

In 1986, I became the second employee of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and in 1990, the CEO. When I arrived, there was not a dime in the bank; when I left in December, 1999, we were doing 250 million dollars in grants a year.

We pioneered federal matching funds, coordination of as many as 13 different federal agencies for targeted conservation initiatives and pioneered corporate conservation initiatives such as Exxon's Save the Tiger program and Shell's Gulf of Mexico conservation initiative and Orvis' matching grant investments. We also funded the breaching and removal of the first three main stem dams in the U.S., including the Edwards Dam on the Kennebec in Maine. We initiated a multi-national program to conserve migratory birds called Partners in Flight linking Latin American countries with U.S. and Canada, and created the nation's first leadership training program and campus for Conservation in Shepherdstown, WV. In fifteen years I oversaw the award of over \$2 billion in conservation grants.

With the turn of the century in 2000, I set up my own non-profit foundation: **Land Conservation Assistance Network** or **LandCAN**. Its purpose is to address conservation on private lands. Seventy percent of the land in the lower 48 states is privately owned, and nobody is talking to this market for conservation initiatives. The environmental community is still doing what Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot started in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, setting aside public conservation lands on which we do a lousy job of managing habitat (think California forest fires) and which does not need the ever-expanding portfolio of acquisitions promoted by the environmental community.

I learned early in my career that the private sector is better at conservation than the government. Private land owners are the 21<sup>st</sup> century's conservation market. To help get my foundation off the ground, I also consulted with the Secretary of Defense through the good offices of Raymond F. Dubois. I also suggested DOD hire Alex Beehler '75 as Deputy Under Secretary for Infrastructure and Environment.

Together Alex and I created the **REPI (Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration)** program, the Defense Department's aggressive conservation program providing green space around our signature military bases. REPI also includes endangered species conservation initiatives, for species such as the red-cockaded woodpecker golden cheeked warbler, and gopher tortoise.

Few people today know that most of our country's Defense installations are surrounded by green bands of protected areas. And the Department of Defense is a leader in endangered species conservation. DOD now oversees one of the best conservation programs in the country.

So after 50 years where are we now? Many declining species are recovering especially in both North America and Europe. Nature is resilient and given space and time heals quickly. Our air is cleaner; our waters are cleaner and forest acreage approaches comparable size to the 1600s in both North America and Europe. Thanks to CO<sub>2</sub>, even the southern Sahara is greening. The **Cato Institute's (2021) Ten Global Trends** posits "the globe is at peak farmland, which is prelude to a vast ecological restoration over the course of this century" thanks to improved agronomics. As of 2018 the World Database on Protected Areas reports 15% of the earth's land surface is now covered by protected areas. (Between 2000 and 2005, I protected 1/3 of all the conservation lands in Maine with the two largest conservation easements in the U.S. totaling 1.1 million acres). "Marine protected areas now cover 7 percent of global oceans." For the U.S. in recent decades, Cato cites EPA reports between 1970 and 2018, U.S. gross domestic product increased 275%, vehicle miles traveled increased 191%, energy consumption increased 49%, and U.S. population grew by 60%. In addition, carbon dioxide emissions increased by 22%. During the same period, total emission of the six principal air pollutants dropped by 74%! (Carbon Monoxide, Ground-level Ozone, Lead, Nitrogen Oxides, Particulate Matter, and Sulfur Dioxide. The **Clean Air Act (CAA)** requires EPA to set **National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)** for six common air pollutants.)"

While the media headlines blare CO<sub>2</sub> is causing global warming, the scientific literature is also definitive that CO<sub>2</sub> is great for greening the globe, enhances agriculture for the feeding of our growing population and is a net benefit to mankind. The progress we have made across the U.S. and worldwide as we lift people out of poverty has been remarkable. Yet it is often eclipsed by environmental headlines screaming about existential threats. Science is not always as definitive as it is reported. Here are three books that broaden the environmental debate: They are:

*Unsettled: What Climate Science Tells Us, What it Doesn't, and Why it Matters* (Ben-Bella, 2021). Written by Steven Koonin, President Obama's climate czar, this book unravels the daily nonsense of media palaverer featured in social and print media. Koonin also repeatedly quotes Princeton's Cyrus Fogg Brackett Professor of Physics, Emeritus, William Happer, who is a passionate critic of the daily headlines pushed by the media.

*Ten Global Trends Every Smart Person*



*Should Know* (Cato Institute, 2020) by Ronald A. Baily and Marian L. Tupy. As the authors show, 65% of Americans are convinced that the world is getting worse. Only six percent think it's getting better. Using uncontroversial data, the authors show that this glum view is badly mistaken.

*Inconvenient Facts: The science that Al Gore doesn't want you to know* (Silver Crown, 2017) by Greg Wrightstone. The author is a member of **The CO2 Coalition**, chaired by Princeton's William Happer (See above.). The book presents 60 "inconvenient facts," all derived from government sources, scholarly works, and peer-reviewed literature. Can carbon dioxide be a good thing?

You don't have to agree with what these authors write to realize that great progress has been made on environmental issues in the last 50 years. As an environmental/conservationist professional, I expect this progress will continue through our dotage and beyond. If any of you care to venture to the **LandCAN** website ([landcan.org](http://landcan.org)), you'll find an extensive catalogue of books and articles on environmental issues that I also recommend.

*Editor's Note: Amos S. Eno, president and founder of Land Conservation Assistance Network (LandCAN), has been active in environmental policy since graduation. He was Executive Director of the New England Forestry Foundation and spent 10 years as the Executive Director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.*

*He has also been Director of Wildlife Programs at the National Audubon Society and special assistant in the Office of Endangered Species at the Department of the Interior, among many other positions. He has challenged government, the corporate world and environmental leaders to think differently about environmental policy, conservation vs. preservation, development and land use. He shares his participation and perspective.*

