

## The History of America's Natural Resources (part 3)

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***“Conservation of natural resources is the fundamental problem. Unless we solve that problem, it will avail little to solve all others.”***

**- President Theodore Roosevelt, 1901**

From my former house in Dalton, NH I could take a walk (or a ski) in the woods due east for several miles to the Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge. I made the trip countless times and unless I was hunting, the dogs always came along. We would see deer, moose, bear, otter, beaver, hawks, plenty of small game and countless songbirds and waterfowl. The refuge itself offers a beautiful view of Cherry Mountain and Owls Head Mountain.



The view to the southeast of North Haverhill, my new hunting grounds, encompasses Black Mountain, Sugarloaf, The Hogsback, Jeffers and Blueberry Mountains. Behind that ridgeline is Long Pond and on up to Mt. Moosilauke. All of this is part of the White Mountain National Forest.

I, or should I say We, owe these natural treasures to one man: hunter, conservationist, President, Theodore Roosevelt. President Roosevelt created the National Wildlife Refuge system, set the stage for the creation of the White Mountain National Forest and spent the eight years of his presidency ramming legislation through Congress that protected wildlife from commercial exploitation at a time when nobody in our nation's capitol seemed to care.

Management of our public natural resources requires the ability to understand equally the consumptive use of natural resources for human benefit and the protection of these resources for future generations. Roosevelt managed both sides of this political issue so well that he was able to pass legislation that benefited hunters, non-hunters, hikers, naturalists, science and the growing needs of the nation all at once.

Roosevelt was great friends with Gifford Pinchot, a traditional forester by training. Pinchot believed in the use and management of our public forests for the benefit of all people. Roosevelt was also a good friend of John Muir, a hard-nosed land preservationist who believed that our forests should be protected and never used for any consumptive purposes.

Roosevelt used this diversity of public opinions to form his political agenda; an agenda that would place land and wildlife conservation as priority number one on Capitol Hill from 1901 until 1909.

Among his accomplishments were: the creation of sixty six national forests, five new national parks, fifty-one national wildlife refuges, four national game preserves and he set the stage for the expansion of Yosemite National Park. In 1906 Congress passed the “American Antiquities

Act”, allowing the creation of national monuments to protect lands of historic, pre-historic and scientific interest. That same year Roosevelt dispatched a naval vessel to the Bearing Sea to protect seals from poaching and in 1909 he ordered Marines to Laysan Island to protect nesting shorebirds from poachers. Whether it was Rocky Mountain elk in Montana or high elevation song birds in New Hampshire, President Roosevelt protected game and non-game animals with equal enthusiasm.

Throughout President Roosevelt’s two productive terms in office, he never forgot his roots as a sportsman and he was a champion of fair chase hunting; “***I am fond of politics, but fonder still of big game hunting***” he confided to a friend in 1882. Trophy game heads graced the walls of the State Dining Room and presidential hunting trips were as closely watched as the golf games of later administrations.

Early in his presidency, Roosevelt was on a guided bear hunt in Mississippi. His guides tied a bear to a tree for the president to “hunt down and shoot”. The President was outraged at the un-sporting gesture and ordered the bear’s immediate release thus Roosevelt returned home empty handed. This event earned him the nickname “Teddy Bear” and solidified his popularity with the American people.

Everyone who enjoys hunting, fishing, hiking, outdoor photography or the simple beauty of New Hampshire’s wilderness owes a debt of gratitude to President “Teddy” Roosevelt.