

BILL OF PARTICULARS

taxpayer and consumer who stand to lose the most from this systematic annihilation of the nation's fauna. As Colorado Wildlife Conservation Officer Louis Vidakovich says, "There'll be a day of reckoning someday. All this killing and poisoning'll collapse on 'em. I just hope there's some game left for us to manage."

Says Glen Sutton, who spent over four decades working as a trapper for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, embracing some of their methods but always disdaining poison, "I'm afraid a lot of these animals are gonna be extinct soon. The bear and mountain lion are next. There's too much pressure from sheepmen; they want 'em *all* killed. Nowadays you don't see one bear track where you used to see dozens. The poisons are gettin' 'em."

Says another retired government trapper, Charles Orlosky, who lives high in a remote area of the Rocky Mountains: **1** "Around here the poisoners have wiped out weasel, marten, mink, fox, badger, and they've got the coyote hanging on the ropes. I used to be able to make a fair living trapping for pelts up here, but now I do it just for a hobby, for something to do. There aren't enough fur-bearing animals left in these mountains to support a trapper, and I don't care how hard he works at it. Mostly, I blame the 1080 poison. They say it's only dangerous to canine species, but that's just not true. I've found all kinds of birds feeding on 1080 stations—eagles, magpies, Canada jays, Clarke's nutcrackers, woodpeckers—and those that don't get killed pack away the poisoned meat in places where the martens and the weasels can find it and get poisoned themselves. Last winter was the first time in years that we didn't have a pair of eagles feeding up here. They just disappeared. And where there used to be magpies all over the place, we didn't see one

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#### THE OFFICIAL EXECUTIONERS

localities bears scant relationship to real need and loss still to scientific management."

The Leopold Board made several recommendations for reform. It called for the establishment of a permanent advisory board of predator and rodent control, and representation by a "wide spectrum of opinions" on the committee. It suggested that the Fish and Wildlife Service reassess its own goals "in the light of changing public attitudes toward wildlife." It recommended that government predator-control programs be continued on a judicious basis on the far-western "open grazing lands," but that they be abandoned entirely in the rest of the country. It asked for a "greatly amplified research program," with less emphasis on how to kill wildlife and more on the development of "repellents, fences, and scare-devices which would preclude the necessity of killing any animals." It called for sharp federal controls on the use of 1080, and a ban on export of the chemical "where the danger of misuse is substantial."

One can imagine the commotion when Secretary Udall accepted the Leopold Report in March, 1964, and announced a month later that it would become a "general guidepost for department policy." Sheepmen yelled bloody murder, and descended on their congressmen in bus-loads. They warned that implementation of the Leopold Report would lead to the end of the livestock industry in the West, not to mention the chicken and turkey and rabbit industries as well. Deer and antelope and elk would perish, cut down in the deep snows by the rapacious coyote and mountain lion, and soon there would be nothing left but predators, dashing across the range preying on one another.

Every subsequent step taken by Secretary Udall was greeted with derision and scorn and the organized opposition of the stockmen. In October, when the director of the

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device that discharged a cartridge sporadically, and kept down his losses. Through all these years, the sheepmen prospered side by side with cattlemen and coyotes.

Then came 1980. "At first we were plumb stupid about it," a longtime resident of the valley recalls. "We'd see these government trappers coming in with their pickup trucks, and we figured they were doing what trappers had always done: trapping. Then we began to hear from the sheepmen. They said the government had invented a brand-new poison that'd kill nothing but coyotes, and they were gonna use it in the valley to wipe out the predators. Right then is when we should've made our move. But we figured, let the sheepmen enjoy themselves. There'd always be coyotes."

In the spring that followed the first winter of extensive 1980 poisoning at Toponas, cowboys rode across their thawing grasslands and discovered the bodies of hawks and eagles. Coyotes and foxes were hardly anywhere to be seen, and some dogs and cats were missing. "It was like a new place," says one of the ranchers. "But we was still too dumb to see what was coming."

*In N.Z. they were also but it helped couldn't be a damn.*

The 1980 poisoning program went on for a few years, until the predators and raptors were almost gone. The bald and golden eagles that had been common in the valley were seen only rarely, and hilltops that had rung with the howls of coyotes now were still and silent in the moonlight. Then the rodents hit the valley like a horde of locusts. With hardly any meat-eaters left to control their sharply multiplying numbers, the rodents popped up everywhere, their jaws working, their paws digging, bringing agricultural chaos. Rich pasture turned into wasteland, suitable only for weeds and sage. Gophers laced the subsoil with miles

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BIOGRAPHY OF A MASTER POISON

kept 1080 solution in a pop bottle. A store employee drank it and it killed him. And then, of course, there've been the suicides." Crabtree remembers a particularly unpleasant case in which he was called for expert advice. "A woman who worked as a secretary at a pest control company in Denver became despondent, and she took some 1080 out of a locked cabinet and ingested it. Then she changed her mind and called for help. But, of course, there's no changing your mind with 1080. During the night, the doctors called me, and I told them there was nothing they could do but try to allay the symptoms. Apparently it was quite painful. She had convulsions, and she lasted several hours."

Where convulsions are present, Crabtree points out, any experienced physician would suspect poisoning, but there also will be cases where the doctor is not present at the time of the convulsions, or the patient does not suffer convulsions at all. In these cases, Crabtree says, doctors "would probably diagnose the death as a heart attack." He reads from a report by scientist Maynard B. Chenoweth, dated 1950: "Major point of attack of 1080 may be either the central nervous system or the heart. . . . Death may result from respiratory arrest following severe convulsions, gradual cardiac failure, or ventricular fibrillation, or progressive depression of the central nervous system with either respiratory or cardiac failure as the terminal event." A 1963 HEW report adds a chilling note to the 1080 profile: "Children appear to be more subject to cardiac arrest than ventricular fibrillation."

Darwin Creek, the maverick game warden of Wyoming, sums the matter up in a simple and accurate phrase: "The trouble with 1080 is if I had some on my finger and licked it, I'd die of a heart attack. Nobody'd know."

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POISONERS WITHOUT PORTFOLIO

less concerned about the manner of death, but 1080 seems to act with such violence and cruelty that the subject has been explored extensively. Weldon Robinson, a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, reported as long ago as 1948: "Compound 1080 is faster [than thallium] in its action, but the spasm period of its victims, particularly the canines, seems unduly violent. With coyotes, symptoms may be delayed from one to several hours, depending on the dose taken. After emesis the animals generally pass through a period of excitement—cowering, yelping, or violently running as though in fear—before falling in convulsions. . . . The severe spasms associated with 1080 and the time required for thallium to kill are outstanding objections to the use of these two particular poisons."

A government trapper tells about the numerous dogs he has seen poisoned by 1080: "They get nervous, start chasing around. Then they start yelping and screaming, and running back and forth; they'll run into a tree or a fence or a wall, bounce back, and run into 'em again. A lot of times you never find 'em. Once when I was in a sheep camp a 1080 dog came into the tent, mused all over it, vomited, peed all over, tore the tent ropes down when she got tangled in 'em, then took off and went down over a cliff and through some oak brush. We could hear her howling far away. Later I asked the herder if he ever found her, and he said no."

But the danger to surrounding wildlife from a fatal dosage of 1080 does not end with a victim's violent death. "Following absorption," wrote Fish and Wildlife biologist Ed Peacock, "sodium fluoroacetate appears to act without being chemically changed." The Western Montana Scientists' Committee for Public Information reported: "Sodium 1080 remains stable and does not degrade easily."

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extremely hazardous to animals higher in the food chain. House cats, dogs, pigs, foxes, skunks and coyotes have died after eating 1080-poisoned rodents. Rodent control programs in California reduced the coyote population by 30 percent in treated areas. Carrion-feeding birds, such as eagles, ravens, magpies and jays, who attack the viscera first, are exposed to maximum concentrations of 1080. It is possible that a coyote might die after eating poisoned rodents and the eagles or magpies die from eating the coyote." Every animal that has died from 1080, no matter how small the dosage or light his weight, has become another poison-bait station in the wilds. "Dogs have been killed by chewing on the dried carcass of a rat or mouse killed with 1080 several months prior," Glen Crabtree wrote; and a Fish and Wildlife bulletin warned: "The secondary hazard to dogs, cats, pigs and carnivorous wild animals following the use of 1080 in field rodent control is significant. Even such precautions as keeping domestic pets tied up for a period of days after poison is exposed, supplemented by carefully collecting and burning all surface kill that can be located, still has not prevented accidental poisoning."

Any animal that ingests 1080 soon begins vomiting, and each little pile of vomitus becomes still another poison-bait station. Colorado trapper Charles Orlosky followed a 1080-poisoned coyote and found that it vomited eight times before crashing into a tree and dying.

Dr. Alfred Etter wrote: "With the web of life operating in reverse, any animal looking for meat in late fall, winter, or spring might be sickened or killed [by such vomitus]. This could include the rare and protected wolverine, the valuable fur-bearing marten, the fox, weasels, bobcat, mink, badger, dogs, other coyotes, and possibly birds. Snowshoe rabbits would be active and vulnerable, as they have been

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sheep in Meeker, Colorado, "The real effectiveness of the predator program is in the field. But this damn program is like any other government program. Nowadays there's ten guys in the office for every one guy in the field. And that's where the money goes." Retired government trapper Glen Sutton adds, "When I first went to work, they had one guy in our office over in Denver and one girl. Now there's about ten or twelve in the office, and it seems to get bigger every year."

The two western Coloradans are not the first to discover that the Wildlife Services division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service seems to grow in strict accordance with the principles evolved by Professor C. Northcote Parkinson. As long ago as 1964, the Leopold committeemen reported, "When professional hunters are employed, control tends to become an end in itself, and, following Parkinson's Law, the machinery for its accomplishment can easily proliferate beyond real need." Dr. Raymond Hall, the eminent Kansas naturalist, testified at a congressional hearing in 1966: "The force of federally direct coyote hunters has grown up again to even larger proportions than before [the Leopold Report]: more than 700 of them, not counting their supervisors and administrators, now are at work. I can add that they spend much of their time in public relations work in order to create a demand for their services." After publication of his book *The Voice of the Coyote*, J. Frank Dobie said, "I found out while writing my book on the coyote that the hierarchy of 'control' care nothing at all except to keep killing and to keep increasing their jobs." The naturalist Joseph Wood Krutch said shortly before his death, "People are so naïve. They think if the state or federal government spends so much money employing so many people it must be important

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