

Dr. Jack Ward Thomas, a wildlife biologist who rose to become chief of the United States Forest Service, understood better than most that wildlife policy and law are a reflection of human values. He knew and taught that, ultimately, wildlife policy is an articulation of where we humans choose to stand along the spectrum between protection and exploitation of wildlife and their habitats. Jack often reminded his students that "the question is not whether humans would exploit the natural world but how." And he taught us that the purpose of policy is to craft and communicate a reasoned articulation of the "how."

Jack came to his deep understanding of policy by way of experience. He held degrees on the technical aspects of biology, forestry, and resource management, but it was his career experiences that quickly taught him that, like Theodore Roosevelt's "timid souls," any who entered the wildlife field to avoid dealing with people had sorely miscalculated. Jack was not one to shy from a difficult challenge, and during his storied career he found himself with lead roles in the formulation and enactment of policies having meaningful implications for wildlife and humans alike. From his early years through his self-described period of "pontification without responsibility" (i.e., retirement—though he never really retired), Jack's contributions to wildlife policy were formative not only for his field but also for his own personal development as a conservationist.

Jack is perhaps best known for his roles as chief of the world's premier multiple-use land management agency—the United States Forest Service—and his leadership in our nation's first considered engagement in what is now familiarly known as "ecosystem management." Government and industry tacitly understood that, by the last quarter of the twentieth century, domestic timber cutting had crossed a Rubicon under policies that delayed the moment of reckoning following decades of unsustainable harvest levels. The two pawns remaining on the board had the most at stake: human communities of the Pacific Northwest and populations of the endangered northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis*), a species dependent on old-growth forests. Thus began the owls-versus-jobs controversy—a battle that would yield only pyrrhic victories.

Reflecting on those battles in his 2004 book, *The Journals of a Forest Service Chief*, Jack revealed his grasp of how wildlife policy decisions result in very real effects for humans and wildlife. He recalled a congressman pointedly asking him in a hearing whether he had "ever thought about the people who will be hurt by what you recommended." He replied, as only Jack could, as only Jack would: "Every god-damned

night from one to five in the morning. But that doesn't change the biology of the situation."

Jack knew that real people and lives hung in the balance of many knotty conservation issues that landed on his desk. He felt it. He would choke up when he felt it—not just at the moment of encountering an out-of-work and frightened lumber mill worker with school-aged kids—but decades later when he would be moved to tears by the conflict, pain, and impact that came with many decisions that fell to him. He understood in his heart that there was rarely a peaceful, satisfying balance to be found in those decisions, and he knew that behind a heralded "balance," there were gains and losses on each side of the fulcrum. He felt for others in his heart, particularly those who faced real trial, real struggle, and real fear.

These high stakes for humans, wildlife, and wild places drove Jack's insistence that effective policy and sound decisions must be fundamentally informed by the best available science. Yes, Jack was fully aware that scientific information is only one input among many that are considered in developing any policy. But he also knew that to deny, downplay, or sideline knowledge would be far more consequential than professional misconduct; doing so would dishonor and likely harm people, wildlife, and wild places. Jack understood that it was fundamentally important (and human) to confront cold, unemotional scientific information with human values, but also to insist on the necessity of informing human values and emotion with scientific knowledge. Jack didn't consider the crafting of policy as merely an intellectual exercise; Jack felt policy and lived policy. And he understood that countless others who care about wildlife conservation and the nation's public lands felt and lived policy too, even if they wouldn't phrase it in quite that way.

This perspective is one of the things that made Jack so exceptionally effective. He was the embodiment of an inextricably intertwined philosopher and practitioner: the man who makes his living off the mountains and the man who feels most alive in the mountains; the university professor and the dirt-kicking white-tailed deer biologist who was always of Texas. Jack appreciated these as complementary, not contradictory, perspectives.

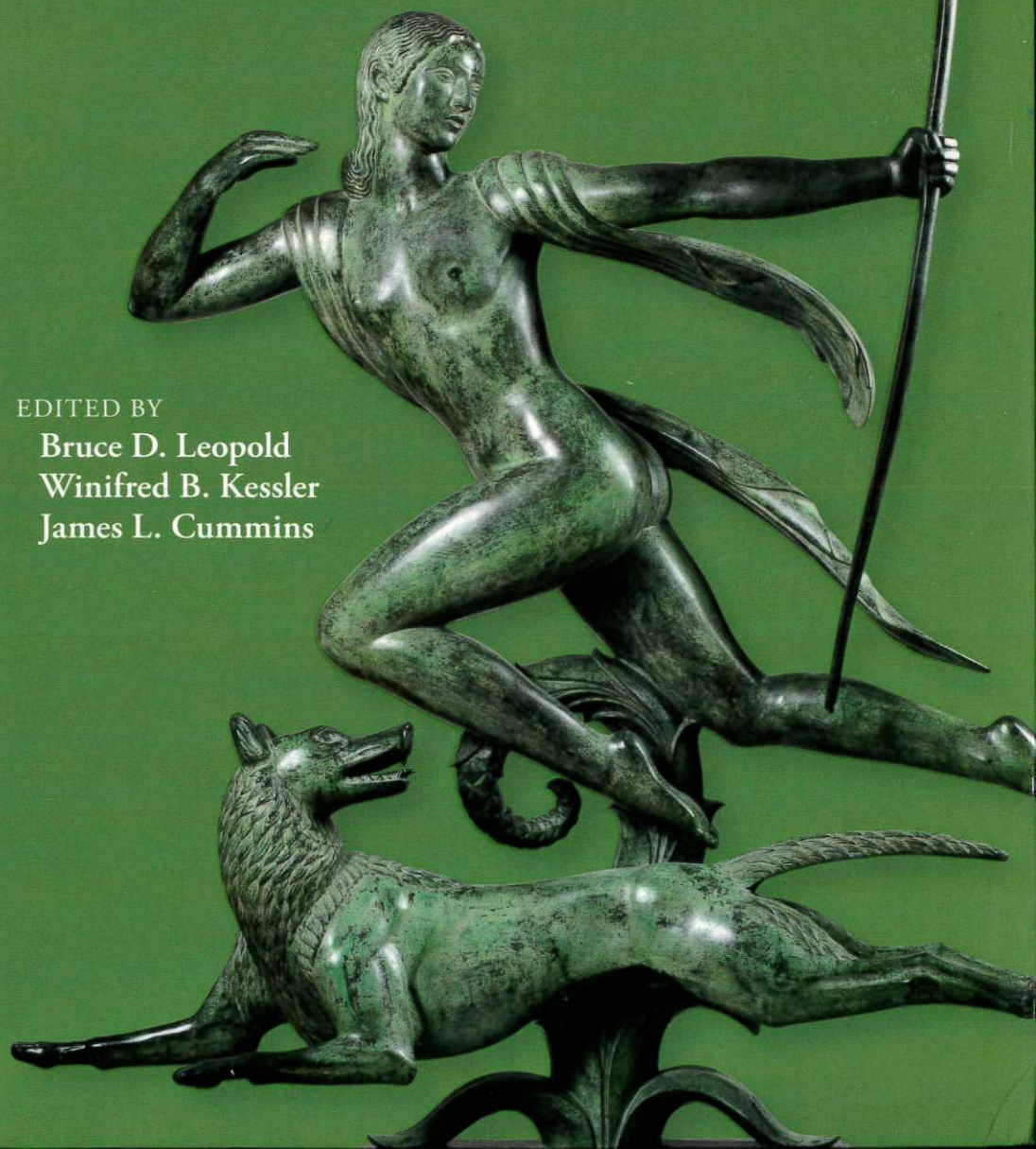
And so, to honor this master of wildlife and natural resource policy, his deep understanding of the human and wildlife sides of any conservation issue, and his example of tempering his intellect with his humanity, the Boone and Crockett Club proudly dedicates this volume to the memory of Dr. Jack Ward Thomas.

Brendan J. Moynahan
BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB FELLOW

NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE POLICY AND LAW

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