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PRACTICAL OUTLOOK NECESSARY IN PREDATOR CONTROL, FWS OFFICIAL SAYS

When discussing predator control, the phrase "balance of nature" probably has been used more loosely than any other expression in conservation, Clifford C. Presnall, Assistant Chief of the Branch of Predator and Rodent Control of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, stated today in a paper read before the 15th North American Wildlife Conference now being held in San Francisco.

"White men, with their modern implements and inventive genius, have made profound changes in the New World, and all their activities have influenced the workings of nature in one way or another," Presnall stated. "The notion that man's mistakes can be cured if we just give Mother Nature a free hand is a *laissez-faire* policy as outmoded in biological science as it is in political science."

"It is physically impossible to let nature alone, to perform its healing miracles unhindered, unless the entire human race gives up its leasehold on this planet and moves to Mars or some other equally improbable place," he added.

By our ignorant and selfish actions we have made this world what it is today, said Presnall, and we are stuck with it. It is up to us to develop ways of combining natural and human factors into constructive and dynamic programs of resource management. It is folly to fold our hands and wait for the "balance of nature" to correct our mistakes.

In practical rangeland management, particularly where livestock is the primary industry, there can no longer be any question that predator control is essential. Large mammalian predators, like coyotes and wolves, cannot be permitted to harvest millions of dollars of livestock. The same principle applies to big game areas where hunting is moderate or heavy, and to areas where vulnerable game species, such as antelope or turkeys, are being encouraged.

Predators do have a proper place, however, in wilderness and primitive areas where hunting is not allowed or is too slight to affect game populations. On such areas, and on areas where predators do not jeopardize livestock or game, the Fish and Wildlife Service does not advocate or practice predator control.

Mr. Presnall, in his talk, cited numerous examples to disprove the popular idea that small rodents and rabbits are kept in check by the predation of such large mammals as foxes and coyotes. The reverse is true. In Northern Canada, predators are starved to death or attain abundance as their food supplies of rodents or rabbits decrease or increase. In both Canada and the United States, the cycles of rodents and rabbits are determined by disease, climate, and other factors regardless of whether wolves, coyotes and bobcats are common or scarce.

The full text of Presnall's paper, "The Predation Question — Facts Versus Fancies," will appear in the proceedings of the 15th North American Wildlife Conference, to be published by the Wildlife Management Institute.