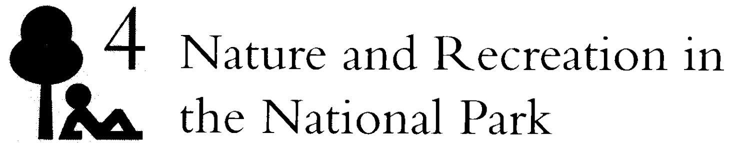

# 4 Nature and Recreation in the National Park

By the end of the twentieth century, national parks existed throughout the world, encompassing some 4,400,000 square kilometres of land. As of 2004, a staggering 3,881 reserves included such diverse ecosystems as the lakes of Afghanistan's Band-e-Amir (1973) and the Kalahari woodland of Zambezi National Park (1979) in Zimbabwe. Variations in habitat, culture, national policy and economics rendered each park unique, yet a number of common prerogatives joined them together. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defined a national park as 'a relatively large area where . . . one or several ecosystems are not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation, where plant and animal species, geomorphological sites and habitats are of special scientific, educative and recreative interest or which contains a natural landscape of great beauty'. In this variant of the park idea, the protection of nature appeared paramount. National park ownership entailed careful stewardship of the environment and a valuation of land based not on commercialism but on green aesthetics and ecological worth. A second hallmark of the national park ethos resided in its democratic purpose. Defined as a public domain by government decree, the national park ostensibly provided for all citizens. As the IUCN elaborated, 'the highest competent authority of the country has taken steps to prevent or eliminate as soon as possible exploitation or occupation in the whole area . . . [and] visitors are allowed to enter, under special conditions, for inspirational, educative, cultural and recreative purposes'.[1]

## THE BIRTH OF AN IDEAL

The national park is typically understood as an American invention. Widely interpreted as a product of the special relationship between US settlers and New World soil, the national park idea draws on American democracy, generosity of character and national primacy, expressed through natural grandeur. For western writer Wallace Stegner the national park concept signifies 'the best idea we ever had'. Environmental historian Donald Worster situates the conservationist ethos that produced the first national parks as 'one of America's major contributions to world reform movements'. For historian Roderick Nash, national parks are, put simply, as American as basketball and Coca-Cola.[2]





Patriotic testaments aside, assessments of American leadership in the national park story stand up to critical scrutiny. The first person to table the idea of a national park was Pennsylvanian George Catlin. A profligate traveller, sketcher and writer, Catlin hit upon the park idea while touring the Dakotas in the early 1830s. Viewing first-hand the encroachment of Euro-American civilization across what he saw as a pristine continent, Catlin proposed the establishment of a prairie reserve containing free-roaming bison and Indian hunters, a snapshot of pre-Columbian life preserved for all time as a '*nation's park,* containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty!' The nationalistic implications of such a move were far from lost on Catlin. As he expatiated, 'What a beautiful and thrilling specimen for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages!'[3]

Nothing came of Catlin's plan (in fact the plains that he so admired only achieved protection, as part of Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Kansas, in 1996), but his vocalizations were prescient. The same year that Catlin urged the creation of 'a nation's park', 1832, Congress brought Arkansas Hot Springs Reservation under federal jurisdiction for the purposes of public medicinal use. Meanwhile, a cadre of literary and scientific figures gradually echoed the concerns of Catlin about the dangers of American industrialization. Such notable individuals as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau saw untamed lands not as their forebears had done – as howling wastes or profitable resources – but as aesthetically pleasing venues worthy of protection. In *The Maine Woods* (1858), New England transcendentalist Thoreau called for the establishment of parks 'in which the bear and panther, and some even of the hunter race, may still exist'. Critical of the private estates of Europe, Thoreau advocated 'national preserves' designed not for regal sport or vacuous amusement but for civic 'inspiration and our own true recreation'.[4]

In 1864, Vermont lawyer and diplomat George Perkins Marsh penned *Man and Nature.* In it, Marsh warned of the capacity of humanity to change the face of the Earth and the fate of great civilizations if environmental limits went ignored. Acting on concerns over the private exploitation of natural resources, the US Congress ceded a slice of rugged scenery in the Sierra Nevada mountains to the state of California for the purposes of 'public use, resort and recreation' the same year. Since their discovery in the 1850s, the cliffs and waterfalls of Yosemite Valley, together with the sequoia trees of Mariposa Grove, had earned plaudits from explorers, writers and artists alike. Viewed as tantamount to unearthing paradise itself – one visitor remarked of Yosemite in 1863, 'If report was true we were going to the original site of the Garden of Eden' – luminaries in California and on the East Coast feared the destruction of the region's wonders by the rampant forces of commercialism.[5] Their solution: safeguard the area as a state park. President Abraham Lincoln duly signed the Yosemite Park Act on 30 June 1864. The grant proved significant by the sheer fact that the government had taken an interest

in nature protection. Aside from city parks, Yosemite represented the first public park anywhere in the world.

The realization of the American national park idea came with the establishment of Yellowstone National Park on 1 March 1872. As Roger Kennedy, ex-director of the National Park Service expounded, 'At Yellowstone . . . Lincoln's idea became a fixed national policy.'[6] Impetus for Yellowstone sprang from a desire to protect the mud-pots, mineral deposits and striking scenery of the Rockies from private acquisition (see fig. 5). Arguments from railroad boosters eager to foster tourist traffic, together with the general worthlessness of the land for extractive or agricultural purposes, also aided passage through Congress. The wording of the Yellowstone Act closely resembled the precedent set with Yosemite. The reserve in north-western Wyoming was established as a 'public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people'. None the less, Yosemite and Yellowstone differed on a number of key aspects. First, the size of the Yellowstone allotment was huge, some 3,300 square miles (Yosemite at the time measured 40 square miles). Secondly, authority for Yellowstone's stewardship came to rest with the federal government rather than any specific state – rendering the park a truly national product. Finally, Yellowstone was the first park to utilize 'national park' nomenclature. Though designated as a 'public' park, the 'national' label was appended to the reserve from the outset. In February 1872, the *Helena Herald* referred to the reserve simply as 'Our National Park', while superintendent Nathaniel Langford favoured this label in his very first annual report.[7]

*Figure 5. Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone National Park, 1878. US National Archives, photo number 57-HS-518.*



## A REVOLUTIONARY IDEA?

Finding the *exact* source of the park idea at Yellowstone proves somewhat elusive. In his 1830s diary, trapper Osborne Russell composed a flowery passage on the glories of the Lamar Valley: 'There is something in the wild romantic scenery of this valley which I cannot . . . describe.' A few decades later, Montana State Governor Francis Meagher reputedly advised that 'the government ought to reserve the territory for a national park'. In 1869, explorers Charles Cook, David Folsom and William Peterson indicated their wish to see the natural features of the region protected from despoliation, though Cook later confessed that 'none of us definitely suggested the idea of a national park'. The most widely quoted 'origin' story involves a conversation between members of the Washburn–Doane expedition over a campfire at Madison Junction on 19 September 1870. As the explorers took to discussing the dollars to be had from land grants adjoining Yellowstone's curious landmarks, one party member, Cornelius Hedges, interjected that the region should not fall to private ownership but be preserved for posterity as a 'great National Park'.[8]

Doubts persist as to the authenticity of the campfire conversation at Madison Junction, not least because Hedges failed to mention it in his own journal. However, the wider significance, along with the revolutionary nature, of the national park idea remains instructive here. The establishment of preserves such as Yosemite and Yellowstone enshrined three decisive tenets: the principle of public access, government responsibility for natural resource management, and a desire to protect nature from the ravages of profligate commercialism in an age when the almighty dollar reigned. Together, these represented innovative directions for the park idea.

From the outset, the American national park concept was situated in opposition to the parks of old. Whereas aristocratic parks existed for the leisure of the landed elite, America's preserves offered public spaces for the 'benefit and enjoyment of the people'. As California conservationist John Muir mused, 'Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home . . . that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life.'[9] The national park amounted to a green space for all to enjoy, thereby offering a fresh, egalitarian take on a hoary idea. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt (himself responsible for dedicating five national parks) lauded America's parklands for their 'essential democracy' in contrast to the exclusive hunting preserves of Europe.[10]

American preservationists also championed their brand of park making for its ecological superiority. Cultural nationalists interpreted the rugged chasms, soaring peaks and crystal-clear lakes of the American West as a distinguished natural past to rival the constructed cathedrals of Europe. California's Sierra redwoods, saplings at the time of Christ, offered themselves as worthy foundations for the country's Manifest Destiny. As John Muir ruminated,

'No other tree in the world, as far as I know, has looked down on so many centuries as the sequoia or opens so many impressive and suggestive views into history.'[11] Such fervent appeals to history and patriotism saw the park lionized as a place not only for healthy recreation but also as an organic repository for national aggrandizement. Nationalists castigated the Alps as 'mere hills' compared to the Sierra Nevada, and lauded Yellowstone's Lower Geyser Basin as far superior to Iceland's geothermal features. The natural monuments of America's parklands provided ready ammunition to hurl across the Atlantic. In June 1872, the US government purchased Thomas Moran's imposing 7 by 12 foot canvas *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* to hang in the Senate lobby – a pictorial indicator of the fertile connections between nature and nation, park making and American identity.[12]

Advocates also saw the establishment of national parks as a signal of cultural maturity. The park idea proved an indicator of a country willing, and affluent enough, to preserve nature for non-utilitarian reasons. The fires of patriotism were again in evidence. Park making provided a philanthropic retort to Europeans bent on mocking the unbridled materialism of Yankee society. Critics had long pointed to the commercialization of Niagara Falls – a tourist resort since the early 1800s – as an example of shameful American profiteering. With the discovery of Yosemite and Yellowstone came the chance for the United States to make amends. As geologist Ferdinand Hayden expatiated in his 1871 report to the House Committee, preserving Yellowstone would guard against the kind of ruination all too evident at Niagara. The ideology of resource protection and governmental oversight implicit in the national park concept showed the American nation at its most enlightened.

The national park concept clearly reflected New World impulses: the discovery of the West and its scenic wonders, cultural nationalism, democratic philosophy, the industrial development of a continent unprecedented in its speed and scale. The United States seized on the park idea, transplanted it to new soil, and watched it sprout fresh shoots. As historian Alfred Runte rightly pointed out, if the critics of Niagara Falls had convinced *their* government to be proactive in matters of resource conservation, 'England, and not the United States, would now be credited as the inventor of the national park ideal'.[13] At the same time, vestigial links remained between the American idea and European parks. Undoubtedly the national park signified a revolutionary notion in its synthesis of nature preservation and public amenity, but cultural exchanges and shared values ensured that continuity also marked the park story.

Romanticism proved a decisive force in generating the requisite sympathies for new national parks in the USA. A conscious reaction to industrialism, Romanticism fostered an appreciation of wild nature in place of pioneer antipathy. Such reverence for untamed nature can be summed up in the eloquent dictum of Henry David Thoreau: 'In Wildness is the preservation of the World.'[14] Yet, for all its applicability to the New World landscape, Romanticism was *not* an American invention, but rather a product of the European mind-set exported and adapted by Yankee intellectuals. A plethora of philosophers, writers and artists, including Jean Jacques Rousseau in France, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in Germany, and William Wordsworth in Britain, shared Thoreau's disdain for industrial encroachment and proffered their own spiritual links to untamed nature. Their musings saw nature elevated as a restorative force and a sublime venue for contemplation in the Old World as well as the New. Such impulses for physical recreation and mental cogitation in a natural setting inspired not just the American park movement, but also the English landscape park of the eighteenth century and the establishment of city parks a century on.



While the national park concept celebrated the nature on display in Yellowstone and Yosemite as specifically *American*, the aesthetic formulations of park campaigners sometimes adopted frames of reference contingent on a longer tradition. John Muir lionized the tumbling waterfalls and glacial cliffs of Yosemite as awe-inspiring wilderness unrivalled across the globe. However, the naturalist equally related his appreciation for pastoral charms. In *The Yosemite* (1912), he described how 'In many places . . . the main canyons widen into spacious valleys or parks diversified like landscape gardens with meadows and groves and thickets of blooming bushes'.[15] For all Muir's attachment to rocky vistas, he still found time to appreciate the meandering river and meadows of the High Sierras. In this regard, Muir championed an environmental aesthetic found in the English landscape park. Moreover, the fact that the esteemed writer used the landscape garden or park moniker as the most appropriate analogy to the wonders of Yosemite suggested that the English park connoted beauty, spirituality and perfection, as well as Old World venality.

Frederick Law Olmsted, a veteran of the park fraternity, ventured a similar duality in his 'Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove: A Preliminary Report, 1865'. Written during his tour of duty as Chair of the Yosemite Park Commission, Olmsted celebrated Yosemite as an American monument to rival the Statue of Liberty or his own Central Park. At the same time, the architect hailed the valley for its pastoral beauty: 'the central and broader part of this chasm is occupied at the bottom by a series of groves of magnificent trees, and meadows of the most varied, luxuriant and exquisite herbage, through which meanders a broad stream of the clearest water.' Olmsted went on to deliver a direct reference to the charms of the British countryside: 'The stream is such a one as Shakespeare delighted in, and brings pleasing reminiscences to the traveller of the Avon or the Upper Thames.'[16]

In terms of culture and aesthetics, the American national park defined itself in opposition to Europe, yet maintained a number of remnant Old World roots. A similar dialectic can be found in its democratic precepts. While the aristocratic estates of the European nobility served as objects of derision for the emerging US conservation lobby, other green spaces in the Old World provided more salubrious templates for park planners. As the previous chapter has elucidated, Yosemite and Yellowstone did not represent

the first experiments in 'people's parks'. Public areas designed for outdoor recreation already existed at various urban centres. Cross-fertilization existed between the landscape, city and national park concepts. The writings of Frederick Olmsted, a man whose illustrious career as a landscape architect took him to Europe and all across North America, illuminate such an exchange. In his 1865 report to the Yosemite commissioners, Olmsted decried European landscape parks for their exclusive control of scenery and praised the US government for abiding by its republican 'political duty' and preserving Yosemite for all. Yet, in an address to the Prospect Park Scientific Association (1868), Olmsted firmly situated the park ideal in English soil, while his *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer* (1852) ventured lavish praise of Birkenhead's public 'pleasure ground' – phraseology that would later grace Yellowstone's enabling act.[17]

## MAKING THE PARK AS AMERICAN WILDERNESS

The national park represented an experimental landscape. Following the establishment of Yosemite and Yellowstone, administrators faced the question of how best to 'preserve' nature. Inaugural laws offered only limited guidance to greenhorn wardens and superintendents. Stewards faced further problems in terms of financing. Congress legislated in favour of reserves, but proved far less willing to pay for their upkeep. Five years passed before Yellowstone received financial appropriations. In the meantime, hunters shot park fauna for sport, subsistence and the market, while local boosters investigated ways to make a fast buck. Tourists at the fledgling preserve showed scant regard for the sanctity of the natural curiosities on display. Seeking impromptu souvenirs, parties chipped away at the mineral deposits at Mammoth Hot Springs and plugged Old Faithful geyser with trash to ensure a more colourful eruption.

Gradually, however, a consolidated park system emerged. In 1890, General Grant and Sequoia reserves were added to the fold. Yosemite was upgraded to national park status during the same year. The preservation of monumental scenery remained crucial. In 1899, the imposing rock and ice landscape of Mount Rainier in the Northern Cascade Mountains joined the national park contingent – the first American reserve to receive the 'national' park appellation in its enabling law. Grand Canyon achieved protected status in 1908, Glacier, Montana, two years later. By 1916, with fourteen individual units set aside, US government officials recognized the need for a more coherent management framework, and set about establishing a federal bureau to deal with park issues. Under the directorship of Stephen Mather, the new National Park Service proclaimed a dual mandate of preservation and use: 'to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations'.

An American national park philosophy also took shape during these years. A commitment to protecting the natural features of the preserves while encouraging public visitation shaped the official mind-set. Together, these crystallized into a universal ethos of seeing the national park as American wilderness. This vision invited specific approaches towards natural resource management, Native Americans and tourism.

In the realm of natural resource management, legislation establishing national parks stressed the significance of keeping them in a pristine state. The Yellowstone Act mandated 'the preservation from injury or spoliation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders and their retention in a natural condition'. The parks stood as paragons to nature's design. As superintendent Nathaniel Langford enthused, Yellowstone amounted to 'a fresh exhibition of the handiwork of the Great architect' rather than a sculpted landscape garden.[18] Such sentiments reflected a 'Cult of the Wilderness' that celebrated the national park as an American Eden untrammelled by man. Hampton Court and Prior Park had their wildernesses, but a vital distinction set apart Old and New World incarnations. For many Europeans, the 'wild' constituted an aesthetic preference and a specific gardening style. Matthew Bramble in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) even described the urban melée of London as an 'immense wilderness'.[19] By contrast, wilderness in the Americas connoted a land entirely devoid of human influence. Consequently, the 'wildernesses' of Yellowstone and Yosemite were seen as entirely different from the contrivances of Versailles or, for that matter, from the constructed urban greenery of Central Park. As Olmsted pointed out, Yosemite represented a 'wild park', a testament to the 'glories of nature' rather than man.[20] Park Service biologists Joseph Grinnell and Tracy Storer ventured a similar comparison: 'A city park is necessarily artificial . . .; but a national park is at its inception entirely natural and is generally thereafter kept fairly immune from human interference.'[21] This was American wilderness: untamed, expansive and iconic.

Things played out a little differently on the ground. Despite the dictum of 'leaving nature to it', managers of Yellowstone and Yosemite prosecuted a regime of environmental tinkering. The 'Cult of the Wilderness' allowed for wilderness by design. Stewards saw nothing amiss in altering park habitats, apparently improving on nature's grandeur by refining the organic canvas. This suggested parallels between the national park and its cultural forebears. In common with landscape designer 'Capability' Brown, America's early park managers favoured a naturalistic aesthetic. Wardens pruned trees to afford a more picturesque vista, and planted exotic flowers to embellish the scenery. Emphasis was placed on the prevention of fire. Charred boughs and smoking meadows were read as unbecoming to the park landscape.

A similar environmental paternalism infused national park wildlife policy. In its medieval manifestation, the park denoted an enclosed piece of ground stocked with beasts of the chase. Although the American national park idea represented a significant evolution from the hunting park, some similitude remained. Despite the general wording of Yellowstone's Act guarding against the 'wanton destruction of fauna', managers operated according to a species

hierarchy that privileged certain animals. Wardens nurtured creatures popular with visitors and sportsmen – namely, bison, mule deer and elk – in the general hope of creating a sanctuary for herbivores. When it came to predators, staff traded in a discourse of devilry and bloodlust, viewing wolves, foxes and their ilk as entirely devoid of value. A vitriolic extermination campaign was enacted against such enemies of the 'peaceable kingdom'. Rangers scattered poison around wolf hang-outs, dug out dens and clubbed pups to death, hounded packs with dogs, and raised their rifles at coyotes. The national park operated as a *de facto* game park, with wardens playing the role of gamekeepers in the European tradition. In Banff and Jasper national parks in Canada, staff even entered their predator control 'scores' on a league table.[22]

Moulding the parks into 'American wilderness' also invited the removal of two-legged predators. While George Catlin's original vision mandated a 'nation's park' containing indigenous hunters, the park ideal as manifest in Yosemite and Yellowstone favoured an alternative approach. European landed estates signified obvious landscapes of power, enclaves for elite recreation, where common rights to gather wood or hunt were moribund. Managers of America's democratic preserves proved equally willing to ignore the rights of local communities, disavowing Native American ancestral claims in landscapes designed to appear untouched. According to the 'Cult of the Wilderness', the national park had to present an unsullied Eden. Native hunting and gathering practices were duly prohibited.[23] Yosemite may have been 'a people's park' in the words of John Muir, but local tribes could not hunt, burn vegetation, or collect acorns in their former stomping grounds.[24] Such management practices contradicted the egalitarian rhetoric of the national park idea and also bespoke federal policies aimed at Indian assimilation rife in the same period.

The promotion of tourism assumed early significance in America's national parks. In Yellowstone, cavalry pursuits of local Shoshone, Bannock and Nez Perce tribes (the US Army took control of the preserve in 1886 amidst growing fears of resource despoliation) centred on the need to render the area safe for tourists. Road, trail and hotel building initiatives also resulted from the drive to craft veritable nature resorts. Behind this remit lay a desire to make good on the 'pleasuring grounds for the benefit and enjoyment of the people' rationale embedded in the park ideal. Moreover, officials quickly realized that the future of the national park system depended on winning over the public. The nature lover could be convinced by paeans to natural worth, the mercenary by pointing to potential revenue generation.

The 'See America First' campaign of the 1910s exemplified early tourist promotions by combining an American spirit of mobility, cultural nationalism and an entrepreneurial ethos. As the glossy *National Parks Portfolio* (1917) proclaimed, 'This Nation is richer in natural scenery of the first order than any other nation . . . and it now becomes our happy duty to waken it to so pleasing and profitable a reality.' Implicit in this rationale was accessibility. In the introduction to the *Portfolio*, Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane articulated official desires to open the parks 'thoroughly by road and trail and give access and accommodation to every degree of income'. Celebrations of scenic wilderness paralleled progress in asphalt mileage and building construction. The government was aided in this regard by railroad companies which advertised the parks with lavish posters, books and exhibitions. Officials also enlisted the automobile in the fight to render the parks popular vacation spots. With the first Model T entering Yellowstone in 1915, and convoys of vehicles soon careening through the specially excavated Wawona redwood in Yosemite, the love affair between the car and the national park was set.[25]



Park advertisements traded in a rudimentary form of theming, with preserves configured as 'playgrounds and pleasure resorts' in the language of the *Portfolio*. Tourists were advised to apprehend famous scenes from specific locales, to heighten their dramatic effect. The national park signified one big landscape portrait to be drunk in. The wonderland tour of Yellowstone promised grotesque rocks, boiling streams and hideous chasms – wild nature writ both as horror and thrill-ride. In this aspect, the freakish nature of the geothermal features edged them a little closer to a circus sideshow or World's Fair than traditional park fare. At the same time, advertisements projected the preserves as wholesome venues, places in which to refresh and rejuvenate, to find in nature an escape from urbanity – a social function not unlike Olmstedian city parks. The national park afforded a place to enjoy America's organic creations, to take to the great outdoors and rekindle the pioneer spirit.

Yet adventure packages in the wilderness rarely promised a complete retreat from civilization. The blankets and tents used by early tourists soon gave way to the comfortable rusticity of the lodge house. Yellowstone's Old Faithful Inn opened for business in 1904, combining rough-hewn architecture with creature comforts and a fireside seat adjacent to the famous spouting geyser. Opportunities for consumption accompanied the visitor experience from early days, with photographer Jay Haynes providing postcards, precious stones and lantern slides of Yellowstone's strange wonders from 1890 onwards.

Entertainment and showmanship proved integral to the park experience from the outset. Blackfeet Indians performed on lawns in Glacier National Park for the benefit of guests, while playful bears licked honey from visitors' hands at Yellowstone's feeding-grounds. Such lively characters represented an animated foreground to a grand mountain backdrop. At Yosemite, the ever resourceful Curry family married nature with pyrotechnics to forge a spectacular entertainment landscape. Visitors gathered expectantly to watch the firefall – an evening stunt which saw embers from a fire catapulted from Glacier Point to the valley below. The national park was packaged as a place of fun and adventure. In 1915, more than 51,000 tourists ventured to north-western Wyoming to take in the remarkable ensemble of geysers, canyons, resplendent wilderness and wildlife attractions in Yellowstone. As Michael Milstein reflected, 'it might not have been Coney Island, but suddenly Yellowstone had become a cherished part of America's backyard: a popular family playground where the kids, deer and the antelope play'.[26]

## SETTLER CULTURES: EXPORTING AND ADAPTING THE PARK IDEAL

Through the late 1800s and early 1900s other countries appropriated the national park idea. Park formation in settler cultures fed from the same sources that inspired the American movement: namely, the disappearance of habitat, a growing connection between nature and national identity, rising demands for public recreation, and an emerging sense of the economic value of park-related tourism. On occasion, the United States exerted a decisive influence on new parks, through a desire to be copied along with its leadership in international scientific discourse. In other cases, planners operated according to national imperatives or took inspiration from other (often imperial) quarters. The American model loomed large, yet, as environmental historian Thomas Dunlap pointed out, 'everywhere local culture was as important as foreign example'.[27] Ultimately, the national park proved a malleable property, adaptable to different life-styles, ecosystems and social mores.

Australian authorities conferred reserve status on the mysterious subterranean wonders of the Jenolan Caves, New South Wales, in 1866. Legislation envisaged the area would act as 'a source of delight and instruction to succeeding generations and excite the admiration of tourists from all parts of the world'.[28] Overseers appointed a keeper, and posted regulations prohibiting vandalism of the stalactites (visitors developed a penchant for breaking off pieces of rock and etching their names on the limestone). The provision of facilities proceeded apace, with the Chifley Cave receiving electric light illumination in 1872. The *Lithgow Mercury* praised the site for its combination of 'rugged grandeur' and 'sylvan beauty', pleasant flowers and 'proper concrete steps built in what were dangerous places'.[29]

In 1879, Australian officials dedicated a preserve 32 kilometres from Sydney as 'the national park' (it was renamed Royal National Park after a visit from Queen Elizabeth II in 1956). The first national park in the world dedicated as such by its enabling legislation, Royal National Park stands as Australia's claim to the original national park concept. Park establishment bespoke various influences – national, American and imperial. A number of Australian park advocates recalled visits to the western reserves of the USA in their pleas for a national park. At the same time, lobbyists couched the primary value of *their* national park as a recreation ground for disaffected city dwellers akin to Birkenhead or Central Park. Environmental aesthetics in the new preserve displayed an Anglo influence. Some 3,700 ornamental trees replaced local bush in order to create an English-style landscape. Staff even took to raising deer and rabbits in the 'people's park' for sport.

In New Zealand, ex-prime minister William Fox recommended a park at Lake Rotomahana on North Island with direct reference to Yellowstone in 1874. His plans came to nothing, but Tongariro (1887), New Zealand's first national park, sprang from concerns over the private exploitation of mountain scenery and fears for the despoliation of geothermal features.



John Ballance, Minister of Lands, anticipated that Tongariro would become 'a source of attraction to tourists from all parts of the world and that in time this will be one of the most famous parks in existence'.[30] The Kiwi preserve ventured an important innovation in terms of sponsorship. Mindful of the encroachment of sheep farmers on to the sacred volcanic slopes of Ruapehu, Tongariro and Mgauruhoe, Maori chief Te Heuheu Tukino IV bequeathed the area to the government to ensure its protection. Tongariro thereby represented the first park in the world to be established at the behest of indigenous peoples. Significantly, at a time when the US cavalry were chasing Native Americans out of Yellowstone, the Maori saw the national park idea as a guarantor of their cultural heritage.

In the 1880s, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) cut across the Canadian Rockies. Enlivened by rumours of mineral riches and fine game, railroad workers spent their spare time hunting and prospecting in the mountains. During one such trip in November 1883, Thomas and William McCardell and Franklin McCabe came across two hot springs – a basin and a cave – in the Bow Valley, Alberta. A sleuth of land claims ensued as the three men, along with all kinds of opportunistic folk, filed title to the steaming pools with a view to developing a financially lucrative spa. The CPR and the Canadian government had other ideas. Fearful of private despoliation of the attraction, authorities in Ottawa ceded 10 square miles around the pool in 1885 as Banff Hot Springs Reserve, due to its 'great sanitary advantage to the public'. National park status was conferred on the region in 1887 following a survey by Dominion land surveyor George Stewart, who categorized the terrain of rugged peaks and gleaming lakes as 'admirably adapted for a national park'.[31] Parliamentary debate on the park issue included heartfelt appeals to patriotism. While cultural nationalists further south heralded the uniquely *American* qualities of Rocky Mountain scenery, for Montreal MP Donald West, 'anyone who has gone to Banff . . . and not found himself elevated and proud . . . cannot be a true Canadian'. Public health incentives and potential tourist revenue also worked in favour of the park. As Premier John MacDonald quipped, the springs would 'recuperate the patients and recoup the Treasury'.[32]

As might be expected, the national park movement in Canada invited a few stolen glances south of the 49th parallel. The USA and Canada shared similar western topographies and land management prerogatives. Sometimes authorities in Canada set out to better their counterparts in the United States, and at other times they sought American guidance. In establishing Banff Hot Springs Reserve, administrators clearly took inspiration from Arkansas. They also planned to trump it – Secretary of the Department of the Interior John Hall returning from an 1886 fact-finding mission to Arkansas bemoaned its poor maintenance, ramshackle plumbing and over-permissive entrance policy. When Banff was upgraded to national park status the following year, enabling legislation paid homage to the Yellowstone Act. Banff became 'a public park and pleasure ground for the benefit, advantage and enjoyment of the people of Canada'. At the same time, Canadian officials seemed more attuned to the

potential economic gains locked up in Rocky Mountain scenery than their cohorts in Yellowstone. In its first six years of operation, Banff received $141,254 for roads, hotels and trails, all judged necessary to render the protected 260 square miles 'a creditable national park'.[33] Rather than 'worthless lands', Canadian administrators envisaged their parks as prestigious resorts. Additional national parks sprang up along the Canadian Pacific Railway at Yoho and Glacier (1886) and Waterton Lakes (1895) based on this dual philosophy of nature protection and wildlands tourism.

In Africa, the impetus for national parks centred on animals rather than monumental scenery, a focus which harkened back to the park's ancient roots as a game preserve. With colonization came land clearance, the railroad and the great white hunter. By the early 1900s, British East Africa hosted 150–200 shooting parties a year at the cost of some 10,000 trophy animals. Market hunters facilitated a profitable export trade in ivory, hides and horn, while settlers shot eland and buffalo in fear of such animals spreading the malaria-carrying tsetse fly. This decimation of Africa's wildlife – the poignant symbol being the quagga, the last specimen of which expired in Amsterdam zoo in 1883 – fermented concern among imperial naturalists and sport hunters (often dubbed 'penitent butchers'). In response, they organized the Natal Game Protection Association (1883) and the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire (1903).[34] Cognizant of the failure of existing hunting laws, dedicated game reserves emerged in the Cape Colony (1856); the Transvaal states of Pongola (1889), Sabi (1898) and Singwitsi (1903); Kenya (1897); and Northern Rhodesia (1899), to nurture populations of hippopotamus, wildebeest, buffalo, rhino and elephant. These game reserves served as precursors of national parks by virtue of their protection clauses and governmental oversight. At the same time, they made no provision for public access and could be dismantled with relative ease. Emphasis remained on preserving animals for sport, perpetuating a 'hunter's paradise', rather than on offering an inclusive civic venue for non-consumptive recreation.

The national park officially came to Africa in 1925 with the dedication of the Parc Nationale Albert, now Virunga National Park, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Inspiration for protecting the monumental volcanic peaks of the Virunga Massif sprang, in part, from Belgian King Albert's tour of US parks in 1919, including a campfire discussion with conservationists John Merriam and Henry Fairfield Osborn at Yellowstone. Suitably impressed by the park idea, yet aware of the lack of wilderness in Belgium, King Albert transplanted an enthusiasm for nature protection to his country's African colony. Additional impetus came from American naturalist Carl Akeley, who campaigned for the protection of Virunga's rare mountain gorillas for the purpose of scientific study. Historian Roderick Nash characterized this process of international conservationist exchange as 'nature importing', whereby Euro-Americans viewed Africa through the filters of imperialist ideology while mindful of the rapid environmental changes occurring in the USA.[35] The park ethos was coloured by a colonial mind-set that apprehended Africa as an unspoiled Eden untouched by human exigencies (a perception that overlooked the role played by village subsistence activities in shaping the 'natural' landscape). By cordoning off areas as parkland, authorities were able to preserve the myth of Africa as a last wild paradise as well as indulge imperial proclivities for science and government regulation.[36]

In South Africa, advocates of the famous Kruger reserve, the second in the continent (1926), also took a glance at American precedent. Noting that 'it would be a thousand pities to endanger the existence of our South African fauna', Minister of Finance Smuts proposed the upgrading of the Sabi game reserve in 1914 'on the lines of similar institutions which exist in the United States and other parts of the world'.[37] Having read up extensively on the popular appeal and financial success of national parks in the USA, head ranger of the Sabi, James Stevenson-Hamilton, pondered in 1905: 'Would it conceivably be possible to wean the South African public from its present attitude towards the wild animals of its own country?' He went on to venture the following assessment:

> It seemed pretty hopeless. The low-veld was wild, dangerous, unhealthy; there were not many scenic attractions; few people had any interest in wild animals unless they were dead. . . . Government in fact, beyond paying the monthly wage bill, left us in the main to shift for ourselves. . . . The American public must surely be very different from ours![38]

Securing a national park for South Africa appeared doubtful, given such a pessimistic verdict. However, the mood in government and among the public altered dramatically in subsequent decades. As modernization, settlement and capitalist farming techniques gathered pace, vanishing nature attracted romantic and aesthetic valuations beyond the standard economic equation. Aware of the disappearance of wild habitat and faunal species, the Report of the Game Reserves Commission (1918) recommended 'a great national park' for the benefit of 'scientists, naturalists and the general public'.[39] The tone of the report reflected traditional imperial interests in botany, science and wildlife protection as well as articulating the nascent idea of nature as a tourist resource.

The drive to create South African national parks further related a rising sense of Afrikaner patriotism. Eager to secure international prestige for the republic as well as to glorify its pioneer heritage, conservationists rallied for the creation of a 'Volkspark' where future generations could see the landscape 'just as the Voortrekkers saw it'. The African savannah with its complement of charismatic mega-fauna symbolized the august of the South African nation, just as Sierra redwoods did for the USA. Behind this nostalgia lay important political considerations. Advocates saw the formation of Kruger National Park as a route towards fostering a collective (white) national identity. Stevenson-Hamilton, privately at least, saw the capital, and the irony, of using the Kruger moniker: 'the "Kruger stunt" is I think of priceless value to us . . . I wonder what the old man, who *never in his life* thought of wild animals except as

biltong . . . what he would say could he see himself depicted as the "*Saviour of the South African game*"!!!'[40] Equally, park creation enhanced the authority of the National Party in placing land and natural resources under governmental tutelage. Kruger National Park served as a landscape of power whereby the white elite executed control over indigenous communities. As in the USA, traditional subsistence activities were reframed as illegal poaching, the historic role of hunter-gatherer neglected in favour of forging parks as repositories of white cultural identity and pristine wildness.

## THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: PARK PROLIFERATION, ECOLOGICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL DISCOURSE

The national park idea proved popular in the late 1800s as part of a process by which settler communities came to terms with their environments and forged distinct spiritual, romantic and patriotic associations with the land. In the twentieth century, concerns about unbridled industrial change and the fragmentation of the countryside saw the park extend its influence further. National parks came to symbolize international prestige in the global community.

Whereas parks in North America, the Antipodes and Africa were idealized as untouched landscapes, Europeans proved far more willing to accept national parks as cultural spaces. In part, this reflected a variance in environmental ideologies – the landscape of Europe had, after all, been consistently (and obviously) modified for thousands of years, leaving the 'Cult of the Wilderness' with far less psychological allure. On a practical level too, park designers were scarcely able to forge large wilderness areas on a continent marked by a high population density and extensive private ownership.

Sweden established Abisko, Stora Sjöfallet, Sarek and Peljekaise national parks by act of the Riksdag in 1909. These preserves, spanning some 1,100 square miles, comprised forbidding landscapes of rock and ice in the Lapp province. Inspiration came from a variety of quarters, including the US example, German forest conservation, and the activism of committed individuals such as explorer A. E. Nordenskiold. Administered by the Swedish Academy of Sciences, the Lapp parks followed a strict remit of scientific research. In 1914, the Swiss government ceded 61 square miles of alpine scenery near Zernez as Engadine (Swiss) National Park with scientific enquiry also in mind. The area had been dedicated as a private nature reserve in 1909, thanks to the efforts of conservancy groups. Meanwhile, the protection of historic landscapes assumed primacy in the dedication of Spain's Covadonga National Park (1918) in the mountainous region of Cantabria – the site where the Moors were vanquished in the twelfth century. As the location for the country's inaugural parliament assembly or 'Althing' (AD 930), the Icelandic park Thingvellir (1928) commemorated a distinguished cultural history as well as a tumultuous geological past. Other reserves in Europe illuminated the park idea as an evolving cultural phenomenon. In Italy, Gran Paradiso National Park, ex-hunting reserve of the royal elite, was established in 1922, specifically to protect the range of the endangered alpine ibex. In Poland, the old hunting reserve of Bialowieza acquired national park status in 1932. Six years later, the Greek government ceded 15 square miles of the sacred grove of Mount Olympus, craggy home of Zeus, as a national park.

In the Americas, philanthropy and conservationist impulse combined. Mexico inaugurated its national park system with Desierto de Los Leones (1917), an hour's drive west of Mexico City, thanks to conservationist Miguel Ángel de Quevedo and his concerns over deforestation. The park had been demarcated as a forest reserve in 1876 to protect water resources. At its centrepiece lay an impressive Carmelite retreat dating to 1611, the product of the monastic order's desire to worship the deity in the wilderness. In Argentina, park creation came from the philanthropy of Dr Francisco P. Moreno, who gave 10 square miles to the nation. Dedicated as Parque Nacional del Sur in 1903, the park was renamed Nahuel Huapi in 1934.

The presence of British, French and Dutch colonial authorities also fostered a germination of the park idea. In India, Jim Corbett National Park (originally known as Hailey) was established in 1936.[41] In Japan, spiritual reverence for mountain scenery combined with a hiking craze and growing concerns about the disappearance of green spaces to produce the National Parks Law of 1931. Inspiration also came from wilderness aficionado John Muir, who once hosted Japanese naturalist Ryozo Azuma at his California home. By 1936, Japanese authorities had created twelve parks, including Setonaikai, Chubu Sangaku (known as the 'Japan alps'), Unzen-Amakusa and Akan volcanic mountain complexes, and Nikko, famed for its cedars and ancient shrines.

The proliferation of parkscapes in the early twentieth century encouraged a professionalization in the staffing and management of nature reserves. Canada pioneered the first federal agency mandated with park protection in 1911, though the US National Park Service (NPS), created five years later, is more recognized. In South Africa, the National Parks Board of Trustees assumed stewardship over Kruger and other preserves. Training in landscape architecture, engineering, wildlife management and civil service gradually replaced army command and amateur naturalism as prerequisites for employment. Banff hosted its first warden school in 1925. Parks were systemized, extended and furnished with administrative infrastructures. The US National Park Service extended stewardship over state parks and historic buildings in the 1920s and 1930s. New recreational units came in the form of the Blue Ridge Parkway, North Carolina/Virginia (1933), and Cape Hatteras National Seashore, North Carolina (1937).

Authorities reappraised traditional management policies in the inter-war years. Influenced by the emerging discipline of ecological science, a new generation of stewards, most active in the USA, engaged in a critique of existing park practices. Scientists articulated a need for parks to protect both representative landscapes and rare native fauna. Biologists George Wright, Ben

Thompson and Joseph Dixon, all working in the newly established NPS Wildlife Division (1933), endorsed a doctrine of 'total preservation' in their landmark report *The Fauna of the National Parks* (1933).[42] Wright and his cohorts called for parks to be refocused on the protection of habitat and the preservation of wild spaces for scientific and educational purposes. The dedication of Everglades National Park, along with Australia's Tallowa Preserve (both in 1934), reflected this new emphasis on representative habitat in preference to monumental scenery.

Animal programmes were similarly scrutinized. A positive appraisal of predators, due to their rarity and ecological value, emerged. With elk starvation in the Grand Canyon and exotic red deer irruptions in New Zealand, resource managers learnt to recognize the unintended consequences of meddling in biotic systems. As James Stevenson-Hamilton confessed, the removal of carnivores such as mongoose, jackal and wild cats from Sabi had caused an explosion in rodent numbers:

> The ideal wild life sanctuary should aim to be fully and accurately representative of the particular area . . . All indigenous species of fauna and flora ought to be represented, but the introduction of exotic types of either should be religiously avoided . . . Only by keeping such a place perfectly natural, may the student acquire true knowledge, and the ordinary visitor a real education in natural history.[43]

Venturing a fierce criticism of sapient environmental transformations, along with an embryonic biocentric philosophy, Stevenson-Hamilton railed: 'If and when Man should ever disappear from Earth, there is no form of nature but would benefit by his departure.'[44] Once read as vermin, predators became 'special charges' of the parks. African wardens refrained from shooting lions. All control policies ended in the continental US parks from 1933. In Canada, commissioner James Harkin insisted that 'predatory animals are of great scientific, educational, recreational and economic value to society'.[45] Such emphasis on ecological conditions equally brought a reassessment of zoos and performing animal shows. Henry Baldwin War, of the University of Illinois, lambasted the NPS for its historic focus on faunal entertainment, advising that visitors should visit fun-fairs rather than national parks for such attractions. Bear shows at Yellowstone smacked of vacuous amusement, anthropomorphism and barbarity, 'all the flavor of a gladiatorial spectacle in Ancient Rome'.[46] Menageries in Yosemite and Banff closed in 1932 and 1938, respectively. Yellowstone's bear-feeding show served its final entrée in 1941.

Conversations proceeded across international lines between governments, scientists and non-government organizations on matters of ecological philosophy and conservation. In North America, US, Canadian and British officials discussed all manner of issues, from the protection of migratory birds to predator control. As Franklin Lane, US Secretary of the Interior, advised NPS director Stephen Mather, 'maintain [a] close working relationship with the Dominion Parks Branch [Canada] . . . and assist in the solution of park problems of an international character.'[47] Canadian officials, in turn, looked to the USA for advice on resource management, not least because US conservation agencies received far better funding before 1945. Conservationist discourse across the 49th parallel led to the creation of the first international peace park at Waterton-Glacier in 1932. Similar proposals were ventured by Miguel Ángel de Quevedo, who led a delegation in 1935 for an International Park Commission and US–Mexican border preserve. In 1940, the *Daily Oklahoman* proudly reported, 'While Europe Fights, Mexico and America Plan Peace Park.'[48] Such plans have yet to reach fruition.



In Europe, such exchanges led to the formation of the International Congress for the Protection of Nature (1909). Co-founder Paul Sarasin (an instrumental force in establishing Swiss National Park) characterized the mission of the organization as 'to extend protection of nature to the whole world from the north pole to the south pole, covering both continents and seas'.[49] Moves to foster a formal consultative committee faltered during World War I, but discussions continued thereafter. In 1933, a number of powers, including Britain, South Africa, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, signed the Convention Relative to the Preservation of Flora and Fauna in their Natural State, a decree demonstrative of the growing international interest in parks and conservation. The Convention recommended a 'special regime' for the protection of endangered fauna, especially in Africa, and advocated national parks along with more rigorous hunting laws as appropriate remedies for species decline. Significantly, the Convention offered a common definition of a national park, one that incorporated preservationist, scientific and populist tenets:

> The expression 'national park' shall denote an area . . . under public control . . . set aside for the propagation, protection and preservation of wild animal life and wild vegetation, and for the preservation of objects of aesthetic, geological prehistoric, historical, archaeological, or other scientific interest for the benefit, advantage, and enjoyment of the general public.[50]

The document drawn up by the Convention was a transitional one. It ventured a traditional image of the national park as a pristine paradise, yet championed new ecological rationales of regional protection and sustainability. The decree revealed a lingering imperial mind-set in offering no provision for indigenous hunting – seemingly putting the rights of animals before humans – yet also signalled an emerging modern discourse on the park as a vital biotic space as opposed to a mere tourist venue.

## THE POST-WAR ERA: NATURE PROTECTION AND AUTO-RECREATION

Conservation funding plummeted during World War II. In the USA, national park appropriations fell from $21,100,000 in 1940 to $4,600,000 in 1944. In Sequoia National Park the number of personnel dropped by more than 50 per cent following enlistment in the wake of Pearl Harbor. Many parks were

appropriated as military camps, hospitals and training grounds. Troop exercises occurred in Mount McKinley and Hawaii. Banff and Jasper housed prisoners of war. The war also raised the spectre of requisitioning. Salt mining was permitted in Death Valley, and NPS staff reluctantly allowed timber cutting in Olympic National Park out of 'critical necessity'.[51] The patriotic *Calgary Herald* even envisioned a wartime role for Banff's beaver population: 'far away from the roads, where tourists delight to see them', the industrious rodents could allegedly be 'trapped and used for war work'.[52]

The demands of conflict dampened the national park movement only temporarily. In 1948, various government bodies and NGOs established the International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUPN, later IUCN) – a supranational organ designed to promote nature preservation, educational outreach and environmental information. The IUCN highlighted a growing interest in global nature by advocating nothing less than the protection of 'the entire world biotic environment' as well as advertising the continuing internationalization of the park idea.[53] In 1958, the IUCN began compiling a definitive list of global reserves. Four years later, it hosted the First World Conference on National Parks in Seattle. At the conference, more than sixty nations debated a range of issues from wildlife protection to wilderness and religion.

While activists and civil servants discussed the merits of the national park as an environmental good, members of the public took to the great outdoors in record numbers. Rising levels of affluence and leisure time saw the parks become favoured destinations for vacationers in Europe and North America. In 1955 alone, Yosemite hosted 1,060,000 people. Yellowstone received 1,408,000 visitors. Banff attracted 1,000,000 annual guests for the first time in 1960–1. That figure had doubled by 1967. During the same year, 2,099 visitors rafted through the Grand Canyon.

Although hinted at for some time, the national park idea finally manifested on British shores in the 1950s. In *A Guide Through the District of the Lakes* (1810) William Wordsworth asked for 'a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy'.[54] The Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society (1865), the oldest citizen environmental group in the world, carried forth Wordsworth's call for public access to the British countryside, as did the National Trust (1895) and the Council for the Protection of Rural England (1926). In 1904, Charles Stewart called for a national park for Scotland, a cause championed by *The Scots Magazine* from the late 1920s.[55] In 1932, protesters exercising their 'right to roam' staged a mass hill-walking trespass of Kinder Scout in England's Peak District. Endorsement came from the government-appointed Addison Committee (1929–31), although the issue remained moribund until after World War II, when civil servants looked to the national park idea as a way of bolstering national unity in the context of wider post-war reconstruction. Conservationists lent their support to the project, raising fears of urbanization and industrial encroachment alongside traditional pleas for



democratic access to the countryside. The time for park creation seemed politically appropriate, given the new Labour Administration's public works and social betterment philosophy, its interest in comprehensive town and rural planning, along with its aspirations to rein in landed control of property.

Encompassing 544 square miles of moorland and rocky hills, the Peak District became Britain's first national park in 1951. Ten further parks were created in the 1950s, including the Lake District, Dartmoor, Brecon Beacons, Snowdonia, Exmoor and the Pembrokeshire Coast. Significantly, Scotland was left out of legislation, due to the power of Highland landowners, reticent county councils, and pressure from the Forestry Commission and energy interests who wanted free reign to tap timber and hydroelectric resources in the region.

The British incarnation of the national park idea balanced North American influences with national conservationist impulses. Lord Bledisloe, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, visited Yellowstone and Banff in the 1920s. For Bledisloe, national parks served vital aesthetic, conservationist and social functions, providing not only 'beautiful sanctuaries for wild animals and birds, as well as for the wild flowers and ferns', but also 'a most perfect holiday resort for persons of all classes'.[56] A similar philosophy graced the Dower Report (1945), a government paper that clearly paid homage to the Yellowstone prototype in its call for 'beautiful and relatively wild country' preserved 'for the nation's benefit'.[57]

At the same time, British legislators realized the different social and ecological composition they had to work with. A small, densely populated island, Britain lacked the requisite space to dedicate vast reserves. After all, Yellowstone was the size of Yorkshire. While the US park system comprised large swathes of government property, three-quarters of British reserves remained under the purview of private owners, necessitating a different approach to land management. Britain's landscape told a story of lengthy human occupation, environmental transformation and economic activity – all of which planners had to incorporate into the Anglo park ideal. Snowdonia featured monumental scenery, including the peaks of Snowdon and Cader Idris, but also jet fighter exercises by the Royal Air Force, sheep farming, hydroelectric power facilities, and a plethora of grey stone villages within its 848 square miles.

In 1999, political devolution and the creation of a Scottish Parliament saw the national park idea finally reach fruition in Scotland. In 2002, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park was set aside, (1) to conserve the area's natural and cultural heritage, (2) to encourage wise use of natural resources, (3) to promote public enjoyment of the region's special qualities, and (4) to facilitate the economic and social sustainability of local communities (some 15,600 people lived within the 720 square mile reserve). Such goals harkened back to Yellowstone in 1872, yet ventured a significant caveat. The British national park was not just a place of nature and visitation, but also a home and a workshop.

## PARKS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVOLUTION

In the 1960s and 1970s, a new global environmental movement emerged. A response to the insidious spread of nuclear fallout, chemical contamination by toxins such as the pesticide DDT, as well as high-profile disasters such as the sinking of the *Torrey Canyon* and the Santa Barbara oil spill, environmentalism offered a sharp critique of the direction of modern society and its implications for the planet. In April 1970, 20 million Americans participated in Earth Day, a day set aside for environmental protest, festival and grass-roots organizing. 'Ecology' and 'going green' quickly became the buzzwords of the new crusade. Significantly, the environmental revolution is often presented as a decisive shift away from traditional conservation (and with it, park making) in favour of a new concentration on 'the modern industrial threat'. Characterized as a politicized, media-savvy activist, the stereotype of the modern environmentalist suggests concern over not the decline of individual species, or ecosystems, but the survival of humanity itself. This analysis overlooks the enduring impact of the park idea on modern discourses regarding humankind and nature. Its emphasis on industrial contamination and sapient health notwithstanding, the global environmental movement has been influenced by the park idea in several instrumental ways.

Many environmental campaigners acquired their love of the planet as a direct result of contact with park-like landscapes. In her ground-breaking text *Silent Spring* (1962), American naturalist Rachel Carson related the dangers of DDT and other pesticides. Carson gained her sense of natural wonder, moral philosophy and biotic humility through discreet observations of America's coastline, first as a child and later as a marine zoologist. She witnessed the dangers of DDT – a truly modern environmental threat – principally through seeing *nature* at risk. The public impact of *Silent Spring* – it sold 500,000 copies in hardback and was published in fifteen countries in just one year – owed much to its engaging naturalist style situated firmly in the tradition of John Muir's works on Yosemite.

It was precisely the fight to protect parks from industrial despoliation that facilitated the transformation of traditional conservation outfits into modern environmental organizations. Originally formed as a genteel mountaineering fraternity in 1892, the Sierra Club emerged as a radical campaign organization for parks and wilderness areas in the 1960s. A series of exhibit-format books produced in the period illuminated club philosophy as a marriage of old and new concerns. In *My Camera in the National Parks* (1950) photographer Ansel Adams extolled national parks as evidence of an 'enlightened relationship of nature and man' – precisely the ethos highlighted by environmentalists as lacking in modern industrialism.[58] The Sierra Club's *This is the American Earth* (1960) amounted to a spectacular tribute to national parks as vital symbols of human freedom and ecological health *as part* of a modern environmental discourse stressing imminent threats to the Earth from technology and human arrogance. Meanwhile, under the coaxing of executive



director David Brower, the Sierra Club cut a new pro-activist trail with a series of high-profile campaigns. Members argued for new national parks in the North Cascade Mountains and California's redwood forests, protested resort development at Mineral King in the Sierra Nevada, and vigorously opposed dam projects within the Grand Canyon. Such actions in defence of the park idea allowed the development of new protest tactics based on media exposure and ardent lobbying. In summer 1966, the Sierra Club purchased a series of full-page advertisements in the *New York Times* to protest dam projects on the Colorado River, one of which touted the seminal line: 'Should we also flood the Sistine Chapel so tourists can get nearer the ceiling?'

Although some veterans disapproved of the new directives, the popularity of the Sierra Club could not be denied. Membership rose threefold between 1966 and 1970. Under the umbrella philosophy of 'environmental survival', traditional concerns for parks and wilderness merged with new issues of energy consumption, industrial pollution and population growth for the first time. Everything seemed relational. Without a sustainable biome free from nuclear fallout and chemical carcinogens, national parks had little hope of survival. Moreover, in the estimation of David Brower, the park idea had its own unique contribution to make to modern environmentalism. For him, an effective remedy to the impending ecological crisis was, quite simply, the creation of 'Earth National Park'. As Brower extrapolated in a January 1969 advertisement for the *New York Times*, the ideas from Yellowstone and Yosemite could be fruitfully applied, and extended to the space race generation: 'It is now the entire planet that must be viewed as a kind of conservation district within the Universe; a wildlife preserve of a sort, except we are the wildlife, together with all other life and environmental conditions that are necessary constituents of our survival and happiness.'[59] Humans were now the endangered species, and thus required their own park refuge. Fellow Sierran Edgar Wayburn ventured similar sentiments in a quieter fashion in the club *Bulletin*. Far from an outdated concept, the park idea brought forward a valuable ethos of appreciation and aesthetics to a modern discourse. As Wayburn explained:

> survival is not enough . . . In many places this is being hailed as the emergence of a 'new' conservation as opposed to the 'old'. The 'new' is supposed to be spear-heading the just-discovered 'gut' issues of survival; the 'old' more narrow (and called by some 'elitist') is supposed to be still saving trees and worrying about Wilderness areas and National Parks . . . We can also end up living in a concrete world and subsisting on algae, if survival is our only aim. The earth was meant to be a liveable, beautiful place: none of us must settle for less.[60]

Nor were park-related issues absent from the agendas of newly formed environmental lobbies. Friends of the Earth (FoE), Greenpeace and other groups famous for their protests against nuclear power, oil drilling, climate change and biotechnology also articulated concern for wilderness and parklands. Founded by David Brower in San Francisco in 1969, following his acrimonious departure from the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth hoisted 'Think

globally, act locally' as its mantra. FoE counted affiliates in sixty-nine countries by 1970. Campaigns included whaling protests, the fur trade, dams and wilderness protection, along with fights against the MX nuclear missile, acid rain and the World Bank. In the late 1990s, FoE lobbied for the creation of a South Downs national park in the UK, opposed the Jabiluka uranium mine for its deleterious impact on Kakadu National Park in Australia, and highlighted plans by Shell to drill for gas in Kipthar National Park in Pakistan.

Another bastion of modern environmentalism, Greenpeace, maintained a similar dual-track approach. Founded in 1971 to protest nuclear testing off the Aleutian Islands, Greenpeace engaged in high-profile direct action campaigns to scupper whale and seal culls in the 1970s. Significantly, in the early 1980s the group lobbied for the creation of a 'world park' in Antarctica. Fusing concerns over mineral exploration, marine mammal harvests and global warming, Greenpeace advertised the park idea as a suitable protective device for the world's 'last great wilderness'. Activists established World Park Scientific Station in 1986. In 1998, twenty-six nations ratified the Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (the Madrid Protocol), rendering the continent off limits for resource exploration for 50 years as a 'natural reserve, devoted to peace and science'. In the view of modern environmentalists and international governments alike, the national park concept represented the most credible system to protect Antarctica from exploitation.

## PARADISE THREATENED

By 2004, some 9.5 per cent of the Earth's surface had been set aside as national park land, nature reserve or wilderness area. However, the integrity and security of such spaces was not without challenge.

As more people flocked to the outdoors for recreation, 'loving the parks to death' represented one key problem. Popular nature trails suffered soil erosion and habitat damage. Camera-wielding tourists startled grizzlies in Yellowstone and water buffalo in Kilimanjaro. Meanwhile, tourist infrastructure included hotels, roads, gift shops, gas stations, food outlets, campsites and parking lots. Mass construction consumed core habitat. Floodlit waterholes near hotel lodges in African reserves disturbed the natural behaviour of animals. Grazers concentrated on succulent lawns, while bright lighting kept away predators. In Banff, shopping malls, cinemas, a cable car and a golf course catered to a daily onslaught of 25,000 visitors.

Industrialized tourism represented another problem for park managers. Motor vehicles translated into noise pollution, high carbon monoxide emissions, congestion, habitat degradation and road accidents. In 1955, the *US News and World Report* observed: 'This summer 19 million Americans will visit parks that are equipped to handle only 9 million people. Result: Parks overrun like convention cities. Scenery viewed from bumper to bumper traffic tie ups.'[61] The situation had hardly improved in the 1990s. In Banff, the four-lane Trans-Canada Highway brought upwards of 15,000 vehicles (including freight juggernauts and RVs) through the eastern gateway of the park every day in 1995. Between 1986 and 1995, eleven of Banff's struggling wolf population died on the road. On a hot summer weekend, both Yosemite Valley and Dovedale Falls in the Lake District resembled car parks rather than national parks – all frayed nerves, revving engines, queuing traffic and asphalt haze. Park tourists rarely ventured far from their vehicles, choosing instead to congregate around major attractions, or 'honeypots'. In Britain's national parks, four out of five visitors remained in their cars or walked less than 3 kilometres. Autophilia came to challenge biophilia. Popular fascination with the road trip rendered the national park just a sideshow to be viewed through the windshield. The park became a place to drive through, rather than experience directly. As US conservationist Joseph Wood Krutch complained, 'Instead of valuing the automobile because it may take one to a national park, the park comes to be valued because it is a place the automobile may be used to reach.'[62]

Other forms of technology facilitated a similarly mechanized experience. Airplanes and helicopters buzzed over Grand Canyon, while snowmobiles (some 1,600 a day) careened along the snow-packed trails in Yellowstone during winter. People always looked to the park for recreation – from family vacations to extreme sports – but for some, the activity, the ride or the machine was what mattered most.

As a result, boundaries between the national park and the theme park blurred. Both venues satisfied human desires for automotive excitement. In Yellowstone, the grand loop road offered a slow-motion ride through a frontierland of rugged canyons and bubbling mud-pots, the scenery courtesy of geological design rather than clever engineering. A raft trip through Grand Canyon promised a splash-canyon journey to trump Disneyland, albeit with a longer queue and a higher price tag. In 1972, 16,432 people signed up for this adventure on the Colorado River, the sheer volume of passengers leading one commentator to dub the experience more 'carnival-style thrill ride' than wilderness excursion.[63]

A further peril to the national park emerged in the form of alternative valuations of nature. For developers, the parks symbolized wasted opportunities, locked-up resources whose value lay in their extractive, agricultural, timber or real estate merits. Petroleum companies lobbied for rights to oil reserves near the Great Barrier Reef National Marine Park, the largest World Heritage area on the planet at nearly the size of England. Pharmaceutical corporations ventured plans to delve the fabled geysers of Yellowstone for microbes. Agribusinesses touted intensive farming to offset rural decline in the Brecon Beacons, Wales. During the twentieth century, many park boundaries were whittled away to accommodate economic interests, from the decision to dam Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite (1913) to reductions to Kutai National Park, Indonesia (1982), slashed by 1,300 hectares for industrial projects. Development pressures also encouraged illegal encroachment. In India's Ranthambhore National Park (1981), a 426 square kilometre preserve in

Rajasthan, tiger populations crashed, due to unlawful grazing, poaching and forestry within the reserve.

Threats also came from beyond park borders. As 'ecological islands', small biotic remnants surrounded by landscapes of agriculture, mineral extraction, logging and settlement, parks proved vulnerable to outside economies. Ranthambhore National Park featured twenty-three villages within 5 kilometres of its perimeter. Some 60,000 domestic animals competed with thirty tigers and other wild fauna for territory and forage. As aerial photographs of the border between Yellowstone and the Targhee National Forest starkly illuminated, developers engaged in clear-cutting, strip mining and gas drilling right up to park borders. Meanwhile, the effluents of industrial society impacted on preservationist intentions. In the 1990s, the Florida Everglades fell under threat from a network of canals and levees dumping agricultural run-off into the 'river of grass' and siphoning off fresh water to supply the region's thirsty condominiums and theme park complexes. Reduced water levels and rising salinity from dams upstream jeopardized the future of pink flamingos in the wetlands of Ichkeul, Indonesia, a hunting reserve of the Hafsids since 1240 and a national park since 1980. Airborne pollutants proved equally insidious. Acid rain from industrial sites in the ex-Soviet Union, the so-called black triangle, compromised 60 per cent of tree cover in Krkonose National Park (1963) in Bohemia, while sulphur dioxides from fossil fuel power plants and exhaust emissions in Los Angeles drifted some 240 miles east to reduce visibility in the Grand Canyon.

Shifting political environments also affected national park systems. In January 1996, the entire complement of US reserves shut down following a wrangle between Democrats and Republicans over the federal budget. With funding priorities centred on tax cuts and the War on Terror, many environmentalists in 2004 considered the Bush Administration to be a principal danger to America's parklands. When Homeland Security raised the terror threat level from 'yellow' to 'orange', the Park Service incurred additional overtime costs of $2,000,000 a month. Meanwhile, the opening of Padre Island National Park in Texas (1962) to oil drilling, as well as controversial plans to allow gas exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, suggested that officials favoured economics over ecology. The close relationship between government and big business – both George W. Bush and Dick Cheney maintained connections with extractive industry, while Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice boasted an oil tanker bearing her name – provided fuel for a legion of political cartoonists playing on the 'this Bush is not green' motif. On a more serious note, a poll conducted in late 2003 found 84 per cent of 1,361 NPS employees in agreement that the government was 'enacting policies and laws that will destroy the grand legacy of our national parks'.[64]

Elsewhere in the world, limited political resolve left some reserves mere 'paper parks'. According to the Worldwide Fund for Nature, up to a third of Chinese national parks amounted to little more than ecological origami.



Poloniny National Park in Slovakia received protection in 1992, yet its old-growth forests remained victim to extensive clear-cutting due to economic and legal constraints. Other reserves suffered neglect due to bureaucratic corruption, under-funding, staff shortages and deficient infrastructure. Poloniny featured one employee per 2,930 hectares. In Jau National Park in Brazil (1980) a complement of four rangers protected 8,800 square miles of Amazonian rainforest from illegal forestry and the poaching of fish and turtles. Fewer than 600 park staff, with one plane and scant radios, faced off against ivory squads across Zambia's nineteen reserves. National parks further proved vulnerable to political destabilization and military conflict. In 1994, the IUCN placed Virunga National Park on the list of World Heritage Sites in danger following a war in neighbouring Rwanda that led to 1,500,000 Tutsis establishing refugee camps nearby. Large-scale habitat loss ensued as desperate exiles logged the park for fuel and poached its animals for food. In 1996, domestic conflict within Congo led to Virunga itself becoming a battlefield. Infrastructure was destroyed, and wardens fled. Locals appropriated areas of the park for mining, grazing and coffee production, while armed militias put their automatic weapons to use harvesting elephant, gorilla and hippo for the bush meat market. Virunga's hippo population, some 33,000 strong in 1986, numbered a mere 1,300 by 2004.

If 'loving the parks to death' represented a critical problem for parks in the affluent West, perhaps the most pressing matter in the developing world concerned issues of indigenous rights, poverty and economic sovereignty. In Virunga, locals viewed conservation with disdain, as park authorities appropriated valuable resources over which villagers claimed ownership. The national park had little relevance to impoverished communities, who associated the concept with imperialism, resource control and ethnocentrism. By the twenty-first century, many parks had come to represent contested spaces, geographies of dislocation claimed by a plethora of groups each touting different constructions of nature, history and identity. Amboseli National Park in Kenya, a game reserve since 1906 and a national park since 1974, symbolized in the eyes of international conservationists the romance of the African wild. Amboseli represented an iconic paradise roamed by abundant wildebeest, zebra and gazelle before the imposing backdrop of Mount Kilimanjaro. For the local Maasai tribe, however, park establishment in the 1970s encompassed the dismantling of traditional pastoral user rights, an increase in cattle and sheep disease, crop trampling and soil erosion, cultural contamination from illegal tourist photography, and a siphoning of gateway receipts to outside interests. Keen to nurture the park as a safari resort, with wildlife equated to biological dollars, government authorities failed to listen to indigenous demands for grazing access. When financial compensation proved unforthcoming and a water pipeline scheme fell through, the Maasai registered their disapproval by spearing elephant and rhino. Both conservation and regional sustainability appeared imperilled. Without local people as economic stakeholders, the long-term sustainability of national parks remained in jeopardy.

As environmental commentator Erik Eckholm noted, national parks cannot survive 'as fortress islands in a sea of hungry people'.[65]

## RESTORING BALANCE: MISSING PEOPLE, MISSING ANIMALS, MISSING HABITAT

The national park tenders a landscape of paradoxes. It is a space defined as 'natural wilderness', but shaped by shifting environmental aesthetics; valued as a refuge from society, yet penetrated by cultural, economic and political exigencies; portrayed as having an altruistic ethos, yet concealing power abuses and ethnic prejudice. Some critics deem the entire concept as beyond redemption. In 1993, African National Congress member Derek Hanekom claimed that national parks offered little to Africans living in poverty and needed to be abolished.[66] Edward Abbey lamented the state of Arches National Park in Utah (1971), seeing it as a cathedral of consumption, all floodlit signs and smiling female attendants, a 'utopian national park: Central Park National Park, Disneyland National Park'.[67] According to disgruntled conservationist Michael Frome, Yellowstone today provides a dystopic experience, an 'urban tourist ghetto' and 'popcorn playground, just another anodine theme park'.[68]

The national park seems caught somewhere between its promotion of pristine nature and competition with Disneyland. The natural eruptions of Old Faithful too easily compare with the nature facsimile situated in Anaheim's Frontierland. However, we need to remember that, though vulnerable to our manipulations, national parks remain *relatively* unspoiled landscapes. A recent study of ninety-three reserves in twenty-two countries discovered a higher level of species and habitat preservation within their confines as compared with outside.[69] National parks advance a number of vital environmental and social functions. They protect global biodiversity by storing relatively intact landscapes and genetic libraries in a wider environment under transformation; they stabilize regional ecosystems; they provide core refuges for rare plants and animals; and they cater to human economic, spiritual, recreational and cultural needs.

At the same time, changes are needed if national parks are to operate effectively in the twenty-first century. Tourist regulation, effective biotic representation, a bioregional perspective and indigenous participation are essential additions to the national park mantra. Some progress is already evident. In the late twentieth century, Costa Rica developed a successful, environmentally sensitive tourist programme combining conservation and local economic benefits in its twenty parks. At Yosemite and Banff, current management plans call for rolling back development. Park stewards and environmentalists anticipate extending the global reserve system to include all ecotypes. Already the restoration of extirpated species includes the Przewalski horse in Hustai National Park, Mongolia (1992–8), and the grey wolf in Yellowstone (1995–6). Bioregionalism has entered official discourse, with conservation agencies updating the 'island reserve' concept to embrace regional planning and inter-agency liaison on issues from grizzly bear management in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to the creation of 'superparks' such as Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (1999) in South Africa/Botswana.

Indigenous rights are finally being considered. In 1996, the Kenyan Wildlife Service announced the 'Park beyond the Parks' scheme allowing tribes to develop ecotourism in reserve buffer zones. Today, the Maasai are more involved in Amboseli, thanks to a community plan delivering economic incentives from wildlife tourism. In Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta parks in Australia's Northwest Territories, aboriginal leaders sit on the Parks Board of Managers, locals are employed as rangers, and indigenous communities utilize the park for spiritual and subsistence purposes. Official publications stress the rich natural *and* cultural heritage of Kakadu. From 40,000-year-old cave pictographs to resident saltwater crocodiles, people and reptiles are both presented as integral features of a vibrant ecosystem. Such schemes illustrate that sustainable development and the protection of nature can be compatible and mutually beneficial. If conservation authorities embrace indigenous values as well as international conservation directives, and aid local biodiversity and the regional economy, the national park idea can survive. As Albert Mullet, Koori representative from Victoria, Australia, volunteered: 'We can work together to mend the damage 200 years of inexperience has wrought. We can bring the spirit back to the land. And protect it for another 40,000 years.'[70]