

CANADIAN FEDERAL WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT

Looking back on
100
years

EVERY ORGANIZATION has a history, but Canada's federal wildlife enforcement function in particular is complex and extensive. It has reached a respectable milestone of 100 years and, like most government organizations, has done so while upholding an enduring passion for and dedication to Canada's natural legacy in this, the world's second largest country by area.

Today's federal wildlife enforcement officers possess the same important qualities of yesterday's game wardens. With guidance from the "*Special Issue of the Canadian Field-Naturalist 1999*" by Sandy Burnett, and input from retired officers and on-line research, a timeline of events was compiled to educate some and remind others of Canada's wildlife protection history.



Right: CWS wildlife enforcement officer patrolling for late season goose hunters.

ROBIE W. TUFTS (1884-1982) can truly be called the father of migratory bird science in the Maritimes. He is worthy of special recognition not only for what he did in his work with wildlife conservation, but in shaping the attitudes of a whole new generation of both professional and amateur conservationists.

This Wolfville, Nova Scotia native developed a keen interest in birds at a young age, encouraged by his mother, who was a botanist. He accompanied her on field excursions and developed a passion for birds that would last his entire life. While working in the banking business, Robie had a deep

Let's turn back the clock to just after the turn of the 20th century...

1912-1913: Early discussions with U.S. Biological Service in Washington and Canadian provincial authorities for a continental approach to migratory bird conservation and protection.

1914: The U.S. forwards a draft migratory bird treaty to Ottawa for consideration.

1916: *The International Treaty for the Protection of Migratory Birds* (aka Migratory Birds Convention) was signed by the United Kingdom (for Canada, as foreign affairs were then represented by Great Britain) and the U.S. This is Canada's first major environmental treaty.

1917: Canada establishes the *Migratory Birds Convention Act* (MBCA) as the enabling legislation to make regulations.

1917-1918: Several western provinces amend their provincial game laws to reflect the new legislation; however, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia repealed their waterfowl legislation and did nothing to protect waterfowl. It soon became clear to the Canadian government that, without provincial participation, a federal enforcement body would be required to enforce its legislation.

1919: Robie W. Tufts began work as the first Chief Migratory Bird Officer with five junior officers working under him. He was based in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

1920: Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers appointed as *ex-officio* game officers under the MBCA.

1932: In a move to concentrate most federal law enforcement under the RCMP, the Canadian government assigned MBCA enforcement responsibilities to

identification and advising the RCMP to respond to problem areas.

1947: The Dominion Wildlife Service (later becoming the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS)) officially came into existence and was responsible for federal wildlife management.



Poachers of migratory game birds keep a sharp eye out for the law, but sometimes to no avail. Members of an enforcement strike team in the early 1970s display guns and birds seized during a raid on an illegal spring hunt. (Photo credit CWS)

that agency, relieving migratory bird officers of their policing responsibilities. For the next five decades, civilian game officers would spend most time on field

1951: The federal government appointed provincial conservation officers who enforced individual provincial wildlife acts as having authorities under the

concern about the declining numbers of birds due exclusively to overhunting and a general lack of conservation standards. He eagerly welcomed the passage of the *Migratory Birds Convention Act* in 1917, and subsequently became the Chief Federal Migratory Birds Officer for the Maritimes two years later.

With relentless vigour, and armed with those new laws, Robie quickly amassed an impressive 679 charges and convictions in his first 13 years of work, following his philosophy of "hew to the line and let the chips fall where they may." While this is a notable enforcement achievement, his most significant contribution was his enthusiasm to

not only enforce the law, but to educate those who would run afoul of the regulations. In fact, following their encounter with the formidable character of Robie, many of those lawbreakers would become some of the most passionate conservationists.

An exemplary success of Robie's unique approach to enforcement was with two young boys, whom he caught shooting



**ROBIE W. TUFTS
(1884-1982)**

birds in an Annapolis Valley orchard. After an initial blood-curdling lecture, he took the boys to his home, where he introduced them, in a much warmer way, to the philosophy of conservation. In later life, these two young mischief-makers developed distinguished careers in wildlife conservation, one of whom went on to occupy a prestigious senior position with the National Museum of Natural Science in Ottawa.



Unlawful road construction destroyed part of the Meanook National Wildlife Area in Athabasca County, Alberta, resulting in a \$300,000 penalty.



Paul Langdon with some violators. He was likely saying "You will have to tell it to the judge."



Environment and Climate Change Canada wildlife officer examining a primate carcass.



Hugh O'Neill holding an alligator head.

MBCA. Efforts were primarily directed towards waterfowl hunting.

1961-1966: The RCMP created a special group to coordinate the enforcement of the MBCA, which eventually saw 10 RCMP members dedicated across the country by 1966. During hunting seasons, most rurally based RCMP officers would spend time each year doing some hunter enforcement.

1967: CWS initiated efforts to re-establish an enforcement program recognizing that enforcement is also a management tool. 'Surveys and Enforcement' units were developed across the country.

1971: Environment Canada (now Environment and Climate Change Canada) was established by combining units from various federal departments that were related to the environment.

1973: *Canada Wildlife Act* is proclaimed and allowed for the creation, management and protection of wildlife areas for wildlife research activities, or for conservation or interpretation of wildlife. Today, 54 national wildlife areas, one national marine wildlife area are patrolled and protected by federal wildlife officers, as well as 92 migratory bird sanctuaries.

1980s: Under the federal Green Plan, the RCMP withdraws from enforcing federal environmental laws while at the same time Environment Canada takes on increasing responsibility for wildlife and pollution law enforcement.

1992: The *Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act* (WAPPRITA)

was passed, enshrining Canada's commitments as a founding signatory to the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

1991: The Canadian Natural Resource Law Enforcement Chiefs Association was formed. This group coordinates interjurisdictional issue response, and is now known as the Conservation Enforcement Chiefs of Canada.

2002: *Species at Risk Act (SARA)* was proclaimed to prevent wildlife species in Canada from disappearing, to provide for the recovery of wildlife species that are extirpated (no longer exist in the wild in Canada), endangered, or threatened as a result of human activity, and to manage species of special concern.





Sea duck patrol, Newfoundland and Labrador style.



Environment and Climate Change Canada wildlife officer conducting DNA sampling.



Handling leeches.

2004: The Peace Officer Exemplary Service Medal (POESM) was created as an award presented by the Governor General of Canada, to recognize meritorious service. Wildlife enforcement officers are eligible and five were recognized at the inaugural ceremony presided over by the Governor General. Awardees: Gary Dick, Garry Bogdan, Gary Colgan, Guy Lafranchise and Ray Lalonde. Over the years, over a dozen others have received the honour.

2005: The Canadian Federal Wildlife Officer Association (CFWOA) is formed as an informal group of officers interested in promoting wildlife conservation, protection, and the vocation of wildlife enforcement.

2005: (Now retired) Officer Paul Langdon was named Officer of the Year by the North American Wildlife Enforce-



Former Director General Garry Bogdan and Governor General Michaëlle Jean.

ment Officers Association recognizing his work as both a federal and former provincial officer. This was a first for Wildlife Enforcement.

2005: A major reorganization took place in Environment Canada that saw the formation of a new, arms-length Enforcement Branch (EB) with a Wildlife Enforcement Directorate and an Environmental Enforcement Directorate. This resulted in the wildlife enforcement program being pulled out of CWS, and placed in an independent enforcement organization to address federal wildlife and pollution enforcement.

2013: Wildlife enforcement's director general is elected to chair INTERPOL's Wildlife Crime Working Group (WCWG). The WCWG is a major contributor to global enforcement initiatives

AGENCY QUICK FACTS:

- Nearly 400 species of migratory birds protected from overhunting, habitat destruction and commercialization over 10 million km².
- 560 species at risk protected
- Regulating over 30,000 endangered species in international trade
- 147 protected areas with combined area of about 135,000 km², or more area than the Maritime provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island combined.
- Approximately 140 employees, of which 100 are officers, 15 intelligence specialists and program support.
- 19 full time office locations; 3 satellite offices.
 - Northernmost: Iqaluit, Nunavut 63°45'N
 - Southernmost: Windsor, Ontario 42°17'N
 - Easternmost: St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador 52°42'W
 - Westernmost: Whitehorse, Yukon 135°3'W
- In addition to Wildlife Enforcement, ECCC's Enforcement Branch also enforces over 50 pollution regulations and protects fish-bearing waters against contamination from deleterious substances.

VISION

- To be a highly regarded law enforcement agency, respected for its effectiveness in the protection of wildlife and their habitat in Canada and for its contribution on the world stage.

MISSION

- To protect, respect and conserve wildlife and their habitat through the effective enforcement of federal wildlife legislation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Achieving maximum deterrence by preventing and stopping crime, and prosecuting offenders.
2. Demonstrating leadership and vigilance locally, nationally and globally.
3. Engaging our partners to ensure our common goals are realized.
4. Engaging our staff at all levels to develop a national program and recognize the importance of individual contributions to this effort

“CHIEF” FEDERAL WILDLIFE OFFICERS OVER THE YEARS

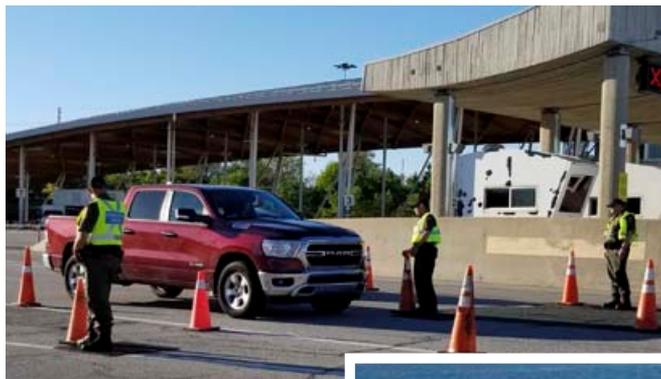
(by many titles)

1919 – 1932

- Robie Tufts*
- Harrison F. Lewis* (Québec and Ontario)
- James Munro (West)

* Two of ECCC's larger patrol vessels have been christened the Robie Tufts and the H.F. Lewis.

- 1932 – 1980s – RCMP responsibility
- Circa 1980 – 1989 – Jim Stoner
- 1989 – 2005 – Yvan Lafleur
- 2005 – 2010 – Richard Charette
- 2010 – present – Sheldon Jordan



Left: CWS border inspection.

Below: Environment and Climate Change Canada wildlife officers seizing eggs from a violator in Tête-à-la-Baleine, Quebec.

such as helping organize the “Thunder” series of operations (2017 – 2019), transnational investigations into wildlife crime, as well as providing trainers for capacity building.

FEDERAL wildlife law enforcement in Canada has always been a unique animal. While provinces and territories are responsible for laws that protect local wildlife, federal jurisdiction covers species that cross borders (migratory birds, international and interprovincial transport of wildlife) and species found on federally owned lands.

Today's Canadian federal wildlife officer looks a lot different from a century ago but still retains the pride, passion and initiative for protecting the environment. The MBCA was enacted in 1917 to protect birds from overhunting. Today, with a satchel of laws and regulations to enforce, an officer is more likely to work on ensuring habitat is protected, vulnerable species are not trafficked into or out of Canada as well as keeping human activities well apart from species at risk.

The federal program maintains a working relationship with federal fisheries officers, park wardens, provincial/territorial conservation officers, and with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state officers. Internationally, the program works with INTERPOL and with the U.S. and Mexico through the North American Wildlife Enforcement Group.

In closing, it is clear that there exists a genuine pride in the job. Some



current wildlife enforcement officers shared that all they ever wanted to be was a federal wildlife enforcement officer. It was and continues to be considered, by many, as the pinnacle of natural resource law enforcement. Congratulations to those, past and present, for their dedication in protecting Canada's wildlife for 100 years and counting! 🇨🇦

Author: Hugh O'Neill retired from the Wildlife Enforcement Directorate in 2012 as the Regional Director for Atlantic Canada. He has remained a retired member of the New Brunswick Conservation Officer Association, and is active with his local fish and game association.

Compiled with contributions from Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Canadian Federal Wildlife Officers Association.

