

CHAPTER XXIV

CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE

“The wildness is the preservation of the world.”

- THOREAU

JAFFREY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The establishment of the Jaffrey Conservation Commission occurred at the March 1972 town meeting. It was approved by a vote of the townspeople. The Conservation Commission is an all-volunteer advisory board whose members are appointed by the selectmen. The purpose of the commission is to be the eyes and ears of the Department of Environmental Services as well as to report to the local government any abuses of the environment. It also keeps track of open space in town. Clean air, water, and soil are of major concern. Original members included Frederick H. Smith, David D. Jewell, Alfred P. Sawyer, Sheridan J. Sullivan, and William W. Torrey. Randy P. Cournoyer, Jr. and Paul St. Pierre joined a year later. Many citizens of Jaffrey have served on the board since that time. Current members in 1995 include William Jack, Harvey Sawyer, William Smith, Charles Koch, William Elliott, James Bacon, and Dale Charles. Maureen Desmarais is the selectperson representative.

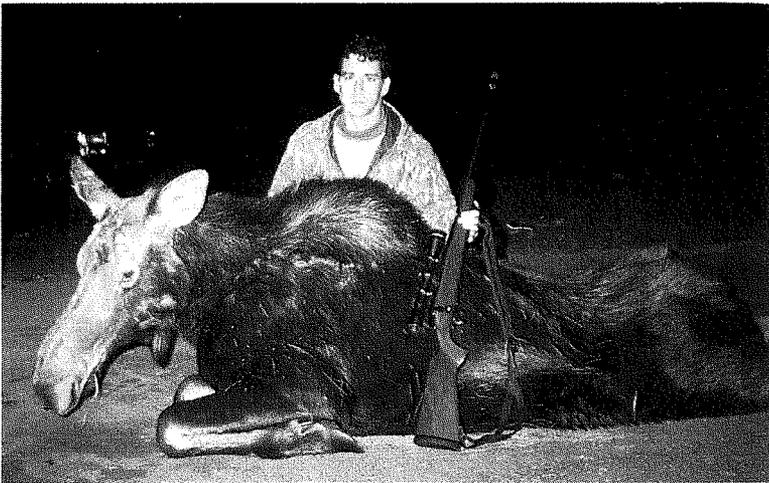
GAME PRESERVE

In the summer of 1952 Robert Bussiere and Paul St. Pierre, then young and strapping high school graduates, began a project that would last for four years. Together with members of the Monadnock Rod and Gun Club, which supplied materials to build pens, and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, which supplied the pheasant chicks, Robert and Paul began to raise the birds in order to populate the Jaffrey area for hunting. The preserve was located on what is now Carey Park Town Forest. A pen was built that was eight feet high and buried deep in the ground to prevent

predators from digging underneath. Located near the abandoned Boston & Maine rail line, the pen was set up to allow for feeding from feed bags and in close proximity to the Contoocook River to supply the water. The pen was opened at the top to allow for eventual flight from the enclosure by mature birds. Initial stock of chicks was around 50. They were allowed to mature in the pens in order to acclimate to the surrounding environment and become accustomed to Carey Park and the Children's Woods as "home." About half the stock survived. According to Paul, most of the problems were foreseen, with the exception of a few great horned owls who would fly in to have an evening meal of fresh pheasant. Another location by Gilmore Pond Road, formerly South Hill Road, was used with the same purpose in mind. The project continued for four years with about half of the birds surviving to populate the Monadnock Region.

WILDLIFE

Jaffrey and the Monadnock Region as a whole have seen the tremendous resurgence of many species of mammals. One could consider this period of time, the 1980s and 1990s, as the "golden age of wildlife." The habitat is excellent because there has been a



*October 1997: Heath Dyer shot a cow moose (450 pounds)
on the Jaffrey-Sharon line*



*September 1998: Heath Dyer shot a bear (250 pounds)
on Archie Coll's property*

change in the land use, and as a result the forest has regained a hold. The Monadnock Region is considered the most productive region in the state. A temperate climate, the number of oak trees, and the open space that exist here are some of the reasons. More than half of Jaffrey is wooded now. As a result, wildlife that was almost nonexistent from the 1920s to the 1940s is thriving. Bald eagles fly over occasionally, and ospreys can be seen diving head first successfully fishing by Red Dam in Jaffrey and at the Contoocook Marsh in Rindge in spring and early summer. White-tailed deer, black bear (several dozen in the region), moose, turkey, fisher, otter, porcupine, wood duck, muskrat, and beaver are once again seen with regularity. The beaver has been so prolific that the state has hired trappers to remove them from streams and small ponds around town. The moose and the great blue heron populations have benefited tremendously from the beaver boom. Both need the marsh and swampy areas created by the beaver dams to provide abundant food supply. The turkey, which was reintroduced in 1975 in Walpole, gradually made it to the Monadnock Region in the 1980s. In the 1990s it has made a significant comeback and can be counted in high numbers. Peter Sawyer's farm, Coll's farm, Old County Road, and Nutting Road are places where these large birds

may be seen on a regular basis. When walking through the woods or on the edge of an open field, you may be frightened by a turkey flying to a tall pine tree. It will fly up to a branch for safety or to rest or roost. Some of the reasons for the recovery are excellent forest cover, including mature oak and beech trees that produce many seeds for wildlife to eat to accumulate fall fat, many acres of wetlands, a diverse landscape, more mature forest acres, and a state-managed hunting season. On the other hand, species that require open farmland and new forest growth are in decline. Grouse, woodcock, New England cottontail, and snowshoe hare suffer from lack of required habitat.

The nongame species may also be experiencing a decline as the community of Jaffrey grows. Turtles, frogs, salamanders, and songbirds all seem to be on the decline as the landscape changes and development occupies areas that these animals once called home. Many of the hunters in the region have also found greener pastures, and trapping is seldom practiced anymore. A recent epidemic of rabies in 1993 and 1994 that ravaged the raccoon population also contributed to a decline in trapping. The one large predator that has made its presence known is the Eastern Coyote. A larger animal than its relative, the Western Coyote, it is seen much more now than ever before. Genetic testing has shown that the Eastern species has wolf genes. Food is plentiful, and it has little competition as it displaces the fox as the top predator in the food chain. The coyote is adaptable to many situations and as such it is beginning to fill the void left when the wolf and the bear were killed off. There have been occasional reports of large cats in the area, but as of yet there have not been any proven sightings. Waterfowl populations have been increasing in the last few years as the breeding habitat in Canada has improved. The exception is the migrating Canada goose, whose population has been declining. As a result, there was no hunting of the Canada goose on the East Coast in 1995. Record numbers of deer, turkey, and moose were taken in Cheshire county in 1995. As the population of these animals increases, new rules are established to manage the numbers. Turkeys weighing 20 or more pounds can be taken by hunters.