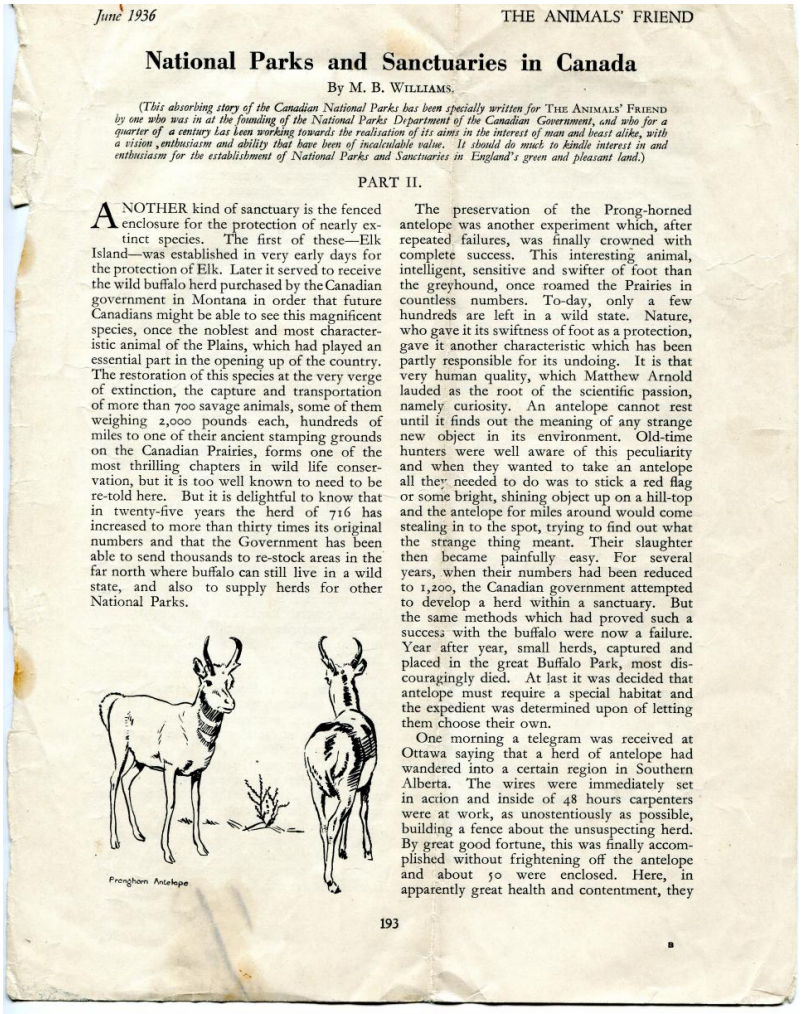
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"National Parks and Sanctuaries in Canada: Part II"

Williams, M. B.



National Parks and Sanctuaries in Canada

By M. B. Williams.

(This absorbing story of the Canadian National Parks has been specially written for The Animals' Friend *by one who was in at the founding of the National Parks Department of the Canadian Government, and who for a quarter of a century has been working towards the realisation of its aims in the interest of man and beast alike, with a vision, enthusiasm and ability that have been of incalculable value. It should do much to kindle interest in and enthusiasm for the establishment of National Parks and Sanctuaries in England's green and pleasant land.)*

PART II.

ANOTHER kind of sanctuary is the fenced enclosure for the protection of nearly extinct species. The first of these—Elk Island—was established in very early days for the protection of Elk. Later it served to receive the wild buffalo herd purchased by the Canadian government in Montana in order that future Canadians might be able to see this magnificent species, once the noblest and most characteristic animal of the Plains, which had played an essential part in the opening up of the country. The restoration of this species at the very verge of extinction, the capture and transportation of more than 700 savage animals, some of them weighing 2,000 pounds each, hundreds of miles to one of their ancient stamping grounds on the Canadian Prairies, forms one of the most thrilling chapters in wild life conservation, but it is too well known to need to be re-told here. But it is delightful to know that in twenty-five years the herd of 716 has increased to more than thirty times its original numbers and that the Government has been able to send thousands to re-stock areas in the far north where buffalo can still live in a wild state, and also to supply herds for other National Parks.

Pronghorn Antelope

The preservation of the Prong-horned antelope was another experiment which, after repeated failures, was finally crowned with complete success. This interesting animal, intelligent, sensitive and swifter of foot than the greyhound, once roamed the Prairies in countless numbers. To-day, only a few hundreds are left in a wild state. Nature, who gave it its swiftness of foot as a protection, gave it another characteristic which has been partly responsible for its undoing. It is that very human quality, which Matthew Arnold lauded as the root of the scientific passion, namely curiosity. An antelope cannot rest until it finds out the meaning of any strange new object in its environment. Old-time hunters were well aware of this peculiarity and when they wanted to take an antelope all they needed to do was to stick a red flag or some bright, shining object up on a hill-top and the antelope for miles around would come stealing in to the spot, trying to find out what the strange thing meant. Their slaughter then became painfully easy. For several years, when their numbers had been reduced to 1,200, the Canadian government attempted to develop a herd within a sanctuary. But the same methods which had proved such a success with the buffalo were now a failure. Year after year, small herds, captured and placed in the great Buffalo Park, most discouragingly died. At last it was decided that antelope must require a special habitat and the expedient was determined upon of letting them choose their own.

One morning a telegram was received at Ottawa saying that a herd of antelope had wandered into a certain region in Southern Alberta. The wires were immediately set in action and inside of 48 hours carpenters were at work, as unostentiously as possible, building a fence about the unsuspecting herd. By great good fortune, this was finally accomplished without frightening off the antelope and about 50 were enclosed. Here, in apparently great health and contentment, they

"National Parks and Sanctuaries in Canada: Part II." First page.

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> This absorbing story of the Canadian National Parks has been specially written for THE ANIMALS' FRIEND by one who was in at the founding of the National Parks Department of the Canadian Government, and who for a quarter of a century has been working towards the realisation of its aims in the interest of man and beast alike, with a vision, enthusiasm and ability that have been of incalculable value. It should do much to kindle interest in and enthusiasm for the establishment of National Parks and Sanctuaries in England's green and pleasant land. (Note before article, presumably by the editor)

This 1936 article by M. B. Williams is for England's *The Animals' Friend* magazine and aims to kindle interest in and enthusiasm for the establishment of national parks and sanctuaries in England.

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Further readings:

- Campbell, Claire Elizabeth. "Pragmatism and Poetry: National Parks and the Story of Canada." In "Big Country, Big Issues: Canada's Environment, Culture, and History," edited by Nadine Klopfer and Christof Mauch. *RCC Perspectives* 4 (2011): 101-11.
- Campbell, Claire, ed. *A Century of Parks Canada, 1911–2011.* Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011.
- MacEachern, Alan. "MB Williams: Living & Writing the Early Years of Parks Canada." Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 2. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/8305. ISSN 2198-7696 Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions*.
- MacEachern, Alan. "Banff Is ... Hell? The Struggle of Being Canada's First, Most Famous, and Most Visited National Park." Environment & Society Portal, Arcadia (Summer 2016), no. 10. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7623.

Related links:

- Virtual Exhibition by Alan MacEachern—MB Williams: Living & Writing the Early Years of Parks Canada http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/8306
- Kheraj, Sean. "Episode 22: A Century of Parks Canada." *Nature's Past* Podcast. http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/5563