rationale: for those who care

Why Wildlife?

Most of us may never see a whooping crane skimming the top of a lake, a polar bear clambering onto an ice floe in Alaska, a cheetah bounding at more than 70 m.p.h. across an African plain, or a giant sea turtle tracking back to the sea after laying her eggs on a moonlit sandy beach.

But somehow the knowledge that these creatures exist in a far-away world or even nearby in another part of our own country—carrying out their part in life's miraculous cycle—is heartening and reassuring to us.

We may also never see a majestic eagle in flight from a small aircraft whose occupants seek to shoot it down (for a thrill); a baby tiger dying of starvation because its mother, while in search of food, was killed by poachers (for an expensive coat); a rhino charging its human enemy in vain, only to be brought down finally and killed just for its horn (considered an aphrodisiac); or the lifeless body of a baby monkey discovered in opening an illegally shipped crate (to have been sold as a household pet!).

And somehow—these are the things we want to push out of our thoughts, remembering only the beautiful images.

But we must not forget. It will be a sad day for mankind if, looking through his window, he sees nothing but reflections of his own weary, baffled and disillusioned face.

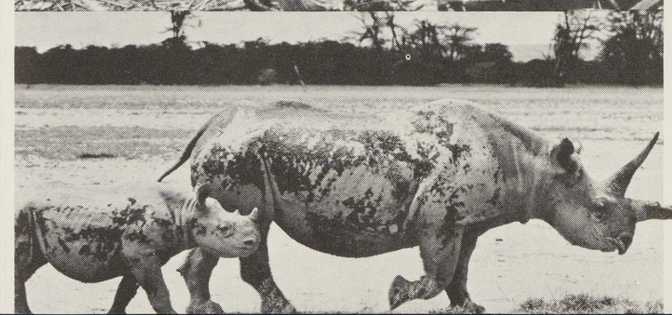
The natural treasures which inspire us deserve as much safeguarding for future generations as do man-made treasures such as historical sites and works of art. Time, however, is not on our side. And failures cannot be redeemed later. Once a species is extinct, or a wild area exploited, the world is that much the poorer—forever.

COVER PHOTO: LUTHER C. GOLDMAN

open →

PHOTO: K. STEUBEN

PHOTO: PEKING ZOO

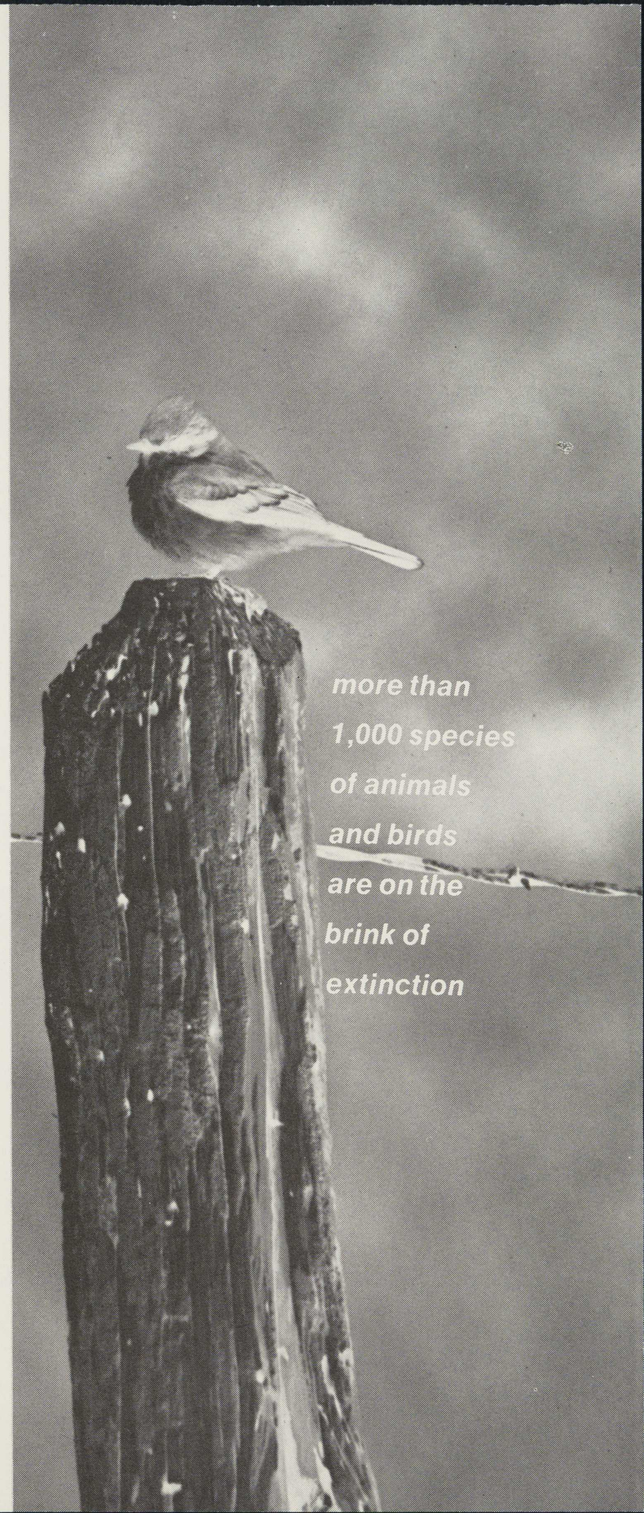


rationale: for those who don't

Why Wildlife?

Listen to a Texan named Jake Young: "I'm not an animal lover. I'm only interested in humans. If humans could do well without animals—if there were an equation that said the fewer animals then the better off man would be, then I'd say 'let's start destroying the animals.' But I do know that if the conditions are such that the white-winged dove, the prairie chicken and the red wolf can no longer survive in Texas then I am getting hurt. And I don't want to get hurt.

"I don't believe we can survive in a world that animals cannot survive in. The better the environment is for them, the better it must be for us. If animals can do well in our environment, and my only problem is maybe occasionally having to protect myself from them, that is something I am well able to do and happy to live with because their very existence is a good sign about the environment."

Conservationists can and do speak eloquently. Not always, however, do they succeed in demonstrating the direct correlation between the saving of wildlife and the wellbeing of mankind. In his earthy, simple way, Jake Young has distilled that seemingly elusive link between wildlife conservation in particular and the environment in general. By his own admission, neither a naturalist nor conservationist, Young has seen yet another reason for the preservation of wildlife and natural habitat—*self preservation.*

Each Jake Young who can think and talk the way he does is to our constituency an addition of the type without which our cause cannot succeed. By the same account, each such addition improves the prospects not only for wildlife, but for our environment as a whole.