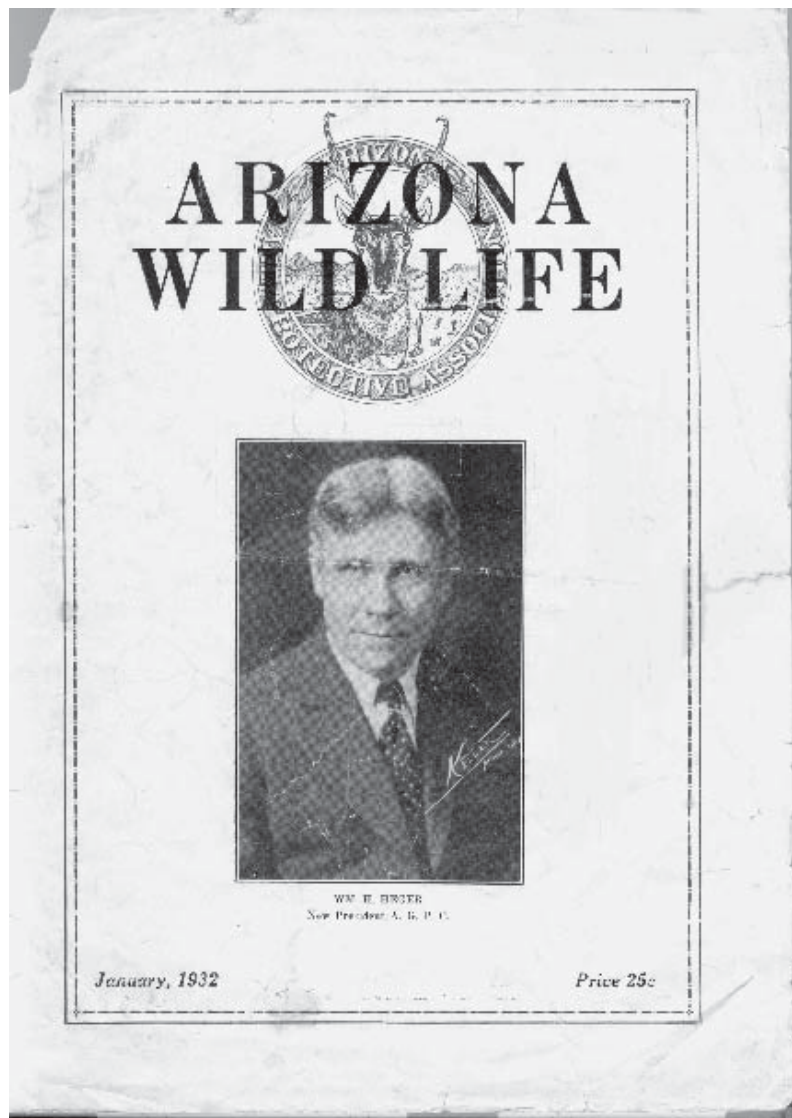


A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ARIZONA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

By Steve Gallizioli



A Short History of AWF

The effort to reconstruct the history of the AWF from its creation as the Arizona Game Protective Association (AGPA) in 1923 to the present (1998), reminded me of the song from the *The Man From La Mancha*—an impossible dream. The seeming impossibility was due to the fact that the formal written record was sketchy at best. Many of the early officers of the Federation involved with the early years of the AWF were deceased, and the memories of many of the officers still among us are somewhat less than dependable. Even the files of the publications that have served as the official organs of the AWF are in a wonderful state of disarray. Despite all this and believing firmly that some impossible tasks are nonetheless worth pursuing, I have, with the help of others, pulled together the information still available into the document here presented.

I have drawn freely on an earlier attempt at such a history by Max T. Layton, who was a long-time Executive Secretary of the AGPA as well as President in 1948-49. Layton was an attorney who practiced in Safford where he was born and spent nearly his entire life. It was the same Layton who, in 1954, represented the AGPA in a confrontation with the U.S. Army over who had jurisdiction over the wildlife on Fort Huachuca. Surprisingly, Layton made no mention of this action in his historical account written in 1959.

The evolution of wildlife management in Arizona is closely tied to the evolution of the AWF itself. Just as the history of western civilization is divided into B.C. and A.D., the eras before and after the birth of Christ, the history of wildlife management in Arizona can be separated into the eras before and after 1923, the year of the founding of the AGPA. This predecessor of the AWF was organized for the prime purpose of getting politics

out of wildlife management by establishing a Commission/Department form of wildlife administration such as we have today.

The objectives of the infant AGPA were as follows: (1) To secure proper and scientific management of our fish, wildlife and other resources for the full enjoyment of ourselves and our posterity. (2) To accomplish that, to secure a game and fish commission and department, the same to be sufficiently staffed with competent personnel free to work without political obligation or interference. To give that commission broad regulatory powers to enable them to accomplish their purpose. (3) To educate the public with the principles of sportsmanship and the need for proper resource management.



Thomas McCullough

The organization itself did not emerge fully formed with the wave of a magic wand. There was a painfully long gestation period followed by an equally stressful emergence. The early beginnings involved the creation of local organizations, the Flagstaff Game Protective Association being the first. According to Curt Meine, Aldo Leopold biographer, Leopold played an important role in the formation of several local GPAs including the first one at Flagstaff and others at Springerville, Tucson and Payson. Yet other local GPAs were formed at Globe and Prescott.

The formation of local groups culminated in October 1923 in Flagstaff when representatives of the various groups met in Flagstaff. According to Layton: "There, with the help and advice of that great and famous conservationist, Aldo Leopold, the Arizona Game Protective Association was born. Tom E. McCullough, that great conservationist, the old stalwart who would fight a cornered wildcat for principle, was elected the first president. ' He was destined to lead to a successful conclusion a long bitter fight to secure proper management of our fish and wildlife and their habitats "

That meeting in Flagstaff that launched the AWF was the start of what would become a virtual revolution of wildlife management in Arizona. Those dedicated leaders who helped found the AGPA in Flagstaff were determined to do the impossible—overturn the politics-ridden system then in place and replace it with a Commission/ Department form of wildlife administration free from political interference. They must have been imbued with the spirit of that unknown soul who declared: "The difficult we'll do immediately; the impossible may take a bit longer." It did indeed take "a bit longer", but in the end, they pulled it off.

They took the management of wildlife away from the incompetence, politics, and graft of the state's most powerful political machine, that of W.P. Hunt, the first governor of Arizona. At almost any other time it would probably have been easier. Bucking the powerful political machine that had been put together by Hunt indeed bordered on the impossible. Hunt loved politics, played the game well, and was both powerful and popular. He was also ruthless and believed strongly that the end justified whatever shady means were necessary .to overcome opposition. Despite these well-known obstacles, the conservationists who formed the AGP were determined to achieve non-political and scientific management of our wildlife resources.

As a first step in 1924 they asked the administration-controlled legislature to repeal the old game and fish code and to establish a commission form of management with regulatory powers and staffed with scientifically trained career personnel. They weren't surprised when the legislature turned them down.

It is said that there is strength in numbers, the strength of the AGPA increased as additional locals were formed. The conservation movement was growing. In that year they tried a referendum to repeal the old game code and make way for the creation of a commission. Despite the energy and effort these pioneer conservationists put into the campaign, they were unable to convince enough voters, and the measure was voted down.

Obviously convinced of the merits of the old saw "If at first you don't succeed, try again, and yet again if necessary." And try they did. At the sixth annual AGPA convention at Phoenix on September 29, 1928 eleven locals were represented by delegates. At the time

A Short History of AWF

there were in actuality 17 locals, eight of them less than a year old. A second referendum to repeal the game and fish code to make way for establishing a commission form of wildlife administration was drawn up after that convention. Referendum No. 314 was voted on by the electorate of Arizona at the general election on November 6, 1928. This time the “good guys” won with votes to spare.

The impossible had been accomplished, but not without a fight and not without the principals coming to the realization that vigilance would be necessary to hold the high ground.

Since the repealed law was itself an initiative measure, the referendum just passed could have meant the immediate abolition of all game and fish laws on the books—except for one provision. The new law allowed the governor a period of 30 days to sign the measure passed by a vote of the people. AGPA officials prevailed upon the governor to wait the full 30 days before signing. So it was that in the first week of December 1928, Governor Hunt signed the proclamation repealing all existing game and fish laws. That meant no restrictions on hunting and fishing until some time after the Legislature convened in January 1929.

Fully realizing the Pandora’s box that had been opened by passage of their referendum, the AGPA leaders had prepared a bill to be introduced on the first day the legislature was in session. This bill provided for the establishment of a Game and Fish Commission with broad regulatory powers and for a Department to be staffed with trained personnel. The legislature enacted the bill into law with the emergency clause, which allowed it to become effective immediately. While it has been amended a

number of times we still have basically the same law.

How was it possible for a comparative handful of men to sell a referendum measure to voters scattered over the face of Arizona? Certainly they were a dedicated bunch. Anyone who has ever worked on initiative or referendum measures in recent years, standing in the hot sun to collect signatures on petitions, driving to other areas of the state to do the same, knocking on doors, calling people on the phone, might appreciate what was involved in time, effort, and money. And who were these dedicated and motivated pioneer conservationists? A complete roster can’t be given but here are some of the officers of local affiliates of the AGPA at the time this historic referendum was passed by public vote:

Tom E. McCullough, President,
Flagstaff GPA

W .R. Denison, President,
Gordon A Johnson, Secretary,
Ajo GPA

J.A. Diffen, President,
R.H. Presley, Secretary, Bisbee, GPA
Clyde Potter, Secretary,
Casa Grande GPA

M.E. Irwin, President,
H. W. Williams, Secretary, Douglas GPA
William Heger, Secretary, Miami GPA
H.F. Easter, Secretary, Hayden GPA
Harold Fulton, President,
Walter Hoffman, Secretary,
Florence GP A

F.A. Mylius, Secretary, Mohave
County GPA

Joseph P. Sexton, Secretary,
Nogales GPA

Henry Brinkmeyer, Jr. President,

Frank Grubb, Secretary, Prescott GPA

Cliff Stewart, President, Safford GPA

M.C. Jolly, Secretary, Seligman GPA

Fred Stoll, President,

Fred Gibson, Secretary, Superior GPA

L.B. Hart, President,

Ben Tinker, Secretary, Tucson GPA

Perry M. Ling, President,

R.E. McAlister, Secretary,
Verde Valley GPA

K.C. Kartchner, President,

H.O. Cassidy, Secretary, White
Mountain Sportsmen

J.W. Lawson, Secretary, Oracle GPA

In addition to the above state and local officers there were others who worked equally hard and deserve recognition including the following:

Judge C.C. Faires, of Globe, Les Hart, of Tucson, Walter P. Taylor, Dr. Charles C. Vorhees of the University of Arizona, Harry Funk, Charles DeWitt, Ed Dentzer, Pan Kitchel of Bisbee, Bob Pressley, and B. Van Voorhis of Superior.

The first new game code was drafted by a committee consisting of Les Hart, Dr. E.P. Mathewson, Fred Win, Dr. Walter P. Taylor, and A.J. Eager appointed by James A. Diffin,

President. Governor John C. Phillips, recognized as a sportsman, conservationist and friend of the AGPA, appointed the first three man Game and Fish Commission. A.F. Jones was chairman, L.B. Hart, Tucson and T.E. McCullough, Flagstaff members.

Unfortunately for the AGP A and other conservationists Hunt was again elected governor in 1930 and took office in January 1931, He immediately asked the Legislature to abolish the Commission. The AGPA pulled out all stops to block this move and convinced the Legislature to refuse to give in to the governor's request. The governor, however, had other arrows in his quiver and immediately accused the fledgling Commission of illegal activities. The result was that a complete investigation of each commissioner and of the Department was made and a public hearing held. In the meantime John V. Sloan had been appointed Commission chairman to succeed A.F. Jones who had died in office. Twenty four pages of the March, 1931 issue of *Arizona Wildlife*, one of the predecessors of *Arizona Wildlife News*, were devoted to a detailed report of the House Committee investigation under the caption, *Arizona Sportsmen Win Fight To Retain Game Commission*. At the conclusion of the investigation the House Committee gave the Commission a clean bill of health. A few of the charges are presented below:

The Commission was accused of having destroyed the 1929 records of license sales to prevent an audit. The "missing" records were found in the files of the Department, where they should be, and should be made available to the Examiner. It turned out that the individual picked by the governor was incompetent to make

A Short History of AWF

an audit. When the Commission's request to have a Certified Public Accountant appointed to do the audit was refused, the Commission hired their own CPA to make the audit.

It turned out that what records had been destroyed had been done by Governor Hunt's last appointee as state game warden. Apparently the warden had destroyed all fiscal records except two or three incomplete journals. An unemptied wastebasket left in the office of the retiring warden revealed that state-owned birds had been distributed to the Governor's friends and political cronies. Letters were introduced addressed to E.E. Pettis, ex-state game warden written in reply to his demand for payment for licenses sold. These letters were from the clerk of the Board of Supervisors of Yavapai County, George Baumgartner of Williams and Felipe Chavez of Springerville. Each held the warden's cancelled check for payment of licenses sold and registry receipt for return of unsold licenses. Checks were also shown received by the previous Hunt administration for license sales, which were endorsed and cashed without the Department stamp. Where had the money gone?

The audit showed that the Commission had a complete set of books of account, that all license dealers had been placed under bond, and that all unpaid accounts for licenses had been inherited by the new Commission from the previous administration.

—The AWF and its predecessor has occasionally had other disagreements with sitting governors since its early battles with our first governor. However, compared with those early years, relationships with governor and legislature have tended to be more amicable

than confrontational. For many years Commissioners were selected from recommendations made by the AWF. With the growing strength of other conservation organizations the governor in recent years has been less inclined to select AWF-recommended candidates.

Before continuing with the history of the AWF it may be worthwhile to go back in time and review conditions that prevailed in the years leading up to the emergence of the AWF on the Arizona scene.

While some may still speak of the "good old days" in referring to conditions in the early years of this century, the reality is that it would be more accurate to call them "the dark ages". Here, in what is now the state of Arizona, the human population may have been low compared to today, but wildlife was anything but abundant. Year round hunting, especially by market hunters, had decimated the most important game animals. The Merriam elk had been exterminated before the turn of the century, the last one having been taken on Mount Ord in 1898. Desert bighorn sheep were also gone from many of their historic mountain ranges. Pronghorn antelope, reported by early travelers to be extremely abundant in all potential habitat, had also been eliminated totally from The Strip, north of the Colorado River, and from all of southern Arizona. The masked bobwhite was also gone from its habitat in the Altar Valley. And both grizzly and wolf were also on the way out.

After Arizona attained statehood in 1912, some restrictions on hunting and fishing were imposed, and a State Game Warden was appointed with the authority to hire deputies to enforce the new

laws. These early efforts to slow down the annual kill of wildlife were only minimally successful. Wildlife continued to be looked on as a resource to be utilized as food, especially by people living in rural areas. Deputy wardens were reluctant to apprehend game law violators that frequently were neighbors, and judges were inclined to leniency for all but the most flagrant violators.

The most undesirable feature of these early attempts at what then passed for wildlife management was the fact that “politics was king”. With every change in governor there was generally a complete turnover of personnel, from top down. Undoubtedly some deputies must have come to the realization that abundance or scarcity of game in their districts depended largely on how conscientiously they enforced the game laws. Generally, however, a change in administration meant ALL deputies were replaced by other political hacks, who knew little or nothing about either game laws or wildlife. Complicating matters further was the fact that it was the legislature, blissful in their ignorance of fish and wildlife matters that set seasons and bag limits and established game reserves. Political concerns governed every step of the process.

With regard to qualifications for deputy wardens Max Layton had this to say: “ Although not always, for we had some very capable and sincere game wardens, the usual qualification for a deputy warden’s position was being a good politician with ability to get votes for the governor.” He quotes from a letter from the State Game Warden to an applicant for a deputy’s job: “...I do not care what a man’s politics are just so he is a good clean democrat. ...I do not intend that the few favors at disposal of this department shall go to a foe of the administration.”

It may be of interest to review the provisions pertaining to hunting and fishing passed by the first legislative session of the newly created state of Arizona in 1912. Open seasons: Male deer and turkey—October 1 to December 15; quail—October 15 to February 1; ducks and geese—September 1 to April 1, mourning doves and whitewings—June 1 to February 1; trout—June 1 to September 1; black bass and crappie—September 1 to December 1. Bag and creel limits: 2 male deer and three turkeys per season; 25 quail per day; 25 ducks per day; 35 mourning doves or whitewings per day; 20 lbs of fish or 40 individual fish not less than seven inches in length per day. License fees were a tad lower than they are now: Resident general license \$.50; non-resident big game \$25; non-resident bird license, \$10.

An initiative measure raised license fees in 1916 to \$1.25 for a resident license. The same measure reduced the turkey bag from three to two and the buck limit from two to one.



Lee Hover

A Short History of AWF

The contrast with the situation today (1998) is both interesting and surprising. The increase in license fees would be expected. So too the reduction in length of hunting seasons for deer, turkeys, waterfowl and doves. Many readers, however, will be surprised to learn that we now have, and have had for many years, a longer quail season than hunters enjoyed in the “good old days”. How is this possible when we also have probably ten times as many hunters as we did 75 years ago? The explanation lies in the fact that Game and Fish now knows that hunters have nothing to do with often drastic year to year fluctuations in the population level of our three quail species. This information is the result of a ten year study of Gambel and scaled quail and a later nine year study of Mearns quail. The Mearns study led to a liberal season and bag limit even for this species which had been closed to hunting until 1960 in the belief that the “fool quail” could not tolerate even a short season.

Also significant is the fact that fishing regulations are today more liberal than they were in 1912. This too is the result of better knowledge of fish population dynamics and also, in the case of trout, of an efficient trout hatchery program that produces enough fish to even permit some stocking of trout during the winter months.

Apparently some people were also concerned about shooting doves during the peak of the nesting season. Layton quotes from a letter written by Mack Willard, State Game Warden: “When first appointed in 1912 the season opened on doves and whitewings June 1, and after being successfully opposed by the so-called sportsmen of Phoenix in my efforts to have the legislature act in the matter, I went over their heads in 1916 and initiated a bill giving the birds six weeks more

time for nesting and reducing the bag limit from 35 birds of each kind to 25 birds including both. And these amendments carried by nearly a 700 majority in spite of the fact that this county rolled up a majority of 1600 against them. But the law is still inadequate and nobody can work harder than I intend to work to have these birds given a longer period of time in which to bring off their young.”

The opening of dove season was eventually moved back to September 1 by the Federal Migratory Treaty Act between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, which became effective in 1937, where it has been ever since.

There must also have been some concern about the status of big game in Arizona. In 1917 a bill was introduced in the legislature that would have closed the season on deer and turkey until 1921.



Bill Beers

It passed the Senate but failed in the House. The record does not indicate why this measure was introduced or whether any evidence was advanced to suggest such a drastic measure was called for.

An extremely popular program elsewhere in the U.S. in the early decades of the 20th century was the raising of game birds for release for the benefit of hunters, Arizona got in the act in 1924 when a game farm was established on East McDowell near 8th street. According to Layton:

“Experiments were conducted in the raising of turkeys, quail, pheasants, chukars, and Hungarian partridges. No doubt a lot of eggs were distributed and birds released in the wild. But politics and graft raised their ugly heads...”



Mary Jane Shoun

Layton quotes from a letter by an unidentified writer: “ (Game Warden) Pettis started yesterday for the Graham Mountains with a bunch of wild turkeys to be liberated there. We put 18 turkeys on the Huachuca Reserve about three months ago and we thought we had better liberate the remainder of the bunch before we left the job and take no chances on them decorating the dinner table of Joe and his friends, as we suspect was the end of most of the stuff we turned over to them before. “ Layton added that “ A new governor had been elected.”

As a further example of the shenanigans involved in the distribution of the products of this game farm Layton quotes Tom McCullough: “ An illustration of the domination of Governor Hunt is shown in the method of his control of the operations of the game farm... This was prior to the new Game Code’s effectiveness in 1929. It so happened that when Governor Phillips appointed game warden took office on January 22, 1929, he found in the wastebasket receipts from the game farm showing who received both pheasants and turkeys and the number. It was quite significant that immediately prior to Thanksgiving in 1928 and immediately before Christmas of that same year how many trios of pheasants and turkeys were distributed for the intended propagation with the 50 percent increase being turned back to the Department. For the year 1929 and 1930 the Commission did not receive one pheasant or turkey, and it is not difficult to imagine what kind of fowl graced the festive boards of the favored few at Thanksgiving and Christmas in the lush political year of 1928.”

Many of the early members and organizers of the AGPA locals were stockmen. For several reasons

A Short History of AWF

during the thirties and into the forties sportsmen and ranchers grew steadily apart. Occasional articles in AWF publications deploring the impact of livestock overgrazing on wildlife habitat may have had something to do with alienation. To remedy the situation the AGPA in 1948 formed the Stockmen-Sportsmen Committee. A year later the Arizona Woolgrowers Association became a member. The two groups, through this committee, sponsored and pursued many legislative issues for mutual benefit. In the nine years of its existence the Committee never failed to arrive at a solution to a mutual problem. And, in each instance the solution approved by the parent organizations and endorsed by the Game and Fish Commission.

In 1951 the AGPA was accepted by the National Wildlife Federation as the representative for

Arizona and has ever since continued as the state affiliate of the NWF.

After 45 years as the Arizona Game Protective Association, the organization became the Arizona Wildlife Federation at the 1968 annual convention. The name change had first been proposed by Jerry Pratt of Sierra Vista in a letter to AWF president Gordon Evans in 1961. Some delegates opposed removing the word “game” from the name and the proposal was defeated. The same opposition managed to muster enough support to block a name change for the next few conventions. Finally, it passed in 1968 after a lot more discussion. A strong supporter of the name change was Ben Avery who argued strongly that Arizona Wildlife Federation more clearly demonstrated the AWF’s association with the National Wildlife Federation.



Bob Spillman



Gary Lamonica

