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GAME MANAGEMENT

by Aldo Leopold.

Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. Pp. 481.

\$14.00, paper.

Aldo Leopold's *Game Management*, originally published in 1933 by the Scribner publishing house, has been reissued by the University of Wisconsin Press. The book is now by necessity dated and, some decades ago, went from being "required reading" to a known but unread classic.

Leopold attempted to unify game management by outlining in an extended essay the principles that determine the quantity of all game species. His basic population model is sound but his management proposal for increasing game populations through range development by private landowners was the smoke from a pipedream having a pleasant aroma but a sour aftertaste. Today, as in 1933, game populations are produced largely through factors of production that are determined by economic forces uninfluenced by the game yield. In simplest terms, farmers as a group did not then and do not now adjust their farmland practices to increase the yield of quail, pheasant, and deer. Leopold had the curious belief or wish that private landowners could be induced to undertake efforts to increase game yields but he was stymied by the question of how to induce such efforts where the costs were certain and the increased yield problematical if even desired by the landowner.

This conundrum of a public resource being on private land has largely relegated game commissions to policing the hunt. Few meaningful incentives can be given to private landowners, although New Mexico does have a policy of allowing ranchowners to profit from antelope hunting through the control of ranch allocated permits. Game commissions admittedly do more than collect license fees, publish glossy magazines, and set seasons and bag limits. They have administered veterinary aid to bighorn sheep and have restored turkeys to areas from which this grand gamebird had been extirpated. But, game commissions do not and can not practice on any extensive scale range development even on public lands whether in New York's Adirondack Forest Preserve or the Gila National Forest in New Mexico.

Game is a by-product of the sum of our land-use decisions. Those decisions include reservation of wildlands, regulation of pesticides, subdivision zoning, subsidization of depressed local economies, banks' farm loan policies, and many of the other curlicues in the structure of our

economy. The quantity of game is determined by such factors and game managers do as they did in 1933: they attempt to regulate the hunt so as to allow the largest harvest that would not jeopardize the future yield.

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