

# Global Protection of Nature

Paul Sarasin

16 August 1910

### **Editorial Note** by Patrick Kupper, 2022

The text “Weltnaturschutz” (World nature protection) by Paul Sarasin (1856–1929) is a key document in the history of the global nature conservation movement. The text is a speech, which Sarasin first held at the 8th International Zoological Congress in Graz on 16 August 1910 and again a few weeks later at the 93rd Conference of the Schweizerische Naturforschende Gesellschaft (Swiss Academy of Natural Sciences) in Basel. It was published both as a special print and in the proceedings of the Schweizerische Naturforschende Gesellschaft.<sup>1</sup> Sarasin wrote his speech in German but translations into English, French, and Italian were made at the time and published as special prints in 1911.<sup>2</sup> Most notably, copies of the speech were sent along with the invitations to the First International Conference on Global Nature Conservation, convened by the Swiss Government in Bern in November 1913 and attended by delegations of most of the leading powers of the time, such as Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Italy, and the United States.<sup>3</sup>

The following is a re-edition of the English translation, now out of copyright. The original page numbers are given in square brackets. The original translation has been lightly edited to improve readability; typographical errors and minor mistakes have been corrected.

### **Further Reading**

Conférence Internationale pour la Protection de la Nature Berne. *Recueil des procès-verbaux*. Bern: K.-J. Wyss, 1914.

Kupper, Patrick. *Creating Wilderness: A Transnational History of the Swiss National Park*. New York: Berghahn, 2014.

Wöbse, Anna-Katharina. *Weltnaturschutz: Umweltdiplomatie in Völkerbund und Vereinten Nationen 1920–1950*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012.

Weltnaturschutz.

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Paper read at the VIII. International Congress of Zoologists in Graz Aug. 16<sup>th</sup> 1910 and at the 93th Conference of the Schweiz. Naturf.

Gesellschaft in Basel, Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> 1910.

*Translated from the German.*

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Sarasin, *Weltnaturschutz* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1910); Paul Sarasin, “Weltnaturschutz,” *Verhandlungen der Schweizerischen Naturforschenden* 93 (1910):50–73. <https://doi.org/10.5169/SEALS90182>.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Sarasin, “*Weltnaturschutz*”: *Protection mondiale de la nature* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1911); Paul Sarasin, “*Weltnaturschutz*”: *La protezione della natura del globo* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1911); Paul Sarasin, “*Weltnaturschutz*”: *Global Protection of Nature* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1911).

<sup>3</sup> The other conference participants were Argentina, Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Spain. In addition, Australia and Australian Victoria were represented but had no vote.

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I know that I am addressing an assembly of representatives of minutest scientific research, who extend their investigations to the very limits of our power of comprehension and who without glancing aside or looking back know but the one aim: ever to come nearer the solution of the riddles both of inanimate nature as well as of life and its manifestations. So I might well have misgivings for my intention to speak to you about the protection of nature nor should I dare to intrude upon your sphere with a subject so different in its nature from your studies if I could not confidently say that the greatest part of my life has been given to scientific studies and that I need not feel a stranger in your midst. My travels have moreover fully convinced me that the protection of living nature dangerously threatened with destruction ought to be put before the scholar, too, as a new and important duty.

Upon the geographical exploration of the earth, which on the whole may be looked upon as finished, there followed at a rapid pace a ransacking of her riches and her creatures which, up to that time, had been living in a seclusion that protected their happy existence. A merciless industrial speculation encroached upon the communities of the globe and did bring a temporary profit, but it sacrificed the beauties of mother Earth to the vanity of man. Therefore it is high time that the scholar, too, should look up from his books and his instruments to see alarmed that our beloved nature is approaching a sad impoverishment.

He will see that unless we stand up for her protection we shall be silenced before the accusations which a near future will throw into our faces before long, that we have left to her a ravaged world because we woke up too late out of our dull meditations. Therefore, wake up! the commanding voice of the watchmen of nature calls us, and as the world is now conquered, .let.us.preserve.it!

May I first speak to you in a few words about the work that has been done for the protection of nature in Switzerland, which has been accomplished with the aim in view that our endeavours are serving a greater cause still, namely the global protection of nature. I should then like to show you by this example what my ideas are about the realization of a protection of nature all over the world.

At the meeting of the “Schweizerischen Naturforscherversammlung,” Aug. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1906, a committee was appointed and entrusted with the task to effect in every particular the protection of nature throughout the whole of Switzerland. This resolution had been suggested by the disagreeable experiences it had been taught when it intended to save the king of erratic blocks, the “bloc des Marmettes” near Monthey out of the hands of a building contractor, which it eventually did after the most tedious negotiations and at considerable expenses.

This commission called itself the “Schweizerische Naturschutzkommission” and at the constituent meeting the speaker was made chairman.

The general uncertainty regarding the object of the protection of nature was shown in the animated debate on the subject. An overwhelming number of proposals and

wishes were heard which, it was thought, were to be realized without delay. The speaker therefore in order to arrange the whole mass divided it in four heads: Geology with Hydrology, Botany, Zoology and Prehistory.

Before however this matter could be actually dealt with there was another thing to be done: to organize the protection of nature throughout the whole of Switzerland, viz. to find men in every canton ready to do the work in their respective districts. This kept the committee busy for the first year, but it succeeded in calling to life this organ par excellence of the protection of nature.

The most pressing work for the second year which was put before the protection of nature in Switzerland was the protection of the alpine flora as well as the wild flora of Switzerland in general of which some of the rarest and finest species were threatened with extinction. All sort of circumstances, the influx of tourists, the florists at their services, the amateurs and the connoisseurs hunting after the very rarest species and unrooting them, the schoolboys who got their master's praise whenever they brought him some rare plant, consequently by its rareness already threatened with extinction, every thing worked together to utterly or partly ruin the autochthone flora of our Alps and the Jura.

Though many voices were heard in our papers against this ravaging of the most beautiful adornment of our country, still anybody who had some experience in the matter could see at once that regulations and laws, and these only, would bring effective help, that the issuing of such laws ought to be the first step towards a protection of our wild flora, the second would be their prompt execution.

Therefore, in February 1908, a list of such regulations for the protection of plants was set to the government of each canton and as most of them have accepted them the most welcome result seems to be as much as secured, viz. that the protection of our wild flora, the reservation of the autochthone plants throughout Switzerland, is guaranteed. That part of the Alps and the Jura surrounded by Switzerland is now put under such a botanical protection that, if our neighboring countries assist with similar measures, this object of the protection of nature in Europe (viz. to put all the autochthone plants of the Alps and the Jura under legal protection and to save them thus for ever from their very extirpation) will be realized. The whole of Switzerland is thus made a "partial reservation"—as I should call it—the first step towards the partial reservation of a much vaster region, viz. Europe, nay, the whole world.

The idea of a partial reservation leads to another task which the Swiss Commission had set itself.

From the very beginning there could be no doubt that the end we had in view would be but insufficiently served by such measures the execution of which will be difficult through the very nature of the matter.

A certain number of species will be protected, no doubt; but the original nature as a whole, resulted as the product of the interchange between all the autochthone plants and animals, as a grand *biocönose* therefore, the preservation of our original Alpine nature such as it had developed into through the ages before the intrusion of man,

could only be regained, to some extent at least, by placing an Alpine district which had been but little intruded upon by man, under absolute protection. Out of such a district, a "total reservation" could be reestablished through the strictest protection of all its animals and plants, an inviolable free region, a sanctuary for all the forms of life created there by nature, as far as they are preserved now. If we most energetically protect such a tract of land we may even hope to bring a partly impoverished life back to its original state.

From the beginning the commission looked upon the foundation of a European reservation, a Swiss reservation in particular, as one of its most important objects, but it was greatly helped through the fact that the *Bundesrat*, urged on through the well-known American reservations, expressly encouraged the commission.

Competent advice directed the eyes of the commission towards that mountainous part of the Lower Engadine, which, being partly encircled by the Inn, comprises on the one hand the Scarl valley with its wild vales and on the other the mass of Piz Quaternals. In that part of the whole chain of the Alps, the Alpine flora and fauna had been relatively least damaged, a district where there are neither vast tracts of glaciers which would kill all life nor is there any level country where cultivation pushes nature aside and destroys it.

In this mountainous world, still in moderate height, the proper place was found where the grand experiment was bound to succeed: to bring about a community of vegetable and animal beings which nature alone will create. Here primitive alpine nature was to be reestablished to be handed over to the time to come as a grand store-room of undisturbed natural life.

After preliminary negotiations with the community of Zernez, a definite agreement was made on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> 1909 according to which the whole valley of Cluozza, a tract of land of 25 square km, was taken on lease for 25 years. With this the corner-stone was laid for a Swiss National Park. A solid block house is already put up in the interior of the valley, a summer residence of an already appointed park-keeper and his assistant, the construction of a comfortable bridle-path will soon follow and the boundaries of the reservation are fixed by notice-boards. Further we are negotiating with five other communities about the enlargement of the boundaries, and we hope to get the whole work done by the end of next year. Negotiations also are being carried on to the end that Italy would join us from the south with a smaller Italian reservation, especially for the friendly purpose to protect our district against the much feared Italian poachers.

The first *total* reservation will thus be established, a district where neither a single animal nor a plant is to be destroyed, with the exception of a few specimens needed for scientific investigations. Beasts of prey, too, will enjoy full protection as being also an essential part of our original alpine nature.

Circumstances are different in the American reservations of the United States, or in the English and German ones in Africa and elsewhere, which are but partial reservations. With the exception of some forest land they take no notice of the vegetable world and interfere more or less violently with beasts of prey. The protection of nature,

however, knows but one duty to save from extermination all autochthone animals and plants, excepting those designated as vermin and the pathogens, and takes no notice whatever of the question whether they are useful or injurious to man; where man exterminated thoughtlessly, we want to restore mutilated nature as far as possible.

Many of these endeavours will be opposed, no doubt, by hunters who think but of the profit they make out of their game. But we shall be cautious in our warfare and we shall lead this new idea of the protection of nature to victory even among those to whom it is of little interest whether these free-living animals, and especially the beast of prey, which are such an ornament to the landscape, do or do not exist.

Hearing of the creation of a National Park you will have asked yourself the question how we could possibly be so bold to venture upon an enterprise that will, no doubt, demand large sums of money. As a considerable sum will be required every year for the lease, the strict supervision, the building of solid sheltering huts, the construction of paths in a district which will in the end comprise some 100 square km, if not more, who will give the money for the creation of a National Park in Switzerland?

This question was debated in the commission and we resolved to organize a *Swiss League for the protection of nature* of which any body could become a member who would give the minimum contribution of 1 fr. per annum; and so vigorous and effective a propaganda has been working since July 1<sup>st</sup> 1909 that the league may be considered as organized and we may confidently hope to find help in many places for this vital element of an active protection of nature in Switzerland. There are as yet only 9,000 members, and the figure 25,000 ought to be reached. But we trust that we shall gain our end in not too distant a time if those who have alpine nature at heart will persevere energetically and assist with active help.

Thus you see four different measures to open Switzerland to the protection of nature: organization, laws for the protection of the flora and later on of the fauna, reservations for the full protection of all the animals and plants living therein, and a league to secure strong financial means.

Having now given you an idea of the endeavours concerning the protection of nature in Switzerland, I shall pass on to my proper subject: the international or global protection of nature extending from pole to pole.

Allow me first to speak about some special terms. I am speaking of a *national* and an *international protection of nature*. In order to see the latter in its true aspect we must above all be sure about the task of the first.

The *national protection* of nature does every thing that can and ought to be done by a nation within her own political boundaries, as the work which the Swiss League is doing has shown you. If the work is really done, the international protection of nature is spared that part of the work. But as the national protection forms but a part of the international one, the latter will have to supervise the former, which is really the heart of the global protection. This control will see to it that the protection is organized in all countries, which continent whatever they may belong to. After the examples which commissary Conwentz in Prussia has given in all the provinces, the commission

of Switzerland in all the cantons, men must be found who are willing to watch over the protection of nature in that district allotted to their supervision, and each of these spheres of activity is to be put under the control of the government or of a central commission. This organization is not only spreading in Germany and Switzerland but also in other countries and the international commission is to work for it in all the civilized nations; where this organization cannot grow and prosper on its own accord, the international commission will leave nothing undone to get it started. The centres of national protection will keep in touch with the international centre, they will send in an annual report of their work which is to be published in a *Bluebook of the protection of nature* throughout the world.

The national commission has still another task besides the actual work for the protection: to organize a *National League for the protection of nature* after the example Switzerland is giving, whose league will supply the means for an effective work not hampered by any measures of a government. Such a league will spread wide in a few years and will be able to help our cause with powerful financial means. Let me give you an example: In 1905 the Society for the preservation of the fauna throughout the Empire appealed to the Colonial Secretary Lyttleton, not only for extensive reservations in the African colonies for the protection of game, but they wanted him to get those districts effectually watched over, if they were not to be mere outlines on the map without any real value whatever. The Colonial Secretary objected with the want of financial means in the mother country as well as in the colonies and the plan was not carried out. He ought to have answered: very well, we shall get those reservations for you, we shall have them effectually watched over, but we want money: gentlemen, get it yourselves!

With the aid of a British league large sums of money could be gained year by year. If the Swiss league succeeds, and I trust we shall do it, in raising 35,000 frs. every year, Great Britain, not counting the colonies, will raise 350,000, the German Empire 600,000, Austria-Hungary 500,000, France 400,000, Italy 350,000, and other countries will bring up corresponding sums. Of all this money the tenth part is to be handed over to the international Commission to enable it to do its work. It is understood that this money ought to be used as exclusively as possible for actual protection of nature, i.e., for the purchase or a long lease of vast districts which are to be cut off from the ruining effects of agriculture, forestry, or hunting, from which natural life suffers most.

They are to form a scarcely interrupted tract of free land, stretching across the whole of Europe, even over the globe. Further, the money is to be used for the management within the boundaries of each country, such as salaries, grants for travels, the publishing of regulations and of appeals to the public, of articles, annual reports, and such like. The national corporations will also draw into the sphere of their activity all similar endeavours which already exist in their respective countries.

Those colonies which have developed into independent states are to be treated as nations which have to organize a national league of their own. How far the protection of nature in the other colonies is to be left to the care of their mother-countries,

these latter will have to decide. Should in every case the protection be carried out unsatisfactorily, it will fall back upon the care of the international commission.

I am speaking to scholars. Therefore let me add that there is also a scientific side to this question. It will necessarily lead to a deeper study of the reciprocal influence of animal and plant, further of the reciprocal influence of the different kinds of animals, especially the carnivorous and the herbivorous species, as well as the reciprocal influence among the plants themselves. A deeper study of the *biocönose* will be resulting and a thorough investigation into the actions of animals. The real object of the protection of nature, however, the preservation of the animal and vegetable world threatened with extinction, is so important and responsible a task that it is the duty of the scientific zoologist to offer his services.

Having given you the brief outlines of a global organization of the protection of nature formed by national leagues and an international commission standing above them, their respective work, and their relationship to each other, I shall now speak to you about the actual work of the international commission:

Let me first tell you how I came to see the necessity of an organization of such a commission.

In October 1908 the papers announced that before long a conference was to be held in Christiania to which the different European countries were to send their representatives, the chief business being to decide upon the future political position of the archipelago of the *Spitzbergen*. The idea struck me if the Spitzbergen could not in some way be made into a *European reservation* after the grand example of the American reservations such as the Yellowstone Park in Wyoming. It was at any rate to be hoped that regulations for the protection of the Archipelago could be put up considering the senseless and brutal destruction of rare and scientifically precious species of animals.

Let the following section of a paper prove this statement: "The Spitzbergen are threatened with the extermination of their game. An example will best show what is going on there. The expeditions sent out for Tromsö last summer brought home 26 live and 137 dead polar bears, 162 dead walruses and 4 live ones, 403 hooded seals, 1,109 phocines, 440 kgs of downs, 4614 tons of lard, 40  $\frac{1}{2}$  tons of whale bone. The winter expeditions 1907/08 brought home among others: 78 bears, 4 live and 232 dead polar foxes, 1,022 kgs of downs, and 116 tons of lard. All this in one year and in Tromsö alone. Add to it the expeditions of Hammerfest, Vardö, and Archangel which show a spoil equaling that of Tromsö. Two calamities of recent date aggravate the matter. The arctic hunt is of late becoming the fashion among the tourists coming from the continent. Last summer a tourist proudly showed his spoil in Tromsö: 1 live and 13 dead bears in four days. The other point is this: those hunters who want but the furs lay there arsenic baits, which kill the reindeer too that live there wild. Besides that they are mercilessly hunted down by the tourists."

Another paper makes this short melancholy statement: "The animal world is no longer so richly represented in the Spitzbergen as it was of old. Many a species is

utterly extinct through the hunters' rapaciousness. To-day only a few polar bears, rein-deers, and seals are left and they too are dying out."

I am sorry to say that no influential person could be found to bring the idea of making the Spitzbergen into a European reservation before the diplomatic committee at Christiania. Therefore I put it before you and point it out as one of the first tasks which the international committee would have to take in hand.

Another task and a still wider one will be added to this, viz. to save from extinction the whole of the polar higher animal world, the arctic as well as the antarctic. The next occasion for a public appeal in this direction offered another notice of a paper: A company was to be formed for a new kind of whaling on a great scale. The novelty consisted in a new steamer of 4,000 tons, which was to accompany the whaling-ships, carrying with it everything that could be wanted for the treatment of the spoil. Thus the whalers would no more have to find their whaling-stations on the coast and the war of destruction would take its course uninterruptedly to its very end.

Upon this I published on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1909 in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* as well as in the *Zoologischer Anzeiger* the following protest:

"Anybody who hears these news and who has the endeavours for the protection of nature at heart, which are beginning to find sympathy everywhere, will blush with indignation to see that the force of money intends to destroy a group of the most remarkable mammals of the whole globe, the whales with the giant whale, the monarch and the wonder of the sea; for such an extinction will be the final work of a company which intends to carry on whaling on a great scale and after a new method, i.e., with all the resources of destruction. Therefore we appeal to all those whose minds and hearts are wide and sympathetic enough to understand and feel what this disastrous enterprise really means to join us, to speak an energetic word of protest against such a proceeding, urging the *Danish league for the protection of nature* on not to look idly on but to do their utmost in order to crush such a violation at the very beginning. Let the Northern Sea be divided among the respective nations, that the mammals and the birds of the sea can be protected through game-laws such as they are executed on land, with a good will these laws can easily be enforced by means of a control in the ports of the coast towns. May also the inventor of this new method of destruction learn to see that it is a higher praise to preserve nature's creatures than to hunt them down and extirpate them, let him drop the antiquated idea which praises the destruction of rare and wonderful creatures as a deed of bravery, and may he enlist under the banner of the new ideal which promises the thanks of the future to those who protect the nature and her creatures."

That such appeals are not wholly useless many kind letters of approval have shown me, but a war waged with the pen usually has but passing effects. As soon as the

real difficulty is to be faced, as soon as the question arises, what can be done against this wave of destruction which overwhelms the remarkable animals of the north, the literary voices grow silent and destruction does its sad work to the final annihilation.

Therefore the international commission for the protection of nature must make it its next and chief object to put up international laws for the protection of the arctic and Antarctic fauna, and if these laws are to produce the intended effect *the sea must be divided among the bordering nations*, who will make it their duty to issue hunting regulations for their part of the sea and to have their execution enforced and supervised, just as it is being done on land.

The sea, once a boundless waste of water, the hunting ground for the freebooter, is now fully explored and is to be dealt with in the same way as a continent. Its profit forms a definite fraction of that of the continents so that the "three miles line" must be broken now and a new political division of the sea in its breadth and length ought to be made.

It will be the duty of each of the nations owning such a part of the sea to save from extirpation the higher fauna, the mammalians, and the birds, in the same way as they protect their game on land. The execution of these laws is easily practicable by means of a control in the ports as well as through police boats. How painful to us naturalists is the extinction of the sea-cow, how unbearable the thought that such giants as the whale of Greenland and the potwhale ought to be cut off from the zoological treasures of the globe, what praise Russia would be earning now if it had decreed at the time: the sea-cow is not to become extinct and if it had thus preserved for us this wonderful being!

Audible voices are warning us now to save other species threatened with destruction, and we can save them if we do not fold our hands to give way with a spiritless: it is too late! Russia knew nothing of its duty to preserve nature's wonders, we do know our responsibility, therefore let us act!

One of the next objects of an international protection will be to prevent the extirpation of the finest and rarest species of *exotic birds and furred animals* for whose senseless massacring the vanity of the European woman is chiefly to be blamed.

The following figures will speak for themselves: The white egret, whose beautiful feathers the ladies are especially fond of, has become as much as extinct in the United States, in Venezuela, Africa, and China where it lived in myriads before. "The quantity of egrets feathers," a report of the British Viceconsul of Venezuela says as early as 1898, "has this year reached the high total of 2,839 kilogram. Considering that about 870 birds have to be killed to produce 1 kilog. of the small feathers or about 215 birds for the larger, the destruction of these birds must be very great. The egrets are shot down at their breeding place while they are building their nests and rearing their young, the latter die of hunger on their parent's death, the breeding places being absolutely devastated by the plume hunters." Nature's living jewels, the colibris, are also threatened with destruction. A single order of a London firm contained 32,000 of them, a firm in Berlin is collecting the skins of these little animals by all means

available in order to sell them with huge profit as soon as they have become rare or extinct. Even shoes are made out of the feathers of the Colibri, one pair costing 6,000 mark. We need not wonder, therefore, that of all the 18 kinds of colibris that originally lived in Trinidad 5 only are preserved. This may show how things stand at other places. The lot of the bird of paradise is not better: in 1907, 19,742 skins were brought on the London market; in 1909 a single order of a London firm showed 28,300 skins, every day thousands are coming in. Another firm received 80,000 seabirds, 19,000 egrets, and 800,000 pairs of wings of different kinds. The Australian emu, too, is damned to extinction, in Tasmania there are none left. A Parisian hat-maker used in one season 40,000 sea-swallows. It has been estimated that fashion kills some 2–300 million birds every year, a gigantic sacrifice which is a blow into the face of nature and which is done only to satisfy the vanity and heartlessness of the European lady.

I do not want to tire you out with further figures, it suffices to state that the dealer stands in the woman's service who demands this sacrifice and that he is driving resolutely towards the destruction of nature's loveliest living treasures. From murder even does not refrain the freebooter who is paid by the dealer, for the keepers of the ornithological reservation in Florida were killed by such knaves: also blood of martyrs that cries out for revenge!

The international Commission must bring about a change into this barbarous destruction. It must turn the course of the dealer's ship which steers insolently towards the annihilation of nature's loveliest adornments and must hold up a harnessed fist before his threats. The countries will have to raise the import duty on exotic birds in such a way that it does not pay any longer to kill them and that the dealer will have to look for substitutes. If the destruction is going on with its sad work he will do it of his own accord, because nature's stock will be exhausted in a few years' time. Then he will commend his substitutes and sell them at big prices and the European lady is sure to be mightily pleased. The dealer must be put into this plight anon and thus we shall preserve for posterity as much of the beautiful feathered world as still can be saved.

A further pressing duty of the Commission will be to save the *mammalian fauna of Africa*. Great Britain has done much for this cause, once the Marquis of Salisbury set the heavy stone rolling, in May 1896. He referred to the proposal of governor von Wissmann, who wished to secure great reservations for the sadly threatened game. There followed an extensive and continued inquiry among the governments of the English colonies and protectorates which resulted in such a wealth of minute informations in the course of the years from 1896–1907 that it is impossible to enter here upon details. The Bluebooks containing the correspondence, dealing with the measures the British government took to preserve the game in Africa, are of the utmost importance and give detailed informations about the decline as well as the present state of the high-class game of Africa.

Here, too, the trade in ivory, furs, and horns, which does the work of destruction with its fire arms, is the main cause of the decline. The chief measures against it will be:

The export of these articles must be rendered more difficult, so must their import into the civilized countries; the game-laws must be more strictly executed and reservations must be formed. In 1903 a society was constituted in London for the preservation of the fauna of the Empire which set, in 1905, the above-mentioned deputation to the colonial secretary Lyttleton, to put before him their proposals for a protection of the game in Africa. In 1906 the Zoological Society, too, energetically spoke for effective measures of protection, Germany and France promised their help, and yet no satisfactory result was achieved, in the struggle with the dealer the state proved to be the weaker and the complaint was heard: we create reservations but we have no means to have them guarded, we make game-laws but we are unable to get them executed and if one colony prohibits the export of such goods or renders it difficult, another allows them to secretly leave their ports and thus derives a profit which the others deny themselves; in short we lack the necessary money to energetically put the regulations into practice.

I add that in the whole tropical and subtropical zones the existence of the animal world is more or less endangered, in British India as well as in the Dutch Indies, where one of the most remarkable animals, the orang-ape, is being mercilessly hunted down; and fashion as mentioned is driving towards destruction of all furred animals.

The international Commission will have to minutely investigate the existence of the endangered animals, to procure the means for an effective protection and for a restoration of those oppressed.

As early as 1867 the late Prof. Ludwig Rüttimeyer, the dear, tender-hearted man, raised his waring voice:

“A single species, man, is driving animal life everywhere with speed into hiding places, difficult to get at. The number of those species which got the worse in this unfair struggle and which are preserved as mummies in our museums has risen to dozens and is increasing continuously. For all the animals the struggle for existence, their only chance of perfection, has become too difficult ever since their powerful rival came upon the stage. Scenes of unspoilt natural life, such as a pious memory represents as illuminated by the morning radiance of the last creation, are only accessible for the most intrepid traveler who advances into the very heart of the oldest places of the creation of species. Wherever the white race intruded upon such a scene we may hear the cry: ‘Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant.’”

This was written at a time when, to mention an example, the American buffalo lived in two immense herds, the northern being estimated at 1 ½, the southern at 3 million individuals, on the prairies of the United States in the west of the Mississippi, and as a *moriturus* indeed the southern mass was already massacred in 1875, the northern in 1883. In 1889 a careful estimate stated that 635 wild bison were left in the whole of the immense district of the United States.

Frightened at this terrible neglect, the government formed the Yellowstone Reservation especially for the preservation and propagation of the buffalo. But a recent report

says: "The animals become nervous and restless and cease to copulate and to rear their calves; the herd is gradually disappearing, in fact it was left till it was too late."

Facing the destruction of so many valuable species of animals, shall we idly look on or, at best, break out into elegiac complaints which call this state of things a necessity? Never, for if the species *Homo* has the power to destroy it has the far nobler power too to restore and to preserve. There is still a wealth of nature's glorious creatures which are dangerously pressed, it is true, but which will increase again and spread if they are properly protected, for their power of increasing is so great that it will at once support our endeavours.

Another task, perhaps the highest of all, falls within the province of the global protection, viz. the preservation of the last rests of those interesting varieties of the species *Homo* which we call "races in a state of nature." If I call to your mind the fate of the inhabitants of Tasmania, the most interesting of them all, who 70 years after the colonization has become extinct to the very last individuals, I need hardly insist upon the duty of the protection of nature throughout the globe to save the remnants of other similar races. I am chiefly thinking of the autochthone Australian but also of the continuously declining tribes of pigmy size, such as the Wedda, the Negrito, the Akka etc. To my apprehension all those races have to be protected who die out as soon as they come into contact with European civilization, be it through the bullet of the colonist, be it through other strange causes little known to us which led to the melancholy words of such a native: "we want to die out." For these tribes the government will have to form inviolable reservations into which no European will be allowed to set foot without special permission, real anthropological sanctuaries whose boundaries the native must not cross. Just as man is the crown of all living creatures, this deed will be the coronation of the work of protection of nature: *the preservation of nature's anthropological monuments.* —

At the VIII international "Congress of zoologists" in Graz, the speaker concluded his speech with the following proposal:

"A *commission for the global protection of nature* is to be formed at once. This commission is to consist of the representatives of all nations and its object will be to effectually propagate the protection of nature in every particular form pole to pole over the whole globe, over land and sea."

Thereupon the speaker was charged with the formation of a *provisional committee* for the global protection of nature which he did at once. The committee met August 18, 1910, and the following resolutions were carried:

"Referring to the paper read by Mr. Paul Sarasin at the VIII international congress of zoologists the then formed provisional committee for the global protection of nature proposes to organize an international agreement between all the nations of the globe regarding the protection of nature.

To this end the chairman of the provisional committee will ask the Swiss Bundesrat to put before the ministers for foreign affairs of the different nations the following petitions:

1. To promote in the respective countries the protection of nature and to further already existing organizations for the protection of the fauna, of the flora, and of the beautiful or interesting landscapes;
2. To elect delegates for a commission for the global protection of nature and to send their names to the Swiss Federal Council, who will invite these representatives to a meeting where the international commission for the global protection of nature will be appointed.

With this the work of the provisional committee will be finished.  
In the petitions then will be enclosed:

- a) The speech of Mr. Paul Sarasin, in English, French, German, and Italian.
- b) The resolutions of the VIII international congress of zoologists.
- c) The list of the names of the members of the provisional committee, together with their nationality.”

A further resolution was carried to make *Basle* the centre of the provisional committee.

The members of the provisional committee are:

Prof. Dr. *A. Appellöf*, Bergen  
Prof. Dr. *G. Koshewnikow*, Moskau  
Dir. Dr. *G. Antipa*, Bukarest  
Prof. Dr. *R. Blanchard*, Paris  
Prof. Dr. *W. Kükenthal*, Breslau  
Geh.-Rat Prof. Dr. *M. Braun*, Königsberg i.Pr.  
Prof. Dr. *F.S. Monticelli*, Neapel  
Hofrat Prof. Dr. *L. von Graff*, Graz  
Prof. Dr. *Chr. Sasaki*, Tokio  
Prof. Dr. *D. St. Jordan*, Stassford-Univ.<sup>4</sup>, Calif., U.S.A.  
Prof. Dr. *R.F. Scharff*, Dublin  
Prof. Dr. *A. Wirén*, Upsala and the *speaker* who was made chairman.  
Hon. *A. A. Kirkpatrick*, Agent Generals for South-Australia, London

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<sup>4</sup> Sic! The original German text also says Stassford instead of Stanford.

The Ted K Archive

Paul Sarasin  
Global Protection of Nature  
16 August 1910

<<https://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/weltnaturschutz-global-protection-nature>>

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