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States of Nature: Conserving Canada's Wildlife in the Twentieth Century. By Tina Loo. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007. xxiv + 320 p., ill., notes, bibl., index. ISBN 978-0-7748-1289-4 hc. 85 \$ 978-7748-1290-0 pb. \$29.95)

par Paul Kopas

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Enfin, en conclusion, on peut se demander si l'auteur n'est pas par moment soit trop aveuglé par le héros – présenté comme un être d'exception (p.39 et 52) – que serait Michel Sarrazin, soit demeuré trop près des sources et des interprétations historiographiques traditionnelles.

RÉNALD LESSARD

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STÉPHANIE TÉSIO

Université Laval et Université de Caen

Environment / Environnement

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In his famous book *Leviathan*, published in 1651, English political philosopher and polymath Thomas Hobbes argued that the creation of the state removed man (human beings) from the “state of nature” in which life was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” Other political philosophers followed with careful analyses about the state of (human) nature and the composition and construction of the (political) state. Wilderness, as conceived of today, was not a concern to the seventeenth century state. The punning title of Tina Loo's book therefore draws attention to natural domains as additions to a state management agenda. As modern (political) states and societies now analyze and debate policy about potentially catastrophic environmental issues such as global climate change, ocean pollution, widespread species extinction and others, it is essential that we understand both the nature of the state and the state of nature.

These two books are therefore valuable additions to the growing body of work on environmental history and raise important questions about how the state formulates policy and how it behaves toward the environment. Despite their subject of wildlife and wilderness both books are strongly focused on the state—what it does, how it behaves, how it interacts with societal actors and how scientific method and results fit

into state actions. Both are cautionary tales, especially John Sandlos' work, about the misapplication of wildlife science and the hubris of bureaucratic decision-making. Both tell compelling stories and offer considerable detail about conflicts concerning how the environment is understood and how it is used.

Drawing extensively on an impressive base of archival research about government agencies from the early twentieth century to the late 1960s, Sandlos examines federal government management regimes for wood bison, muskox and caribou within federal jurisdiction—national parks, mainly Wood Buffalo in northern Alberta, and the Northwest Territories. It is a story of failure. The book is divided into three main parts, one for each of the species considered, with chaptered subdivisions in the sections about wood bison and caribou. These two sections dominate the book with the much shorter single chapter on muskox being almost an anecdote which supports the views presented in the other two sections. The attention to these three species and not to moose, for example, or other animals, is meant to assess the fate of animals perceived to be endangered but, as herd animals, are also seen to have potentially high commercial value. The book highlights the contradictory approach taken by government whereby animals presumed to be at risk are promoted and cultivated for meat production.

All three sections, however, almost singularly address the policies and practices of state expansion and control into boreal and sub-arctic regions. Management and conservation in this account are about the use of these animals as a resource for a commercial and industrial economy, not about their protection for ecological, aesthetic or indigenous purposes. Indeed, one of the values of this book is the intensive coverage of government efforts to commercialize the existence of and production from all three species in order to extract monetary value from the north. The native people of the subtitle occupy a relatively minor part and then mostly as the objects of and (legitimate) complainants about government regulations, pecuniary incentives, and police action. Based on the title, this reviewer was expecting a book about indigenous game management practices, clan or tribal group allocative decisions, conflicts and conflict management among indigenous groups, and traditional hunting systems. Indeed, it might be argued that a more descriptive title for Sandlos' work would be *Bureaucrats at the Centre* as the book seems less about hunters and more about bureaucrats; it is as much about decisions taken in Ottawa as it is about activities in the north.

Sandlos describes his work as “not as a detailed overview of federal wildlife policy but as an episodic account of disputes over access” (p.17).

This episodic approach limits the potential for this richly detailed account. By examining these three species and the treatment they received reinforces the themes about contradictory policies. However, the attention given to what are herd species leaves unanswered questions about competing ideas and interests in wildlife management in this period. The impression is that government bureaucrats would try to commercialize any wild critter with hooves. However, this appears not to be the case for moose. Scarcity of moose and restrictions on (mostly indigenous) hunting are mentioned in passing, but a detailed account is not provided. One wonders whether moose, as a more solitary animal and therefore one less likely to attract development-minded bureaucrats' attention, simply provided a more limited archival record.

Tina Loo's *States of Nature* presents a pan-Canadian view of evolving ideas about, attitudes toward and government policy concerning wildlife and wild spaces in the same period—the early twentieth century to about 1970. In seven main chapters Loo touches on some of the same issues as Sandlos, particularly in chapter five, “Buffalo Burgers and Reindeer Steaks,” which briefly describes government attempts to husband the bison and caribou populations (including efforts to introduce reindeer as a domesticated species in order to take hunting pressure off caribou) ostensibly for conservation reasons but with the real effect of commercializing their production. In addition, *States of Nature* examines scientific efforts to understand population dynamics and predator-prey relationships including human attempts to reduce or eliminate wild predators. The challenge to a sober scientific understanding of these relationships is well illustrated by the “rehabilitation” and popularization of wolves by writer Farley Mowat and filmmaker Bill Mason in the 1960s and early 1970s. Despite vigorous scientific criticism of Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf*, the Canadian public changed its view of wolves from that of bloodthirsty predator to one seeing them as romantic aspects of Canadian wilderness.

The account of Mowat and Mason, amply illustrates Loo's central thesis that “sentiment as much as science” has influenced public attitudes and even government policy. In addition to the key thesis, Loo presents three perspectives on the evolution of “states of nature.” First, she posits that ideas about nature change over time and then, through the book, chronicles these changes in different parts of Canada and for different subjects. Second, she argues that the Canadian interaction with nature is influenced by many actors, not only by governments. The particular attention paid to ideas and attitudes within rural communities is especially welcome. In much writing about wilderness conservation policy there is a heavy focus on organized interest groups who draw significant strength from urban

populations. Rural populations are often overlooked. Third, Loo examines the effect of broad and often deeply embedded, but also changing, values such as Christianity and private property, human relationship with nature and, for some, the fostering of “ethical human communities” (p.7).

States of Nature and *Hunters at the Margin* complement each other in several important respects. By taking a cross-Canada approach the former provides a context in which the latter can be read. While Sandlos adequately explains the specific background for government practices concerning the three species addressed, Loo’s work illustrates that the ideas in the north and conflicts over policy are not limited to that region, but are part of a context and evolution of Canadian ideas. Loo’s book necessarily covers subjects more briefly, while Sandlos’s attends to its in great detail.

The strongest intersection of subjects is with respect to bison and caribou (Loo makes only brief reference to muskox) where both draw attention to the state’s efforts to reap monetary benefit from northern grazing animals. However, Loo’s chapter is disappointingly brief. The central contradiction of attempting to protect wild animals only to slaughter and market them is effectively made, but a more thorough presentation in keeping with the three perspectives outlined in the introduction would enrich this chapter. In contrast, the detail provided by Sandlos presents a rich, complex picture of the conflict, resistance, scientific uncertainty, bureaucratic control and contradictory ideas in the management of northern herds. However, at times the detail is almost overwhelming and cohabiting arguments are not always clearly demarcated. For this reviewer, who appreciates detail, Sandlos’s account is, in this respect, the more satisfying. Moreover, the precision makes this book useful as a source, or inspiration, for related research in this area (such as on the application of tentative scientific conclusions, bureaucratic behaviour, or Aboriginal resistance).

As suggested above, both books are preoccupied with the state. This is much more the case for *Hunters at the Margin* since *States of Nature* attends to societal participants and public perspectives. Nevertheless, in discussing these matters, the latter book frequently examines the interaction between societal groups and public attitudes on the one hand and government policy and bureaucratic practice on the other. In particular, both discuss the human use of wildlife and, for Loo, wild spaces, and (some of) the means by which government manage these activities. Since the state is everywhere present in these books, both would have benefited from an explicit discussion about a theory of the state. While the descriptions of state agents’ activities are often excellent and the role of individual officials is explained, an understanding of state purposes is missing. One wonders, for example, why the Canadian state behaved in this way?

In particular, a definition of the colonial state would support both works. Loo makes a persuasive argument about the transformation of rural Canada as a result of game management laws with reference to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. For Loo, “game laws were instruments of colonization, imposing an urban and bourgeois sensibility about wildlife on rural Canada” (p.40). While the aspect of “imposing” seems colonizing enough it is also clear from Loo’s account there were competing demands for game animals, some from urban recreational hunters and others from rural hunters, both subsistence and recreational. One might ask whether game laws were part of the state’s mediation of these conflicts with the concomitant and inevitable lopsidedness in the outcomes. After all, one of the roles of the state is to adjudicate and mediate.

The assertion of colonialism is straightforward with respect to Aboriginal people—they were being dispossessed of their resources and prevented from pursuing a practicable livelihood. In this respect game laws were consistent with the colonizing efforts of the reserve system, residential schools, band councils and other efforts aimed at transforming them into Euro-Canadians. The charge of colonialism is less clear with respect to non-Aboriginal rural Canadians, the imposition of urban sensibilities notwithstanding. States do regulate societies; they also transform them. What might be the distinction between the legitimate application of state regulatory power and the (presumably non-legitimate) extension of colonial practice? Imposition may be about power, but it is not necessarily about colonialism. At least, a definition of colonialism needs to be offered if this argument is to be sustained. These distinctions are important because governments continue to decide about environmental regulation and the continuing relationship between rural and urban Canada. For example, is the carbon tax in British Columbia, which affects northern and rural people more strongly than southern urban ones, a (legitimate) act of regulation or (a non-legitimate) one of colonization?

While these two books are about the state, they are also about science. Loo’s thesis that “sentiment as much as science” affects attitudes and decision making. Her account of the social (and ecological) rehabilitation of wolves is a case in point. Indeed, Loo devotes valuable attention to the debates about predators and efforts to control them through bounties, authorized hunters, or poisons. Sandlos covers similar ground in his treatment of predator control, including predation by humans. He also considers disease management, population dynamics and hybridization. These presentations outline some of the discussions and practices of the day, but a sharper focus on scientific debates would have enhanced both works. What does the science consist of? What data are used and what

strengths and weaknesses are there in the data? When is local and/or oral knowledge treated as scientific data and when as sentiment? When there are debates over differing results and the consequences for wildlife management, why does one side win and not the other? Finally, why does sentiment have such influence and why is science not more persuasive? The study of the development and implementation of game regulation and wildlife management generally provides an excellent opportunity for the conceptualization, practice, dissemination and application of science to ecological management especially at present. As societies currently confront enormous environmental challenges with heated debates about science and sentiment, a more articulated account of how debates unfolded in the past would be helpful in illuminating the progress of the present conflicts.

In the context of current environmental debates, these books make a valuable contribution by showing that the state can act in self-contradictory ways, that what constitutes knowledge is often unclear, that the application of science is contested and inconsistent, and that power and resistance are present in acts of regulation. While the stories told in both books are valuable and the detail arresting, both could do more to show what broader debates they engage and why these observations are important. With respect both to the conduct of the state and the particular (mis)application of science, a more ambitious attempt to explain social, political, economic and ideational forces behind these outcomes would go a greater distance to uncovering the Canadian relationship with the environment.

PAUL KOPAS

***Taking the Air: Ideas and Change in Canada's National Parks.* By Paul Kopas.** (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008. 248 p., notes, bibl., index. ISBN 9780774813303 pb. \$32.95 9780774813297 hc. \$85)

It has been four decades since the inaugural Parks for Tomorrow conference held at the University of Calgary gave legitimacy to national parks as a subject worthy of scholarly study. Since that time, however, parks scholarship in Canada has remained somewhat fragmented, confined to individual papers in difficult to access journals or several edited collections that often repeat the same themes (with a similar cast of authors) about the importance of national parks and the need to create more of them. With some exceptions (notably Alan MacEachern's *Natural Selections*, a historical study of four national parks in Atlantic