
THE FUTURE OF THE Southern Plains

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29. Groups present at the demonstration were the Young Socialist Alliance, the Student Organization for Black Unity, Young Democrats of Texas Tech University, Jewish Student Organization, Muslim Student Organization, Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, Women's Liberation, India Student Organization, and Vietnam Veterans Against the War. *State of Texas vs. Tim McGovern, et al.* (1972), No. 69455, 137th District Court of Lubbock County, Texas; Lucas Trujillo interview with Yolanda Romero, 24 March 1987, Plano, Texas, SWCTTU; *La Voz de Texas*, Lubbock, 8 November 1971; 25 August and 28 July 1972.

30. Jesús Moya interview with Yolanda Romero, 25 July 1989, Hidalgo, Texas, SWCTTU; *Howard Gault Co. vs. Texas Rural Legal Aid* (1985), United States District Court, Northern District Texas, Amarillo Division; Rod Davis, "The Onion Revolt," *The Texas Observer*, 8 August 1980, 2–8; Jane A. Grandolfo, "Migrant Housing Comes to Hereford," *The Texas Observer*, 20 November 1987, 14–15; *Amarillo Daily News*, October 25, 1985; November 23, 1985; February 7, 1986; November 2, 1987; Mark Seal, "High Noon in Hereford," *Dallas Morning News*, March 9, 1980; *The Hereford Brand*, Hereford, Texas, 27 January, 9 July, 9 August, 1985; *The Monitor*, McAllen, Texas, 11 August 1985.

31. *Howard Gault Co. vs. Texas Rural Legal Aid et al.* (1985); Geoffrey Rips, "The Possibility of Democracy," *The Texas Observer*, 24 January 1986, 2–4; Louis Dubose, "Hispanic Power in the Panhandle," *The Texas Observer*, 15 January 1988, 10–12; Louis Dubose, "Gramm Strikes Out," *The Texas Observer*, 20 November 1988, 2–3; *The Hereford Brand*, 6 March, 20 December 1985; *The Odessa American*, 24 December 1985. Texas Rural Legal Aid lawyers made from \$14,000 to \$18,000 a year. Geoffrey Rips, "Political Intelligence," *The Texas Observer*, 15 August 1986, 16; Geoffrey Rips, "The Possibility of Democracy," *The Texas Observer*, 24 January 1986, 2–4; letter from Bidal Agüero to Congressman Kent Hance, 22 January 1980, concerning critical comments made by the congressman about Texas Rural Legal Aid "Correspondence" folder, Bidal Agüero Papers; *Amarillo Daily News*, 10 December 1985; *Amarillo Daily News*, 26 December 1985; *Dallas Times Herald*, 17 December 1985; *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, 21 February, 27 February, 1985, 10 March, 18 July, 1986; *San Antonio Times Herald*, 2 December 1986; *West Texas Hispanic News*, Lubbock, Texas, 13 November 1985.

32. Jeff Roche, "Water, Race, and Republicanism: The Political Future of the Southern Plains," paper in possession of author, 6; "Farm Worker Activity" folder, Eliseo Solis Papers.

33. *Houston Chronicle*, 13 March 2001.

Loving the Plains, Hating the Plains, Restoring the Plains

DAN FLORES

I know almost nothing useful about W. H. Auden, the twentieth-century British poet-critic, except that once he wrote these lines, which I committed to memory: "I cannot see a plain without a shudder; 'Oh God, please, please don't ever make me live there!'" There's an exclamation point at the end of that sentence. Auden's sentiment, I think—and most modern Americans would surely agree—captures the early twenty-first century view of the matter nicely. The Great Plains is not, by any standard measure of aesthetics, an admired part of America these days, a loved landscape of our contemporary times the way the Rockies or Sierra Nevadas or the southwestern deserts are loved. As even Deborah Epstein Popper, of Buffalo Commons fame (or infamy, depending on your politics) is reported to have remarked during a tour of the Southern Plains of Oklahoma and Texas in the early 1990s: "This is terrible country! . . . There is *nothing here*. It is un-country. It shouldn't be allowed to exist!"¹

Anyone who has driven an automobile across the country Popper is describing recognizes her feeling. Through the car windows a vast emptiness of space assaults the senses. The horizon encircles the world like the rim of some immense plate, and no matter how fast you drive, it recedes in front of you, eventually placing you in a kind of Twilight Zone of suspended forward motion. The wind buffets and rocks your car. There are stretches where, if you roll down the windows, the country smells like a dustier Iowa, with more than a hint of ammonia, feedlots, and hog farms. Other than the frequent sight, oddly in these sere expanses, of thousands of waterfowl threading the blue bowl overhead, there is no visible wildlife—maybe a few pronghorns if you look really hard, a coyote if you are lucky. More than likely you do not see a single prairie dog. Throughout much of the day, the harsh light is almost too bright to look at, at least when there is no brown pall created by agriculture gone airborne. Tiny burgs memorable for the amount of wind-blown waste snagged on chain mesh fences loom and recede along the laser-straight highway. Billboards unintentionally advertising the Plains social order—Jesus, cowboys, pesticides, cowboy boots, farm machinery, banking loans, the Dallas Cowboys—become welcome breaks in the monotony. A pervading notion characterizes such drives: “I wish to God I’d have flown.”

So we react to the modern world of the Great Plains. But it was not always so. A century or two ago, the reactions were very different. To stoke our sense of wonder at the variability of human response to place, let me quote a few of them. They are quite remarkable.

The first is from Sir William Dunbar, the Natchez, Mississippi, scientist whom Thomas Jefferson engaged to help him lead what would have been the first American exploration into the heart of the Southern Plains. Situated as he was on the forested edges of fascination with the country farther west, Dunbar assembled for Jefferson a sense of the Southern Plains two centuries ago:

By the expression plains, or prairies . . . it is not to be understood a dead flat without any eminences. . . . The western prairies are very different; the expression signifies only a country without timber. These prairies are neither flat nor hilly, but undulating in gently swelling lawns, and expanding into spacious valleys, in the center of which is always found a little timber, growing on the banks of brooks and rivulets of the clearest water. . . . Those who

have viewed only a skirt of these prairies speak of them with a degree of enthusiasm, as if it were only there that nature was to be found truly perfect; they declare that the fertility and beauty of the vegetation, the extreme richness of the valleys, the coolness and excellent quality of the water found everywhere, the salubrity of the atmosphere, and above all, the grandeur of the enchanting landscape which this country presents inspires the soul with sensations not to be felt in any other region of the globe.²

There were, Dunbar told Jefferson, “wonderful stories of wonderful productions,” among them mountains of pure or partial salt and silver ore lying about in chunks on the prairie. And there were unfathomed wildlife riches—bears, “tygers,” wolves, and buffalo and other grazers beyond imagination, even great herds of feral horses that had already become the focus of a thriving market. There were stories of giant water serpents, and some said there were unicorns out on the Southern Plains.³

William Dunbar never got to see the region of those wonderful productions that at least one contemporary American map was already calling the “Great Plains.”⁴ But plenty of his contemporaries did. Among scores of such passages from the Lewis and Clark ascent of the Missouri River through the Northern Plains, this one, from Meriwether Lewis in what is now South Dakota, serves as well as any:

Monday Sept. 17 1804 this plane . . . is intirely occupied by the burrows of the *barking squirrel* heretofore described; this anamal appears here in infinite numbers. . . . the shortness and virdue of the grass gave the plains the appearance throughout it’s whole extent of beatifull bowling-green in fine order. . . . a great number of wolves of the small kind, hawks [hawks] and some pole-cats were to be seen. . . . this senery already rich pleasing and beatiful was still farther heightened by immence herds of Buffaloe, deer Elk and Antelopes which we saw in every direction feeding on the hills and plains.⁵

Zebulon Montgomery Pike, in 1806, famously found the Arkansas River country a match for the “sandy deserts of Africa.” And of course the Stephen Long Expedition pronounced—many of us are tempted to think with some savvy—the Southern High Plains “unfit for agriculture” after their trek along the Canadian and Arkansas during what we now

know, according to Connie Woodhouse's essay in this volume, was the very dry year of 1820. With equal insight, though, they noted that "travelling over a dusty plain of sand and gravel, barren as the deserts of Arabia" was never tedious because of the thrilling Plains wildlife spectacle, whose closest analogue was (once again) Africa. On the Arkansas River, Captain John Bell wrote that there were "thousands of buffalo on both sides of the river." Naturalist Thomas Say, no Plains Romantic, added that the vast herds were never without a roiling accompaniment of "famine-pinched wolves and flights of obscene and ravenous birds."⁶

These descriptions could continue without end, for those in the last century who were amazed and startled by the Plains—or smitten with admiration—are virtually too numerous to list. Washington Irving was enthralled with the Plains. So were James Fenimore Cooper, George Catlin, Prince Maximilian, John James Audubon. A favorite Plains quote of mine, whose inversion of the modern reaction is endlessly pleasing to me, is from a little-known but gifted writer who, remarkably, was a New Mexico mountain man. In 1831, Albert Pike and a troop of colorful trappers, having stripped the Sangre de Cristo and Jemez and San Juan ranges of beaver, looped out across the High Plains, hoping vainly for undiscovered beaver streams. After months out on the great horizontal sweeps, this is how the landscape struck him.

The sea, the woods, the mountains, all suffer in comparison with the prairie. . . . The prairie has a stronger hold upon the senses. Its sublimity arises from its unbounded extent, its barren monotony and desolation, its still, unmoved, calm, stern, almost self-confident grandeur, its strange power of deception, its want of echo, and, in fine, its power of throwing a man back upon himself.⁷

Even in the twentieth century, after the Plains wildlife extermination war but before modern agriculture ripped the grass off much of the Plains, the region entranced with the same magic that had moved Albert Pike. Young Georgia O'Keeffe, seemingly sentenced to a career as an art teacher in High Plains Texas during World War I, marveled at how you could just drive or walk "off into space." Writing her friend Daniel Catton Rich as late as 1949, O'Keeffe told him that "crossing the Panhandle of Texas is always a very special event for me . . . driving in the early morning toward the dawn and rising sun—The plains are not like anything else and I always wonder why I go other places."⁸

Yet another twentieth-century woman artist, Willa Cather, reacted similarly. As she told a back-home newspaper in 1921:

I go everywhere. I admire all kinds of country. . . . But when I strike the open plains, something happens. I'm home. I breathe differently. That love of great spaces, of rolling open country like the sea—it's the grand passion of my life. I tried for years to get over it. I've stopped trying. It's incurable.⁹

I could go on. But to progress to my point, let me finally cite that ultimate American lover of being in the world, Walt Whitman. Whitman saw the Plains for the first time after the Civil War, when the animals and native inhabitants of the Old West held sway and the greatest dramas of the so-called frontier were being played out. This was his reaction:

I am not so sure but that the prairies and plains, while less stunning at first sight, last longer, fill the esthetic sense fuller, precede all the rest, and make North America's characteristic landscape.¹⁰

There's an obvious question to pose from this exercise: What has happened to make the modern reaction to the Great Plains so different now? How, in other words, do you get from Albert Pike and Willa Cather to the "un-country" of Deborah Popper?

The Great Transformation

The answer to the change in reaction probably does have at least some gender nuances, but primarily it has to do with the extraordinary transformation the Great Plains underwent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In effect, we dismantled a ten-thousand-year-old ecology, very likely one of the most exciting natural spectacles in the world (and world-famous because of it), in the space of a half-century. For many male observers of the Plains who made careers out of the loss—among them people like Charlie Russell, Frederic Remington, and Zane Grey—it was a perceived life in "wilderness," among Native people and thronging wildlife, that they mourned. Even so experienced a naturalist as John James Audubon, on the Missouri River in 1843, was beside himself out on the "wild" nineteenth-century Plains. He was, he wrote, in "the very midst of the game country." "My head is actually swimming with excitement," he closed a letter that summer, "and I cannot write any more."¹¹

For women especially attuned to the Plains—painters and novelists like O’Keeffe and Cather—it was not the wildlife spectacle but a sense of freedom derived from a vast, uncluttered space of grasslands that appealed so strongly. “Space” and expanses like “the sea” serve as code-words for the spirit-stirring freedom available to independent women on the open grasslands of the West in the early twentieth century. The novelist Mari Sandoz, although she, too, mourned the world of American Plains Indians and thronging wildlife, in the twentieth century thrilled to the same effect O’Keeffe and Cather mentioned.

But historical forces that mounted in intensity a century and more ago destroyed *that* Great Plains, seemingly forever. At a time when government had not progressed to the point of protecting species from eradication and science had not grasped the values and balances inherent in ecological diversity, hunters blessed by the free market devastated the most singular wildlife species of the Plains. Anglo—and yes, Hispanic, Métis, and American Indian—hunters slaughtered thirty million buffalo, perhaps in excess of fifty million pronghorns, tens of thousands of wild sheep, untold numbers of elk, for robes, hides, pelts, meat, and tongues in demand by the global market. Hunters and stockmen pursued and shot down grizzly bears, which had once ranged as far out on the Plains as North Dakota, Kansas, and West Texas, until they drove the few that remained into exile in the mountains of the West. It was partly the market for pelts and a kind of war against the wild on behalf of Christianity and civilization, but mostly it was the livestock industry’s capture of the federal government’s Animal Damage Control Department that resulted in every last Plains lobo wolf getting hunted down or trapped or poisoned. The very last wolf on the Texas Plains ended up gutshot with a .22 by picnickers near Amarillo in 1924.¹² In Montana, a livestock-controlled state legislature even passed a law requiring veterinarians to infect captured wolves with sarcoptic mange and release them to spread the disease among wild canids.¹³

Then came the campaign against such seemingly inoffensive Plains creatures as prairie dogs, ground squirrels, magpies, and ravens, which had the unintended (although evidently welcome) effect of also vanquishing many of the 160-odd species that had evolved to the particular ecologies of vast prairie-dog towns on the Plains. Some of the most notable of these now endangered species were black-footed ferrets, swift foxes, and mountain plovers, the latter one of the most common High Plains birds a century ago and of which fewer than 5,500 remain today.

The big, charismatic Plains species that had defined the region in world imagination in the nineteenth century fled to refuges deep in the Rockies. And now out on the great sweeps, a century after the assault on Plains wildlife commenced in earnest, there are 55 threatened or endangered grassland species in the United States, and an astonishing 728 candidates (including black-tailed prairie dogs, which once may have comprised the single largest living biomass on the Plains) considered as possible or likely listings. The one Great Plains fauna that still seems abundant to modern travelers, its birds, declined 25 to 65 percent in the 1980s, the largest population loss of any species group on the continent.¹⁴

The war on Plains wildlife was one of the biggest steps in the creation of “un-country,” but it was only the beginning. Act Two was the agricultural assault. Because level, grassy plains did not appear to present the kind of obstacles to agriculture that other landscapes did, between the 1850s and 1930s—as John Opie’s and John Miller Morris’s essays in this book describe—homesteading policies privatized the overwhelming bulk of the American Great Plains. In Southern Plains locales like western Kansas/eastern Colorado, the big breakout took place under the nineteenth-century homestead laws, and mostly in the decades on either side of the twentieth century. In Oklahoma, the land rushes resulting from American Indian allotment and sale of “excess” acreage was the trigger. Settlers broke out Eastern New Mexico mostly after the passage of the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909. And in Texas, with its anomalous lands history and long devotion to privatization, the sale and breakup of the XIT Ranch in 1915, along with disposed railroad tracts, brought farmers by the trainload to the Llano Estacado and Rolling Plains.

I am far from an agricultural historian and will leave it to Opie, Morris, and others to address the regional details of how Plains agriculture played out, and will play out, in history. The point I want to address has to do with the resulting environmental history, which saw a landscape already de-buffaloed and de-wolved now almost de-grassed, too. The Southern Plains became almost all privately held, with all the property rights implications of such ownership, including an almost overnight, wholesale replacement of the evolved Plains ecology with a new one consisting of introduced Old World animals and plants.

The losses, in any case, were staggering. Conservation biology now points to plowing up the tallgrass prairie, whose extent on the Southern Plains has been reduced by agriculture to less than 1 percent of its original coverage, as the greatest disaster perpetrated against nature in

modern continental history. Even on the mid-grass and shortgrass plains, from Texas to Canada, the losses have been mind-boggling. By 2001, Saskatchewan had only 19 percent of its native prairie left. North Dakota had only 28 percent. Texas has an average of 20 percent of its prairie today, although the part of the High Plains I know best, the central Llano Estacado, is in far worse shape. Lubbock County by the 1980s had lost 97 percent of its native grasslands. Literally all that remained was in Yellow House Canyon, country too rugged to plow up and to plant cotton.¹⁵

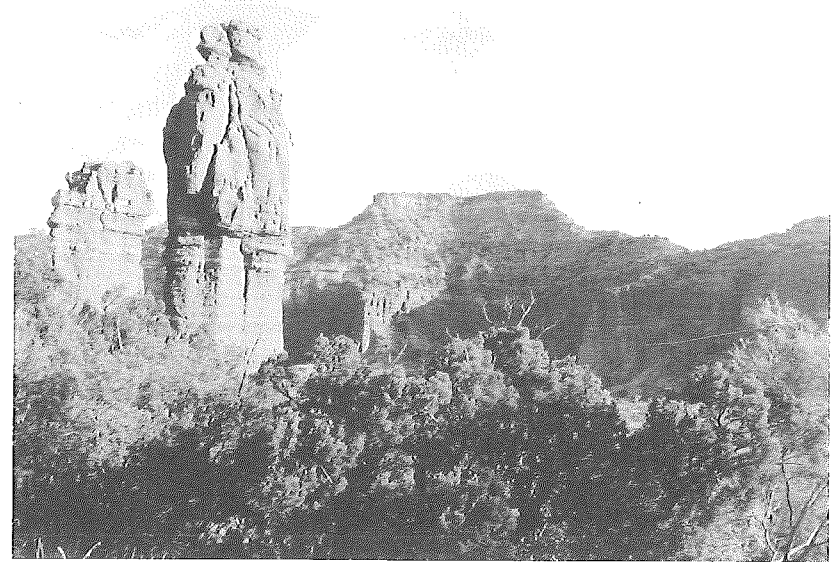
The contrast between the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains in Lewis and Clark's day was clear in the party's longing to escape the wildlife-poor mountains and return to the Plains. In our time, following two centuries of history we have accomplished an entire reversal: the federally managed Rockies are now home to most of the West's wildlife, while the privately owned Great Plains has become a monument to the American sacrifice of nature.¹⁶ "Un-country," it would seem, is the only Southern Plains future within the scope of our imagining.

Preserving the Plains

But this is a three-act story. Once we thrilled to the Great Plains. Then we wreaked havoc on its ecology, and many Americans came to despise the result. For the past three-quarters of a century, a third phase—undoubtedly not the last—has been building momentum. As a result of some tragic historical misses, to an extent, stage three is still a vision. But there have been some successes, too.

In our time, environmentalism and conservation biology seem finally to have recognized natural grasslands and prairie ecosystems as among the most undervalued natural regions around the world. Despite acclaimed examples of grassland parks like the Serengeti and Kruger Parks in Africa and the Elmas in Brazil, in United States environmental history we have famously overlooked or bypassed plains and prairies in the federal preservation agenda.¹⁷ The irony that the first visionary call for an American national park (George Catlin's in 1832) was for a park on the Great Plains, while National Park Service (NPS) history is in fact a study in apathy towards plains parks and monuments, has finally begun to influence the American conservation community.¹⁸ But it was not always so.

A century ago, concerns for watershed protection directed the major American conservation initiative of the time—national forest designa-



Eroded spires of the canyon country at the head of the Red River represent the part of the Southern Plains that conservationists have most often looked to in preserving natural areas in the region. Photograph courtesy Dan Flores.

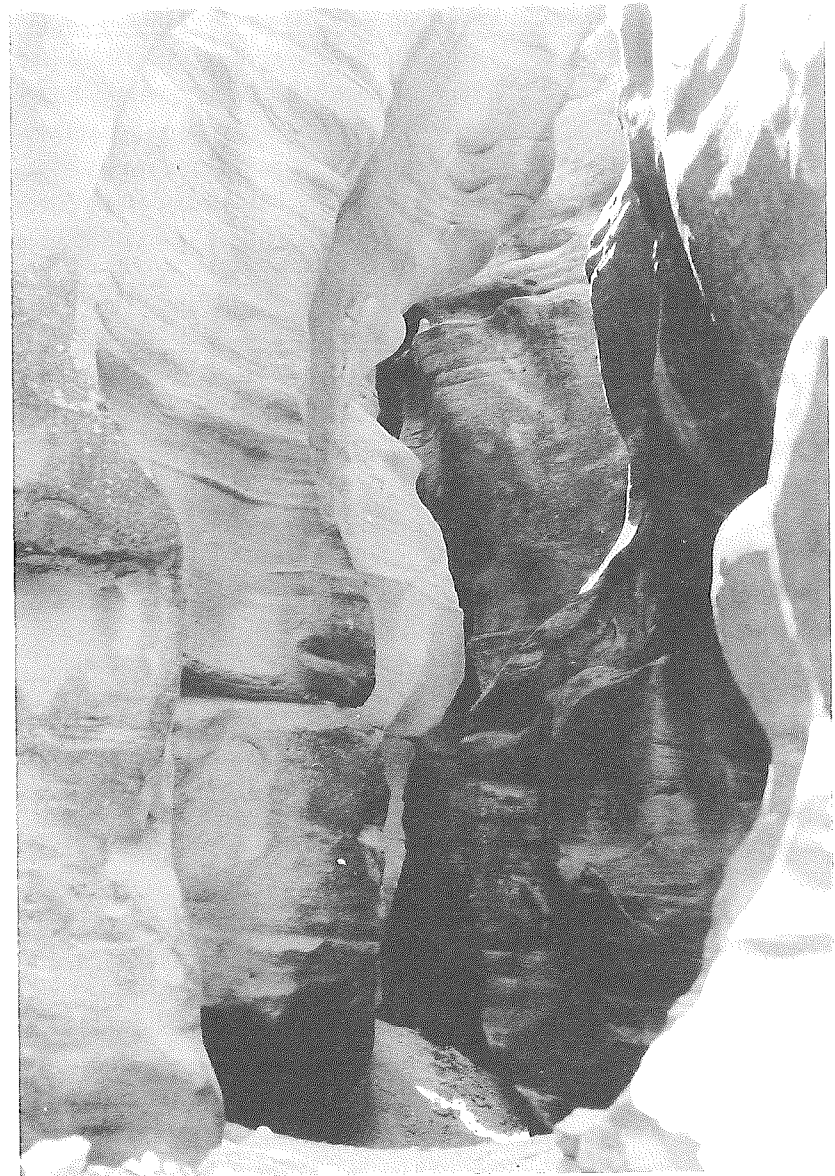
tions—toward the mountain ranges of the public lands in the West. Except for a scattering of island mountain ranges on the Plains, most on the Northern Plains, the national forest initiative ignored the Great Plains. Similarly, although for different reasons, during the initial phase of national park history (the 1870s to the 1930s), the scenic ideals of the Romantic Age, which centered on sublime scenery, dominated American landscape preservation. Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain National Parks, along with the great canyons like Yosemite, Zion, and the Grand Canyon, were the ne plus ultra examples of American parks—not monumental merely, but monumentally *vertical*.¹⁹ No landscapes on the Plains seemed very interesting to a park service with this kind of value system. Although early on the NPS did accept three Great Plains parks—Sullys Hill in Nebraska, Platt in Oklahoma, and Wind Cave in South Dakota—the three totaled fewer than thirty thousand acres altogether (compared to 2.2 million acres for Yellowstone alone). Eventually, the NPS downlisted all but Wind Cave. The result was that almost the only Great Plains nature preservation in the early twentieth century

occurred with the creation of national wildlife refuges such as the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Oklahoma, established in 1906.

In the twentieth century, as the park service moved slowly from monumentalism (what Robert Sterling Yard liked to call the "Scenic Supremacy of the United States") toward some incorporation of ecosystem protection in its criteria for parks, a new problem emerged. Until passage of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act in 1964, the park service had no acquisition budget, which became an almost insurmountable obstacle on parts of the Plains, where privatization had proceeded to the point that literally every potential site for a park was outside NPS reach. In the 1920s, the pioneering ecologist Victor Shelford and the Committee of Ecology of the Grasslands began to press for large Great Plains preserves based on ecology rather than monumentalism. They studied eleven sites, found four more than acceptable, and eventually submitted one (spanning three-fourths of a million acres in Nebraska and South Dakota) to the park service and Congress. But the NPS fumbled the ball.²⁰

Historians of the American park system generally accept that the philosophical direction the service took in its early years was the result of first director Stephen Mather's personal vision. According to his biographer, Mather developed a set of evaluative criteria for new additions to the park/monument system that were essentially followed by his successor and protege, Horace Albright. The Mather criteria centered around the requirement of a large, preferably contiguous area with natural features so extraordinary as to be of national interest—namely, scenery, and of a particularly unusual and impressive quality.²¹ To take care of the "low-grade" sites with only regional or local interest, Mather used the NPS (and especially its regional officers) to promote a state parks movement.

Thus, while scientists like Victor Shelford were already thinking in terms of preserving representative ecosystems, the park service had the Mather scenery inertia to overcome. This is undoubtedly why, as service personnel began to look beyond the mountains and remembered the role of the Great Plains in Western history, they concentrated their efforts not on the rolling, grassy uplands most typical of the region but on the more dramatic badlands and canyonlands country, the erosional equivalents of the Colorado Plateau, where parks like Bryce and Zion were already gestating.



A classic southwestern slot canyon in the erosional maze of the Palo Duro Canyon system was, at various times in the 1930s, considered both for national park and national monument status. Photograph courtesy Dan Flores.

The problem was that no landscapes on the Great Plains measured up when compared to the scale of these places. So in the 1920s and 1930s, the NPS disappointed the ecologists by turning down one Plains proposal after another. South Dakota had first proposed its yellow-cream-and-buff Badlands as a park in 1909, and since much of its acreage consisted of "excess" American Indian lands and parcels never selected in the homesteading process, it was a prime candidate for a High Plains park. Yet sentiments against the lack of vertical relief in the proposed "Teton National Park" prevailed against it. Roger Toll, chief investigator for the NPS, examined the Badlands in July 1928 and decided that "it is not a supreme scenic feature of national importance." The Badlands, Toll reported, "are surpassed in grandeur, beauty and interest by the Grand Canyon National Park and by Bryce National Park."²² However, because 60 percent of the Badlands was still public domain and because South Dakota promised to acquire and transfer to the NPS 90 percent of the private holdings, Toll recommended that Congress invoke the Antiquities Act (which targeted landscapes of unusual archeological or geologic interest) to proclaim 68,000 acres of the Badlands a national monument. Congress approved Badlands National Monument in 1929. Enlarged to some 250,000 acres, it became reality with President Roosevelt's proclamation in 1939.²³

Something similar happened with North Dakota's Little Missouri Badlands, which the NPS initially found "too barren" for a national park. Local ranchers also opposed the idea vociferously. But rancher opposition swirled away with the Dust Bowl and the Depression, and the NPS finally acquired the area in 1947—but as a historical/memorial park based on President Theodore Roosevelt's presence in the area, not the ecosystem park Shelford was calling for.²⁴

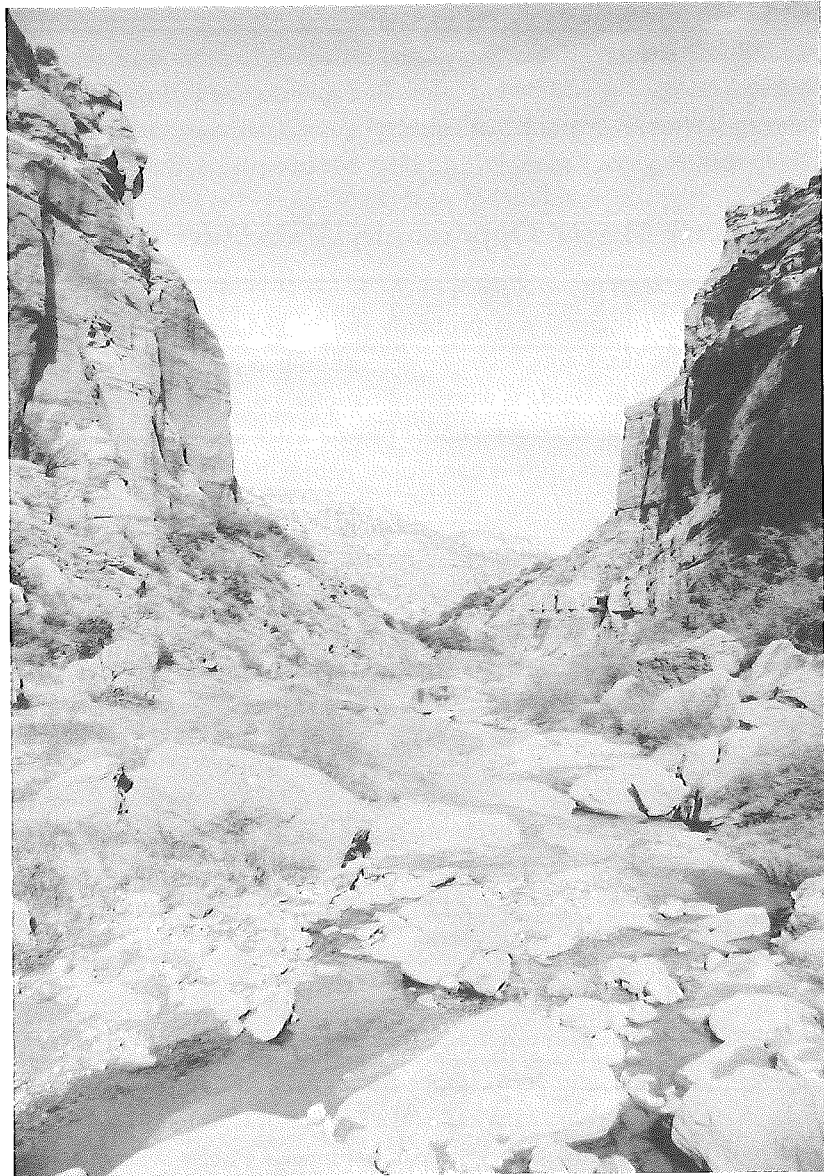
Interesting to ponder, during the 1930s when scientists were gradually pulling the NPS in the direction of ecosystem thinking, it was the Southern Plains where—at least briefly—park personnel toyed with the idea of a large ecosystem Great Plains park that would have gone far toward preserving the old magic of the Plains. What makes this all the more intriguing is that while the NPS upgraded Badlands and Theodore Roosevelt to full national park status with the Omnibus Parks Bill of 1978, and (added to Wind Cave and Saskatchewan's Grassland National Park, created in 1981) thus gave the Northern Plains a fine start in plains restoration, today the Southern Plains entirely lacks large-scale preserved federal lands. The Southern Plains does possess a scat-

tering of national wildlife refuges and small national monuments, notably Alibates Flint Quarry in the Texas Panhandle and Capulin Volcano on the New Mexico Plains. But early in the twenty-first century, agriculturally remade "un-country" prevails on much of the Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico plains.

A Historic Missed Opportunity: Palo Duro Canyon

In the 1930s, with the exception of the Black Hills, Palo Duro Canyon in the Texas Panhandle was probably the most famous Great Plains landscape. The Texas congressional delegation had mentioned it several times, beginning in 1908, as worthy of national park consideration. But Palo Duro had long since gone under private fence and the owner's jealously guarded access; only a handful of people had ever seen it. Yet it was widely known not only for its reputedly dramatic and colorful scenery (painted by a young Georgia O'Keeffe around the time of the Great War), but also because it had been the site of the last major engagement of the American Indian wars on the Southern Plains, and the location of rancher Charles Goodnight's famous JA Ranch.

A sixty-mile-long, eight-hundred-foot-deep roar of color formed where the headwaters of the Red River sliced and diced through the Llano Estacado tableland, Palo Duro not only had historic and scenic values, but it exposed 250 million years of North American geology going back to the Triassic. As elsewhere on the Plains, by the twentieth century its large fauna had been decimated, and there had been botanical deterioration wrought by overgrazing. But Goodnight and his wife, Mary, were known to have preserved a small herd of Southern Plains bison on the JA. And the canyon continued to harbor a splendid floral and small faunal mix, a unique combination of eastern and western species including several relict and endemic species.²⁵ Acquisition of a small (fifteen-thousand-acre) state park was already under way in the early 1930s.²⁶ And Palo Duro had some champions. Among them were historian J. Evetts Haley; newspaper columnist Phebe Warner, who wrote numerous articles on behalf of a national park in the canyon; and architect Guy Carlander, who headed a local national park association. Even Enos Mills, "the John Muir of the Rockies," went on record as supporting a national park in Palo Duro.²⁷ But it seems to have been Albright's unplanned layover in Amarillo in 1932—and the consequent chance to peruse photographs of Palo Duro—that led the director to



The Narrows of Tule Canyon, a stunning tributary gorge of Palo Duro Canyon, was a spot that impressed Roger Toll of the National Park Service in the 1930s. Photograph courtesy Dan Flores.

decide to add Palo Duro to an upcoming investigative tour of possible Texas park sites by Roger Toll.²⁸

I have argued in print—to general consternation in Texas I am pretty sure—that over the long term Roger Toll will be a more significant figure in Texas, for more people, than Davy Crockett. Toll was a one-man-make-it-or-break-it whirlwind for the NPS whose opinion basically gave the West most of the national parks that the NPS targeted during the early 1930s, including Texas's Big Bend, Guadalupe Mountains, and Padre Island. At the time of his Texas tour (the winter of 1933–34), Toll was still a Mather-style scenery advocate. But at park service offices in Washington, the ecologists evidently regarded his upcoming examination of Palo Duro Canyon as the masterstroke of Plains preservation they longed for. While Toll journeyed to Texas, the scientists were assembling maps and materials for the creation of a “National Park of the Plains” around Palo Duro, a huge swath of territory half the size of Yellowstone. This park would have included not just the canyonated sections but adjacent High Plains grasslands so that restoration biologists could return bison and pronghorns to their old home.²⁹

Toll spent four days in Palo Duro in January 1934 in the company of writer and historian J. Evetts Haley. Together they traversed much of its sixty-mile length from Dreamland Falls (where the Red River cuts through Triassic sandstones) to the stunning Tule Canyon Narrows, which Randolph Marcy described during his exploration of 1852 as the most dramatic scene he had ever witnessed.³⁰ Toll was impressed: he regarded Palo Duro as scenically superior to the Badlands, which he had recommended for monument status six years earlier. But whereas Big Bend was monumental, like the Dakota Badlands, Palo Duro was merely “interesting and picturesque.” In sum, as Toll put it in his report, on a scale of sublimity, Palo Duro was “not well qualified for a national park as its scenery is not of outstanding national importance.” He wrote new NPS director Arno Cammerer, “It would rate below the present scenic national parks.” Herbert Maier, NPS regional chief based in Oklahoma City, agreed, adding the clinching argument: “Since its general characteristics are so much like those of the Grand Canyon in Arizona, the Palo Duro as a national park would be a ‘tail to a kite.’”³¹ The NPS also had concerns about land prices. Palo Duro lands were not quite as “worthless” as those in Big Bend, and the state had somehow ended up paying twenty-five dollars an acre for lands that normally sold for five dollars, when it created the state park.³²

Despite Toll's report, ecosystem values continued to gain ground in the NPS. And Palo Duro had now caught the eye of the agency. Both the Washington and regional offices now had files on the Southern Plains canyon, which included several black-and-white photographs of the area taken by J. Evetts Haley. Just two ranches owned the bulk of the canyon below the state park, a great advantage in acquisition negotiations. One, the JA, seemed seriously intent on unloading its holdings, at one point offering the ranch to the newly oil-wealthy Osage Nation of Oklahoma and at another proposing that the Defense Department acquire the canyon as a bombing range! The service's new Everglades National Park in Florida, established for its ecological values instead of classic scenery reasons, demonstrated that NPS interest in ecosystems was to be taken seriously. And new parks like Acadia (Maine), Shenandoah (Virginia), and Great Smoky Mountains (Tennessee/North Carolina) were demonstrating that citizen initiatives could create national parks in states lacking a public domain.

The individual who emerged as champion of large-scale Southern Plains nature preservation after 1935 was Texas Senator Morris Sheppard, and he tried a different tack. As High Plains farming fell apart in the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, the federal government re-acquired thousands of acres of homesteaded lands on the Southern Plains, creating the nucleus of the present National Grasslands. Senator Sheppard began to press for a different form of federal economic salvation for the region by having President Roosevelt make Palo Duro into a national monument by proclamation. Dr. Herman Bumpas, noted geologist and advisor to the NPS, became an inside supporter of the idea. As Bumpas told Planning Chief Ben Thompson, a Palo Duro Canyon National Monument seemed almost a necessity in another of the service's new themes: public education about the natural world. Located just south of Route 66 (now Interstate 40), one of the principal routes across the country, Palo Duro could play the geological role of "First Chapter of Genesis" for tourists heading west, since its bottom-most geological strata ended exactly where those at the rim of the Grand Canyon began.³³

Thus in October 1938, Wendell Little, NPS planning coordinator, initiated a second review of Palo Duro Canyon, this time as a candidate for a rather more modest 134,658-acre national monument. By this point in NPS evolution, evaluation strategy was much more systematic than when Roger Toll's visual impression could decide a landscape's

fate. From the Santa Fe regional NPS offices, eight experts in as many fields, ranging from archeology to recreation, descended on Palo Duro during March and April 1939. The result was an eighty-nine-page document assessing everything from the botany and wildlife of the canyon to its geological and historical significance. It included a detailed estimate of the cost of federal acquisition of the land, a figure that ran to \$294,000, plus \$264,000 for the fifteen-hundred-acre state park. The proposed boundaries extended from Dreamland Falls 35 miles down-canyon to Paradise Valley, owned by the JA Ranch. The plan omitted the wide, bottom end of Palo Duro, which features Tule Canyon and its spectacular gorge. Nor did the report include any significant description of bison and pronghorn restoration; needless to say, it did not broach the subject of recovering Southern Plains wolf populations at all.³⁴ The idea five years earlier of a large, restored Southern Plains landscape seems mostly to have evaporated by 1939.

This "Investigative Report on Proposed Palo Duro National Monument, Texas," which has long lain forgotten in the NPS papers in Washington, did recommend national monument status for Palo Duro. But flipping through its pages now, it is hard not to think that its arguments could have been far stronger. True enough, geologist Charles Gould made an eloquent plea. "From the standpoint of Geology and scenery," he wrote, "Palo Duro is well worthy of being made into a national monument. It is the most spectacular canyon, carved by erosion, anywhere on the Great Plains of North America." While the majority of the members of the investigative team echoed those sentiments, they missed many opportunities to point up ecological or historical uniqueness. Confronted with a long stretch of heavily timbered canyon above the state park, the forester failed to recognize it as a relict forest of Rocky Mountain junipers. While the wildlife biologist noted the unusual mixing of eastern and western species, he missed specially evolved endemics like the Palo Duro mouse. The most glaring omission was the historian's failure to even mention the Battle of Palo Duro Canyon, 1874, as much a finale for American Indians on the Southern Plains as the Little Big Horn was on the Northern.

In Washington, the recommendation in favor of monument status met with mixed reviews. Those who had actually seen Palo Duro were uniformly in favor of national monument status. Others, like NPS Chief of Engineering Ben Thompson, who saw only black and white photos, thought the scenery not "particularly outstanding" and wrote a rebuttal



South Prong Canyon of Caprock Canyons State Park is part of Texas' efforts on behalf of wildlands preservation on the Southern Plains. The state parks preserve only small fragments of the far larger region the National Park Service was interested in protecting during the 1930s, however. Photograph courtesy Dan Flores.

to the recommendation.³⁵ But again, in a nonpublic lands state, the most important element was cost. In the 1930s, the NPS entirely lacked acquisition funds except when a government or private individuals provided them. And whereas public support for the idea of a large Southern Plains national monument poured in from places like Denver, Albuquerque, and even Oklahoma City, Texans seemed strikingly ambivalent to the prospect.³⁶ Its cultural identity based on the aggressive, free-wheeling, speculative strains of the American personality, Texas in the 1930s and 1940s appeared largely uninterested in preservation of the natural world of the Plains—or environmental preservation in general.³⁷ So lacking a commitment from Texas or one of its philanthropists, that \$558,000 cost for the 135,000 acres seemed insurmountable. Nor was the matter helped when one of the landowners, an absentee owner from Chicago who had title to a much admired scenic area above the state park, wrote the NPS that he was willing to sell his 3,000 acres “NOW . . . in a spirit of cooperation” for a mere \$475,000.³⁸

That was the swan song for Palo Duro National Monument. As Interior Secretary Harold Ickes told Senator Sheppard in 1940, “The Department probably would be willing to recommend the establishment as a national monument of approximately 135,000 acres of land . . . if the necessary area could be acquired. . . . No funds are available to this Department for the purchase of these lands.”³⁹ It is at that point that the documents trail in the NPS papers ends.

Restoring the Magic of the Plains

Of course, the story of Southern Plains restoration, let alone the visionary project of returning to the Great Plains some of the magic that compelled so many travelers and observers in the nineteenth century, does not end there. Missing out on an expansive Southern Plains national monument—to say nothing of the early 1930s vision of a million-acre ecosystem Plains park—in hindsight was a huge, shortsighted miss for both nature *and* civilization. But in our time the Great Plains finally has champions again. As Frank and Deborah Popper are given to arguing these days with respect to their Buffalo Commons idea, Plains outmigration, the emergence of American Indians as major environmental players, and a new excitement about ecological restoration are making their *idea* reality, just on a smaller and more decentralized scale than they had originally envisioned.⁴⁰

Undoubtedly, there is reason for excitement. There is every evidence of state, private, and grassroots activity across the Plains: groups like the Southern Plains Land Trust in southeastern Colorado, which is seeking to acquire High Plains acreage for restoration; the recent establishment of a Nature Conservancy office in Amarillo; Texas Parks and Wildlife's persistent, if so far unsuccessful, search for a large High Plains state park where buffalo and elk might roam at large again; and groups like the Great Plains Restoration Council in Denver, which presently acts as an information clearinghouse for hopes to create a million-acre Buffalo Commons. The Bob Scott/Institute for the Rockies vision for a “Big Open” in Montana has been around for more than a decade, and a number of nonprofit groups like the American Buffalo Foundation and the High Plains Ecosystem Restoration Council are attempting to advance that cause, too, if a bit vaguely. In the summer of 1999, the journal *Wild Earth* published a proposal for a biological corridor around the Caprock of the Llano Estacado into which biologists might release



One of dozens of waterfalls and pools located in the recess of the Caprock Canyonlands of the Southern Plains. Photograph courtesy Dan Flores.

wolves and other native charismatic fauna. And the *Great Plains Natural Resources Journal* has published a proposal on a "Greater Black Hills Wildlife Protection Area."⁴¹ Even the Sierra Club, for decades interested only in mountains until it discovered the Colorado Plateau in the 1950s, is now a prairie advocate, with an evolving proposal for High Plains biological corridors linking preserved "core" areas, modeled on the Yellowstone-to-Yukon idea for the Northern Rockies.⁴²

So far, aside from Ted Turner's several buffalo ranches, the most successful small-scale efforts have been those of the Nature Conservancy, whose thirty-thousand-plus-acre prairie acquisition near Tulsa in northeastern Oklahoma may finally serve as the core area around which a tall-grass prairie national park will get established.⁴³ But American Indian peoples, especially on the Northern Plains reservations where tribal land bases still exist, have become major players in prairie restoration. The Inter-Tribal Bison Cooperative has been an unexpectedly successful project, managing to place bison herds—some of them thousands of animals—with nearly forty tribes over the past decade. And tribes like the Blackfeet, the Gros Ventres/Assiniboinés, and the Cheyenne River Sioux have been able to pursue prairie-threatened and endangered species recovery programs (for Swift foxes and ferrets, for example) more adroitly than any federal land managers.⁴⁴

As has been the case in American environmental history for more than a century, though, it is, after all, the federal initiatives that give prairie advocates the most hope. The park service has long known that what it needs is both tallgrass and High Plains ecosystem parks.⁴⁵ And pressure has been mounting for a decade now for a large park that would quite literally restore the Plains that excited Audubon to speechlessness: tens-of-thousands of wild bison, elk back out on the undulating sweeps, prairie dog towns as far as the eye can reach, and the predators—wolves and grizzlies—right in there with the ferrets and foxes. Conservation biologists say that for such a Catlinesque park to work it should at least cover 2.5 million acres, about the size of Yellowstone, although ten to twenty million acres (!) would be a more effective size.⁴⁶ This would be an act of conservation statecraft at the level of a Yellowstone or a Wilderness Act, a worthy goal for a new century.

There is nothing so ambitious in the real-life works. But a smaller version might emerge from the Clinton administration's proclamation in 2000 of a Missouri Breaks National Monument centered on the

White Cliffs section of the Wild and Scenic Missouri River. Merge this 377,346-acre monument with the 150,000-acre Charlie Russell National Wildlife Refuge just downriver, as prairie advocates are hoping, and federal managers would have a sizeable chunk of the last *sanctum sanctorum* of the bison plains, handily located in a state that already has wolves and grizzlies in its mountains and a buffalo source available on nearby American Indian reservations. On the Southern Plains, restoration of that old world of grass, animals, and the magic of space is a little harder to see. More than fifteen years ago, Oklahoma geographer Bret Wallach called on us at least to consider preserving the river corridors on the Southern Plains.⁴⁷ And using Palo Duro's history, I have tried to rescue the idea of a national ecosystem park on the upper Red River that would not only restore the Southern Plains world of nature but would confer the Comanches, Kiowas, and Southern Cheyennes special privileges of use.⁴⁸ In large part (you have to suspect) because of the political and ideological obstacles in a conservative and anti-federal region, whose roots Jeff Roche describes elsewhere in this volume, no serious plans for implementing these ideas exist. Yet.

Ecologists Fred Samson and Fritz Knopf, writing in *Bioscience*, have argued that for preserving biological diversity in North America, the Great Plains has now become "a priority, perhaps the highest priority."⁴⁹ I could see where such a statement might strike many Americans, utterly bored by the Great Plains in its present skinned form, as preposterous, perhaps a joke perpetrated by geeky scientists who don't quite get that it's not funny. But among those of us who know some history, who have read Lewis and Clark, Albert Pike, Audubon, Cather, Sandoz, and O'Keeffe, nobody is laughing.

Notes

1. Quoted in Anne Matthews, *Where the Buffalo Roam: The Storm over the Revolutionary Plan to Restore America's Great Plains* (New York: Grove Press, 1992), 122–23. See also Neil Evernden, "Beauty and Nothingness: Prairie As Failed Resource," *Landscape* 27 (1983): 3–6.

I need to express my heartfelt thanks to my long-time friend and one-time graduate student, Blake Morris, whose graduate school career consisted almost solely of flying off to Washington, D.C., to collect the National Park Service documents on Palo Duro (cited in this essay for the first time) for me. To Blake and to Eric Bolen, another old friend who was then a dean in the graduate school at Texas Tech and who gave us the research money: Southern Plains conservation history is indebted to you.

2. William Dunbar to Thomas Jefferson, Natchez, 9 June 1804, and "Journal of a Voyage, 10 December 1804," in *Life, Letters, and Papers of William Dunbar*, ed. Erin Dunbar Rowland (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi for the Mississippi Historical Society, 1930), 133–35, 307–308.
3. Dan Flores, "A Very Different Story: Exploring the Southwest from Monticello . . .," *Montana, the Magazine of Western History* 50 (Spring 2000): 8–9.
4. "Great Plains" was laid in boldface across the country up the Red River in an untitled map compiled by American General James Wilkinson in 1804. The original is owned by the Houghton Library at Harvard University.
5. Meriwether Lewis, *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, ed. Bernard DeVoto (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), 28.
6. Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, vol. 1, ed. Donald Jackson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966); Edwin James, "Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains Performed in the Years 1819, 1820," in *Early Western Travels, 1748–1846*, vol. 17, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1906). The "Arabia" and Arkansas River quotes: John Bell, "The Journal of Captain John R. Bell, Official Journalist for the Stephen H. Long Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, 1820," in *The Far West and the Rockies Historical Series, 1820–1875*, vol. 6, ed. Harlin Fuller and Leroy Hafen (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark, 1957), 178, 215. Say's remark is quoted in Patricia Tyson Stroud, *Thomas Say: New World Naturalist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 113.
7. Albert Pike, *Albert Pike's Journeys in the Prairie, 1831–1832*, ed. J. Evetts Haley (Canyon, Tex.: Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, 1969), 23.
8. Georgia O'Keeffe to Daniel Catton Rich, Abiquiu, 13 November 1949, in *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*, ed. Jack Cowart, Juan Hamilton, and Sarah Greenough (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1987), 249.
9. *Lincoln State Journal*, 2 November 1921.
10. Walt Whitman, *The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman*, 2 vols., ed. Emory Holloway (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1921), 2:35.
11. First quote in Robert McCracken Peck, "Audubon and Bachman: A Collaboration in Science," in *John James Audubon in the West: The Last Expedition, Mammals of North America*, ed. Sarah Boehme (New York: Harry Abrams, 2000), 84; second quote in Robert McCracken Peck, "Audubon, Bachman, and the Quadrupeds of North America," *Antiques* (November 2000), 749.
12. Oral history tape, "The Last Wolf Killed in the Panhandle," Harrell Family Papers, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum Archives, Canyon, Texas.
13. Dan Flores, *Horizontal Yellow: Nature and History in the Near Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 270.
14. Fred Samson and Fritz Knopf, "Prairie Conservation in North America," *Bioscience* 44 (1994): 418–19; Mark Matthews, "Saving the Hated Prairie Dog," *Washington Post*, 16 August 1999.

15. Samson and Knopf, "Prairie Conservation"; Peter Lesica, "Endless Sea of Grass—No Longer," *Kelsey* 8 (1995): 1–9; Dan Flores, *Caprock Canyonlands: Journeys into the Heart of the Southern Plains* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 45.

16. For a discussion of the different conservation histories of the two regions, see Dan Flores, *The Natural West: Environmental History in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), chapters 7–9.

17. Kenton Miller, "The Natural Protected Areas of the World," and Claude Mondor and Steve Kun, "The Lone Prairie: Protecting Natural Grasslands in Canada," in *National Parks, Conservation, and Development: The Role of Protected Areas in Sustaining Society*, ed. Jeffrey A. McNeely and Kenton R. Miller (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), 21, 508–17.

18. Catlin's "call" was a very public one. From George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Traditions of the North American Indian*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Edition, 1973), 1:332.

19. See, particularly, Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting, 1825–1875* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1979), and Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 2d ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

20. Victor Shelford, "Preservation of Natural Biotic Communities," *Ecology* 14 (1933): 240–45; Jerry Shepard, "Singing Out of Tune: Historical Perceptions and National Parks on the Great Plains" (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1995).

21. Robert Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, 3d ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 210–15. Richard Sellars has shown how difficult it was for the ecologists to bring the park service around to their way of thinking. Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

22. Roger Toll to Horace Albright, 23 November 1928. Proposed National Parks, File 0–32, Box 2948, Record Group 79, National Archives (hereafter NARG 79).

23. Hal Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 89–118; John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961), 339–40, 411; Robert Righter, "National Monuments to National Parks: The Use of the Antiquities Act of 1906," *Western Historical Quarterly* 13 (August 1989): 281–301.

24. Newton Drury, Memorandum, August 1946, File 0–32, Box 2954, NARG 79; Elise Broach, "Angels, Architecture, and Erosion: The Dakota Badlands as Cultural Symbol," *North Dakota History* 59 (Spring 1992): 2–15.

25. See Duane F. Guy, ed., *The Story of Palo Duro Canyon* (Canyon, Tex.: Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, 1979); and David Adams, "Vegetation-Environment Relationships in Palo Duro Canyon, West Texas" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1979).

26. Peter Petersen, "A Park for the Panhandle: The Acquisition and Development of Palo Duro Canyon State Park," in Guy, *Palo Duro Canyon*, 145–46; John Jameson, "The Quest for a National Park in Texas," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 20 (1974): 47–60.

27. See, especially, Phebe Warner, "Palo Duro—as a National Park," *Southwest Plainsman*, 16 November 1930, and "The Mission of Our Palo Duro Canyon," *Southwest Plainsman*, 21 November 1930. Enos Mills's support is in Enos Mills, "Address to Amarillo Kiwanis Club on Palo Duro as a Park," *Amarillo Daily News*, 20 October 1921.

28. *Canyon News*, 23 June 1932; Horace Albright to Dr. R. P. Jarrett, File 0–32, Box 2948, NARG 79.

29. See Regional Form and Map, National Park of the Plains, Proposed National Parks and Monuments, File 0–32, Box 2948, NARG 79.

30. Randolph Marcy, *A Report on the Exploration of the Red River, in Louisiana* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1854). Eugene Hollon had speculated that Marcy's romantic descriptions ("gigantic escarpments . . . giddy heights . . . unreclaimed sublimity and wilderness") were of Tule Canyon. I believe I laid the matter to rest in *Caprock Canyonlands*, 106–108, 114–15.

J. Evetts Haley was an interesting selection as a guide. He undoubtedly knew the country marvelously, and in the 1930s evidently was a national park advocate. But he became a notorious conservative critic of New Deal and later Great Society federal programs, penning a scathing critique (*A Texan Looks at Lyndon*) of liberal politics.

31. Roger Toll to Arno Cammerer, 7 March 1934, File 0–32, Box 9, NARG 79; Herbert Maier to State Park Division, 8 June 1935, File 0–32, Box 2948, NARG 79.

32. Petersen, "A Park for the Panhandle," 150.

33. Memorandum, Ben Thompson to Charles Wirth, 1 December 1938, File 0–32J, Box 2948, NARG 79.

34. "Investigative Report on Proposed Palo Duro National Monument, Texas, May 1939, File 0–32J, Box 2948, NARG 79. The team consisted of Charles Gould and Ross Maxwell, geologists; Aubrey Neasham, historian; Erik Reed, archeologist; Ward Yeager, forester; John Kell, landscape architect; and Milo Christianson, recreation. Daniel Brand later provided a wildlife report.

35. The report recommending monument status is in Hilory Tolson to Arno Cammerer, 10 May 1939, File 0–32, Box 2948, NARG 79. Thompson's rebuttal is in Ben Thompson, "Comments on Proposed Palo Duro National Monument."

36. See Palo Duro Files, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum Archives, Canyon, Texas.

37. During this same era, as the NPS was similarly searching for funds in Texas to transfer Big Bend lands to the service, the sort of public campaigns that in states like Maine, Virginia, and Tennessee were significantly aiding national park creations in those states, in Texas netted the total sum of

\$8,346.88 for Big Bend National Park. The sentiment went all the way back to the Forest Reserve Act of 1891 (which created the national forest system); Texans were the major voices against it. See Flores, *Horizontal Yellow*, 148.

38. Fred Emery to Marvin Jones, 6 December 1939; Jones to Emery, 8 December 1939. Emery's offer priced his parcel at \$150 an acre, roughly thirty times the prevailing market value of Palo Duro land.

39. Acting Under Secretary Underhill, on behalf of Secretary Ickes, to Senator Sheppard, 19 January 1940.

40. Frank Popper, keynote address for the Inter-Tribal Bison Cooperative, Polson, Montana, November 1999; interview with Frank Popper, Lincoln, Nebraska, April 2000, notes in possession of the author.

41. Andrew Kroll and Dwight Berry, "Carnivores in the Caprock: Re-Wilding the High Plains of Texas," *Wild Earth* 9 (Summer 1999): 35–40.

42. See the Sierra Club website: <http://www.sierraclub.org/ecoregions/prairie/html>.

43. E. Raymond Hall first recommended a tallgrass prairie park (along with a High Plains park) in "The Prairie National Park," *National Parks Magazine* 44 (February 1962): 5. A competitor site for a Tallgrass Prairie Park is near Strong City, Kansas, in the Flint Hills.

44. Flores, *The Natural West*, chapter 9. Also see the ITBC web site: <http://www.intertribalbison.org.crst.htm>. The Nez Perce Tribe provided an example by famously taking responsibility for wolf recovery under the Endangered Species Act in the state of Idaho. On the Plains, Defenders of Wildlife has worked with the tribes mentioned in the text in Swift fox releases in advance of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service programs. See Michelle Nijhuis, "Return of the Natives," *High Country News* 33 (26 February 2001): 1, 8–12; Steve Pavlik, "Will Big Trotter Reclaim His Place? The Role of the Wolf in Navajo Tradition," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 24 (Fall 2000): 1–19.

45. Jerry Shepard, "Singing Out of Tune," 140–72; Victor Shelford, "The Preservation of Natural Biotic Communities," *Ecology* 14 (April 1933): 240–45.

46. Ernest Callenbach, *Bring Back the Buffalo! A Sustainable Future for America's Great Plains* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1996), 154–55.

47. Bret Wallach, "The Return of the Prairie," *Landscape* 28 (1985): 1–5.

48. Flores, *Caprock Canyonlands*, chap. 8.

49. Samson and Knopf, "Prairie Conservation," 418. See also their book, Fred Samson and Fritz Knopf, eds., *Prairie Conservation: Preserving North America's Most Endangered Ecosystem* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1996).

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