protested the "excessive slaughter" of game animals that had been undertaken in Zululand with the apparent approval of the South African government.[51] The organization also commissioned Robert Strong, the head of the Harvard School of Tropical Medicine, to undertake a systematic review of research on the relationship between game and the spread of tsetse fly–borne diseases. Strong and his two coauthors found no consistent correlation between the abundance of game and the number of tsetse flies present in a given area, but they did find at least one species of the fly that seemed to decline when large game animals were "considerably reduced."[52]

Another issue that periodically emerged during the committee's early years was how to respond to cinematic nature faking. Numerous feature films released in the United States during the 1930s purported to depict the behavior of African (and occasionally Asian) animals in their native habitat. As it turns out, many of these movies were partly or entirely staged using captive creatures that were starved or otherwise manipulated in order to obtain the most gruesome and spectacular footage possible. A notorious example released in 1930, *Ingagi*, even depicted gorillas carrying off native women. By 1933, the American Committee had investigated no less than six films containing "unnatural natural history" of this sort. While these movies claimed to be "genuine celluloid documents of African expeditions," many of them were actually made in Hollywood using animals from private zoos.[53] However, attempting to point out their inaccuracies to a gullible American public could backfire. When the American Committee exposed the fallacies of *Ingagi*, for example, the creators of the film sued the organization for $3 million. To add insult to injury, before dropping the suit, they used the ensuing publicity to drum up interest in the film. In the end, the committee decided to refrain from further exposés of fraudulent wildlife films, deciding instead to report them to the Better Business Bureau and the National Humane Society.

One of the most significant events in the American Committee's early history was its contribution to the London Convention for the Protection of African Flora and Fauna.[54] The frenzy of African colonization in the second half of the nineteenth century brought with it unprecedented pressures upon the continent's native wildlife, with habitat destruction, displacement by domesticated species, enclosure, disease, and hunting for sport and profit each taking their toll. What had happened to the bison in North America seemed to be being repeated with numerous species throughout Africa. With as much as two-thirds of the continent's game in territory under its control, in 1899, the British circulated a proposal to the other European colonial powers that expressed a desire to stem the slaughter. The resulting convention, signed on May 19, 1900, applied to a

2,500-mile swath that cut through the heart of the continent, between latitude 20° north and a line extending across the north boundary of Southwest Africa (Nambia) through the Zambezi River. It provided a list of recommendations offering decreasing levels of protection to a list of animals (schedules 1–4) and promoted the destruction of animals deemed noxious (schedule 5). Other provisions called for the establishment of reserves (where hunting could take place only by permit), closed seasons, a licensing system, and a permit system for the export of certain threatened species.[55] Signatories agreed to put these and other measures into effect within a year after the convention came into force, though numerous clauses permitted delays in implementation. Even with this wide latitude, the convention never took effect, although several governments adopted portions of its recommendations.

By the early 1930s, British conservationists were once again clamoring for greater protection of African wildlife. In December 1932, Hobley informed Coolidge that his organization was anxious to negotiate a revised version of the convention.[56] Coolidge responded by lobbying various British and American officials to get John Phillips appointed as an advisor to the conference drafting the convention, an action that he later called "the most important single thing outside of our publications that this committee has done."[57] In preparation for the conference, the American Committee also published a lengthy pamphlet on *Africa Game Protection* that provided a brief listing and map of the 117 protected areas on the continent and notes on its game species "nearing extinction" or "needing additional protection."[58] A press release distributed on the eve of Phillips's arrival in England declared that a new treaty, if ratified and enforced, would "play a vital role in preserving from extinction species such as the gorilla and the white rhinoceros."[59]

The 1933 conference reaffirmed many of the provisions of the 1900 agreement, but also extended it in significant ways.[60] The new convention was geographically more expansive, for example, covering the entire continent of Africa rather than just its central two-thirds. To replace the cumbersome system of five categories of animal schedules, the 1933 convention established only two: class A, species requiring special protection; and class B, those needing some protection. (Forty years later a similar two-part classification scheme would be at the heart of the U.S. Endangered Species Act.) Gone entirely was the attempt to categorize some animals as noxious, deserving of systematic destruction. One of the most important new developments in the 1933 agreement was language calling for the establishment of permanent national parks, with secure boundaries that could be modified only by legislative action and strict limitations on the activities allowed within them. As with the 1900 convention, it turned out that few nations actually

ratified the treaty, but it did provide a framework for much of the African wildlife regulation that followed in its wake.

John Phillips returned from the conference brimming with ideas that would become central to the future of the American Committee. As one indication of the high hopes he and the committee had for the London Convention, the committee published its full text, including an illustrated version of the two annexes of special protected species and a revised listing of African national parks and reserves. In his forward to the volume, Phillips urged all participating governments to ratify the new convention as quickly as possible: "Unless vigorous steps are taken in the next few years, we fear that the rapid development and opening up of the great continent will result in the permanent loss of some of the most interesting productions of nature to be found anywhere in the world."[61] The struggle to produce the two schedules of African species needing special protection highlighted the need for better data on the status of threatened wildlife around the world and pushed forward a major long-term project to compile such an inventory. At the same time, the success in negotiating the London Convention suggested the possibility of a similar agreement in the Western hemisphere, with the United States taking the lead, much as Britain had done in Africa. While the protection of African wildlife continued to be a priority of the American Committee, during the mid-1930s, the organization increasingly set its sights on the conservation of Central and South American wildlife. Before making this shift, however, it engaged with an issue that revealed a basic tension between wildlife preservation and scientific study.

COLLECTING CONFLICTS

In April 1934, Hastings William Sackville Russell, the Marquess of Tavistock, wrote a letter to the editor of *The Auk* to complain about the "ruthless and excessive destruction of rare birds by the American Whitney Expedition." One of his colleagues had recently returned from the Pacific Islands with reports that the collectors associated with this expedition had "apparently exterminated" the small lory found only in the interior of Viti Levu, killing forty-seven specimens, while their permit allowed them to take only five. Moreover, due to expedition's excessive collecting, the "rare" masked parrot (*Prosopeia personata*) could no longer be found in the wild, while the Norfolk Island parakeet (*Cyanoramphus cooki*) had been "decimated or exterminated." Tavistock feared that "great mischief has been done on Antipodes Island and other islands as well." An avid aviculturalist, Tavistock hoped the reports were exaggerated, but they seemed reliable. He seemed particularly distressed by the "slaughter of rare birds of the parrot fam-

ily" because, if a few birds of each species had been trapped, they could have been bred in captivity, thereby producing an abundance of museum specimens. For some time, he had been encouraging his colleagues in California to begin breeding "species threatened with extinction in a wild state." He had even sent a few examples of the Norfolk Island parakeet to the West Coast, where they now appeared to be reproducing successfully.[62]

Frank Chapman, curator of the bird department at the American Museum of Natural History (the institution that sponsored the Whitney South Seas Expedition), issued a series of responses to Tavistock's troubling charges. In his initial reply, published with Tavistock's letter, Chapman countered that the "small lory" that Tavistock mentioned was not only found on Viti Levu, but also on several other islands in the Fijis as well. The Whitney party collected twelve specimens of the bird (not forty-seven) during its weeklong visit, proof that the species was not particularly rare. Of the masked parrot, twenty-six (not eighteen) had been collected, but the fact that they all had come from a small portion of a relatively large and unexplored island suggested that "this species is neither rare nor threatened with extinction." The expedition party had taken only two specimens of the Norfolk Island parakeet. The Marquess's information was inaccurate, Chapman asserted, and in the future, anyone who had concerns about collecting done under the auspices of the American Museum would do well to contact him directly: "We have nothing to conceal, and if excess of zeal should lead one of our collectors to violate the ethics of the profession we should be among the first to admit and regret it."[63]

Chapman seemed inclined to drop the matter at that point, but rumors about the Whitney Expedition's overzealous collecting of rare species continued to circulate. With prodding from the American Committee, then in the midst of formulating guidelines for the collection of threatened species, Chapman published a lengthy rebuttal in *Science* magazine.[64] There he stressed the strictly scientific character of the Whitney expedition, pointing out that thus far it had not only resulted in important additions to the museum's ornithological collections but also in forty-four published papers. Chapman emphatically denied that the collections, made over the course of fourteen years from six hundred separate islands and more than one thousand localities, had posed a serious threat to any birds. He admitted that on Chatham Island the expedition party had collected twice as many individuals of three species as their permit allowed. But this was inadvertent, he claimed, because several members collected independently of one another and thus did not realize their error until they returned to headquarters. Moreover, the "excess" specimens had been donated to the New Zealand Dominion Museum.[65]

Like most naturalists of his day, Chapman firmly believed that scientific collecting posed little or no actual threat to wildlife, even in cases when rare species were taken. In terms of their impact on wildlife populations, other factors—habitat destruction, commercial hunting, systematic persecution, and the introduction of exotic species and disease—proved much more destructive than collectors. But what Chapman failed to acknowledge was that in addition to its potential implications on animal populations themselves, collecting rare wild animals also had a symbolic dimension that grew more pronounced as a species declined in number. Seeking out animals known to be rare gave the impression that naturalists were more interested in the pursuit of science than in protecting vanishing wildlife.

The issue of defining the boundaries of legitimate scientific collecting was one that the American Committee had struggled with from the beginning. Early in 1931, Coolidge contacted William K. Gregory, a curator in the Department of Comparative Anatomy at the American Museum of Natural History and a close friend of Osborn, about three live juvenile gorillas that Martin Johnson had recently captured or purchased while filming in the highlands of the Belgium Congo.[66] When officials in Brussels caught wind of what had transpired, they complained that Johnson had failed to obtain the necessary permit to take the specimens, which were protected by law throughout the colony. Although this particular expedition relied solely on private funds, Coolidge feared that foreign officials would associate his illegal activities with the American Museum, which had sponsored some of Johnson's earlier travels. As a scientist who specialized in the great apes, Coolidge relished the prospect of having three live mountain gorillas available for study in American zoos; but as secretary of the American Committee, he was also quite concerned that these specimens had apparently been procured without proper permits. He was particularly troubled by the chilling effect that Johnson's activities might have on future American efforts to collect gorillas in the area. In the end, after much discussion, Johnson gained permission to export the three young gorillas and the issue died down.

Three years later, Tavistock's charges concerning overcollecting by the Whitney expedition forced the issue of taking rare species back in the limelight. In the spring of 1934, the American Committee asked Alexander Wetmore—an ornithologist, assistant secretary at the Smithsonian Institution, and member of the committee's advisory board—to author a resolution on the issue. Wetmore, in turn asked his staff in the bird department to draft an initial version that strongly condemned the "increasing collecting of rare species" and urged that "larger museums" pressure the government to restrict unnecessary collecting.[67] Fearful that this draft was too restrictive to gain wide acceptance within the zoological

community, Wetmore jettisoned it and presented an entirely new version at the American Committee's annual meeting later that year. Now the first paragraph blamed "progressive exploitation of natural resources" for the "alarming reduction in numbers of even extermination in numerous forms both of animals and plants." The second paragraph affirmed the right of museums, zoological gardens, and arboretums to gather flora and fauna for "scientific study," but called for "discretion" in the taking of "rare species" so that "collecting in the name of science may not lead to actual extermination." The final paragraph urged organizations and private collectors to refrain from activities that would "injure the continued existence of any form."[68] Another paragraph penciled in at the meeting asked signers of this resolution to do everything in their power "to prevent the extermination of threatened species," but this proposed modification failed to gain support. The initial plan was to circulate the toned-down version of this resolution to various biological institutions for signatures and then issue the resolution and supporter list as a printed circular.[69]

The American Committee advisory board, which now included representatives from fourteen institutions, remained divided over the resolution. Joseph Grinnell, the founding director of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at Berkeley, who two decades earlier had publicly lamented the decline of collecting in ornithology, strongly supported the idea.[70] He thought the resolution would make the officials of America's museums and zoological societies "and especially the sportsmen who frequently operate under the auspices of these institutions, more conscious of their responsibility not to pursue rare animals anywhere near to the point of extinction."[71] However, Charles M. B. Cadwalader, the director of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, feared that it would open up institutions to "unnecessary criticism and unfavorable publicity" if a sponsored collector should "accidentally shoot one of the few remaining forms" of a rare species. He also thought it better for each museum or zoological society to subscribe to a resolution along the lines being proposed and that these would then be deposited with the committee. This procedure would allow institutions to maintain their autonomy and prevent them from being publicly associated with others of "definitely lower standards."[72]

Coolidge then hashed out the issue with the American Committee's executive committee, which now included Wetmore, Cadwalader, and five other members. In the end, the executive committee decided to circulate a condensed version of the resolution to forty-five American museums and zoos, asking for support in the form of a letter that would be kept on file. The final paragraph, urging collectors not to carry on their activities in such a manner as not to threaten "the continued existence of any form" was dropped. Although thirty-three institu-

tions had signed on to the resolution by the end of the year, it was unclear how much effect it had on their collecting activities.[73]

The resolution did lead to calls to condemn collecting abuses. One telling case is the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), which had long been dominated by technically oriented ornithologists, many of whom resented outside interference in their activities. In 1930, as the newly elected president of the AOU, Joseph Grinnell appointed a new bird protection committee whose chair proposed creating a "white list" of "rare and vanishing" birds for which collecting permits would not be issued, an idea the full committee rejected. Five years later, at the AOU meeting following the circulation of the American Committee collecting resolution, the retired businessman and ornithologist S. Prentiss Baldwin presented a resolution calling on AOU members to refrain from "collecting of skins and eggs of rare and apparently vanishing birds." Through various behind-the-scenes machinations, opponents managed to squelch the resolution. When a similar measure failed to gain passage the next year, the National Association of Audubon Societies took the AOU to task. Finally, in 1937, the AOU passed a resolution that opposed "any scientific or other collecting or investigational activities which may in any way endanger or adversely affect the status of seriously depleted species by molestation, invasion of territory or otherwise."[74]

Ironically, Coolidge himself later found himself under attack for overzealous collecting of a rare species. In 1937, he led the Asiatic Primate Expedition to Siam (Thailand), Borneo, and Sumatra. The goal of the expedition—which also included the primate morphologist Adolph Schultz, the psychologist and anthropologist C. Ray Carpenter, and three other participants—was to observe, photograph, and collect gibbons in the hope of discovering more about their evolutionary relationship with humans.[75] When Van Tienhoven, of the International Office for the Protection of Nature, and Henry Maurice, of the SPWFE, heard troubling rumors that Schultz had killed two hundred gibbons during the expedition, they wrote to W. Reid Blair, the new secretary of the American Committee. Blair passed on their queries to Coolidge, who authored a lengthy letter to Maurice revealing just how touchy the subject of taking rare species remained in conservation circles. "No one in this country that I can think of," Coolidge asserted, "has a stronger feeling [than I do] in regard to the importance of protecting vanishing species and the promotion of national parks and game preserves in all parts of the world." Yet, in his opinion the Asiatic Primate Expedition's toll, a total of 175 gibbon specimens in Northern Siam and twelve specimens in North Borneo, proved entirely justified. The "considered judgment" of the expedition party, which included three of the world's authorities on primates, was that the "vast gibbon population" in the region would not be harmed by the collecting ac-

FIGURE 29. Sherwood Washburn (*left*) and Harold J. Coolidge (*right*) collecting gibbons in Siam (now Thailand), 1937. Not long after the American Committee adopted a policy calling for restrictions on the collection of rare and endangered species, European conservationists accused the Asiatic Primate Expedition (which Coolidge had organized and financed) with overzealous collecting of gibbons. Courtesy of Miles Coolidge.

tivities of its members. Moreover, the collections promised to reveal valuable information about the taxonomy and morphology of the gibbon that would nicely complement expedition field studies of their psychology and sociology.[76]

In his reply to Van Tienhoven, Coolidge reiterated one of the basic premises of the American Committee—the claim that detailed, firsthand knowledge of native species in their natural environment provided crucial insight into the challenges those species faced in the wild: "Both John Phillips and I had a definite feeling that a person who has hunted or collected in the field can, in many ways, evaluate certain wild life problems better than one who has not the advantage of field experience. I mention this because I think the question of gibbon skeletons is a case in point."[77] What Coolidge failed to reveal in either response is the fact one of his collectors killed several gibbons in close vicinity to a Buddhist temple, a site where local residents considered all life to be sacred, thus creating great resentment in the region.[78] Here was a case when the symbolic dimensions of specimen collecting loomed particularly large.

Of course, naturalists, sportsmen, and collectors needed access to reliable information about the status of potentially rare species if they hoped to avoid contributing to their demise. At this point, a layer of irony further clouded the debate about overcollecting rare and threatened species. It turns out that naturalists desiring to fill gaps in their collections not only routinely sought out specimens of vanishing organisms in the wild and extinct specimens from other collectors, they also created the first systematic, worldwide inventories of those species.

The British naturalist and banker Walter Rothschild offers a vivid case in point. An avid collector since his youth, Rothschild possessed both an obsessive desire to amass natural history specimens and the prodigious wealth to fully indulge his passion.[79] His family estate at Tring Park housed the world's largest private museum ever assembled; at its height, the famous Rothschild collection contained 280,000 bird skins, 3,400 mammals, millions of insects, and an assortment of other invertebrates, reptiles, and fish.[80] Other statistics associated with the enterprise are equally staggering. Shortly after his parents built a large museum to house his burgeoning collection in 1889, Rothschild hired two German curators, the ornithologist Ernst Hartert and the entomologist Karl Jordan, who between them would describe five thousand new species and author more than a thousand books and papers based on the specimens at Tring. According to Miriam Rothschild (herself an accomplished naturalist and the author of a fascinating biography of her uncle), between 1890 and 1908, Lord Rothschild dispatched more than four hundred bird collectors to the far corners of the globe in an attempt to fill in his ambitious desiderata list. He was particularly enamored with rare species of birds and spared no expense tracking them down in the wild and attempting to purchase extinct species in other private collections. His interest in the subject culminated in the publication of a lavishly illustrated book, *Extinct Birds* (1907), which represents the first attempt to compile a thorough inventory of birds thought to be lost.[81]

By the early decades of the twentieth century, Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology was also racing to obtain specimens of as many of the world's birds as possible. With encouragement from Thomas Barbour (who in 1927 would become director of the MCZ), and a contingent of supporters that included John C. Phillips, John E. Thayer, and several other ornithologist-patrons, around 1920, curator Outram Bangs announced an ambitious program to acquire examples of every known avian genera for the MCZ bird collection.[82] To monitor progress in his quest, in 1923, Bangs recruited the ornithologist James Peters to compile a card catalog of the museum's collection and want list.

This initiative soon blossomed into a major, multivolume project, *Check-list of Birds of the World* (1931–87), which Peters spent the rest of his career compiling and other ornithologists finally completed more than three decades after his death.[83] Another spin-off project from the original card file was a catalog of rare and vanishing species that Thomas Barbour and John Phillips began maintaining.[84] Based on the references in this catalog, in 1926 Phillips published a list of nearly 150 "extinct and vanishing birds of the Western Hemisphere," a third of which he considered "certainly" or "probably" extinct.[85]

From the time of the American Committee's foundation, Phillips, Coolidge, and Barbour had noted the need for a comprehensive study of the world's vanishing forms of mammals and birds.[86] As early as 1932, the committee began maintaining a simple card index of threatened mammals around the globe.[87] A year later, Phillips returned from the London Convention negotiations with a renewed conviction that an authoritative inventory of the world's extinct and vanishing mammals was crucial. Such a report would not only prove important in its own right but would also help the committee set conservation priorities. With this information in hand, the hope was that the committee could "draw up proposals for the protection of vanishing species in their natural habitat through the establishing of adequate national parks and reservations."[88]

Despite renewed interest in the idea, two challenges initially kept the project from getting off the ground. First was the issue of financing. The economic depression that continued to grip the nation limited the American Committee's ability to raise the funds needed to commission such a study, while repeated attempts to secure foundation funding initially came to naught.[89] The other problem was locating someone qualified, willing, and available to compile such an inventory, which would require not only considerable scientific background but also the language skills needed to slog through hundreds of widely scattered publications.

During the summer of 1935, Phillips finally found someone who seemed perfect for the job. Francis Harper was a talented but temperamental zoologist with a keen memory, an accessible writing style, and a Ph.D. from Cornell.[90] Despite his qualifications, the forty-eight-year-old was also an outspoken perfectionist who seemed unable to hold down a permanent position of any sort. Immediately before beginning work for the American Committee, he spent several years summarizing scientific papers for *Biological Abstracts*, a task he considered "severe drudgery," even if it did provide him with constant exposure to the latest research and regular practice in translating foreign languages. When Phillips approached him about the extinct and vanishing mammals project, Harper expressed interest but refused to commit.[91]

FIGURE 30. Francis Harper in the field, 1934. Given his training and background, Harper seemed a perfect fit for the job of compiling a volume on lost and vanishing mammals of the world. However, his slow work pace proved a source of growing tension between him and the American Committee. Courtesy of Special Collections, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries.

Confident that Harper would eventually sign on, Phillips and Coolidge began drawing up plans for the project. The members gathered at the American Committee's annual meeting approved a modest annual budget that included a special research allocation of $1,000, enough to pay Harper a salary for four months.[92] Early estimates suggested that the project could be completed in "a year and perhaps longer." In his correspondence with Harper, Phillips stressed that the resulting publication should provide a widely accessible but authoritative compilation, and he urged emphasis on the utilitarian arguments for wildlife preservation. The work should highlight "humanistic appeal, economic possibilities and possible uses for scientific experiments or use in preparing serums," he argued. "We want to assemble all the arguments we can and avoid as much as possible appeal to pure sentimentality; though sentiment is, I suppose, the reason behind most of our efforts."[93] Consistent with this general orientation, the report would stress "those forms of important interest and direct benefit to mankind."[94] Cadwalader, a member of the American Committee board, granted Harper permission to work at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, which possessed a library he knew quite well from his work for *Biological Abstracts*. Coolidge and Phillips felt their belief in the project's value to conserva-

tion gained vindication when they attended a meeting of the North American Wildlife Conference in February 1936. There Aldo Leopold circulated a draft paper calling for a "conservation inventory of threatened species" that seemed quite similar to the project they were undertaking.[95]

Harper finally began work for the American Committee in May 1936. For the next three years, he not only scanned a seemingly endless stream of relevant publications but also widely circulated a form letter asking for up-to-date information on the status of lost or vanishing mammals.[96] After laboring on the project for a year, he reported at the American Society of Mammalogists annual meeting that he had identified approximately 390 species and subspecies that warranted inclusion in his inventory and that as many of fifty-five of these had already gone extinct. Although he had written up only a handful of forms, already patterns were beginning to emerge. "In practically every case," Harper asserted, "civilized man has been responsible, either directly or indirectly, for the extinction of these species. It is only too evident that the process of extermination is being accelerated as time goes on. The general advance of settlement, clearing of land, firearms in the hands of primitive Africans and Asiatics, introduction of exotic pests—all these contributory causes of extinction are directly chargeable to civilized white man, chiefly in the last century. It is a terrible indictment." Perhaps surprisingly, the continent "ahead of all others in its record of destruction" was North America, where twenty-four of fifty-five forms had been lost and government agencies were making a "determined effort to wipe out, with poison, a large portion of our native mammalian fauna." Even if the many subspecies of grizzly bear on this list were reduced to a single form, fourteen North American species of mammal were gone forever. "This is America's shame," Harper admonished his colleagues. How was native fauna to be preserved from the onslaught of civilization? While there were no easy answers, Harper believed the most expeditious solution was the creation of "a sufficient number of inviolate sanctuaries."[97]

In response to Harper's claim about the abysmal record of fauna destruction in North America, Phillips warned that geographical comparisons of extinction rates were misleading, particularly since the mammals of other continents were less well known. He also urged Harper to avoid "critical attitudes and propaganda" in his forthcoming book.[98] Still, the apparently high rate of human-caused extinction in North America was an issue that had dogged the American Committee since its founding. For example, in 1936, when writing to the director of the South African Museum about a campaign to protect the mountain zebra, Coolidge noted that his own nation's spotty conservation record potentially comprised the American Committee's ability to successfully lobby officials of

other countries: "We are fully conscious of the plight of many of our own disappearing species. There are only six hundred Grizzlies left in the United States. There are only six of the Sierra Nevada race of our Mountain Sheep that still survive. The Trumpeter Swan and the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker are in a very precarious condition. As you know the Carolina Paroquet and the Heath Hen are already extinct. If we had only made a better showing ourselves we would be in a stronger position in approaching your Government. Nevertheless I do hope that some good may come from our action."[99]

The slow pace of the project proved another source of tension between Harper and Phillips. In May 1937, a year after Harper began working for the American Committee, Phillips reported that he told Harper he must begin writing up his final report by the end of July and have it completed by the end of the year, but he also added, "I don't really expect this to happen."[100] Several months later, when Phillips expressed his concerns directly to Harper, he responded that he was "as anxious as anybody to wind the work up in the shortest reasonable time."[101] By December 1937, the committee had expended nearly $5,000 on the Harper project, but still no end was in sight. Following a trip to Philadelphia, Barbour reported back to Coolidge that Harper was doing "a good job though not a very speedy one. I don't suppose, however, that anyone, not having a job to turn to when this task is finished, is very likely to hasten its conclusion. Human nature ain't made that way."[102]

By this point, Coolidge and Phillips were both experiencing health problems and anxious to relieve themselves of the constant pressure of fund-raising on behalf of the American Committee. They entered negotiations with the New York Zoological Society, which had expressed interested in expanding its conservation work following receipt of the Permanent Wildlife Fund. The hope was that if the home office of the committee relocated to New York, the organization would be in line for a portion of the interest from the $130,000 fund that William Hornaday had bequeathed to the society following his death in May of that year.[103] While zoo officials found the prospect of housing the American Committee appealing, they wanted nothing to do with the Harper report.[104] A disappointed Phillips agreed to oversee the report's completion but died of a heart attack in November 1938, nine months after the American Committee's official move to New York. A committee consisting of Coolidge, Wetmore, and Cadwalader then assumed responsibility for monitoring Harper's progress.

They began to fear that Harper might never finish the project. In December 1938, he reported that he had written up about 318 Old World forms but still had about eighty more to go.[105] Coolidge warned him that "the financial situation looks desperate" and the committee could not continue his salary after Janu-

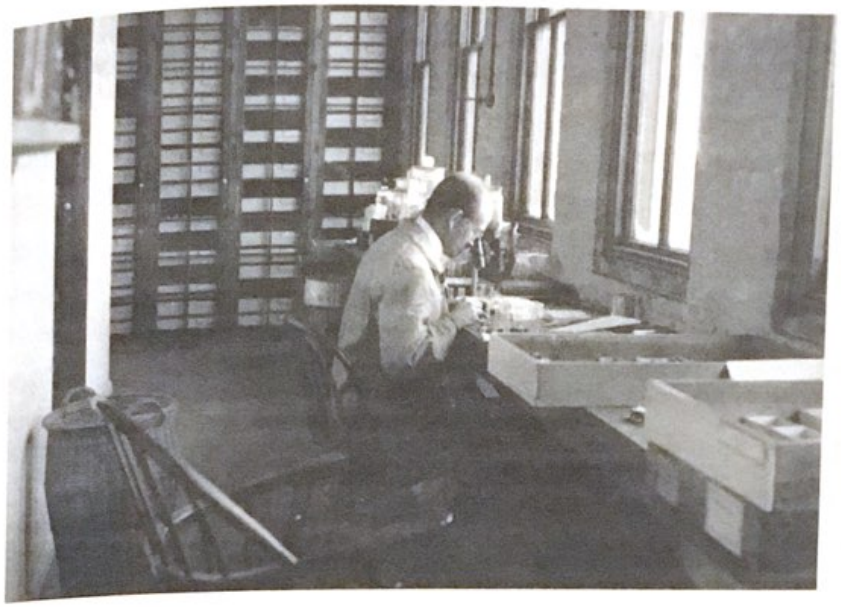

FIGURE 31. Glover M. Allen at the Museum of Comparative Zoology. When it looked like Francis Harper might never complete his report on lost and vanishing mammals of the world, the American Committee recruited Allen, a renowned mammalogist, ornithologist, and Museum of Comparative Zoology curator, to finish the portion on New World mammals. Courtesy of the Archives of the Ernst Mayr Library of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University.

ary 1939.[106] In response, Harper urged the publication subcommittee to release the Old World material before it became outdated.[107] After initially balking at the idea, they reconsidered when Glover M. Allen, a curator of mammalogy at the MCZ, agreed to assume responsibility for a second volume on New World and marine mammals. Since Allen was already on the payroll of the MCZ, recruiting him to the project would not only speed the appearance of a significant portion of the inventory but would also save the American Committee a great deal of money. The publication subcommittee also granted Harper a final three-month extension to finish writing up the Old World material. He still had twenty-five to thirty forms to complete after this final deadline, in mid-April 1939, three years after he began working on the project.[108] Allen, on the other hand, made rapid progress, finishing not only his volume by January 1940, but also seventeen Old World forms that Harper failed to complete.[109] When negotiations with several academic publishers fell through, the American Committee raised the funds to publish the volumes themselves.[110]

Allen's *Extinct and Vanishing Mammals of the Western Hemisphere, with All the Marine Species of All the Oceans* finally appeared in 1942, the same year that its author died suddenly from a heart attack, and was dedicated to John C. Phillips.[111]

In his forward to the book, Coolidge likened the project to a "clearing of a new trail into a virgin forest" and alluded to the war as he urged an expansion of efforts to protect endangered species: "In these dark days, when even man is fighting to save himself from extinction, let us hope that this book, inspired by a great sportsman and conservationist and written by a great naturalist 'whose gentleness and purity of spirit were beyond all praise,' will in some measure be helpful in promoting a wider understanding to the need for preserving the wildlife heritage of the American republics for the enjoyment and wise use of generations to come."[112] Allen's introduction was extremely brief and curiously devoid of detailed analysis of overall trends. He did claim that as of the date of publication "few modern species of New World or marine mammals" had been "directly exterminated by man." But he also predicted that economically valuable species were "likely to be endangered increasingly with the more intensive [harvesting] methods of modern times and the growth of populations."[113] The body of his more than six-hundred-page inventory treated nearly three hundred species and subspecies of North American and West Indian mammals (including eighty-six forms of grizzly and black bear), twenty-five forms of South American mammals, and fifty-four of oceanic mammals.

Following a series of additional delays, Harper's *Extinct and Vanishing Mammals of the Old World* finally appeared three years after Allen's volume and nearly a decade after the project began.[114] Once again Coolidge offered a foreword to the book in which he expressed hope that the two volumes would "serve as a foundation . . . on which will be built future plans for the preservation of vanishing species of mammals in their native habitats." He thought this goal might be accomplished within a "framework of international cooperation," such as the London Convention or the newly negotiated Inter-American Convention. He also proposed regarding "threatened species" as "a sort of international trust by the country under whose jurisdiction it may fall."[115]

Harper's introduction was not only much longer than Allen's but also grappled with the larger implications of his findings. During the previous two thousand years, Harper noted, the "world has lost, through extinction, about 106 forms of mammals," about seventy-seven of which were full species. The rate of extinction seemed to be steadily increasing, with the previous century alone witnessing the extinction of 67 percent of the 106 extinct forms and the previous fifty years witnessing the extinction of 38 percent of the forms. The majority of mammalian extinctions occurred in North America (twenty-seven) or the West Indies (forty-one), while the least number occurred in Asia (one) and South America (three). Europe, Africa, and Australia fell in between these extremes with six, nine, and eleven extinctions, respectively. Harper noted that insular faunas seemed particu-

larly susceptible to loss and that at present there were about six hundred vanishing or threatened forms of mammals around the world. After briefly reviewing the causes of wildlife decline in several major regions, Harper concluded that a single agent was responsible for the vast majority of recent extinctions: "The primary factor in the depletion of the world's mammalian faunas is civilized man, operating either directly through excessive hunting and poisoning, or indirectly through invading or destroying natural habitats, placing fire arms in the hands of primitive peoples, or subjecting the primitive faunas of Australia and of various islands to the introduction of aggressive foreign mammals, including the fox, mongoose, cat, rat, mouse, and rabbit. Except in the West Indies, comparatively few species seem to have died out within the past 2,000 years from natural causes, such as evolutionary senility, disease, or climatic change."[116]

Reviewers at the time typically praised both volumes while expressing a hope that they would serve as a wake-up call for saving endangered mammals around the world. For example, W. L. McAtee, a naturalist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, commended the reports for providing widely accessible accounts of the human record of wildlife destruction: "May it prove more than a pious hope that these books will stimulate action before it is too late for the preservation of some of the earth's most interesting creatures."[117] The British ecologist Charles Elton was even more effusive, calling the works "godsends to the ecologist interested in the fate of the world's mammals." Elton recognized that, if the political will for conservation could be ever mustered, much more research would be needed to successfully "protect and manage" the world's disappearing species. But in providing a ready compilation of virtually all that was known about extinct and vanishing mammals, these volumes represented an important first step.[118]

There were, of course, limitations to the Harper-Allen reports. Perhaps the most obvious of these was that they treated only a single class of charismatic species and only the most economically important examples of that class. In 1945, George Sprague Myers, an ichthyologist and professor of biology at Stanford, asked whether the committee might sponsor a companion volume on extinct and vanishing fish.[119] Although doubtful if Myers was the right person to take on the project, Wetmore expressed enthusiasm about the general idea and even suggested that it be expanded to include reptiles and amphibians as well as fish.[120] Still smarting from the delays surrounding the Harper report, though, the executive committee voted not to pursue the project, citing the difficulty in finding someone with the drive to complete it and the uncertainty about its cost as reasons for its decision. An inventory on extinct and rare birds was "more needed" the committee argued, and MCZ curator James Greenway had been maintaining a file on the subject for many years.[121] Jean Delacour, a member of the American

Committee since his move to the United States at the beginning of World War II, agreed to chair a committee on the proposed bird volume and a year later reported that Greenway had finished a draft of the volume. Not until 1954, however, was the final version completed, and four more years would pass before the *Extinct and Vanishing Birds of the World* finally made its appearance.[122]

These three reports represent the most enduring legacy of the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection. At a time when wildlife conservation in the United States remained firmly focused on the plight of native species, Coolidge, Phillips, and a handful of their colleagues called attention to the growing dangers facing birds and mammals around the globe. Haunted by the specter of extinction, they recognized that effective wildlife protection needed to begin with the construction of authoritative knowledge about the status of vanishing species. Their pioneering efforts to systematically document what would later be known as the "extinction crisis" were not only widely acclaimed at the time, but also became the inspiration for the "Red Books" that the International Union for the Conservation of Nature began compiling in the 1960s and the official list of Rare and Endangered Wildlife of the United States that the Fish and Wildlife Service initiated shortly thereafter.

SHIFTING FOCUS

Even more so than many other conservation organizations in the United States at the time, the American Committee sought to use science to rescue endangered species. Most of its members were naturalists with extensive experience in the field, often in far-flung locations around the world. Not surprisingly, then, they sought to use the methods of natural history to craft a global inventory of species that seemed to be facing extinction, and they regularly appealed to the authority of science when deploying arguments in the defense of those species. As the contentious debate about limiting the collection of rare forms of wildlife attests, at times their commitment to the values and institutions of science even threatened to overshadow their sense of responsibility to protect vanishing species.

Yet, despite repeated appeals to the seemingly timeless authority of science and a prescient interest in international wildlife issues, in fundamental ways the American Committee was also a product of its times. Like many social, intellectual, and political leaders at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, Coolidge, Phillips, and other members of the committee not only shared a sense of racial superiority but also often displayed a condescending paternalism when dealing with non-Western peoples. Just as imperialists had long justified appropriating other peoples and other lands on the grounds that

bringing the benefits of civilization to unwashed savages was part of the "White Man's Burden," in public and in private, American Committee members declared wildlife preservation to be an "Anglo-Saxon" duty. They regularly condemned native uses of wildlife, even as they vigorously defended the rights of white settlers, sportsmen, and (especially) scientists to hunt those species. Rarely did they acknowledge the role that imperialism and Western-driven economic development played in threatening native wildlife in Africa and Asia. One important exception was Harper's report, which blamed "civilized man" for the extinction of numerous species and pointed out that the rate of extinction in North America was much higher than on other continents.

The American Committee was also a product of its times in terms of its basic agenda. The organization began during a period of increasing American interest in Africa and its wildlife, and all of its initial members had experience hunting or collecting specimens (the distinction was not always easy to make) on that continent. By the end of the 1930s, however, a series of events fostered a shift in the committee's geographical focus. The centennial of Charles Darwin's famous visit to the Galápagos Islands raised consciousness about the plight of endemic species on that archipelago. A dramatic decline in migratory waterfowl fueled concern about the many species that spent part of the year south of the U.S. border. At the same time, the establishment of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy highlighted the United States' long-term economic, military, and political entanglements to the south. The advent of World War II, which greatly limited communication and travel outside of the Western hemisphere, proved to be the final straw that pushed the American Committee to begin paying greater attention to Latin America.