

The Game Department 1929 - 1957

On June 1, 1929 thirty five Game Constables and Special Constables, along with some regular Constables, and some former Deputy Game Wardens, formed a new 60 member BC Game Department.

The Game Department was organized like the B.C. Police with 5 Game Divisions, each supervised by a District Game Warden (later called Inspectors).

The Attorney-General oversaw both the Game Department and the BC Provincial Police and they would work in close cooperation until the Provincial Police were disbanded in 1950.

The dress uniform worn by the Game Department was nearly identical to that of the B.C. Police, including Sam Browne belt with cross-strap, holster and revolver. Brass "Game Department" insignia and buttons replaced B.C. Police brass, and blue epaulets and tie replaced the green worn by the police. Most wardens wore a cloth peak cap, but a flat brimmed Stetson was also worn by some wardens.

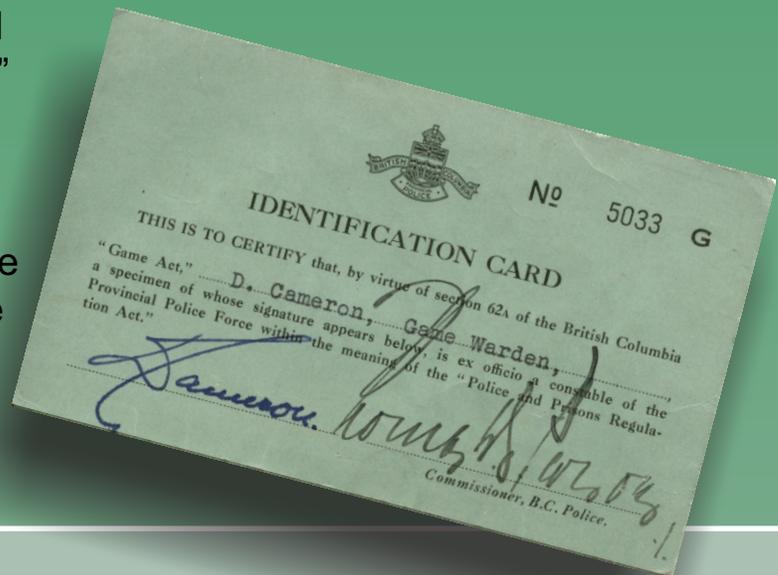


In 1929 the two agencies laid a combination of 602 game-related charges 35 per cent more than the previous year. Game Department staff laid the vast majority of these charges.



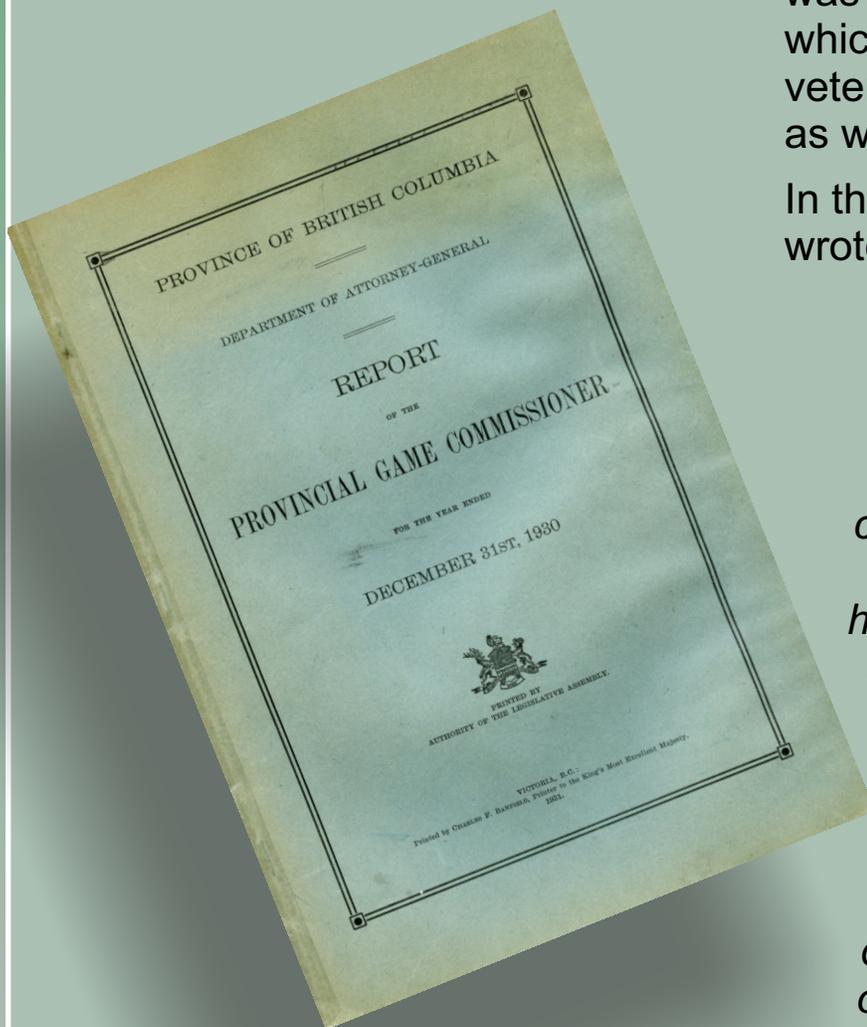
Game Wardens Neil Cameron and Len Washburn, Fernie 1932

Provincial constables retained their designation as “ex-officio” game wardens and, similarly, game wardens were designated as “ex-officio” police constables. Many police constables transferred into the Game Department over the years, and some wardens transferred to the Police.



Game Commissioner Williams was proud of the new force, which was comprised of many veteran law enforcement officers, as well as several new recruits.

In the Annual Report for 1930 he wrote:



“The work done by the Game Wardens this year has been highly commendable. While every force of men is bound to have one or two who are not as energetic or as efficient as they might be, nevertheless the Game Department really has a remarkably fine lot of men whose physique and devotion to duty regardless of danger, exposure to rain, frost, and snow, and often long hours of night work, has been a great credit to the Department.”

On July 5, 1930 the fledgling Game Department suffered its first tragedy when Game Warden Dennis Greenwood of Canal Flats was shot and killed off-duty by a man who he had charged for several violations of the Game Act. Greenwood was in the presence of his family at the time. Warden Greenwood's murderer, William Floyd, was arrested and charged, but was found not guilty by reason of insanity. Game Warden Greenwood was highly respected in the small community and his funeral was attended by most of the residents of Canal Flats.



DENNIS GREENWOOD.

AT the rear of his car, in which his wife and three young children were sitting, Mr. Greenwood, provincial game warden at Canal Flats, was shot to death there on Saturday afternoon. William Floyd, stationary engineer, was on Monday committed for trial on a charge of murdering Mr. Greenwood.



Conservation Officers Lawrence Umsonst, Pat McHarg and Justyn Bell visit Dennis Greenwood's grave in 2009.



IN MEMORIAM.

During this year the death of Game Warden Dennis Greenwood has to be reported. Game Warden Greenwood, who was stationed at Canal Flats, was shot to death in cold blood by a man whom he was about to prosecute for an infraction of the "Game Act." The man who was responsible for his death was subsequently arrested and tried for murder, but was pronounced insane.

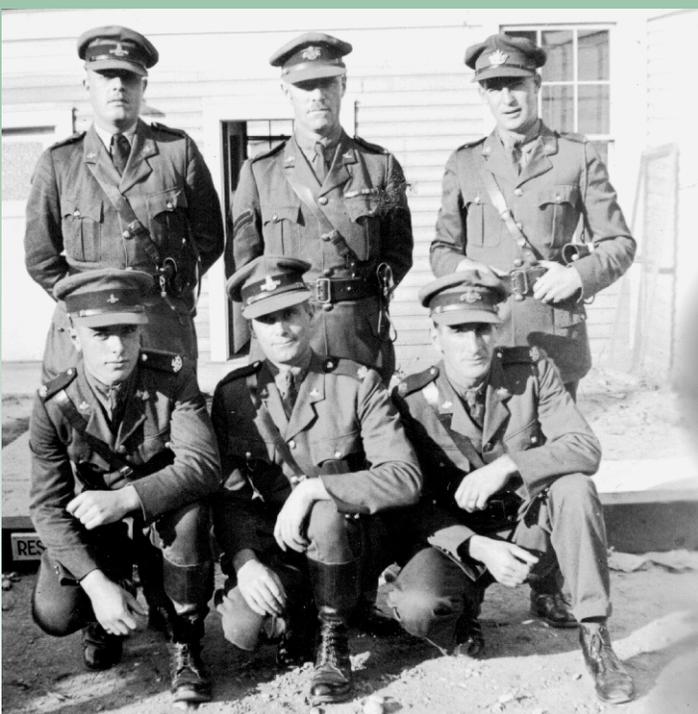
Dennis Greenwood was a returned soldier with a very good war record. He had been a Game Warden for five years. His whole heart and soul were in his work, and he had developed into a very reliable and efficient officer and had all the qualifications for promotion. He was most highly respected and liked throughout his district and his lamentable death is most deeply deplored.

A great example of cooperation was the 1931 purchase by the Game Department of a 38 foot patrol boat for its Powell River Detachment to replace the "Watla." The Game Department also covered all operating costs and provided the skipper, while the B.C. Police provided the crew as required. The "Provincial Game Department (P.G.D.) #2" was launched in 1932 and Game Warden Roy Allan assumed command.



In his 1931 Annual Report Commissioner Williams again praised his warden force:

"The ordinary man cannot know what amount of work a police officer or Game Warden has to do or what his responsibilities are. A Game Warden has his whole time occupied, every day of every month of the year, and to do his work properly he has to work long hours, frequently finding it almost impossible to take his annual leave of absence."

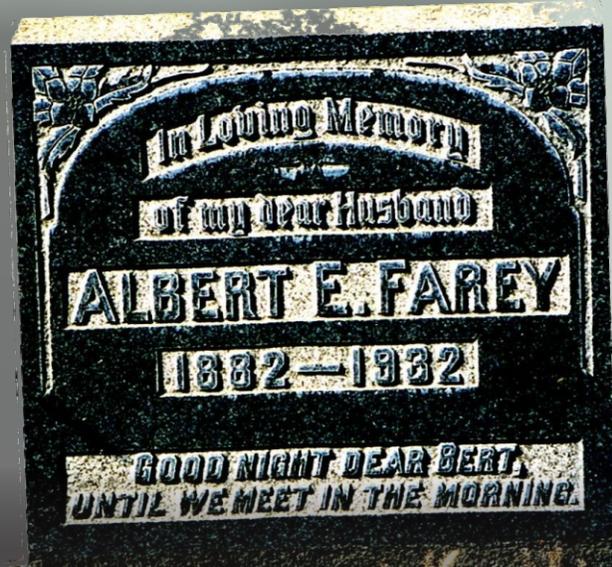


Game Warden/Skipper Roy Allan (rear right) with unidentified members of the Provincial Police, Powell River 1934



The Game Department suffered its second tragedy on October 3, 1932. Game Warden Albert Edward Farey had charged and convicted Frank Gott, a decorated war hero, in 1930 and Gott had borne a grudge against the Game Warden ever since. The requirement to tag deer was introduced in 1932 and Game Warden Farey found Gott in possession of a deer that he had failed to affix a tag to. At some point Farey turned his back on Gott and he was shot, dying instantly. Following a two day manhunt Divisional Game Supervisor Robertson of Kamloops and Game Warden Quesnel of Clinton found Gott, who refused to surrender. He ignored several warning shots and tried to flee, resulting in him being shot in the leg. He later died of a combination of tuberculosis and exposure.

Criticism was leveled at the police for the methods used to apprehend Gott. The critics chose to ignore the fact that Gott was a desperate and dangerous man, who had shot a dedicated Game Warden in the back without any chance to defend himself. Newspaper articles of the day chronicled Gott's guiding expertise, outdoor skills and wartime achievements, while little was written about the life of the murdered Game Warden, himself a decorated W.W.I veteran who had been wounded in action. Game Warden "Bert" Farey was buried in the Lillooet cemetery and his funeral never even made the newspapers of the day.



" IN MEMORIAM."

It is with great regret that the death of Albert Edward Farey is recorded. Game Warden Farey, who was stationed at Lillooet, was shot while examining a deer in the camp of Frank Gott, when the latter picked up his rifle and, before the Game Warden had a chance to turn, shot him in the back. Death was instantaneous. Gott escaped into the woods, but a day or two later, while attempting to cross Bridge River and reach an Indian reserve, was accosted by Divisional Game Supervisor Robertson, of Kamloops, and Game Warden W. O. Quesnel, of Clinton. Gott refused to surrender and tried to escape across the river, but was shot in the leg. The wound in itself probably would not have proved fatal, but being in a tubercular condition and also suffering from exposure, he subsequently died.

Game Warden Farey was an excellent type of man. Having lived the greater part of his life in the mountains, and also having been a guide and trapper, he had all the essential qualifications required for the position he held. He first saw service with this Department on August 24th, 1917, but resigned his position in April, 1920. Later on he again served for a few months, but was not on the permanent staff until June 1st, 1929.

**Game Warden
Clint Atwood
with two
unidentified
members of
the B.C.
Provincial
Police,
Quesnel,
1930s**



Below: The actual sign from the Fort Nelson Game Detachment. It was originally a B.C. Police sign, but was painted over in 1929. The original wording can still be seen when viewed from the right angle.



**Below: Game Warden Norman Robinson,
Game Inspector Thomas Van Dyk, and a
guest on the Liard River, 1933, as they
deliver a new riverboat to the Fort Nelson
detachment.**



**Below: Game Inspector Thomas
Van Dyk, Special Game Warden
Baptiste Villeneuve and friends at
the Fort Nelson detachment, 1930.**



In the early days of organized game enforcement British Columbia had a few regulations regarding non-tidal angling, but the Dominion government began to exert its authority over these matters and by 1928 the province had no involvement in sports-fishing management and enforcement.

However, in 1932 the first resident Angler's Licences were issued for a \$1 fee. As was the case with a non-resident, the licence was required not only to angle, but also to carry fishing rods and any other device that could be used for catching fish by angling.

That same year a Fish Culture Branch was established and three small trout hatcheries were built with the proceeds of the licence sales.

In 1938 the Governments of Canada and British Columbia signed an agreement that permitted the Province to manage non-tidal fisheries, with the exception of the salmon species. The Game Department began enforcing the federally enacted non-tidal fishing regulations and took over the federally operated trout hatcheries.



Newly appointed Game Commissioner James Cunningham and Warden William Clark after a hard day on patrol, North Lake near Egmont, 1936



A. Bryan Williams retired in 1934 at the age of 68, and a three man Game Commission made up of A.G. Bolton, Head of the Fish Culture Branch, James Cunningham, Inspector of E Division and Frank Butler, Headquarters Inspector, replaced him. Mr. Bolton retired two years later due to ill health and he was not replaced.

Another example of the close working relationship between the Game Department and the Provincial Police was the assistance provided by Game Warden Don Ellis and his Doberman Pinscher Reo. Don was hired as a Game Warden in 1939, and until Reo's death in 1945, the two assisted the B.C. Police in over 50 successful manhunts.



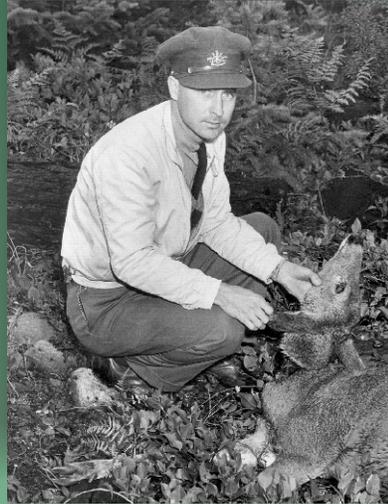
As the Second World War raged in Europe, Game Commissioner Frank Butler advised Game Department staff they were not to enlist in the non-permanent or overseas forces unless they first received permission from headquarters.

The Game Commission and the Attorney General felt game wardens were so thoroughly acquainted with their assigned districts, because of constant patrolling, that their services to the country would be far more valuable at home should trouble arise in those districts.

While some Game Wardens felt the necessity to take part in the overseas action and resigned in order to do so, only Inspector Frank Kearns and Game Warden Clint Atwood, both of whom had served in the First World War, took a leave of absence to enlist. Wardens Kearns and Atwood both returned to the Game Department at the end of the war.



Left: Game Warden Reg King, 1934. Spent his entire service in Vancouver, retired in 1972



Right: Game Warden Charlie Estlin, Courtenay, c. 1952



Top Right: Game Warden Frank Urquhart, Coquitlam, 1950s

Below: Inspector R.M Robertson, Kamloops, 1931-1953.



Right: Game Warden Jack Williams, Fort St. John, 1945



Above: Game Warden Jim Lorange, Quesnel on patrol in Wells, 1953

Right: Game Warden Waldo Maxson, Kelowna 1926 to 1950.



Right: Game Wardens Clint Atwood and Butch Tyler, Kamloops, c. 1953



Left: Game Warden John S. Clark, Special Game Warden Baptiste Villeneuve and baby John Clark, early 1930s, Fort Nelson.



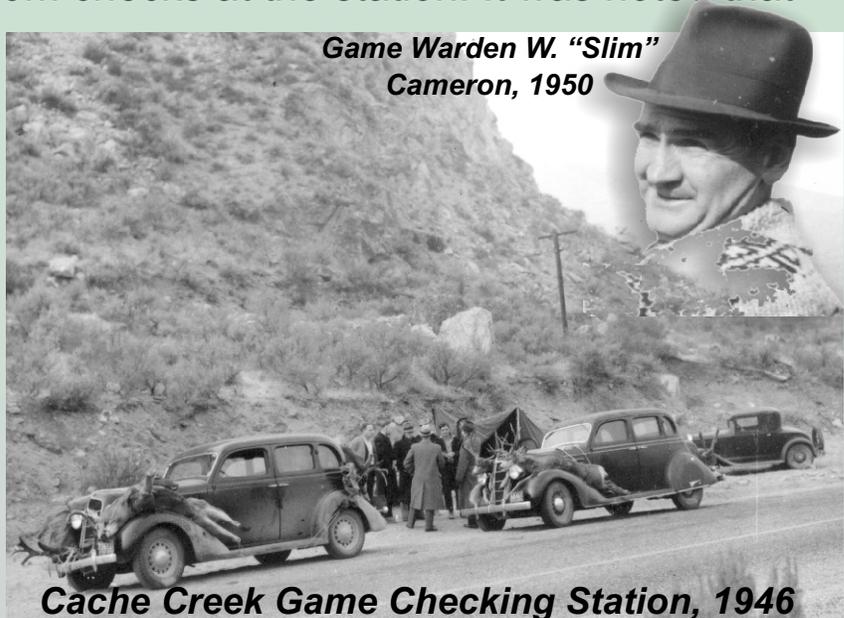
Game Warden Reg King, Vancouver, using a Provincial Police issue Harley-Davidson to carry out his patrols, circa 1940.

In recognition of the demanding nature of the job, in 1945 Game Commissioner Frank Butler wrote:

“As the duties of a Game Warden are of an arduous nature, calling for him to be on duty at any and all times, it is the desire of this Commission that whenever possible, a Game Warden should be allowed one day a week off duty if he so desires...it should be a recognized fact that each Game Warden or Fishery Officer is entitled to a reasonable time off to spend with his family or in connection with his own personal interests.”

In 1946, due to the significant increase in resident and non-resident hunters, especially in the Kamloops, Cariboo and Lillooet Districts, the **Cache Creek Game Checking Station** was set up under the command of Game Warden W. “Slim” Cameron. Its function was to collect data on fish and game harvested in those regions and to enforce the Game Regulations. In this first year of operation, 64 convictions for game violations were obtained from checks at the station. It was noted that there was an astonishing lack of knowledge or partial disregard of the regulations.

The station initially consisted only of a tent on the side of the highway. The station was made permanent in 1955 when a building was constructed and the area around it was improved and paved.

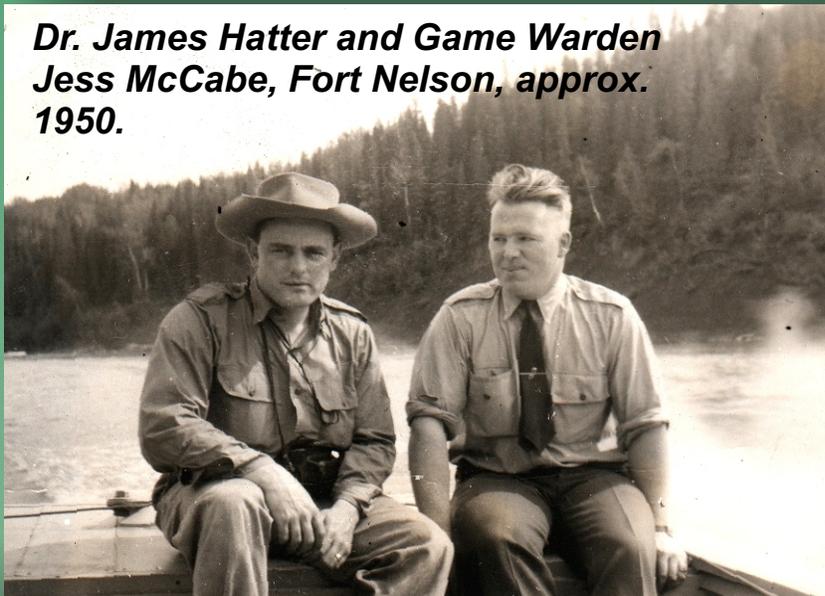


Game Warden W. “Slim” Cameron, 1950

Cache Creek Game Checking Station, 1946

The Game Department hired its first biologist, Dr. James Hatter, in 1947 and a number of fish and wildlife research studies were initiated. Wardens were becoming more involved in game management functions in addition to fish and game law enforcement.

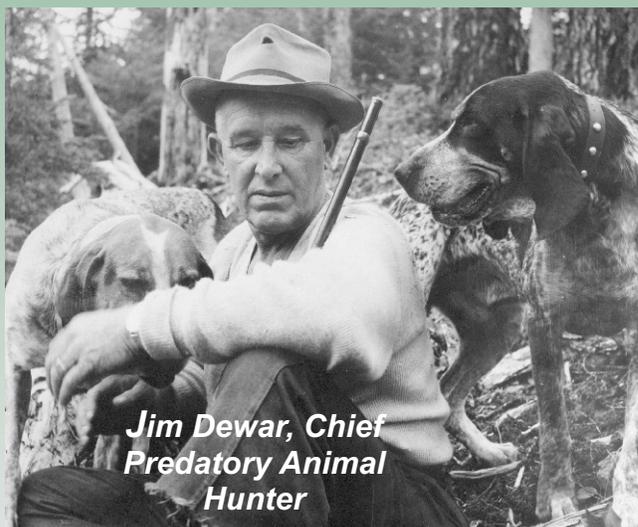
Dr. James Hatter and Game Warden Jess McCabe, Fort Nelson, approx. 1950.



The game wardens of old were not specialists in the removal of what were deemed to be “predatory animals.” The Game Department, and B.C. Police before it, had employed a few different Predatory Animal Hunters since 1926, but it wasn't until 1947 that departmental predator control became serious business.

A bounty system had been employed to reduce the numbers of predators, but it had proven ineffective. Former Police Constable James Dewar, based out of Extension near Nanaimo, was named Chief Predatory Animal Hunter, and was assigned the task of training new Predatory-Animal Hunters. The Department built kennels at Extension and purchased trained cougar hounds. The plans were to breed, train and then distribute cougar hounds to districts that required them.

In 1949 the **Predator Control Division** of the Game Department was established and a Supervisor was appointed to oversee operations. Although stationed in the various Game Divisions, the Predatory Animal Hunters were under central control of the Supervisor, not the Game Inspectors.



Jim Dewar, Chief Predatory Animal Hunter



Joe Gibault had been a B.C. Police Constable and was taken on by the R.C.M.P. but resigned two years later and went into private business. He joined the Game Department in 1953, eventually becoming an Inspector and then the Co-Ordinator of Guiding Services.

On August 15th, 1950 the British Columbia Provincial Police force, which had existed since 1858, was disbanded with little warning and replaced by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) which took on many of the constables. Many resigned and several transferred to the Game Department. Several more joined the Game Department over the next few years as they resigned from the RCMP or decided that civilian life was not for them.



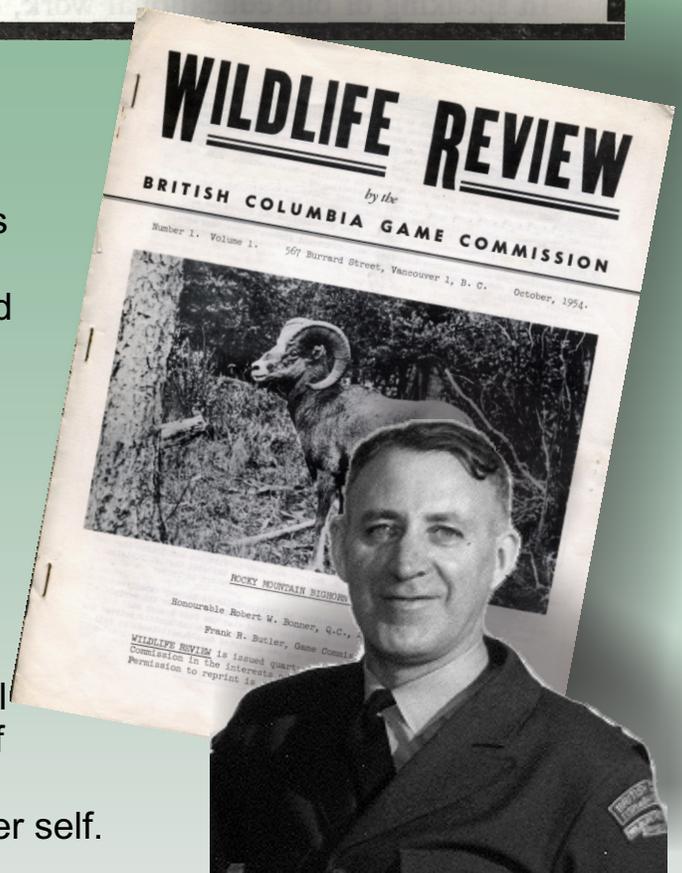
Predator Control Hunters did not wear uniforms prior to 1951. New style “battledress” jackets were issued to personnel to foster greater public awareness of their work and to assist them in receiving public cooperation. A shoulder flash depicting a wolf head, surmounted by the words B.C. Game Department Predator Branch was placed on the left arm of the jacket. This was the first instance of a shoulder flash or patch being worn by Game Department staff.



Game Commissioner James George Cunningham (right) passed away suddenly on February 8th, 1954 and Frank Butler (left) remained as sole Commissioner. The death of Commissioner Cunningham hits the Department hard, as he was the "field operations" half of the Game Commission and was popular with the game wardens.

Finally it is with a great deal of sorrow and regret, coupled with a feeling of personal loss, that I find it necessary to record in this Report the loss on February 8th, 1954, of Commissioner James George Cunningham. The late Commissioner joined the department in 1919 after distinguished war service in the First World War with the Canadian Army. He was appointed Commissioner in 1934 after outstanding work in various phases of conservation activities. Through the demise of Commissioner Cunningham, his boundless energy and wise counsel have been sorely missed, not only by all personnel of this Commission, but by sportsmen throughout the Province and by his many friends in the rest of Canada and the United States.

Game Warden Bill Ward of Kamloops had been directing much of his efforts towards public relations since 1946. The Game Commissioners recognized the value of Bill's work, and the need for a larger scale effort. In 1953 he was transferred to Vancouver and in October of 1954 the first issue of the "Wildlife Review" was published and 2000 free copies were distributed. The magazine was an immediate success. By May of 1964, circulation was 60,000 and it was still distributed free of charge. A one dollar charge for a two year subscription was imposed and circulation fell to 20,000, but stabilized around 37,000 copies in 1968. Bill Ward retired in 1967 and the look and feel of the magazine changed almost instantly and within a year it no longer resembled its former self.





Left: Prior to establishment of the Predator Control Division district Game Wardens often had their own hounds and conducted predator control work. Game Warden Art Butler, Chilliwack, Game Warden George Williams, Abbotsford, and Game Warden Percy Cliffe, Mission in 1940.

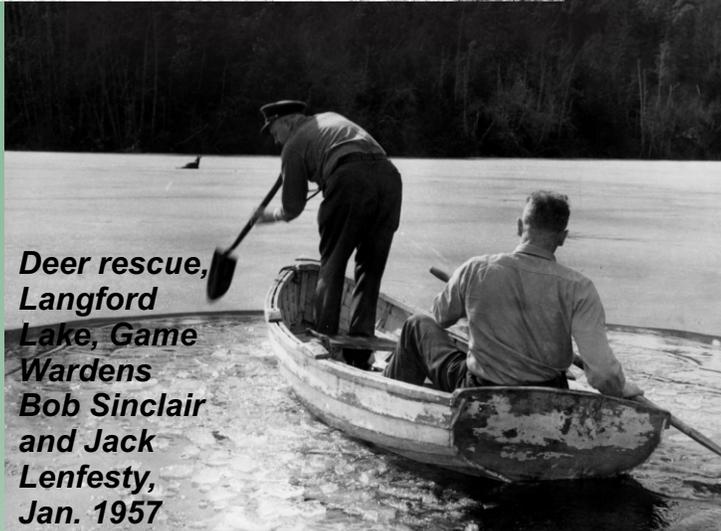


Left: Game Warden Rex Hayes, Campbell River, on the "Osmobile" c. 1956

Game Wardens Catch Up With Killer



PHOTO BY CONSTABLE BUD GODFREY, R. C. M. POLICE
 From the Game Department's point of view this is a happy ending. Pictured here are Game Warden Bob Sinclair and Joe Jones, and cougar dog "Tuckey" after dispatching a cougar that menaced the Parson's Bridge district, close to Victoria.
 The wardens got the call at 7:45 a.m. on October 19, that a cougar had been seen, and in record time were on the scene with Tuckey, who is part Kentucky 'coonhound and part English bloodhound. Tuckey quickly picked up the scent near Wilfert Road and trailed the big cat for an hour before he treed the killer near the Colwood race track. The tawny menace was dispatched by a shot from Warden Sinclair's .25-20, and proved to be a two-year-old Tom, that measured six foot nine from nose to tail tip.
 It was a lucky thing that the game wardens were on the job so quickly, for a flock of sheep were grazing within a hundred yards of where the cougar met his fate. Farmers in the district were undoubtedly saved some losses in stock.



Deer rescue, Langford Lake, Game Wardens Bob Sinclair and Jack Lenfesty, Jan. 1957



Above: Predator Hunter Milt Warren, c. 1952



Right: Game Warden Bert Wilson and Predator Hunter Jim Dewar, 1952



Game Warden Jim Lorange at Cache Creek, 1949

Game Warden Bob Sinclair, Victoria, models the new uniform, 1955



Other than changing the color of their tie and shoulder straps after the dissolution of the B.C. Police, Game Wardens had worn the same uniform since 1929. Following the lead of the Predator Control Branch, a more practical uniform with cloth shoulder flashes was introduced in 1955 for the warden staff. The green shoulder flash simply stated British Columbia Game Warden in yellow script. Similar flashes were issued to the Game Commissioner and to the Inspectors. While they were worn by some officers for several years afterward, the style was officially changed the following year, and a tab identifying the Division the employee worked in was placed underneath.

The Department of Recreation and Conservation was established on March 28th, 1957 and on April 1st the Game Department was transferred from the Department of Attorney General and became the **Fish and Game Branch** within the new Department. Former Game Commissioner Frank Butler was named the Director of what was referred to for many years to come as “the Game Branch.”