



# Aldo Leopold (1887-1948)



Aldo Leopold loved trees. He became a forest ranger and spent years in the woods. Then one day, he did something that changed his life.

Leopold lived in a time when there were no **game laws**. If a person wanted to kill an animal, he could. When Leopold was a young man, he shot a wolf. As he watched it die, he felt guilty. The wolf had not threatened him. He had killed it for no reason! It struck him that every living thing was part of an ecosystem. He had just damaged it without cause.

Leopold urged others to stop killing animals for no reason. It took him years to convince others that wildlife should be preserved. He fought to get laws passed. He became the leader in the field of **game management**. He pushed for game preserves and national forests. He wanted these areas set aside. Then nothing would spoil their natural beauty.

## Lost Birds

The **extinction** of the passenger pigeon is a shocking story. This bird species was once the most numerous on Earth! Yet they were shot for sport until none were left. The last one died at the age of 29 at a zoo in 1914.

Long ago, dodo birds lived on one island in the Indian Ocean. They could not fly. This made them easy to catch and eat. Pigs came and ate their eggs. By 1680, there were no more dodo birds.

← The gray wolf has made a comeback. Ranchers used to shoot wolves because they attacked their cattle. The species was near extinction. Laws were passed to make shooting wolves illegal. Without hunting, the wolf population grew back. Now lawmakers are making new laws to allow just enough wolf hunting to keep their numbers balanced.

These stuffed passenger pigeons can →  
be found in a museum.



Leopold's work helped create two laws. The first was passed in 1969. It is the National Environmental Policy Act. It states that the government must first think about the **environmental effects** of any land use. This means that a mall cannot be built without a study to find out how to not harm the ecosystem.

The second law is the Endangered Species Act of 1973. It protects plants, animals, and their ecosystems from becoming extinct.



← The dodo bird is now extinct. Today's laws may have helped it to avoid **extinction**.



↑ When crops were sprayed with DDT, many people ate the poison. It is stored inside the fat in our glands. When the fat was used, it made people sick.

## DDT

Rachel Carson was also concerned about animals. She wondered how chemicals affected them. She studied DDT. It was sprayed to kill bugs. She found that DDT killed much more than bugs. The birds that ate the bugs were dying, too. Carson said that if people didn't stop using DDT, there would be no birds left. Her 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, made U.S. leaders aware that DDT was dangerous. They banned DDT so no one could use it.

