

**RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT**

cent of the acreage along the lower Rio Grande. Such areas are good candidates for halophyte cultivation, Neary suggests. Indeed, a quarter-million square miles of the United States (one-twelfth of the continental land area) lies atop "reachable" saline aquifers. Beneath the water-short Western states alone is a salt water supply that would fill Lake Michigan. The trick will be to convince conventional farmers and finicky consumers to give halophytes a try.

The British put pickleweed in salads. And the seeds from Palmer's grass, once a staple of Pacific Coast Indians, contain 80 percent soluble carbohydrate (comparable to corn or rice). But the *Altriplex* is most likely to appeal to farmers, with its six-ton-per-acre yield (twice that of alfalfa) and its 20 percent protein content (equivalent to alfalfa). Unfortunately, the plant is also 30 percent salt, and researchers have yet to find a cheap, efficient way to purge its briny flavor.

*The Earliest  
Conservationists*

"The Earliest Traces of a Conservation Conscience" by Robert M. Alison, in *Natural History* (May 1981), Membership Services, P.O. Box 6000, Des Moines, Iowa 50340.

Kublai Khan, Akhenaton, and Montezuma—their names alone evoke mighty armies and towering monuments. But these leaders were also vigorous conservationists. In fact, conservation laws have existed almost as long as civilization has, according to Alison, a Canadian science writer.

The earliest known "environmental regulations" were decreed by the Middle Kingdom pharaohs of Egypt, who, more than 3,000 years ago,



*Conservation laws date back to ancient Egypt. Though the pharaohs enjoyed hunting, they set up game preserves to protect wild beasts.*

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Carnarvon Collection, Gift of Edward S. Harkness, 1926.

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issued hunting licenses to limit the slaughter of waterfowl. The ancient Romans, Greeks, Assyrians, Chinese, and Indians also safeguarded wildlife. Around 1900 B.C., the Sumerians and Babylonians enacted the first known law protecting vegetation, setting a fine of half a mina of silver for cutting down a tree.

But perhaps no society has practiced conservation more assiduously than the English. King Ine (c. 700) issued the earliest known English environmental statute. He forbade the burning of forests and the cutting of any tree "big enough to shelter thirty swine." After 1066, the first Norman kings marked off royal game preserves; their foresters brutally enforced a ban on nonroyal hunting.

Even the Magna Carta (1215) had two sections devoted to environmental protection—one calling for reforestation along England's rivers. During the reign of Edward I (1272–1307), Parliament passed its first conservation act, abolishing the death penalty for killing a deer but establishing a fishing season for salmon. In succeeding centuries, more and more species came under official protection, with one conspicuous exception. The otherwise bird-loving Henry VIII (who ruled from 1509 to 1547) pledged a bounty as encouragement to his countrymen to "kill and utterly destroy all manner of Crows."

Broad as early English conservation laws were, there were major gaps. They ignored nongame animals. They protected trees, which are marketable, but neglected noncommercial vegetation. Though conservationists rallied to defend individual species that became endangered, they paid little heed to the surroundings. Not until the 20th century did the total "environment" become an issue.

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**ARTS & LETTERS**

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*Cézanne's Role*

"Cézanne and the Continuing Cubist Controversy" by Carol Donnell-Kotrozo, in *Art International* (Jan.-Feb. 1981), Via Maraini, 17-A, Lugano, Switzerland (CH-6900).

In recent decades, the reputation of French post-impressionist Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) has been caught in a crossfire—between art historians who credit Georges Braque with the invention of cubism and those who tout Pablo Picasso.

Cézanne's omission of detail and his penchant for rendering areas as planes of color have long reminded critics of the cubists' efforts to reduce nature to its basic geometric forms—rectangle, sphere, cone, and cylinder. An influential art historian, William Rubin of New York's Museum of Modern Art, has persuasively argued that most of Cézanne's "distortions" of nature flowed from the same conscious wish to de-