

Contemporary wildlife conservation in the United States has its roots in the mid-19th century and is now recognized as unique from other forms worldwide. Referred to as the “North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, it is based on seven guiding principles:

Wildlife as Public Trust Resources,

1. Elimination of Markets for Game,
2. Allocation of Wildlife by Law,
3. Wildlife Should Only be Killed for a Legitimate Purpose,
4. Wildlife Are Considered an International Resource,
5. Science is the Proper Tool for Discharge of Wildlife Policy,
6. and Democracy of Hunting.



During the Industrial Revolution and the resulting increase in wealth in America, unsustainable hunting practices began to feed a growing workforce and an urban class with enough money could hunt for sport. Conflicts between these user groups led to the elimination of game markets, allocation of wildlife by law rather than privilege, and limits to the harvest of wildlife.

In 1842, the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Martin v. Waddell* became known as the Public Trust Doctrine. It laid the groundwork for common law regarding the principles that wildlife resources are owned by no one but are to be held in trust by the government for the benefit of present and future generations. With dramatic declines in wildlife, advocates pushed for the Public Trust Doctrine to become the legal regulatory framework for state and federal governments in the United States.

Over the years, regulation impacting wildlife, including regulations for migratory birds and marine animals, has been updated and amended. But under this conservation model, hunting in the U.S. remains open to all citizens regardless of class and is central to the success of the Model.

**The policy of Montana Audubon regarding the North American Model of Conservation is to:**

- Educate the public and decision makers about the important role the North American Model of Conservation plays in supporting sound wildlife policy in Montana
- Educate the public and decision makers about and promote adherence to the seven core components
- Educate people on the Model and the importance of its components
- Challenge policy harming any components, especially ones to commercialize wildlife
- Recognize threats and challenges to the model and evaluate its proper uses and application under current and future conditions