

| BY LUCY LAWLISS |

**PLACES UNTRAMMELED BY HUMANS.** It's hard to conceive of such places in a world of more than six billion people. Can areas exist where nature has its way, and humans only visit? This was the vision of the advocates who saw their years of labor recognized when Congress passed the Wilderness Act of 1964—two years before the National Historic Preservation Act—creating for the first time a national system of protected wilderness. **IF THESE PLACES WERE SCARCE** 40 years ago, they have only become more so in the ensuing decades, making this act of government restraint—the conscious choice not to develop, not to manipulate, not to impair nature's rhythms, sounds, sights, and smells—one of the most profound and confounding decisions that a society could make. **THIS ANNIVERSARY YEAR OFFERS** an opportunity not only to examine and celebrate what the federal wilderness program has achieved—protecting cultural as well as natural resources—but to also think about the uniquely American philosophical roots of the wilderness movement. As Roderick Nash, author of the seminal *Wilderness and the American Mind*, explains in his interview, wilderness has moved from a place that invokes fear to one that commands awe and respect. **IN ADDITION TO THE 46 NATIONAL PARKS** with designated wilderness, the National Park System includes numerous places that *could* tell unique aspects of the wilderness story—a story most Americans would never contemplate. That story begins with Jamestown, the first English settlement in North America, literally hewn from the fearsome wildness of the 17th-century Virginia coast, and continues through Jimmy Carter's boyhood home, where the future President's inspired contact with the wilds of Georgia moved him to sign the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, more than doubling the size of wilderness lands. **AND THERE ARE THE MORE OBVIOUS PLACES** like Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in Woodstock, Vermont, specifically set aside to tell the conservation story. Superintendent Rolf Diamant challenges visitors who wander this picturesque agricultural landscape to “read” the evolution of stewardship written in its forest plantations and protected natural areas—to understand the conservation thinking that began with the mid-19th century publi-

cation of *Man and Nature*, written by the property's first owner, George Perkins Marsh. **NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS** and properties in the National Register of Historic Places also have stories that connect us to the ideas and ideals of wilderness. The figures commemorated range from Hudson River School artists Church, Cole, and Moran—who helped us see the spectacle of the wild—to Olmsted, Thoreau, Carson, Mather, and Leopold—who provided the intellectual foundation for wilderness conservation. **WHEN ASKED IF THERE IS** a figure yet to be nationally recognized, Doug Scott, long-time wilderness advocate also interviewed in this issue, didn't hesitate—it would be Howard Zahniser. A 20-year executive secretary for the Wilderness Society and editor of its publication *The Living Wilderness*, Zahniser wrote 66 drafts of the wilderness bill, steering it through 18 congressional hearings.

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Without his dedication, the Wilderness Act would never have passed. The legislation's memorable words—untrammelled by man—are his. **WE'VE COME A LONG WAY** in our thinking about the nature of wilderness, from the first naïve and destructive attempts to subdue wild lands for our benefit, to the present generation's need to revere and connect with wilderness as a place beyond human manipulation. Places like Niagara Falls, Central Park, and Yosemite Valley, while seemingly tame now, represented in their time all that man could achieve in an attempt to put visitors in touch with the greatness of nature. Today, from the application of science to understanding nature's dynamism, to the effect that this knowledge has on philosophies of humans as part of or separate from nature, the ongoing evolution of ideas will ultimately shape the future of our wild lands.

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