



“SERVING THE HUNTER WHO TRAVELS”

“Hunting provides the principal incentive and revenue for conservation. Hence it is a force for conservation.”

**Special To The Hunting Report
World Conservation Force Bulletin**

by John J. Jackson, III

IMAGE BUILDING FOR ACCEPTANCE AND RECRUITMENT

**Speech Made by John J. Jackson, III
at the Canadian Outdoor Writers Association**

(Montreal, Canada - June 1, 2000)

The image of hunting, and worse, of hunters themselves, has been in serious trouble. Anti-hunters invented some of the negative imagery but a lot of it they only capitalize on. It is a long-standing problem. The anti-hunters are only making it worse. It's important because hunters' own perception of themselves or self image affects both the retention and recruitment of hunters. Also, the public perception about hunters and hunting influences its acceptance, public policy and the continued legal authorization to hunt.

Remember, hunting is generally treated as a legislated privilege that requires special authorization. Most states and provinces have laws prohibiting the taking of game except when expressly and specifically authorized. It is especially vulnerable because no authority exists without the special grant of per-

mission. It is imperative that we identify hunting's image problems. Then, the greatest challenge is how to improve the image of hunters and hunting.

This presentation addresses three of



the principal image or perception fronts. The first misperception is that hunting is an anachronism.

Anachronism

Anti-hunters regularly assert that

hunting is somehow out-of-style, unpopular, losing its following, not a thing to be done anymore, an anachronism from another period, a sinking ship that should be abandoned and is being marginalized with the passage of time. The anti-hunters broadcast as a fact that hunting is slipping out of existence because it is not keeping up with the human population growth rate. This almost daily claim has gone unchallenged and been accepted in many circles as being true.

Well, it is not true. Don't let them get away with this bandwagon, unpopularity farce. The one activity that is misrepresented to be the most anachronistic and fading into history the fastest really has never been more popular and exceeds all other popular outdoor activities in growth. The news is that big game hunting has now been documented to be more popular than

it has ever been. There have never been more licensed big game hunters in the history of the world. It is an exceptional activity for it is one of the few activities that keeps growing faster than the human population growth rate!

This exceptional growth rate has been officially documented to have been continuous for more than 50 years. This is obvious at the computer game stores and magazine racks. The numbers have catapulted in growth compared to other outdoor activities. For example, since 1950, the US population has increased by 49 percent while the number of big game hunters has increased 615 percent.

Their characteristics are every bit as impressive. Big game hunters spend more time in the woods per capita than anyone, despite the shortening of seasons to accommodate their growing numbers. This means they continue to be America's foremost outdoorsmen and women. Most hunters today are big game hunters, and they contribute more money for conservation, as well as spend more for outdoor recreation, per capita than anyone else.

Incidentally, wildlife watching has slid in numbers in each of the last three national surveys (15 years) in the US. Not so for booming big game hunting. The Survey and Big Game Hunting brochure, completed by Responsive Management, and contracted by Dallas Safari Club and Conservation Force, documents these facts in the US once and for all. I have distributed a copy to everyone here.

Endangered Species Doom and Gloom

The second front is the misperception that all wildlife is on the brink of extinction. For 30 years, the public has been bombarded by authorities with assertions that all wildlife is doomed. The message has been in the form of Endangered Species Acts, CITES, and special protective legislation. There have also been continuous fund-raising messages from across the spectrum from mainline conservation organizations, as well as from the anti-hunters, prophesying doom. It is how they raise their money, so we are bombarded con-

tinually with this theme.

The resulting misperception that all wildlife is threatened is pervasive and deep-seated. Of course, there can be very little tolerance of hunting by a public that thinks it is endangering wildlife, or that believe the targets are truly endangered wildlife. For example, a recent study shows that school children in a region in the heart of Texas with the densest deer population in the world think that white-tail deer are endangered. When questioned further, they state that they believe that hunters are the cause!

Well, this perception too is not true. Wildlife is a renewable resource. The best management practice is to keep populations below capacity, at levels where their reproduction and survival is higher. There is less stress and disease then, competition is lower and habitat is maintained. Moreover, wildlife's sustainable use can and has provided for wildlife's long-term survival through the generation of management revenue and conservation incentives. Licensed recreational hunting is the classic form of such sustainable use. In fact, sportsmen are the conservation heroes of wildlife in North America. They are the backbone of the most successful conservation system in the world today and the most successful that has ever existed on this scale. That system has now withstood the test of 100 years.

Let's not keep it a secret anymore! The Un-endangered Species poster copyrighted by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) has made it clear that there are record numbers of game animals, thanks to the hunting tradition in North America.

Today, Conservation Force is working with NSSF to publish an update of the Un-endangered Species poster and to give credit where it is really due, to hunters. It is soon to be published and mailed to 50,000 schools. There are 105 million ducks, 34 million white-tails, 5.2 million turkeys, 1.2 million elk, nearly 1 million black bears, etc. Moreover, sportsmen and sportswomen are largely responsible for that restoration.

JOHN J. JACKSON, III
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“Serving The Hunter Who Travels”

Conservation Force has helped expand this information and technique to other regions of the world. For example, The International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife in Europe now produces a poster, *Des Espèces Hors Danger*, demonstrating the successful game management and increase in game numbers in France! The All of Africa Safari Club has a poster for Southern Africa that shows the explosion in white rhino, elephant numbers, and other game species. The British Columbia Wildlife Federation has just produced an excellent poster depicting the increase in game numbers for the province of British Columbia! The Foundation for North American Wild Sheep has responded with a whole book on the growth of wild sheep in North America as a consequence of “Putting Sheep Back on the Mountain.”

The fact is that the game that we hunt is not doomed, thanks to hunters and unmatched hunters’ organizations. For example, there is no match in the conservation world to Ducks Unlimited that has expended 1.4 billion dollars on wildlife conservation and saved eight million acres of habitat. There is no match to Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, which has been largely responsible for increasing wild sheep from 30,000 to 200,000. No match to the North American Wild Turkey Federation, which has more than doubled the number of wild turkeys. Sportsmen’s wildlife conservation organizations are still dominant in North America even if overlooked by the general media. What are we apologizing for?!!

Research now documents that sportsmen and sportswomen (hunters and fishermen combined) also contribute more for non-game animals than all others in society combined! Less than 10 percent of the American public pays more than all of the rest of society. (Of course, fishing has to be factored in as well.) The world is riding on our coattails. Hunters have long been the largest providers of wildlife conservation revenues and incentives. In the US, hunters and fishermen provide over 1 billion dollars per year in direct license revenue

alone, excluding excise taxes and other revenue. Those fees are the principle funding source for our state wildlife agencies.

Make no mistake, hunters are the stakeholders, the proven stewards of our wildlife and wild places. It is important that our conservation efforts not be represented like an apology. It is not an apology. For a fact, hunters are indispensable to the whole wildlife conservation system. I repeat, hunters are indispensable. Their special interest grows more important each year as the competition for land space for wildlife to survive becomes more fierce.

In Europe, hunters are called the game keepers. In fact, they are the keepers of the game and the primary keepers of all wildlife. Our challenge is to portray hunters as the heroes. If



success be any measure, licensed hunting has been proven to be the foremost means of sustaining wildlife.

Do We Kill or Hunt?

The anti-hunters’ rhetoric narrowly focuses on the kill, while totally ignoring the whole hunt. They mischaracterize hunting by framing the question, “How can you have fun killing?” They claim that hunters don’t care for wildlife or they would not kill it. They assert that it is fundamentally wrong to kill: therefore, it is wrong to hunt for recreation.

Of course, the shot is only one component of a hunt. To level the field we must first establish that hunting is far more than killing. We all know that we kill to have hunted and that we are the foremost stewards for the game we pursue. We must counterbalance this assertion in the war of values. Should

the incidental death of a negligible number of cub bears or the minuscule increase in risk to them be given greater value than what spring hunting uniquely means to tens of thousands of us in human terms? Have we expressed what the spring hunt means to the human spirit and the totality of the value of our very own lives?

No one cares more about wildlife than those millions whose lives and disposable incomes revolve around the species they defy through hunting! The very act of hunting esteems game. We give it its highest value. Aside from the incomparable services it provides to wildlife conservation, the question is what does it provide to man and society? It is time we focus on the value of hunting in human terms, what it means to us that uniquely makes it so very important and worthwhile.

The challenge is to capture and convey the essence of hunting for the sake of its own preservation. It is an aesthetic experience that awakens and engages the senses like nothing else, builds character and discipline, uniquely and fittingly puts one more in touch with the natural world, is renowned for inspiring a conservation ethic, motivates personal physical conditioning, provides meaningful insight into life processes and much more. It is the ultimate relationship with nature and the natural world. It astrophically enriches our human essence and the quality of our lives. We must convey that it is a complex natural relationship with wildlife. It is a unique higher order experience at the spiritual level, like love and religion to which we are intensely devoted.

Love is a complex higher order human experience of great but inestimable value. It is a relationship. It is real even if hard to describe. No less is true of hunting. It too is a complex higher order experience. The experience is the most natural and complete relationship with nature. It is time to convey why we hunt, why is it so very special and worthwhile? It is worthy of support without apology. Don’t abandon it. Once again embrace it. Make it real. Make it count - otherwise, it will be of no count.

We must at least gain acceptance of the fact that there are compelling reasons in human terms that are worthy of public support even if the reasons are not susceptible to easy description because of the nature and complexity of all higher order phenomena. Though hunting as a wildlife conservation service is indis-

pensable and incomparable, it is also of enormous value to man himself. Let's not apologize for being human, much less for the highest level experiences that enrich our lives. The hunting experience raises what we are to a more fulfilling whole. We are better for it.

Remember, big game hunters are

the mainstay, and their numbers are growing; game animal numbers are spiking at record numbers, and hunting is a desirable higher order relationship. Let's again make hunting worthy of respect and support for itself, for what it provides and the celebration it brings to our lives in human terms. - *John J. Jackson, III.*

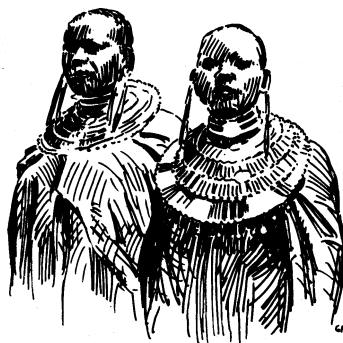
Briefly Noted

■ **Premier's Symposium on North America's Hunting Heritage:** The 6th Symposium on North America's Hunting Heritage is being hosted by the Premier of Ontario. It will be held in Ottawa from August 23 to 27th. It will promote and protect hunting more than any of the conferences that have preceded it. This is because a new goal has been set for this conference. This time a "charter" will be drafted to really do something for the future of hunting. This giant step towards achieving the original mission of the conferences makes this the most important conference to date. This conference should not be missed. The whole program will be unique, educational, enjoyable and serve our long-term interest. Conservation Force has been selected to give a presentation entitled, "We Have Reason to Celebrate," which corresponds to the theme of the whole symposium, "Celebrating Hunting's Heritage." You can register online at website <http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/ps2000/register.html>; or you can obtain a registration form by calling 888-720-1960. Fax: 705-755-1900. E-mail: PS2000@mnr.gov.on.ca.

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• **Trade and Development Act of 2000:** The Trade and Development Act has been signed into law after its passage by the US Congress this past May. The legislation merged the proposed African Growth and Opportunity Act with a similar proposal for Central America and the Caribbean. In short, it will improve and promote trade between the US and Africa. This will economically help our impoverished friends in Africa. It will cause closer

economic relations and help pass on to African nations the prosperity of the US. Africa will become more of a reality to America and vice versa. Trade



is the best form of aid. You can now expect to see more African products in the US market. Africa may come to

matter to more than hunters and movie makers. Conservation Force leaders have been at the forefront of the hunting community in support of this Act, from the initial meetings with Congressman Jefferson in Louisiana over two years ago through its endorsement at the National Conference on Africa in Washington, DC in March. We were the only representatives of the hunting community at those meetings.

• **Trappers and Nonresidents Slighted:** The US Fish & Wildlife Service has officially adopted its "planning policy" to govern the future management of all National Wildlife Refuges, 93 million acres divided into 520 units. Despite the written comments filed by Conservation Force and similar comments filed by the Wildlife Management Institute, Wildlife Legislative Fund of America and the National Rifle Association, the Service ruled that trapping is not part of recreational hunting. Therefore, trapping is not to be treated as a "priority" use like recreational hunting is to be treated. Trapping can be permitted when appropriate, but is neither favored nor prioritized. The Service also wholly ignored the Special Comments by Conservation Force, which asked that as a matter of national refuge policy, nonresident hunters be allowed to hunt on refuges equally with residents. Though technically required to address all issues raised in comments, the Service avoided this contested issue. That suggests that the Service is only giving lip service to its broad statement that the refuge system is to be administered to serve all citizens. - *John J. Jackson, III.*

Conservation Force Sponsor

The Hunting Report and Conservation Force would like to thank International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife (IGF) for generously agreeing to pay all of the costs associated with the publishing of this bulletin. IGF was created by Weatherby Award Winner H.I.H Prince Abdorreza of Iran 20 years ago. Initially called The International Foundation for the Conservation of Game, IGF was already promoting sustainable use of wildlife and conservation of biodiversity 15 years before the UN Rio Conference, which brought these matters to widespread public attention. The foundation has agreed to sponsor *Conservation Force Bulletin* in order to help international hunters keep abreast of hunting-related wildlife news. Conservation Force's John J. Jackson, III, is a member of the board of IGF and Bertrand des Clers, its director, is a member of the Board of Directors of Conservation Force.



International Foundation for
the Conservation of Wildlife