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**“SERVING THE HUNTER WHO TRAVELS”**


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*“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**

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□ **Special Focus**

**Pronghorn Antelope Decline**

*(Editor Note: The pronghorn population in Canada and the United States has had a dramatic decline. Overall, it decreased by one-third from 1983 to 1997 (36 percent overall and much more in some states). Twenty-five percent of that was lost from 1995 to 1997! The population of 1 million in 1983 was down to 672,000 by 1997. Bart O’Gara Ph.D. is one of the five board members of Conservation Force and is a pronghorn expert. He has just completed a project on the problem and a survey of 16 pronghorn states and two Canadian provinces. I asked him to give us a short abstract of what is going on with this important American game animal. More details will be available in the Proceedings of the 18th Pronghorn Antelope Workshop which will be published later this year. Bart is an important member of Conservation Force, a world-class hunter, Wildlife Professor Emeritus at the University of Montana and a retired US Fish & Wildlife Service research*

*biologist. He has helped me for years with projects ranging from argali in Asia to grizzly bear in British Columbia. - John J. Jackson, III)*

**Pronghorn Antelope Decline  
 An Analysis by Bart O’Gara, Ph.D.**



A survey of pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) during 1996-97 was accomplished by mailing questionnaires to provincial and state wildlife agencies in Canada and the United States. Survey results were compared with similar surveys conducted during the

previous four decades. Apparently, a 36 percent population decrease occurred from 1983 to 1997, with the highest (25 to 30 percent) during 1995-1997 (Yoakum et al. 1998). Extensive surveys of pronghorn have been conducted at various intervals during the past 75 years (Nelson 1925; Yoakum 1968, 1978, 1986; Sundstrom et al. 1973; O’Gara 1996). These surveys indicate that numbers exceeded 30 million during the early 1800s and declined to some 15,000 by 1915. Antelope were later cited in one survey as hunted big game animals that have benefited from modern wildlife management practices in North America (Yoakum et al. 1996).

The continual population increase from 1915 to 1983 was concurrent with increased human activities on western rangelands. During that time span, thousands of acres of pronghorn habitat were modified or lost because of conversion of rangelands to agricultural crops and various other human

uses. Even though large tracts of the western landscape were no longer optimal for pronghorn, their numbers continued to increase. By virtue of closed seasons or closely regulated harvests and other management initiatives in the different provinces and states, pronghorn proved remarkably adaptive to human intrusions.

When population numbers for 1997 were compared with like data for 1995, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota reported major decreases. Telephone calls to various wildlife agencies to try to determine if reasons were known or postulated for the high losses produced varied responses. No agency contacted reported scientific findings to explain major declines, but each expressed intuitive explanations. For northern herds, the severe 1992-93 and 1996-97 winters coupled with droughty summers were reported as factors. R. Lanka (personal communication 1997) of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department noted that pronghorn did not bounce back after high mortality suffered during the 1992-93 winter.

Summaries of personal communications (1999) from biologists in the province and states that reported 48 percent or more decline in pronghorn numbers from 1995 to 1997 follows. Montana (Glen Erickson): A variety of factors including droughty summers, extremely low field mice populations and high coyote (*Canis latrans*) populations, plus low fawn survival (pronghorn and mule deer [*Odocoileus hemionus*]) began about 1993; the harsh winter of 1996-97 probably killed some pronghorn, but mange also impacted coyote populations; at the same time field mice increased along with fawn survival. South Dakota (Chuck Schluter): Severe winter weather was blamed, although few carcasses were found, probably because of high coyote numbers. Saskatchewan (Dwight Dobson): The number of does having twins and studies both indicate normal nutrition; weather not unusual; coyote numbers high and predation suspected on pronghorn and deer fawns. North Dakota (William Jensen): Archery hunt-

ing during the rut apparently disrupting breeding; possibly, because of that and few bucks, fawns are being born well into July, increasing vulnerability to coyotes; severe winter in 1996-97, but few carcasses found; if winterkill was high, abundant coyotes apparently scavenged the carcasses.

Severe winters led to high losses of pronghorn on the high plains - especially the Canadian provinces, Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming - during 1964-65, 1968-69 and 1977-78. No species-wide surveys documented overall losses from winters, but individual herds lost 50 to 75 percent of their members (see Compton 1970, McKenzie 1970, West 1970). In Wyoming, most of the animals died along woven-wire fences, and mortality was almost twice as high in fenced as opposed to unfenced areas (Oakley and Riddle 1974).

After the earlier die-offs, numbers rebounded rapidly. Most herds that lost 50 percent of their numbers regained them within two years, and that may happen again. However, only extremely severe winter weather was blamed in the earlier die-offs. The recent one apparently was preceded by a couple years of poor fawn survival, possibly as a result of droughty summers and/or predation. A graph of pronghorn numbers during the twentieth century, using the six continent-wide surveys available, resembles that of a population introduced to new habitat after the population had exceeded carrying capacity and declined toward carrying capacity.

It cannot be overemphasized that population surveys are merely estimates. However, they generally are accomplished by experienced wildlife biologists applying scientific procedures (Pojar et al. 1995). Recent surveys are more sophisticated than those conducted 30 to 40 years ago. They provide trend data when computed over a period of years, indicating whether a population is increasing, static or decreasing. Almost certainly, the piecemeal attrition of pronghorn habitat, particularly in critical wintering and fawning areas as well as in travel corridors, is accelerating. Dur-

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ing the 1980s and 1990s, intensified agriculture, subdivisions, accelerated energy development, upgrading of roads and other activities financed by a continent-wide, growing, affluent society prevailed. This may negatively influence recovery of pronghorn from inevitable weather-induced die-offs. Clearly, loss of pronghorn habitat translates to loss of pronghorn. Unfortunately, habitat losses tend to be insidious and go unreported and are not analyzed before the loss of pronghorn is substantial (Yoakum et al. 1998).

A survey in autumn 2000 probably will indicate whether the precipitous decline in pronghorn numbers during 1995-1999 was the beginning of an adjustment to deteriorating habitat quantity and quality or just another temporary setback that will right itself within a couple of years.

**SPECIAL REPORT**

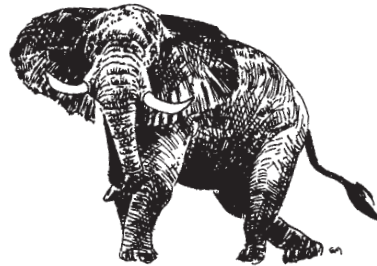
**News Analysis**

**Anti-hunters Now Say  
Elephants “Dangerous”**

**T**he antis are opposed to people having dominance over animals, wild and domestic alike.

Dominance includes use, control, ownership, possession and influence over wildlife. This includes the use of animals in circuses. Elephants are the center attraction of many circuses so their use and presence is a vital target to the antis. In Maryland in March this led to the introduction of legislation for a ban against the use of elephants in circuses. They have been successful in banning elephants in a few municipalities in the recent past. The shocker is the purported reason for the proposal. The antis are admitting that elephants are so dangerous that they are an “imminent public safety threat.” Their use has led to “disastrous incidents . . . with resulting deaths” and “injuries.” According to the Fund for Animals, they are “concerned about public safety.” They claim that “[s]ince 1990, captive elephants have killed at least 41 people and injured more than 100. These include two incidents in

Texas in 1997 when a circus elephant broke the arm and shoulder of a 65-year-old man and when another elephant crushed her handler to death; an incident in Wyoming in 1996 when an elephant used for giving children ‘elephant rides’ suddenly knocked down and repeatedly kicked the trainer; and an incident in New York in 1995 when two circus elephants went on a rampage, triggering a panic among hundreds of spectators that left 12 people injured.” The Fund reports that “[j]ust last month, an elephant from a circus broke loose in Poughkeepsie, New York, and charged the audience.” This recognition that elephants are dangerous animals may run up circus liability insurance rates and run circuses as we know them out of business. The irony is the Antis’ collection and use of proof that el-



phants are a public safety threat and are not the harmless creatures they have previously been misrepresented by Antis to be. Of course, we know elephants are dangerous. Our own information is that from 1976 to 1993, 17 zoo keepers in the United States were killed by elephants and the trend is worsening. Elephants are responsible for injuring more zoo keepers in the United States than any other animal. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Safety Council list elephant keeping just beneath coal mining, as the most dangerous occupation in America. In the United States, elephant keepers are at greater risk of being killed on the job than either police officers or fire fighters. Likewise, elephants kill more people in Africa than any other animal, according to those countries with

the best record keeping. We know that more people are killed by elephants in Kenya than elephants are killed by licensed sporthunters across the border in Tanzania. The second irony is that elephants in circuses and zoos in the United States may be killing and indirectly injuring more people than elephants are in some (though not all) African countries. Perhaps that is because African elephants have replaced Asian elephant in many places. At any rate, most of the elephants killed today are killed in problem animal control because of the menace they present, though poaching will always take its toll. The most significant problem today is their conflict with humans, according to authorities. If the Fund for Animals has its way, the circuses that have made elephants so dear to Americans will cease and hence be another loss of elephant habitat. It will be one more place they are not wel-

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*“One more distinct population of elephants is about to be eliminated (extinct), and guess who is doing it?”*

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come. One more distinct population of elephants is about to be eliminated (extinct), and guess who is doing it? However you view it, it confirms a dangerous tendency of the antis to push an animal agenda for public relations purposes even if it works against the interests of the animal it is supposed to help. To the antis, the end justifies the means and their agenda determines whether elephants are harmless, lovable creations or public safety threats. The antis have portrayed elephants to be docile and lovable in the past; now, they opportunistically are taking the exact opposite tack, calling them too dangerous to be allowed around people. Although the antis’ message that elephants are dangerous contradicts what they have said before, the effect is the same. If given their way, the anti’s will take steps that result in far fewer animals and less habitat for them.

## Briefly Noted

### **Animal Rights Versus Animal Welfare:**

There is one apparent distinction between animal welfare and animal rights. The advocates of animal welfare want to care for pets, while the ultimate goal of animal rightists is to eliminate pet ownership. The animal rights movement threatens the very existence of pets. Animal rightists have already gone a long way towards eliminating rabbits, chicks and turtles as pets, and right now they are making an effort to eliminate the use of the word “owner” in regulations and statutes relating to pets. They have a nationwide grassroots campaign underway to substitute the term “pet owner” with “pet guardian” wherever it appears in laws and regulations. Though it is easy to get confused over whether this is an animal welfare or animal rights movement, rest assured it is the work of animal rights groups and most certainly an overt step towards making pet “ownership” a thing of the past - even the term. The animal rightists are fond of drawing an analogy between human dominion over animals and society’s slavery of humans in the past. PETA recently got movie star Richard Pryor to send a letter “on behalf of PETA” to President Mandela of South Africa urging him to stop allowing the sale or transfer of live elephants. In a letter obviously written for him by PETA, he urged Mandela to “stop elephant ‘slave traders’ from operating in South Africa” and complains of “young Africans” being “sold into servitude” (elephants). The letter was a protest against surplus elephants being sold to zoos and parks around the world because “[t]hey cannot cry out for freedom” so please “join me in giving them a voice” against being “for sale to zoos, circuses and safari parks around the world.” Though Pryor may have been duped into equating animals with people, they most certainly are not.

**Unendangered Species:** While pronghorn antelope and mule deer populations has dipped, other game animals continue to increase in numbers. Dr.

Gary Wolfe, president of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, reports that elk in North America now exceed a million. He should know because the Foundation is playing a significant part in bringing these animals back. The Wild Turkey Federation reports that turkeys are probably at 4.75 million and expects that with some programs they have in mind, the population may reach five million in a few years. The Whitetail Institute reports that whitetail deer are up to 32 million! Their population has more than doubled in the past 15 years. There are an estimated 900,000 black bears in North America, and their numbers continue to grow. Big game animals are indeed growing more numerous, and there are more licensed big game hunters than at any time in history.

**Grand Slam Club:** The Grand Slam Club has renewed and increased its support of Conservation Force. It is an absolutely amazing organization that is the epitome of the Conservation Force theme that hunting is a force for wildlife conservation. The organization has 2,100 members of which 800 are Grand Slammers. The remarkable thing is that it has completed nearly

300 conservation projects! That is a project for every 2.6 Grand Slammers. Who can claim that they care more about wildlife and do more for it than hunters? If you want to join, you don’t have to have a Grand Slam. For more information, you can contact their very able President Dennis Campbell at PO Box 310727, Birmingham, Alabama 35231. Tel. 205-674-0101. Fax 205-674-0190. When you call, thank them for supporting Conservation Force.

**Boxer At It Again:** California senator Barbara Boxer has filed a bill supposedly to preserve the rights of cities to sue gun manufacturers by “providing a federal cause of action against firearms manufacturers, dealers and importers for the harm resulting from gun violence.” What her bill would really do is create a new and devastating cause of action against the firearms industry, which would shut it down altogether. The bill does not stand a chance of passage, but it is interesting to note that she and her cronies are the same senators that tried to stop funding for the poor people of CAMPFIRE last year!

**CITES Has 145 Members:** The CITES Secretariat reports that Azerbaijan acceded to CITES effective February 21, 1999. CITES now has 145 country members. The next CITES Conference is to be held in Nairobi, Kenya on April 10 - 20, 2000. The new appointed Secretary General of CITES is Willen Wijnsteckers. He has been the European Commission’s CITES expert for 20 years.

**Leopard Kills Student Ranger:** The IUCN Cat Specialist Group reports that a student ranger was killed by a leopard in Kruger National Park in front of a group of tourists he was escorting. He kept watch as the group descended from their vehicle. The leopard charged out of the bushes and grabbed him by the throat. Rangers arrived and had to shoot the leopard as it was feeding on the body. They reported that the leopard was old and mangy and had wounds from fights.

- 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



## **MEMO**

To: Jim Young, Print N Mail  
From: Nilton Aquino, The Hunting Report  
Re: April 1999 Issue of Conservation Force Supplement  
Date: April 8, 1998

Jim,

Here's the April 1999 issue of the Conservation Force Supplement, to be inserted in the April 1999 issue of The Hunting Report. Don't forget to insert John Jackson's picture on page 2. Please fax "blue lines" for approval ASAP.

Total print run is 4,275. That includes 4,021 copies for insertion into The Hunting Report (active circulation); and 50 copies to be shipped directly to John Jackson. The remaining 204 copies are to be shipped to us here in Miami. As usual, bill John Jackson for all costs relating to Conservation Force.

Please call if questions.

Nilton