



“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**

**THE PHENOMENAL GROWTH AND SIGNIFICANCE OF
 BIG GAME HUNTING**

**Presentation made by John J. Jackson, III
 at the 2nd World Conservation Trust Symposium
 on the Sustainable Use of Wildlife Resources**

Chendgu, China
 November, 1999

(Introductory Note: The International Wildlife Management Consortium-World Conservation Trust (IWMC) was founded in 1994 by Eugene Lapointe, former Secretary General of CITES. It encourages unity among the organizations and nations working for the conservation of nature through sustainable use of wildlife. It has a Panel of Experts of the world's leading authorities on the conservation of wild species and wild places. I serve on the panel as the representative of the international sport hunting community. At the next CITES Conference in Nairobi I will advise IWMC as well as be its spokesman to the world press on the issues relating to hunting. This includes sporthunting as a general form of sustainable use and specific issues like the proposal to list all urials on Appendix I and to place all African elephant back on Ap-

pendix I. I served on the Panel of Experts at the last CITES Conference in Harare, Zimbabwe as well. My panel position provides a unique opportunity to help serve the hunting community when and where it needs it the most. I welcome all useful information anyone has, particularly any information on the status and management of urials. The IWMC held a five-day international symposium on sustainable use the last week of November in Chengdu, People's Republic of China. It presented an opportunity to learn, to network and to prepare for the upcoming fight with the antis at CITES. It drew participants from 41 nations and covered everything from the outstanding conservation benefits being derived from the sporthunting of polar bears in Nunavat and Northwest Territories (Professor Milton Freeman, the Senior Research Scholar at the Canadian Cir-

cumpolar Institute) to the success of tourist elephant hunting programs in Botswana's Chobe Enclave Conservation Trust Area (Director Sedia Modise, the Director of Wildlife and Parks in Botswana.). The program was entitled "In Search of Innovative Conservation Initiatives." True to the theme of Conservation Force, sporthunting was cited many times for its contribution to conservation. It was gratifying to hear others describe successful programs that the principals of Conservation Force helped establish and that we continue to help maintain today. The growth of big game hunting, especially the number of hunters who travel, has created conservation opportunities never before imagined. We are proud to have helped put that to work for the good of all mankind. The following is the presentation I made on your behalf on the opening day of the IWMC Conference.)

The growth in big game sport hunting in North America continues to be phenomenal compared to other field activities. This is important because it provides wildlife and habitat stakeholders and conservation revenue. Let me describe that growth, compare it to other outdoor activities, describe some of its characteristics and point out what it means to wildlife conservation as one of the ultimate forms of sustainable use.

PHENOMENAL GROWTH

■ Big game hunting is the hunting of large species such as deer, turkey, moose, bear, caribou, pronghorn antelope, sheep, elk and goats. It has a growth rate of five percent in the US. Consequently, there are more licensed big game hunters in the United States than at any other time in recorded history - and their numbers are increasing faster than those of any similar activity. Big game hunting is more popular than it has ever been. This rate of growth exceeds the population growth rate of humans in the US.

The rate of growth that has made big game hunting more popular than it has ever been is not new. It is a trend that began with the licensing of hunters nearly a century ago. The total number of big game hunters in the US has tripled since the 1950's and doubled since the 1970's.

COMPARISON

■ Today, the growth rate of big game hunting sets it apart in a class by itself. It exceeds the growth rate of all other categories of hunting, such as waterfowl and small game hunting, and the growth rate of other outdoor activities such as fishing and wildlife watching. Nothing else has a growth rate as high as five percent. In the last five-year survey period (1991-1995), wildlife watching declined 17 percent. In fact, wildlife watching growth has been negative and declining in numbers in each of the three five-year survey periods over the past 15 years. Fishing, with its great number of participants is also declining. (Negative

growth). Big game hunting is the only category of activity covered in the National Survey whose growth rate equals or exceeds the US population growth rate. In the great competition for time, most other activities are in decline.

CHARACTERISTICS

■ Today, 81 percent of all US hunters hunt big game. It is the largest category of hunters by far, and the percentage of hunters that hunt big game is increasing. It is flourishing and increasing dramatically in the face of stable to declining overall participation rates of other hunting categories. Based on a recent analysis performed by Responsive Management under contract to Conservation Force in collaboration with Dallas Safari Club, "...big game hunting is the future of



hunting in the United States.” (Total hunter expenditure in the US was \$61 billion per year in 1996.)

The average big game hunter is also spending more time in the woods than ever before. The amount of time the average big game hunter is spending in the woods is up 20 percent. Big game hunters spend more time afield than all other categories of hunters, saltwater fishermen and even wildlife watchers. This is amazing when you consider that hunting seasons have been shortened to accommodate the increasing number of big game hunters while fishermen and wildlife watchers have not experienced comparably narrowing windows of time.

Big game hunters are not just the largest number of hunters. They make the largest financial contribution to the US conservation system as a group,

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and they make the largest financial contribution per capita, or per individual participant. Ditto Canada, according to a recent survey by the British Columbia Wildlife Federation. If you could choose which category of your conservation funding base would increase, wouldn't you choose the category proven to be able and willing to pay the most? Well, that is what we have, thanks to the phenomenal growth in big game hunting.

A big game hunter is much more likely to be a member of a sportsmen's conservation organization. While 26 percent of all big game hunters are members of sportsmen's organizations, only eight percent of other hunters are.

Big game hunters are much more likely to have a high fidelity to hunting than hunters who do not hunt big game. While 74 percent of those who hunt big game hunt every year in a five-year period, that is true of only 55 percent of other hunters. This makes it a more reliable conservation base.

The reasons big game hunters hunt are:

- 41 percent for the sport
- 27 percent for the meat
- 21 percent to be close to nature
- 11 percent to be with friends and family

WHAT DOES THE PHENOMENA MEAN?

■ First it means that video games such as “Deer Hunter I, II, and III” and “Rocky Mountain Trophy Hunter” are the hottest video computer games in North America. These games have been first place and the top-ten in sales of video computer games from their introduction a few years ago.

It means we have sporting good stores across the US that have grown to be larger in size than supermarkets - larger even than “giant” supermarkets and that are now approaching the size of shopping centers and malls. One of my big game hunting acquaintances, Johnny Morris, who owns Bass Pro Shops, is building 25 super stores filled with big game hunting items at the cost of over \$25 million each. That is the cost of the structures, not the contents. One of them is 300,000 square feet and most of them resemble miniature Disneyland entertainment

centers. You take your whole family and spend the day. It is fashionable - it is “in” like never before.

It means that big game hunters' conservation organizations are flourishing and that the American sportsman is continuing his dominance of North American conservation. The hunting and fishing paradigm remains the status quo in American conservation. It bolsters the contribution traditionally made by sportsmen such that they continue to pay for 85 percent of the conservation system. Species-specific sportsmen's conservation organizations such as the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep are able to auction special sheep hunting tags for as high as \$400,000 when the proceeds go to “putting sheep back on the mountain.” Of course, it also means that the sheep populations in North



America have gone from little more than 30,000 to over 200,000 because of sportsmen's stewardship. It means that the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's Budget has increased 1,000 fold in less than a decade and that elk numbers have gone from 800,000 to over 1,200,000 during the same period of time. It means that the North American Wild Turkey Federation has mushroomed in size and been largely responsible for bringing the wild turkey population up to five million. Despite these successes, it would not be fair to fail to mention a waterfowl hunters organization that is the leading conservation organization in America. Ducks Unlimited has 6,200 fund raisers a year, more than a \$100 million annual budget (excluding Canada and Mexico,) nearly 800,000 members, is responsible for eight mil-

lion acres of habitat and has spent \$1.3 billion on conservation. There are more than 100 million ducks in US flyways today (105,000 million - more than at any time in recorded history). In that shadow, big game hunters still have a long way to go. Still, it means that the dominate big game animal, the whitetail deer, has grown to 32-34 million in number. It means that black bear numbers are over 800,000 in North America. The demand has generated and supported an increased supply of game animals. Consequently, the often repeated concern today is about conflicts with wildlife not the survival of wildlife. I should add that sportsmen in the USA have always paid more for non-game conservation than anyone else as well. (Wildlife Management Institute)

In the political realm, it has meant the development of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus in the US Congress and its supporting Foundation. It is the largest *ad hoc* caucus in Congress and big game hunters have been its base from the inception.

Big game hunting is also at the base of the growth of nonresident hunting. Most hunters who hunt outside of their home states (three out of every four) are big game hunters. Those nonresident big game hunters typically provide 85 percent of the conservation revenue of states in the US West. Resident hunters have not always responded favorably to this competition for the resource from outsiders. They have established legislative and regulatory restraints in the form of nonresident license fees priced 20 times higher than resident fees, and they have placed limits on the number of nonresident licenses. Conservation Force is leading the legal challenge to those restraints in trade that are holding wildlife and land values artificially low.

There is another form of nonresident hunting that has taken off due to the growth of big game hunting, and that is big game hunting in foreign lands or so called “safari hunting.” This has created increased conservation opportunities that were never possible before. In the last quarter of a century the number of safari clubs in

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America have gone from two (the Shikar Safari Club International and African Safari Club of Florida) to nearly 200. The largest of them is Safari Club International that has an Annual Convention with 1,100 booths hawking safaris and safari equipment.

New conservation opportunities abound because of this form of big game hunting. There would be no CAMPFIRE Association, Chobe Enclave Conservation Trust, BOP parks, Inuit Hunting Associations, many conservancies or other programs without big game hunting - and these have only evolved over the past 10 years. From the safari hunting of elephants in Africa (which generates \$50 million dollars of foreign exchange)... to markhor hunting in Pakistan... to polar bear hunting in the Arctic North, big game

hunting is a significant part of the wildlife and habitat conservation equation - it is part of the solution - a force for conservation.



CONCLUSION

■ I have really been talking about sustainable use. Hunting, and today

that means big game hunting, has become a time-tested form of sustainable use with a vast array of benefits. In North America, licensed, regulated hunting is recognized as the single greatest conservation development of the 20th century. (Geist) It has been the conservation status quo. Today that means big game hunting. Big game hunting has the greatest growth, has had it for the longest term, and that growth exceeds everything else and has the most devoted followers. It is at the top of the conservation paradigm in North America as we enter the 21st century. It will continue to be one of the foremost forces for conservation. - John J. Jackson, III. (Addendum: Conservation Force in collaboration with the Dallas Safari Club has commissioned a study of this phenomena by Responsive Management.)

Briefly Noted

CITES: November 12 was the deadline for countries to submit proposals to list, uplist or downlist species at the 11th Conference of the Parties in April, 2000. Germany has proposed listing all urial on Appendix I, which would require that an import permit be issued before hunters could bring their trophies home. The proposal openly targets regulated hunting. Kenya and India have proposed uplisting the elephant in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia to Appendix I, where it was before. That would effect hunting by requiring import permits for trophies from those three countries again. Though elephant tourist hunting is not the direct target, we expect it to come under attack and fully expect Kenya to be a circus for animal extremists. In response, the three countries have filed their own proposals for authority to continue trade in elephant parts. The Republic of South Africa has submitted a proposal to downlist its elephants for trade as well. Elephant numbers are up in all four countries. In fact, Botswana now has 106,000 elephants, which is the most in any country.

Wolves And Pets: Thanks to Conservation Force, the US Fish & Wildlife Service has finally adopted a new rule which allows it to control wolves that kill pets. Before Conservation Force's intervention, the service only controlled (destroyed or relocated) wolves

when they killed cattle or sheep. The object of the control measure is to get the support, confidence and tolerance of ranchers for the presence of wolves by controlling those few that begin eating livestock. Conservation Force wrote a comment suggesting that the control measures should also include wolves that brutally destroy pets that may be far dearer to a rancher and his family than livestock raised for slaughter. Upon examination, it is an obvious point, but no one had ever made it in over five years of wolf control, nor did anyone else suggest it when the rules were being revised for the next five-year period.

New Support: The African Safari Club of Florida and Game Conservation International have joined the number of organizations around the world supporting Conservation Force. The African Safari Club of Florida is one of the oldest and most prestigious safari clubs. It has become a full “sponsoring organization.” We look forward to a closer alliance with these exemplary organizations. - 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.



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