



“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

Special Report On Hunting

Why We Do It; Its Conservation Benefits

The North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference is one of the most important conferences I attend on your behalf each year. It is the annual gathering of the professional management community responsible for stewardship of wildlife, fish and other natural resources at the state, provincial and federal levels in North America. The 66th program just held included more than five days and 150 meetings of committees, working groups, task forces and management teams gathered to address the issues, problems and continuing programs into the future.

This year there was a special two-part session to take an in-depth look at the Changing Role of Hunting in North American Conservation. The first session of the program dealt with the human value, motivation and the importance of hunting in human terms. The second part focused on the conservation value or benefits derived from hunting and hunters. A

diverse array of practicing professionals from the US and Canada presented thoughtful, even provocative examinations of why more than 15 million licensed hunters hunt, what the role of hunting is in conservation and how it contributes other values



to society. “Why We Hunt” was last addressed at the conference 42 years ago by Paul Shepard and others. His widow presented a paper at this program.

Why We Hunt....

■ Today we know that the public

perception of hunting and acceptance of hunting varies dramatically with what they perceive the motivations for hunting to be. The deep, complex, philosophical and personal motivation for hunting relates more with the value of hunting in human terms and more with what we are and what is important to our essence than with our normal preoccupation with the animals we hunt. Though both non-hunters and hunters themselves do not fully appreciate that hunting is the greatest generator of wildlife conservation, there is even less understanding of its importance and worth to humans for itself and what it uniquely provides to man himself.

Today it is the morality of hunting that is most under attack. At Conservation Force we believe that attack on hunters is immoral! We believe that there is a moral right to hunt within sustainable limits and that it is so important to man in human terms that it is deserving of protection on moral grounds. It is anti-

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social, offensive and immoral for anti-hunters to attack what is so unique and fundamentally valuable in human terms to the significant minority who hunt.

The speakers also described some of the human virtues nurtured by hunting. It furthers character virtues like self reliance, responsibility, competence, discipline and resolve. It employs and awakens our senses and our physical condition. As beings we are programmed or designed to be hunters. It is our essence. Hunting made us human. It has shaped our evolution and development. It is our “authenticity.” (Paul Shepard) Hunting uniquely provides self actualization, completeness and expression which are complex, higher order needs deserving of protection. These

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are human needs higher on the needs scale than food, and security. It puts us in touch with our past and with ourselves. It is recreational only in that it is not commercial, but it is much more than just a recreational pursuit. If we were deprived of it, we would lose more than recreation. It is more than our heritage and culture, it is our essence.

Hunting and our prey made us what we are today. We are wired to hunt. It helped define who and what we are. A study by Jan Dizard demonstrates three of the values of hunting in human terms. (1) It is a form of historical re-enactment; (2) it embodies an honest relationship between humans and nature; and (3) it keeps alive the ideal of self-reliance, which is argued by some scholars to be the only distinctive American contribution to political philosophy. The historical re-enactment aspect is why hunting gives a hunter a deeper appreciation of the past. For example, many hunters feel a kinship to and respect for American Indians. To many, hunting is “like entering a time

capsule” and puts us “in touch with a life” we dream about or a time we “imagine to have been simpler and somehow more virtuous.” It is a relationship with nature that is uniquely honest. It brings us in contact with the natural world in the most natural way. It has a sacredness to those who hunt that will never end. That relationship teaches us basic truths of life and death while almost everything else in life masks reality and how life works, not just where our food comes from. While those who have illusions about nature evade responsibility and even acknowledgment of the life and death process, hunters “take personal responsibility for the conservation use they make of nature.” Witness the enormity of our conservation system. Those who kill and eat what they harvest know a sense of self-sufficiency and more truthful worldview than those who evade the truth and delude themselves about their consumption and responsibility. Hunters embrace and celebrate the eating of the game they have shot. Non-hunters never experience this. It is symbolic of self-sufficiency and self-reliance while it is “an expression of a particular sense of self.”

Delwin Benson and Daniel Decker used Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs Theory” to provide insight into why we hunt in contemporary times. That theory, or model, divides human needs into five elements as follows: (1) philosophical needs that are necessities like food and water; (2) safety and security needs to reduce risk; (3) love, belonging and affiliation need; (4) self-esteem, including identity recognition and achievement needs; (5) self-actualization. This model provides a new philosophical understanding of the relationship of human hunting behavior to levels of psychological needs. Each level can be treated as reasons, motivations or satisfactions sought, in short, why we do something. Hunting can and frequently does fulfill all five elements of the model of psychological need or motivation. For example, supplying

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game meat fulfills the physiological need for food, number one, but it also fulfills higher order needs including self-esteem from the achievement, recognition and sense of self reliance, number two, as well as need for affiliation when ceremoniously celebrating at the meat pot or at time of consumption, number three. (Incidentally, the estimated weight of game meat that is consumed in the US is 950 million pounds, which is the equivalent of two million beef cattle each year.) The human behaviorists are quick to point out that hunting is “distinct from other human behaviors in that it provides a direct link to the land, wild animals living on that land, and our North American history of human-nature interaction where other experiences may not.” “Hunting is a unique form of expression within the function of humans who are truly part of nature “in an intimate and participatory way.”

All five levels of the model can naturally be fulfilled by hunting, but “self actualization” holds the most fascination for me. The first four categories are considered “developmental” in the theory. They are “Becoming” stages compared to the final stage, self-actualization, when one arrives at the stage of “Being.” One who reaches this stage is motivated to pursue activities that they find spiritually fulfilling. The reasons for hunting at this level are not experienced by everyone. It is the “complete” hunter. It is a higher level experience that follows from those below. It is “more abstract, spiritual, emotional and pluralistic,” thus more difficult to describe in words. It may be a “temporary . . . state of being rather than the constant search for needs fulfillment.” These hunters have “become.” Self-actualizing people are more self-disciplined, authentic, and genuine than other people, according to Maslow. In these “psychologically healthy people he found duty and pleasure to be the same thing, as were work and play, self-interest and altruism, and individualism and selflessness.”

Hunting uniquely fulfills our highest order needs as well as our most basic needs. No single stereotypical hunter exists, for different hunters hunt for different reasons or needs.

There are other substitute means of achieving these human needs and satisfactions in life other than hunting, so why do we choose to fulfill these needs through hunting? There are multiple reasons including recreation, cultural roots, social experience, spiritual experience, heritage and self-identity. The common denominator is that “hunters have a psychological propensity for activities that provide a close tie with the life and death process of nature.” It “allows some humans to be more than mere observers . . .” “Hunting allows entrance into nature again as participants . . .” which is man’s true



and most natural relationship. In a sense, hunters “take a life in order to be part of living.” It is a cognitive experience and relationship that is unique while “a ritual that is probably an instinctive part of their (hunters) genetic wiring.” Moreover, “Capacities of humans strain to be applied, developed and honed.” Expression of capacities in humans is also a human need.” Modern, regulated hunting helps us express our capacity to participate very constructively while it fulfills the “needs” to do so.

Urbanites who hunt big game are the largest pool of hunters today. My own thinking is that though the five levels of psychological needs can be filled in substitute activities in the city, urban hunters are beckoned to more richly experience life and the

natural world in the most authentic and natural way. Some reach a temporary state of completeness, of being a healthy, whole man or woman because of self-actualization in its most original and authentic form. We were born to hunt. Aldo Leopold, the father of wildlife management, liked to “arrive too early in the marsh” just for “an adventure in pure listening.” He wrote that hunting “is not merely an acquired taste; the instinct that finds delight in the sight and pursuit of game is bred into the very fiber of this race . . . the love of hunting is almost a physiological characteristic . . . We are dealing, therefore, with something that lies very deep. Some can live without opportunity for the exercise and control of the hunting instinct, just as I suppose some can

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live without work, play, love, business, or other vital adventure. But in these days we regard such deprivations as unsocial. Opportunity for exercise of all the normal instincts has come to be regarded more and more as an inalienable right.” “[H]unting and fishing are an indispensable social resource of tremendous national value. . .” “Of course we hunters have always known this, but until recently we failed to tell the public.”

Jose Ortega y Gasset wrote that “Hunting submerges man deliberately in that formidable mystery and therefore contains something of a religious rite and emotion in which homage is paid to what is divine, transcendent, in the laws of nature. It is a transcendent experience. We know the gathered as only those in the choir know it.” This meshes well with President Teddy Roosevelt’s

statement that “We grieve only for what we know.” “The erasure of (a species) is no cause for (real) grief if one knows it only as a name in a botany book.”

The Conservation Benefits

■ The Second Session dealt with the conservation benefits of our hunting system. Hunting is a conservation generator that is both enormous and indispensable. We have been the caretakers of America’s wildlife as long as man has accepted that responsibility. This is the value of hunting as a wildlife conservation tool, while the first session addressed the value of hunting as a human experience and need. Hunting serves both people and animals. Our system ensures it will do both perpetually. Hunters’ responsibility for habitat protection was particularly enlightening. Hunters are largely responsible for the creation of the National Wildlife Refuge System and have funded 69 percent of its 93 million acres. Ditto the 86.3 million acres of state wildlife management areas funded with license fees and Pittman-Robertson Act firearm and ammunition revenue. Sportsmen-sponsored Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has added another 35 million acres, and the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) has enrolled more than 912,000 acres of private lands mostly in permanent easements. These alone total more than 1.1 billion acres! These lands are twice the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Forest Service and National Park lands combined. Yet they do not begin to include most private hunting habitat, which has not been quantified. We do know that US hunters spent \$923 million in 1996 on hunting leases alone. Our organizations also enhance habitat like Ducks Unlimited’s restoration and enhancement of more than 10 million acres of wetlands, National Wild Turkey Federation’s 2.22 million acres, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation’s 3 million acres, Quail Unlimited’s 400,000 acres, Pheasant Forever’s 2 million acres, and Ruffed Grouse Society’s 450,000 acres.

The success of our wildlife conservation system is unprecedented. The very formation, structure and evolution of that system and modern wildlife agencies has arisen from hunting. Of course, hunting provides the largest source of revenue. Hunting and fishing license fees and excise taxes on firearms provide \$2 billion a year in funding that is *indispensable*. Recent surveys show that influence has not diminished. The



government receives another \$1.4 billion (1996) in state income tax revenue and \$1.7 billion in federal income tax. In 1996 (a new survey will be out next year), the federal income tax revenue alone was nearly twice the 1996 budgets of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Bio-

logical Service and National Park Service combined! (Rob Southwick of Southwick Associates and Melinda Gable of Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation.) “The combination of hunters to wildlife agencies’ conservation mission are long, wide and deep.” No one has ever restored more wildlife. Hunters continue to be the force behind “the greatest environmental success story of the twentieth century,” according to Valerious Geist and many scholars. Finally, Aldo Leopold’s “land ethic” in *A Sand County Almanac* summed up the modern relevance of hunting. “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to do otherwise.”

Briefly Noted

Upcoming Meetings: The next Governor’s Hunting Heritage Conference is to be November 10-13, 2001 in Houston, Texas. The 12th CITES Conference of the Parties is to be in Chile November 4 - 15, 2002. The next North American Wildlife Conference is to be April 3-7, 2002 in Dallas, Texas. The 3rd International Wildlife Management Conference of The Wildlife Society is to be in New Zealand December 1-5, 2003.

Cheetah: Namibia stakeholders have decided to continue the Cheetah Compacts and to promote execution by the new private and communal conservancies in the country. The Compact has been renewed and strengthened. The proposed motion to abandon the Compact was withdrawn at Conservation Force’s urging. We attended the Namibia Professional Hunting Association (NAPHA) Annual General Membership Meeting in March.

Cullman-Hurt Community Wildlife Project: Conservation Force has become the North American 501(c)(3) funding arm of the Cullman-Hurt Community Wildlife Project in Tanzania. This is a world renown program that has reduced poaching conserved game and provided community benefits for local people in the hunting concessions.

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 Abdorrezza 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: Aymara Hernandez, The Hunting Report
Re: April 2001 Issue of Conservation Force Supplement
Date: March 27, 2001

Jim,

Here's the April 2001 issue of the Conservation Force Supplement to be inserted in The Hunting Report. Don't forget to insert John Jackson's picture on page 2. Please fax "blue lines" for approval A.S.A.P.

Print run is 4,900. Please ship all overs as usual.

Please call me if you have any questions.

Aymara