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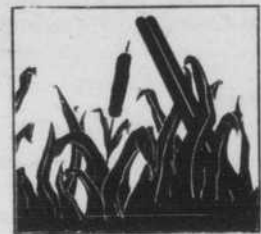


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Hunting: is it necessity or slaughter ?

It's slaughter, say opponents



We take the belief that every American is a natural born hunter. And every fall a great number of men set out to prove that without talent, training, knowledge or practice they are dead shots with rifle or shotgun. The results are horrid.

... Somehow the hunting process has to do with masculinity, but I don't quite know how. I know there are any number of good and efficient hunters who know what they are doing, but many more are overweight gentlemen, primed with whisky and armed with high-powered rifles.

John Steinbeck in "Travels with Charlie"

John Steinbeck's words written in 1960 are no less true today — many people share a feeling of revulsion about hunting. For some it follows naturally from a pacifist point of view and for others it is simply a disgust for the bloodletting which must accompany killing.

Wendell Wood, president of the Oregon Natural Resources Council, is "philosophically" opposed to hunting.

Even if it could be proved that for every deer shot there would be one to take its place, "some people would want to kill it and others would say no way," he says.

Wood is one of the ones who wouldn't touch the gun.

Keith Nelson, associate coordinator of the Outdoor Program, agrees.

"I do not hunt and never will," says Nelson. "I don't think it is an appropriate use of the wilderness."

Recreationally, Nelson doesn't like the restraints it places on him.

"It makes a large part of the wilderness off limits," he says. "I'm leery to go out when there are individuals who will shoot at things that move. I'm not saying they're wild or careless, but I am apprehensive. In this way, it impacts on me. I'm selfish. I don't want to get shot."

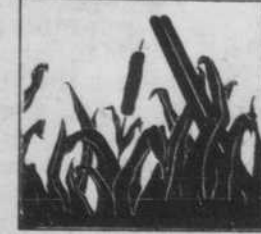
Those against hunting do not view it as a sport at all.

"Hunting is a euphemism for a killing game where one of the contestants is armed and the other is not," says Barbara Kelley of Save Our Ecosystems.

"It's not sporting to use a high powered rifle against a defenseless animal," says Nelson. "There are so many things going against wildlife — the loss of habitat, continual development of metro areas — that wildlife doesn't need another thing against them."

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It's necessary, say supporters



Jim Greer, a state wildlife biologist, calls it the "brown-eyed Bambi syndrome."

Marvin Caine, a local hunter and vice-president of the Emerald Empire Gun Club, believes it panders to an emotionalism that denies reality.

Both are referring to the anti-hunting mentality that glorifies the wide-eyed innocence of the forest's creatures and slings mud on the "blood-thirsty savages" that stalk those creatures.

"It's an emotional thing for the general public," says Greer, who is the state wildlife biologist for all of Lane County except the coastal areas. "The general non-hunting public is often uninformed, and they don't understand that we have to have a hunting season if we are going to keep the overall herd balanced and healthy."

Although Greer says he can understand people making a personal choice not to hunt, he wishes they understood why herds of animals like the deer and elk have to be "managed."

There are two major reasons, says Greer. One is the fact that nature follows a "boom or bust" cycle in which deer herds often starve to death during bust cycles.

"If an animal isn't going to make it thru the winter, then you have to ask how he going to die," Greer asks. "What are some of the things that can be done to prevent that animal from dying?"

Part of the answer is looking at the herd as a whole rather than individual animals, says Greer. With a well-policed hunting season, you can prune some animals from the herd to insure that the animal population as a whole is compatible with the land resources in the area, says Greer.

That way, only 20 percent of the herd might be reduced selectively instead of 80 percent of the herd through a difficult winter.

"We're trying to take that annual winter loss and put it to some use, which would be the hunter's refrigerator," he says.

The second reason for hunting, according to Greer, is to reduce a herd's impact on land resources — both agricultural and timber.

Because of the current variety of forest areas — ranging from clearcut areas brimming with undergrowth to old-growth sections with little undergrowth — herds have more forage, feed and cover than before, Greer says.

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