

About Hunting

"Hunting is one of the hardest things to think about. Such a storm of conflicting emotions." (Abby 2000: 11)

It is also hard to write about if one is to leave out a litany of anecdotes and hunting stories. What does one say about hunting that will carry meaning for and be useful to hunters and non-hunters alike?

The following is drawn from a number of references and the thoughtful authors are allowed to speak in their own words - that is a large number of quotes are used to talk about hunting. The full reference for each publication used is shown at the end of this document while the page number is shown at the time a quote is used.

Table of Contents

[Hunting Defined](#)

[What Makes a Hunt? What Makes a Hunter?](#)

[Hunting Ethics](#)

[A Natural Relationship](#)

[Hunter's Contributions](#)

[The Future](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Additional Information](#)

Hunting Defined

Jose Ortega (1942: Page 87) suggests that "Hunting is, then, clearly a relationship between two animals of different zoological level, a relationship in which two systems of instincts confront each other: the aggressive instincts of the hunter and the defensive instincts of the game."

Robert Jones (1996: 129) looks back to ancient times for a definition: "Hunting, like religion, is incomplete without death. Indeed it is a religion, older, deeper and more visceral than Judaism or Christianity or even Islam, as old at least as the Pleistocene cave paintings of the Dordogne or Altamira. It has its own prayers, of thanks coupled with a plea for forgiveness each time we kill what we seek; its own dark sacraments and rituals and symbols; its own distinctive art."

According to Ortega (1942: 52), the definition of hunting has remained unchanged for thousands of years. He compares a scene of a deer hunt painted on a cave wall near Valencia, Spain by Paleolithic man to one that might be painted of a 1940 hunt and says there are no "important" differences.

[Return to top](#)

What Makes a Hunt? What Makes a Hunter?

"Seeing a flock of Canada geese from a blind in the prairie potholes is far different from seeing a flock on a golf course or city park." (Seng et.al. 2001: 203)

Only those who have experienced waiting for, seeing and calling Canada geese in the hunting blind will understand the above. And almost everyone who has done so has also watched geese in the city and knows the difference. Those who have experienced only "city" geese cannot envision hearing geese, first behind them at a half mile, then turning in response to a hunter's flute call, increasing the intensity of their insider conversation, swinging over the decoys, quieter now, and turning into the wind to land.

"It is not essential to the hunt that it be successful. On the contrary, if the hunter's efforts were always and

inevitably successful it would not be the effort we call hunting, it would be something else. ... The beauty of hunting lies in the fact that it is always problematic. ... Doubtless, man opens this margin (ecological distance) to the beast deliberately and of his own free will. He could annihilate quickly and easily most animal species, or at least precisely those he delights in hunting. ... There is, then, in the hunt as a sport a supremely free renunciation by man of the supremacy of his humanity." (Ortega 1942: 57)

Ortega argues that most all the things that man does are the means to an end - man works, expends energy, to achieve or get something. He then says: "But in hunting as a sport this order of means and end is reversed. To the sportsman the death of the game is not what interests him; that is not his purpose. What interests him is everything that he had to do to achieve that death - that is, the hunt. (Ortega 1942: 110)

He continues this discussion of the death of an animal: "Death is essential because without it there is no authentic hunting: the killing of the animal is the natural end of the hunt and that of hunting itself, *not* the hunter. ... To sum up, one does not hunt in order to kill; on the contrary, one kills in order to have hunted." (Ortega 1942: 110)

Ortega brings the following perspective to the fact that man hunts at all: "In order to subsist, this early man had to dedicate himself wholly to hunting. Hunting was, then, the first occupation, man's first work and craft. ... Hunting was, then, the first *form of life* that man adopted, and this means - it should be fundamentally understood - *that man's being consisted first in being a hunter.*" (Ortega 1942: 118)

Ann Causey (1996: 85 & 88) adds: "Whereas ecologists study systems from without, examining and analyzing from a perspective necessarily distanced from their subject, dedicated hunters live and learn from within, knowing parts of nature as only a parent or child can know his or her own family. ... Hunters celebrate their evolutionary heritage and stubbornly refuse to be stripped of their atavistic urges - they refuse to be sterilized by modern culture and thus separated from nature. ... Moreover, there is no one factor that motivates all hunters to hunt or even that motivates one hunter on each hunt; nor is there such a thing as the hunter's mind-set."

These writers bring the essence of hunters and hunting to just a few words. Hunting is not just something people do: it is something they long to do. And if not permitted to do so through any set of circumstances, the hunter would be as sad as angry. The modern hunter has more than accepted - even demanded - limits on hunting, as noted above by Ortega.

Phil Seng (2001: 222) and his co-authors noted: "Hunting has been shown to contribute positively to the development of individuals, the cohesiveness of families and the vitality of communities. In doing so, it contributes to the conservation of culture in North America." The total loss or even a reduced level of these much-needed contributions would indeed be sad.

[Return to top](#)

Hunting Ethics

"Grandpa Wilson once told me: 'A good hunter .. that's somebody the animals come to. But if you lose your luck with a certain kind of animal - maybe you talk wrong about it or don't treat it with respect - then for a while you won't get any, no matter how hard you try.'" (Nelson 1996: 317)

Hunting ethics is an immense subject and there will be no attempt here to fully examine it. Thousands upon thousands of words have been written about it including essentially all of the references below which in turn contain many other references.

Ortega (1942: 35) did provide a summary: Hunting "involves a complete code of ethics of the most distinguished design; the hunter who accepts the sporting code of ethics keeps his commandments in the

greatest solitude, with no witnesses or audience other than the sharp peaks of the mountain, the roaming cloud, the stern oak, the trembling juniper, and the passing animal."

We shall leave the deeper examination of the ethics of hunting to the reader.

[Return to top](#)

A Natural Relationship

Ortega and Causey point to a strong relationship between hunters, their evolutionary heritage and Paleolithic man. Ortega: (1942: 129): says that hunting is the "only occupation that permits him (the real hunter) something like vacation from his human condition." He argues that "Happiness has generally been thought to be simplicity and primitivism."

Ortega (1942: 139) brings a perspective to this idea by saying "Man is a fugitive from Nature. He escaped from it and began to make history... History is always made against the grain of Nature." This concept is explored in depth in a book entitled *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn (Quinn 1992).

Quinn (1992) contrasts two groups of people: Takers and Leavers. The "Mother Culture" of most humans today - the Takers - began when man adopted agriculture as a way of life and a belief system that holds that the world was made for him. He was here to own and conquer the earth, an idea depicted everyday in phrases such as "our environment, our seas, our solar system. ... our wildlife." (Quinn 1992: 64) The Mother Culture leads us to believe that man is exempt from the "laws" of nature that govern all the lesser creatures. Further, if humans can increase control of the earth, any problems created by ignoring these laws can be fixed.

The Leavers, who have retained their hunter-gatherer and pastoralists life styles, find that nature provides them the things they need. They live their lives in a manner that is best for them without a presumption that they know what is best for others. They did not invent their culture but rather are living their ecological and evolutionary history as it naturally came into being.

Each generation of Takers is more cut-off from their Leaver past because the Takers threw out the Leaver reality and started their own history. Takers assume that humans came into being at the same time as their culture - that their culture made them human. Leavers have simply continued their inherent connection to the larger natural community around them and they abide by that community's laws.

While Quinn (1992) doesn't discuss hunting explicitly, it is easy to see that modern hunters are able to step into the Leavers world, even if briefly. They are able to step back from the Mother Culture and acknowledge and even participate in a life style as part of the living ecological community that makes man what he is.

[Return to top](#)

Hunter's Contributions to Society

This section focuses on economics and other tangible contributions hunters have and continue to make to North American wildlife and wild land conservation.

The information in the following table was collected from a recent professional paper (Southwick et.al. 2001) and shows the enormous contributions hunters have made to wildlife and habitat conservation over the last six decades. More than \$8.9 billion dollars have been expended by hunters and hunting organizations protecting more than 43 million acres of habitat for **ALL wildlife**, not just game species. These habitats include the entire gamut of ecological types in and the entire breadth of North America. No other conservation program has spent more or accomplished so much.

Program or Organization	Start Year*	Dollars	Habitat (acres)
Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson)	1937	4.1 billion+	Acres are included at State Wildlife Agencies
Federal Duck Stamp	1934	500 million	4.5 million
North American Wetlands Conservation Act	1989	1.5 billion	7 million
State Wildlife Agencies - Land Owned			14 million
U.S. Hunting Licenses/Stamps	In 1998	561 million	
Canadian Hunters	1985	900 million	
Ducks Unlimited, Inc	1937	1.2 billion	10 million
National Wild Turkey Federation	1973	120 million	2.2 million
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	1984		3 million
Quail Unlimited	1981	6 million	400,000
Pheasants Forever	1982	70 million	2 million
Ruffed Grouse Society	1961	7 million**	450,000**
Foundation for North American Wild Sheep	1976	20 million	
Totals		8.9 billion	43.5 million
+ Central Flyway states have received about \$915,000 or 22% of the total.			
* Except where noted, contributions are for the period from the Start Year through 2000			
** 1985-2000			

To put some of the contributions hunters make into a perspective, consider the following statistics from 1996 (USDI 1996): 14 million hunters spent 257 million days afield and \$21 billion on retail purchases creating over 700,000 jobs with wages and salaries of over \$16 billion and a total economic "multiplier" effect of \$61 billion.

"If hunting were a company, it would generate sales equal to United Parcel Service and support three times more jobs than Wal-Mart. ... State and federal income tax revenues generated by United States' sportsmen exceed the combined box office earnings of the all time top ten films (Titanic, Star Wars, E.T., Jurassic Park, Forest Gump, The Lion King, Return of the Jedi, Independence Day, The Empire Strikes Back and Home Alone)." (Southwick et.al. 2001: 240) Three million of these hunters hunted migratory birds, spent 26 million days afield and \$1.3 billion. 1.6 million hunters own or lease 362 million acres of land at a cost of \$3.2 billion (USDI 1996). Much of this land is managed to improve habitat for all the animals that live there.

[Return to top](#)

The Future

A conclusion of a recent study is that "hunters and hunting have and will continue to contribute a great deal to our (wildlife agencies') missions." (Williams et.al. 2001: 251) This is good news for hunters and non-hunters alike since hunters demand that agencies manage habitats in a sound manner. This benefits all species of wildlife and sustains the diversity needed for a healthy ecosystem to thrive.

However, Ortega (1942: 79) offers this warning: "Now it is a matter of a dramatic reality: that the game is disappearing, that hunting is dying, that soon man will have to stop being a hunter, and that this outstanding form of his happiness is on the verge of vanishing." He blames progress or "'humanizing' the planet."

Quinn (1942: 243) takes this a bit further and suggests that the Mother Culture depicts man as the end of evolution. This premise leads to there being no successor to man. And as mankind takes more and more control of the earth, reducing diversity and trust in the Leavers culture, the devastation will be complete and the Mother Culture will fill its destiny of ceasing to exist. However, Quinn (1992:246) offers an alternative scenario. If the Leavers philosophy - that where man is part of the larger natural community as opposed to conqueror - can be adopted, man can become the model on which the future of millions of years is based. That hunters can play an important role in instituting this latter alternative is clear. They, along with a few tribes of peoples around the world, already have the ability to envision such a future.

Hunters and other conservationists have been trying to keep the earth as "wild" as possible. And the Governors' and Premiers' Symposium on North America's Hunting Heritage is working on the maintenance of hunting. They drafted a [Millennium Accord on North America's Hunting Heritage](#) in August 2000 at their Ontario, Canada meeting. Discussion on adoption of a final Accord is scheduled for the Governor's and Premier's Symposium on Hunting Heritage in Houston, Texas in 2003. Four Purposes are identified for the Accord:

1. Create a philosophical environment for consensus and action on hunting related programs, strategies and initiatives.
2. Showcase and renew hunters contributions and commitments to wildlife conservation.
3. Provide focus to hunters' efforts not only in wildlife conservation, but in hunter education, safety, recruitment, ethics and cooperative initiatives with others.
4. Provide a basis for progress reporting by agencies and organizations associated with hunting.

And finally, Phil Seng (2001: 224) and his co-authors ask this thought provoking question: "Does the hunting community have a responsibility to provide these broad benefits to society, or does society have the responsibility to help sustain hunting because of the benefits accrued?"

[Return to top](#)

Conclusion

An attempt has been made to define hunting in the words of thoughtful writers and philosophers. In each case, they reached back to ancient times when man was simply a part of the larger natural community - when hunting was a way of life. They describe modern hunters as maintaining that connection.

The importance of the hunt itself - and its natural outcome, the death of an animal - was discussed. The necessary approach required by hunters to fully participate in hunting was identified by Ortega: "one does not hunt in order to kill; on the contrary, one kills to have hunted." That there is no "one factor that motivates all hunters to hunt or even that motivates one hunter on each hunt." was set out as a premise by Ann Causey. Yet, the evolutionary heritage of hunting is celebrated by all hunters. Their desire - their need to have millennia-old experiences releases them temporarily from stresses of modern life and provides communication lines with family and friends.

Hunters possess the knowledge and skills to turn the world from a path of certain destruction to one where humans live in peace with nature rather than constantly being at war with her. Hunters know their place in the natural community and can provide a bridge so that others may know it too. Their history of financial and political contributions to society and wildlife habitat conservation provides a model for others to follow.

The future of hunting is either dismal or bright depending on one's perspective. It is within the philosophy of the

Central Flyway Council to work toward keeping hunting a proud vocation and one available for generation upon generations to come. There is hope for this to occur through improved communications, joint efforts with others across North America and beyond and vigilance to protect the habitats wildlife relies on.

[Return to top](#)

Additional Information

The above is a brief overview of hunting and how hunters contribute to the conservation of wildlife and their habitats. There are additional aspects of hunting not covered here. The interested reader will, in particular, find more information and many additional references in the 15 papers given at the Sixty-sixth North American Wildlife and Natural Resource Conference (Rahm and McCabe, 2001) in two sessions entitled The Changing Role of Hunting in North American Conservation. This publication should be available at most universities and state wildlife agency libraries.

Several publications not mentioned above but which the reader may find useful include: Beyond Fair Chase (Posewitz 1994); The Other Side of Eden (Brody 2000); In Defense of Hunting (Swan 1995) and; The Hunter in Conservation (Council for Wildlife Conservation and Education). This latter publication contains statements about hunting by 21 organizations across the US (last updated in 1995).

[Return to top](#)

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[Return to top](#)

Federal Aid In Wildlife Restoration Program Summary

[Return to About Hunting](#)

The U.S. Congress passed the Federal Aid In Wildlife Restoration Act, in 1937 at the request and through the lobbying efforts of sportsmen and women. This important program became known as the Pittman-Robertson Program (P-R) after its primary sponsors. It placed an 11% excise tax on sporting firearms and ammunition. In 1970, the income from an existing 10% excise tax on handguns was added to the fund. And in 1972, an 11% tax was placed on archery equipment used for hunting. These taxes are applied and collected by manufacturers. The program is implemented and administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The USFWS also administers a similar program that taxes fishing equipment and supports management of state fishery programs.

The Act established a separate fund for these dollars along with the provision they were to be sent to state wildlife management agencies. While Puerto Rico gets 0.5% of the funds and the other four possessions get 0.125% each, states are allocated the remaining dollars based 50% on the number of hunting licenses sold and 50% on the land area in the state. No state can get less than 0.5% nor more than 7.5% of the funds. Up to 50% of the income from archery equipment and handgun taxes can be used for hunter education and shooting range construction. These latter dollars are allocated based on total population only and no state can get less than 1% nor more than 3%.

The Act requires that states provide at least 25% of a project costs - actually, states are reimbursed for projects so they must have the cash flow to pay the entire cost up front. A maximum of 8% can be spent on administration by the USFWS but over the years, 3-4% has been used for this purpose. A further constraint is included in the Act which restricts how states' spend their income generated by hunters: "and which shall include a prohibition against the diversion of license fees paid by hunters for any other purpose than the administration of said State fish and game departments." Funds that have been allocated to states and not spent within two years revert back to the USFWS to accomplish purposes of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

The original law contained a requirement that states spending P-R funds had to only hire people involved in wildlife management approved by the Federal program administrator. The requirement stated that employees had to have experience and education in wildlife management. This requirement was dropped in the mid-1970's as states adopted their own hiring criteria.

P-R lead to and continues to support research to improve science based management and the hiring of trained biologists to implement the research findings. It is not limited to expenditures on game animals and many states have and continue to do research and management of non-game animals with P-R funds.

"Pittman-Robertson funds, used largely for preservation and restoration of wetlands in those early days, laid the foundation for waterfowl conservation, non-game and endangered species management, and conservation education." (page 230).

Source: Restoring America's Wildlife 1937-1987: The First 50 years of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) Act. 1987. U.S. Department of Interior: Fish and Wildlife Service. 394 pp.

[Return to About Hunting](#)

Draft of the Millennium Accord on North America's Hunting Heritage Accord

Presented at the Governor's and Premier's Symposium on North America's Hunting Heritage -August 2000 in Ontario, Canada.

Discussion on adoption of a final Accord is scheduled for the Governor's and Premier's Symposium on Hunting Heritage in Austin, Texas in 2002.

[Return to About Hunting](#)

Four Purposes are identified for the Accord:

1. Create a philosophical environment for consensus and action on hunting related programs, strategies and initiatives.
2. Showcase and renew hunters contributions and commitments to wildlife conservation.
3. Provide focus to hunters' efforts not only in wildlife conservation, but in hunter education, safety, recruitment, ethics and cooperative initiatives with others.
4. Provide a basis for progress reporting by agencies and organizations associated with hunting.
 - whereas hunting is the lawful and responsible pursuit of wildlife, including the opportunity to harvest animals for food, clothing and cultural purposes; and
 - whereas hunting remains a relevant and enduring part of our culture and heritage, providing sustenance for the human spirit and a vital link to understanding and appreciating an ever-changing natural world; and
 - whereas hunting provides a continuing and sustainable source of healthy natural food that enriches the body as well as the soul; and
 - whereas early leaders of the hunting community-Audubon, Seton, Thoreau, Roosevelt, Leopold, Clarke and others-recognized and promoted the need for conservation policies and programs to benefit all wild creatures in North America; and
 - whereas the hunting community has always been in the forefront of ensuring the continuing welfare of all wildlife and their habitats; and ' whereas the hunting community generates many billions of dollars annually in support of habitat conservation, restoration and enhancement that has benefited all wildlife; and
 - whereas hunting is carefully regulated to prevent the endangerment of wildlife populations; and
 - whereas hunted species continue to be sustainable in response to science based management, careful regulation and habitat conservation; and
 - whereas the hunting community stands ready to work co-operatively with all groups whose goal is to ensure the well being of all wildlife populations; and
 - whereas the hunting community strives to improve understanding among all participants including aboriginal peoples and
 - whereas the hunting community and government agencies have developed and implemented hunter safety and education programs that have reduced accidents to a rate which is lower than most other outdoor activities.

Therefore, the North American hunting community and the agencies that regulate the activity, hereby declare their support for and agree to take action on the following articles. By these undertakings, the

activity of hunting will continue to be ecologically sustainable, safe, lawful, ethical and true to the hunting heritage of our forefathers.

Article 1: The North American hunting community pledges to conduct itself in a manner that will maintain and strengthen public acceptance of hunting and hunters.

Article 2: The North American hunting community and associated agencies and organizations will work co-operatively and constructively in the funding and delivery of hunting-related programs and in the collection and use of science based information to manage wildlife populations and their habitats.

Article 3: The North American hunting community will develop, articulate and personally adhere to ethical principles and practices, including the spirit of fair chase, which will guide their conduct before, during and after the hunt.

Article 4: The North American hunting community will maintain and strengthen its longstanding commitment to the conservation of wildlife and its habitat, through the funding and support of ecologically sustainable initiatives.

Article 5: The North American hunting community will participate, as appropriate, at the global level, in support of wildlife conservation, including the consumptive uses of wildlife that are legal and ecologically sustainable.

Article 6: The North American hunting community will continue to support initiatives that promote natural resource conservation and public safety, and that preserve hunting cultures and traditions.

Article 7: The North American hunting community will continue to seek an appropriate balance between the use of new technologies in hunting and their impact on the resource, the experience, the application of skills and the maximization of opportunities for hunter access.

Article 8: The North American hunting community, associated agencies and organizations that finance, deliver and regulate hunting programs will ensure staff are knowledgeable of the richness and diversity of our hunting culture and heritage.

Article 9: The North American hunting community and associated agencies and organizations will develop and implement initiatives that retain and recruit participants.

Article 10: The North American hunting community will share the rich history and traditions of hunting in all its forms with future generations in a manner that reflects respect for the quarry and the responsibilities of the hunter.

[Return to About Hunting](#)