

The Brunswickan

Canada's oldest official student publication

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OPINION...

In recent issues of *The Brunswickan*, several articles have been published concerning sport hunting. In our industrialized country, hunting is regarded as a luxury, superfluous to human survival. And pursuant to that aspect, a growing minority exists calling for legislation banning hunting as a sport.

As hunting normally revolves around the death of an aesthetically pleasing creature, hunters are regarded as anti-society as driven by psychopathic motive, merely fascinated by the destructive abilities of high-powered rifles.

This attitude is ridiculous. While it is now possible to eat meat purchased from stores. All meat-eaters are responsible for the death of an animal. By divorcing the act of killing from eating meat does not make a person more righteous or humane.

On moral grounds, anti-hunters view hunting as a nonjustifiable exploitation of the natural world. Even more ridiculous. With our ever expanding human population, the status of wilderness is being reduced to a memory. As hunted wildlife exists primarily as a secondary product from this resource, hunters have played key roles in ensuring that wildlife populations are maintained. In 1981 American hunters paid an average of 1.4 million dollars a day in licenses alone to support fish and game programs. Anti-hunters however, spend a majority of their time and energy in expensive lawsuits, or in money raising campaigns, doing little to directly enhance the population they appear so concerned about.

It is so quickly forgotten that it is was a reknown hunter Theodore Roosevelt, who established the first National Park in North America - Yellowstone Nat'l Park - or that it was hunters who first clamoured for closed seasons and bag restrictions. In the early 1900's, it was estimated that possibly only .5 million deer existed across the U.S. At present some states contain over a million animals. Obviously these herd increases benefit everyone interested, not only hunters.

In terms of population control, hunting is unnecessary. The law of population dynamics dictate that numbers will increase until the habitat carrying capacity is reached. At this point disease, starvation, or other decimating factors reduce the population. However, unless the habitat has time to recover from the increased demands on food and shelter, continued high populations result in an ever-increasing spiral of the carrying capacity. This results in considerably lower numbers. While hunting as a management tool may be unnecessary, it helps to prevent continuation of high population, in so doing other decimating factors are lessened, eg: less animals succumb to disease.

Some anti-hunters claim hunting as a cruel sport. If you've ever seen prey hauled down by predators, this statement is a joke. Prey are subjected to continued attacks until too weak to defend itself, often being consumed while still alive. Surely no-one can realistically call this more human?

In conclusion there are some very valid points raised by anti-hunting groups. Hunting does not replace natural predation. However, the activities of hunters are ensuring that hunted populations are maintained in relative abundance and associated species are also ensured of a chance at survival. As long as the dollar rules humanity, stopping hunting will not benefit wildlife populations. In comparing hunters to misogynists, to anti-society types, or to nazis, serves no purpose but to illustrate the often deficient knowledge of anti-hunters who are no more human than anyone else.

P. Brochez

The trick is to keep the balance....

