

THE HUNTER AND CONSERVATIONSM



100 YEARS AGO

It has been more than a century since America's first environmentalists — hunters and outdoorsmen — established the conservation tradition in our nation. These early environmentalists warned that the population growth and industrial development that offered prosperity for our nation also created serious threats to the future of our wildlife resources.

75+ YEARS AGO

It has been more than a half-century since these environmentalists fought for the laws and regulations that created a new system of wildlife management that would rescue many species of wildlife from near extinction and would set aside millions of acres of important habitat to help ensure future wildlife abundance.

TODAY

Millions of Americans are interested in conservation and wildlife, but those who oppose hunting may not be aware that hunters are the largest contributors to conservation, paying for programs that benefit all Americans and wildlife.

This brochure is about the hunter and conservation. It is an important story for future generations of conservationists to know, so that they understand the facts about our nation's first environmentalists and how today's sportsmen and sportswomen contribute to the development of conservation and wildlife management in America.

FACTS ABOUT WILDLIFE

Some people oppose hunting because they feel that by preserving wildlife, it will increase. Wildlife, however, is a resource that cannot be stockpiled. If any annual overabundance of game is not harvested, nature often takes over in a cruel and harsh way.

Weather, more than any other factor, often decides the fate of wildlife. Just as wildlife will flourish under ideal weather conditions—mild winters and bountiful springs—the opposite is true when seasons are harsh.

In a harsh winter, when oversized white-tailed deer herds deplete all available food, merciless death by slow starvation is inevitable.

Predators attack the young and hunger-weakened stragglers. Disease and parasites add to the toll. Most often, the end result is a weak, unhealthy herd with far fewer deer than would be present if hunters had taken a reasonable surplus in the fall.

Research shows that a healthy white-tailed deer herd, reasonably sized to make the most of available habitat, can be reduced each year by as much as 40 percent with no ill effect on the future population. Hunters in most states rarely take more than 15 percent of the herds. Yet, if left alone, a white-tailed deer herd can double in size in only two years, quickly deplete available

food supplies and face certain mass die-offs.

This management concept is even more evident with gamebirds. Quail has an annual mortality rate of 75 to 80 percent whether it is hunted or not. Dove and pheasant populations are likewise regulated far more by factors of feed, cover and weather, than by hunting.

It is apparent that hunting is a useful part of today's wise game management practices. By teaming habitat improvement with carefully regulated hunting seasons and bag limits, our professional conservationists make sure that hunters take only the surplus of game populations.

POPULATION CONTROL

An overabundance of any one species can cause a shortage of food and an increase in the spread of diseases. Hunters help to regulate and maintain wildlife while not affecting future populations.



GAME PROTECTION

Concern for the protection of game in America goes back at least to the days of the earliest Colonial settlers.

Connecticut prohibited the export of game across its borders as early as 1677, and Virginia banned the harvest of female deer (does) in 1738. New York forbade the use of hounds in deer hunting in 1788, and Rhode Island passed the first seasonal regulation in 1846 to protect waterfowl from spring shooting.

Bag limits made their first appearance in Iowa in 1878, and by the end of the century 13 states had limited the amount of game that could legally be taken. Over the next 10 years, hunters in 23 more states requested this approach to wildlife conservation.

The concept of resident hunting

licenses caught on even faster. The first were issued in 1895 by Michigan and North Dakota, and by 1910 revenue from hunters through licenses was being collected in 33 states.

The new laws required state agents to enforce them, and in 1878 the first game wardens were appointed in New Hampshire and California. By the turn of the century game wardens were employed in 31 states.

With the passage of the Lacey Act in 1900 outlawing market hunting, Congress joined the move to protect game. This federal law prohibited interstate transportation of game killed or possessed in violation of state law at either end of the transaction. Prior to this sportsmen-supported legislation, market hunting

had taken a dangerous toll on many wildlife species.

The hunters of America took the lead in the effort to reform game laws. They supported passage in the legislature and observance in the field. Today, the bag limits and season restrictions hunters have requested are only a part of the overall wildlife management picture — but they did play an important role in early conservation efforts, and they remain basic to any comprehensive wildlife program.

Very few states had established any kind of official conservation organization at the turn of the century. Today, all 50 states have a well-organized wildlife conservation agency, financed primarily by hunters and anglers, for the protection and management of wildlife.

THE HUBS OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Some people think of the state fish and wildlife agencies as consisting only of game wardens who enforce hunting and fishing regulations. This is not the case.

State fish and game departments are responsible for protecting and aiding all wildlife — not just those few species that may lawfully be hunted. Hundreds of non-game species, such as the many songbirds and small animals that enrich the outdoors for all of us, are also under their care.

Practically all of these conservation agencies came into being after the turn of the last century and, with little exception,

were organized with the strong support and endorsement of hunters.

The American Game Policy, introduced by Aldo Leopold in 1930, pinpointed the quality and quantity of habitat as the key factors regulating game populations and called for highly trained professionals to effectively manage them.

State game and fish agencies are staffed by biologists and wildlife management specialists who work to improve habitat by establishing supplemental food plots and cover,

STRONG SUPPORT

State fish and game departments help to maintain and improve wildlife habitats with help from management specialists and the strong support of hunters.

creating wetlands and managing other elements essential to the well-being of many birds and animals. These include research on wildlife management practices, efforts to control wildlife diseases and programs to restock and relocate wildlife.

The results achieved by these dedicated conservationists are evident in healthy wildlife populations throughout the nation.

MONEY FOR CONSERVATION

The wildlife conservation programs of state fish and game departments add up to a vast undertaking, one involving thousands of people working for the well-being of hundreds of species of birds, animals and fish, game and non-game species alike, on millions of acres of land and water.

As one might imagine, the cost of managing our wildlife is extremely high, with hundreds of millions of dollars spent each year.

Here, once again, the hunter enters the picture because, unlike other state governmental agencies, the 50 fish and game departments receive little support from taxes paid by the general public. Instead, the majority of their operating funds come from hunters and anglers. Sporting enthusiasts are paying, as they have for many years, nearly all the bills for practical wildlife conservation — and paying them not just for their own benefit, but for that of all Americans.

Dating as far back as the 1920s, sportsmen and women have paid the lion's share for conservation. Through license fees and special excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment, they currently contribute more than \$7 million each day for the benefit of wildlife.

The knowledge of how this

money is gathered and how it is spent contributes greatly to an understanding of the overall conservation picture — and the hunter's important place in it.

License fees are the largest portion of the sportsman's contributions to the state fish and game departments, presently furnishing them with more than \$1.4 billion per year.

Because of the many ways license fees are used for the benefit of all wildlife, the purchase of a hunting license — whether by a hunter or non-hunter — is one of the best contributions that can be made today for conservation.

A milestone in conservation history occurred in 1937 with the passage of the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. Strongly supported by hunters, this legislation transferred receipts from a 10 percent excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition from the general treasury to state wildlife conservation programs.

This tax was raised to 11 percent during World War II and now yields \$550 million per year for wildlife conservation programs.

In 1970, again with hunter



support, the Dingell-Hart Bill was enacted, making a 10 percent excise tax on handguns available for wildlife restoration and hunter safety training. Proceeds from this tax provide some \$210 million per year.

The archery community entered the picture in 1972 with the passage of the Dingell-Goodling Bill, specifying an 11 percent excise tax on archery equipment. The proceeds, which now amount to some \$25 million per year, are also used for wildlife restoration and hunter safety training.

A similar levy on fishing equipment contributes some \$325 million a year.

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

Sportsmen and women have historically funded the majority of the conservation effort.

EACH STATE IS RESPONSIBLE

Proceeds from these excise taxes are divided among the 50 state wildlife agencies. Each state's share is based on its land area and number of licensed hunters and anglers. Funds cover about 75 percent of the bill for approved wildlife and fish restoration projects and total some \$1.8 billion per year.

The combination of these taxes has formed one of the best programs ever devised for the benefit of wildlife, game and non-game species alike and has enabled

the states to greatly expand their conservation activities.

An important stipulation of the Pittman-Robertson (P-R) Act is that proceeds may not go to any wildlife agency that turns over any P-R revenue to other state programs. This has prevented a number of state legislatures from diverting funds provided by hunters and anglers into their general funds.

Another important provision is that states, in order to remain eligible for P-R funds, must employ

trained wildlife specialists. This has encouraged many universities to introduce courses in wildlife management and related biological studies.

More than half of the revenue generated by the P-R Act is used to buy, develop, maintain and operate wildlife management areas. These activities include planting feed and cover, restocking game, constructing marshes and ponds for waterfowl and providing watering places for wildlife in arid areas.

Another major use of these funds is research, which contributes to sound wildlife management and disease control.

Almost every one of the 50 states has used P-R funds to obtain a collective total of some four million acres for wildlife refuges, wintering range, wetlands and public hunting grounds — more than the total

acreage of the state of Connecticut.

It is important to realize that land acquisition from taxes on sporting arms and ammunition provides the non-hunting public, as well as the hunter, with state-owned recreation grounds.



DOLLARS FOR DUCKS

One portion of the hunter's contribution to conservation is specifically set aside for waterfowl. Here, rather than through state fish and game departments, the hunter teams up with the federal government.

Every waterfowler, in addition to his or her state hunting license, is required to buy a federal duck stamp. Duck stamp revenue is used by the government to buy or lease wetlands for waterfowl. Again, the

hunter's contribution goes beyond game species because the land purchased is also home to many non-game species that can thrive in the same habitat.

Despite the success of the hunter-financed programs administered by the states and the federal government, they alone cannot ensure a secure future for waterfowl, because four out of five

ducks begin life north of our border in neighboring Canada.

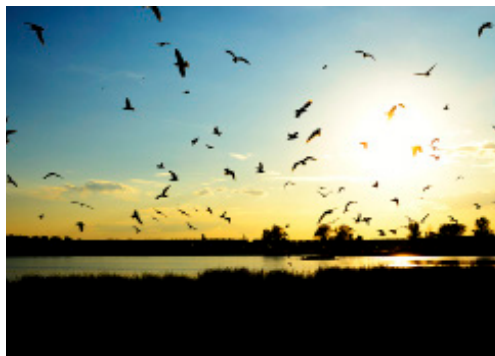
Duck hunters responded to this challenge in 1937 when they banded together to found Ducks Unlimited (DU), a private organization dedicated to the betterment of waterfowl and waterfowling in all of North America. DU funds have built or restored millions of acres of prime waterfowl nesting habitat,

including thousands of miles of vital protective shoreline.

Recognizing the need for still greater support for waterfowl, DU's goal for the future calls for the development of additional nesting habitat in both the United States and Canada.

PRESERVATION

When hunters contribute to preserve wetlands, they're also preserving every other species that share that same habitat.



ORGANIZED OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS

Whatever their favorite pastime, many Americans with a serious interest in the outdoors are joined together in private organizations, large and small, working to sustain and improve the quality of our natural resources.

For example, in the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), hunters and anglers join with bird watchers, wildlife photographers, campers and others concerned with the outdoors to work together for the wise conservation of all the nation's resources. With a membership of more than four million individuals, the NWF is the nation's largest

member-supported conservation group.

Some 54,000 outdoor enthusiasts are united in the Izaak Walton League of America, working through a network of local clubs to implement the league's national program for clean waters and improved hunting and fishing.

Working toward the same goals is the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI). Supported by the firearms industry, WMI works to promote scientific management methods and encourages educational programs to help train more people in the field of wildlife management.

With a membership of nearly 200,000, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation works to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife and their habitat and supports projects such as land protection, habitat enhancement, management, research and conservation education.

The National Wild Turkey Federation is a grassroots volunteer organization with nearly a half million members organized in state and local chapters across North America dedicated to conserving wild turkeys and to preserving hunting traditions.

Whether members of a national organization or a local club, organized sporting enthusiasts are often the ones who put practical conservation to work in the individual wood lot, field or stream. It is estimated that hunters spend more than \$800 million a year developing wildlife habitat through licenses, tags, permits and other fees to hunt on private land. Local clubs and their members work with the owners of large tracts of private land to open more acreage for a wide range of

outdoor recreational uses. They consistently urge their fellow outdoor enthusiasts to respect the property of others and to observe the rules of outdoor etiquette.



The nation's lumber industry provides a good example of the benefits of this hunter-landowner cooperation. Today, hunting is permitted on more than 90 percent of the roughly 70 million

acres of woodlands managed by the forest products industry.

These efforts do not benefit the hunter alone. Each contributes to America's outdoor heritage, benefiting every citizen.

WILDLIFE'S POPULATION EXPLOSION

Many species of wildlife that are hunted are not only secure today, but even, in many instances, far more numerous than they were before the turn of the last century.

Efforts by hunters have increased the populations of many kinds of wildlife to record numbers and have returned many species to parts of the country that had been stripped of native wildlife by commercial exploitation and unchecked development.

As recently as 1900, the total white-tailed deer population of North America was estimated at about 500,000, following a study by the U.S. Biological Survey. Nearly every state in the nation had closed its deer hunting season, and a good number need not have bothered because there were so few deer left to hunt. Massachusetts counted about 200, all on Cape Cod. New York claimed about 7,000 in the Adirondacks, and Pennsylvania had a small herd centered in Potter County. In Delaware and New Jersey, deer were considered practically extinct.

In contrast, by the early 1960s, every state allowed some form of regulated deer hunting. Currently, the deer population of the U.S. is

estimated at around 32 million and many of the largest are found in Midwestern farming states that were, a generation ago, completely without deer. In many states, expanding deer herds have created traffic hazards and caused extensive crop damage.

Only 50 years ago, the total U.S. population of pronghorn antelope was about 12,000. In 1920, this species, which at one time may have outnumbered the buffalo, could not be hunted anywhere on the continent. Today, however, there

are more than one million, and the pronghorn may once again be legally hunted in more than a dozen Western states. The restoration of habitat, restocking of range and other efforts by wildlife managers to protect and increase the antelope population were made possible by the financial contributions of American hunters.

Today there are more than 1 million Rocky Mountain elk, or wapiti, in the nation — 12 times as many as there were in 1907, when

WHITE-TAILED DEER

In 1900, less than half a million white-tailed deer remained in the nation. Today, conservation programs have returned the whitetail population to some 32 million. Source: Quality Deer Management Association, 2013

THEN 500,000

NOW 32,000,000



DUCKS/WATERFOWL

In 1901, few ducks remained. Today, there are more than 46 million ducks populating the United States and Canada. Source: USFWS, 2013

THEN FEW

NOW 46,000,000



ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK

In 1907, only about 41,000 elk could be counted in the United States. Today, populations in 23 states total approximately 1 million. Source: National Park Service, 2013

THEN 41,000

NOW 1,000,000



WILD TURKEYS

By the early 1900's, civilization and habitat loss may have reduced the wild turkey population to under 100,000. Today, programs have restored the population to more than 7 million birds. Source: National Wild Turkey Federation, 2013

THEN 100,000

NOW 7,000,000



PRONGHORN ANTELOPE

About 50 years ago, the total U.S. population of pronghorn was only about 12,000. Today, conservation programs have helped increase the population to more than one million. Source: Texas Parks and Wildlife, 2011

THEN 12,000

NOW 1,100,000



elk were common only in and around Yellowstone National Park. Elk may now be found in 16 states, and most Western states have surpluses that may be hunted.

Overpopulation on some ranges permits local restocking, and in Yellowstone National Park, where the control effect of public hunting is prohibited, the elk multiplied so

fast that they nearly destroyed their range.

The wild turkey, which had also disappeared from much of its native range early in this century, has now been restored in many states thanks to the hunter's financial contributions. The national population of wild turkeys has increased from 100,000 in 1952 to

more than 7 million today; and 49 states now offer spring hunting for this traditional table trophy.

The fact is that no game bird or animal is endangered by hunting. Rather, it is the helping hand of the hunter that protects and conserves these free-roaming species of wildlife for the enjoyment of future generations.

THE OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey in 2011 found that Americans spend some 280 million days hunting each year. They took 200 million trips and spent a total of \$38.3 billion on hunting. Though it's impossible to put a price tag on a day or even an hour spent at a pleasant pastime, hunters continue to support their sport with their time, effort and money.

The contributions hunters make to the outdoor scene are there for everyone to see. Our woods and fields are alive with the evidence of their concern, and the same open spaces that hunters use and in which wildlife thrive are just as available

to the non-hunting public for its enjoyment and recreation.

Hunters have earned their place in outdoor America. To date, hunters and anglers have contributed billions for wildlife conservation.

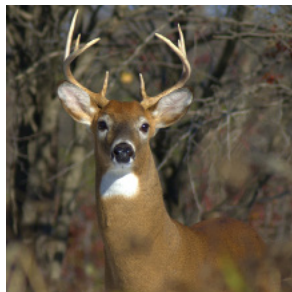
Surveys by the U.S. government show that hunters and anglers produce a multiplier effect that puts more than \$200 billion into the nation's economy each year. A great deal of this money finds its way into far-reaching conservation programs.

The USDA Forest Service reports there were more than 200 million visits to the national forests during 2003. This number will pyramid rapidly according to all population

and recreation projections. Future generations will need refuges of peace and quiet in the out-of-doors. They will want clean streams and lakes full of fish and open spaces where they can spread a picnic lunch and encourage their children to discover the outdoors.

They will look for hushed woodlands with free-roaming wildlife and sunlit meadows alive with songbirds.

This is the future that hunters are shooting for — a future that only wise conservation can provide. This should be the concern of all Americans — hunters and non-hunters alike.



Sources:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation

Hunting in America, 2011 NSSF and AFWA

USDA Forest Service, 2003

Wildlife Management Institute

Wildlife Conservation Fund of America



The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) is the trade association for the firearms, hunting and recreational shooting sports industry. Find out more about how NSSF supports programs designed to ensure the future of hunting and the hunter and conservation at nssf.org.

NSSF[®]
*The Firearm Industry
Trade Association*