

## "Why do you go hunting?"

The lady was a casual acquaintance asking a question that truly seemed important to her. I smiled and said I had been doing it since I was a kid and that I really enjoyed it. She smiled but I could see she didn't understand and vaguely felt sorry for me. The conversation twisted in other directions and soon was but a memory. Her question and my answer often come back to me when I put down a book or stare into a fire. Why do I hunt and fish and often think of trapping again?

Could it be the memories of my father and long gone friends sharing a day of fellowship?

Could it be all the books and articles and magazines and catalogues and plans laid to make the next trip as good as can be?



Could it be the sunrises and sunsets and wild weather that composed a canvas worthy of Renoir?

Could it be the guns and shooting and the smell of gun oil in the evening?

Could it be all the dogs I have known and hunted over?

Could it be all the little things like trying a heron confidence decoy or making a gun holder for the gunwale of the canoe?

Could it be a natural continuance of owning old decoys made by master carvers for hunters or trading old shotguns whose beauty and function evoke a bygone era of craftsmanship and pride?

Could it be just a natural association with the fascination for ice fishing decoys or all of the various traps used over the centuries?

Could it be just one more excuse to get up early and see the sunrise and spend the entire day afield poking around rivers and marshes and woods and fields like some mink scurrying down a stream and sticking its nose in every hole it comes to?

Could it be the evenings in the midst of all sorts of hunting equipment making hundreds of snow goose decoys that will mean getting up even earlier to put out decoys and even later to pick them up after a day of cold and wind and hopefully a few birds?

Birds? Mink? When I think of hunting and fishing and trapping, the critters involved are merely a part of it. By merely, I don't mean they are a small part but that they are but one of many. The mystery and fascination of what we call sport could not exist without them and like hunters and fishermen from time immemorial, neither could I.

Have you ever taken a ring-necked duck from your retrievers' mouth on a cold November morning on an Illinois river and noticed a band on its' leg? Months later (that was 50 years ago) learning that the bird was banded two years before in the Northwest Territories of

Canada near Yellowknife was an experience for a young man that led to a life of adventure and public service.

Have you ever stalked an antelope on open Wyoming plains and then dropped him with a perfect shot from a .270?

Have you ever talked to North Dakota farmers about the hunting and their experiences as kids while sipping coffee in a café during a blizzard?

Have you ever spoken to an old man about how he and his Dad hunted on the Platte River just before the First World War?

Have you ever watched caribou grazing in belly deep grass while your thumb took your gun off safe?

Have you ever read a book about lawyers and doctors going from Philadelphia to Chincoteague by train (all the way down the Eastern Shore through flooded woodlands) and by wagon to the edge of the marsh and then by boat over to Chincoteague to shoot ducks?

Have you ever mounted a deer rack or a bird and glanced at it 30 years later and smiled at the memories it evoked?

Have you ever tasted broiled deer steak or yellowfin tuna or backstraps out of a caribou that lived where no predators harassed them?

Have you ever roasted a mallard or tasted a Cassoulet de Toulouse with White Beans made with snow goose breasts? No finer dish ever enhanced a wine.

Have you ever spent the day hunting or fishing with a friend or an evening eating and drinking with friends after hunting or fishing?

Have you ever spent the afternoon with a trapper far from your home while he tells you about all the animals in his area and how he goes about outfoxing those he wants?

For these and so many more reasons that I can't even recall; hunting, fishing, and trapping are irreplaceable parts of what I am and who I am.

Today, these reasons are often hidden as we hunters are forced to defend ourselves. Large and rich organizations have specifically targeted hunting, fishing, and trapping for elimination. Government at both the State and Federal level increasingly caters to these organizations and their agendas. University professors, like the bureaucrats, often profit from enabling these groups to achieve their ends. Sadly, many politicians try to profit from the money and influence controlled by these organizations. Cries of animal "welfare" and animal "rights" ring in our ears. Lawsuits quoting "NEPA" and the "Endangered Species Act" and the "Wilderness Act" are being used to demolish fish and wildlife management for hunting and fishing while being disguised as "saving" the environment. We hunters and fishermen and trappers are being denied our rights and traditions and the economic fruits of the hunting, fishing, and trapping economy.



As a result of all this, we more and more try to justify why we hunt as "necessary" population control. We are so vilified by teachers and the media that we are ashamed to say we enjoy pursuing, killing, and benefiting from the animals we take.

We even either remain quiet or agree with others when they vilify loggers or ranchers or dog breeders or dog owners that have their dog's ears clipped or tails bobbed.

We look away when environmental extremists or animal rights veterinarians join with University professors to proclaim that they and "their" science should rule us.



We are intimidated by fellow citizens demanding that we accept their notions of animal worship and equality with ourselves.

We still vote for politicians that will eliminate our rights to these things because they support other things like "prescription drugs" or "more money for schools".

**Enough!**

We hunt because we enjoy hunting. Young men and women enjoy hunting. Housewives enjoy hunting.

It is because we enjoy it so much that we pay ever-increasing license fees and hunt whenever, however, and wherever the regulations dictate.

It is because we enjoy it so much that controlling beaver or reducing deer numbers can GENERATE public funds instead of COST public funds.

It is because we enjoy it so much that there are State Fish and Wildlife agencies and a National Wildlife Refuge System.

It is because we enjoy it so much that there are State and Federal agencies in existence to "manage" fish and wildlife or as we are wont to say today, "the environment".

It is because we enjoy it so much that we willingly tax ourselves over half a billion dollars per year for State fish and wildlife agencies to maintain and restore fish and wildlife populations nationwide.

It is because we enjoy it so much that hunted bird populations, fish populations, and big game populations are maintained and carefully protected.

It is because we enjoy it so much that we are outraged that the Federal agencies and their ever-more subservient State cousins are decimating game populations with wolf introductions and burgeoning populations of unmanaged cougars, bears, and wolves.

It is because we enjoy it so much that we are so offended by the steady disappearance of fish and wildlife management and research and its' replacement by no-use, no-access, and no-management philosophies and enclaves.

It is because we enjoy it so much that we should demand the firing of public employees that would eradicate game populations and gun ownership in the name of "native ecosystems" and gun control.

Hunters, fishermen, and trappers have a very real stake in maintaining the animals they pursue. No other persons have anything like this "very real stake" as they watch nature programs or pontificate in urban coffee shops. The animals provide pleasure, food, products, and an ancillary industry that benefits the nation as well as each of us.

Animals are NOT humans or citizens with rights; they are PROPERTY. Whether it is the private property of my pet or livestock or the public property of wild animals held in trust for each of us by OUR government they belong to us. No matter whether they are so smart or so big or "so much like us"; they are and shall remain property for us to butcher or bob their tail or shoot over decoys on a cold fall morning. Those who would take away our rights in these regards have more in common with socialists and communists in foreign lands than those of us living under the US Constitution.



So if someone like the lady I first mentioned wants to ask about it after Church, I will discuss it. If some teacher wants to brainwash little kids with lies and propoganda I will oppose him or her.

If some bureaucrat wants to restrict my rights or public property I will remind him or her that they work for me.

If some professors wants to advocate that he and his "science" should dictate my lifestyle, I will see that his opinion is but one of many considerations taken into account.

If some politician supports eliminating management or closing public lands I will oppose him and work to get a politician elected

that will preserve my rights.

If I see any of these radical organizations or their supporters spreading their hateful propaganda or trying to influence others in any way, I will oppose them publicly, privately, in writing, and verbally to anyone that will listen.

Hunting is important to me and I will do whatever I can to preserve it from those that would exterminate it. How about you?

Jim Beers  
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This article and other recent articles by Jim Beers can be found at  
<http://www.allianceforamerica.org/bb/viewforum.php?f=91>

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