

APHA'S STAYING ON THE TRACKS

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 3

August 2022

Greetings APHA members! May this newsletter find you busy, safe, and successful, creating and savoring memories afield with old friends and new. Hopefully since travel restrictions have greatly eased in these post-pandemic times, (most airlines are not even requiring mask usage anymore), everyone's lives and businesses are also returning to more normalcy.

LEGISLATIVE HAPPENINGS:

In America, the HR 8294 budgetary bill discussed in previous newsletters will likely be voted upon in September. Hopefully the Senate will wisely reject the amendment prohibiting funding of elephant and lion trophy import permit applications from Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

The U.S. – Africa Leaders Summit will be held in Washington, D.C. on December 13-15, 2022. Its stated purpose is to “demonstrate the United States’ enduring commitment to Africa and will underscore the importance of U.S.- Africa relations and increased cooperation on shared global priorities. “ In the related U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa document, drafted in August 2022, supporting conservation is listed as one of the primary goals, with acknowledgement that the African continent will be home to one quarter of the world’s population by 2050 and hosts vast natural

resources. It also pledges to dampen climate change impacts, and to continue and work to expand efforts to combat wildlife trafficking and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. No word yet on how African citizens and/or organizations can voice their concerns and share their insights and perspectives, but it is mentioned that public participation will be involved. Perhaps there will be opportunities for APHA to officially submit stances on how the hunting industry in Africa is essentially important to sustainable use, biodiversity, economic contributions, habitat protection, and community livelihoods?

PERSECUTORY PURSUITS:

Social media and public debates and campaigns to persecute and disincentivize hunting unfortunately continue to rage on. The Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting in the UK has been featuring quotes from people like Jane Goodall – “Trophy hunting is just unconscionable”, who also states that banning trophy imports would be beneficial to animal welfare. This from Dame Joanna Lumley – “I have always considered trophy hunting the lowest of the low: contemptible, hollow triumphalism which we would laugh to scorn if the consequences weren’t so utterly grim and cruel. Killing animals for fun is just disgusting.” And as per Steve Backshall – “Trophy hunting not only degrades the diminishing numbers of charismatic wild animals, but it degrades us too.” This group also claims to be handing out anti-hunting literature to schools and members of the general public.

How can the hunting industry and community combat this? A difficult challenge, no doubt, as such shameless propaganda, emotional drama and hate-mongering is sadly seemingly well-received by many people

who know nothing about hunting. Promoting all the things we love about the entire hunting experience (instead of just the small fraction that is the kill), as well as how hunting contributes to conservation, is of course a logical way to promote the positives for logical, reasonable people to consider in opposition to manipulative misinformation.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION/OVER A SUNDOWNER

The word 'ethical' is an increasingly popular term used to describe many practices nowadays, including hunting. But is the term descriptive and specific enough?

Ethics are standards of conduct we adhere to that reflect our moral stances as to what we consider is right or wrong. They generally cover behaviors related to fairness and respect, and they can be very personal or can be drafted more generally by societies, businesses or organizations as codes of appropriate conduct all members must adhere to.

They can be vague or specific. For example, many people, including those who don't hunt, feel it is only ethical to kill animals for food. But, unless that sentiment is worded as to LEGALLY kill animals for food, then technically poaching is ethical to them as well. And if the purpose of shooting an animal is solely to eat it, then killing ANY animal might be considered ethical, regardless of its age, sex, population status, etc.

Some consider that any hunting technique that is legal is also ethical. But others don't. Baiting, hunting with dogs, hunting certain species at night, the use of game cameras, hunting over waterholes, and hunting high fenced properties are some examples.

And laws don't always fully consider ethics. For instance, it is illegal in many places to dispatch a wild animal you might incidentally happen upon that has been injured by colliding with a vehicle. But most people, especially hunters, would feel the ethical thing to do is to end its suffering by shooting it.

Ethics can also be very situational. In a sport hunting situation, for example, shooting individual animals from a helicopter or airplane is generally considered unethical and in violation of fair chase, but in a culling or controlling of invasive species situation, such shooting could be considered ethical and acceptable by some due to the intended purpose of the act – mass eradication by the most efficient means possible.

Calibers or weapon specifications cannot be universally described as ethical either. They must be rather specific. It would be difficult to claim shooting a cape buffalo with a 45 lb compound bow, for example, is ethical, as that set up could only succeed in wounding the animal, not killing it. And even if you meet the proper, legal specifications for effectively killing any game, many people consider it unethical to take certain shots or to hunt without adequate marksmanship practice and proficiency.

Age and sex restrictions on harvested game are not universally ethical either, as whilst post-mature males are typically the ultimate animal to trophy hunt, all ages and sexes typically need to be shot in population reduction (management) hunts. And, in the case of some high profile species, such as elephants, some may consider (based largely upon personal preferences) that shooting true, 100 lb plus tuskers as trophies is unethical. Even if, ecologically, removing these animals from any population may have no detrimental effects and the trophy fees generated may greatly help fund conservation of elephants, in general, in the area.

The examples of how ethics can vary are many, with the aforementioned ones being just a few, but there are some basics about hunting that hopefully everyone agrees constitutes ethical – like striving for a clean, swift kill, doing all you can to recover wounded animals, adhering to all relevant laws, and utilizing the animal as fully as possible. But beyond such basics, ethics can be very specifically personal and/or situational. There honestly is no universally ethical hunting due to the immense variety of cultures, regulations, methodologies, intents and purposes involved.

So perhaps a better term than ethical is responsible? Responsibility means having obligations as part of one's job or role, being in charge of or caring for someone or some thing, accepting consequences from one's actions, honoring commitments, and being accountable. These are all actions anyone wishing to ensure the conservation through hunting model has a future should embrace. They are acknowledgements of and adherences to principles that help ensure hunted species are sustainably utilized as valuable, renewable natural

resources. Responsible choices and actions that also respect the need to be stewards of the wildlands that wildlife needs, and to be ambassadors representing and promoting the pursuits and passions most important to us – and to nature’s future – in a positive light.

The term responsible, more so than the term ethical, indicates a flexibility and commitment to do what is right more specifically for each situation and/or resource than to simply morally judge practices that have no universal themes. For example, most should consider respecting quotas as ethical, but the responsible thing to do would be to not fully fill any quotas that your firsthand experience with an area might suggest is more prudent for sustainability. Or, whilst some may view baiting, especially with game camera surveillance as unethical, it is indeed a responsible way to help judge the age of the animal visiting the bait site to make a better informed decision about potentially hunting it. And, although respecting any caliber or weapon restrictions can be considered ethical, the responsible aspect is doing all you can to be proficient with it and to wait for the best shot opportunity that will minimize chances of wounding. Another example is that it may be considered ethical to use adequate ammunition when hunting, but it is responsible to ecosystem health, in general, to use non-toxic alternatives, when available and appropriate.

Describing hunting values and guiding principles thereof as ethical only is a good start, of course. But it definitely begs the question of whose ethics apply and therefore requires further specification. Perhaps the term responsible instead of ethical better illustrates our dedication to, caring for, and passion for doing what is ultimately right for wildlife and hunting than simply just our personal morals and feelings alone?

PARTING SENTIMENTS

African Game-lands: A Graphic Itinerary In Kenya and Along the Livingstone Trail in Tanganyika, Belgian Congo and Angola is a very interesting book published in 1929 by Prentiss N. Gray. Prentiss was a bank president, trustee of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, and an avid hunter and photographer who was the first editor and designer of the Boone and Crockett Club's Records of North American Big Game book.

In the intro to his 1929 book on his hunting adventures in Africa, he mentions issues that Anthony A. Dyer, president of the East African Professional Hunters Association for 13 years, noted as then problematic. People in that era often shot animals indiscriminately from trains, boats, horses, etc. – whatever conveyances that might get them close. Visiting sportsmen (especially from North America) often utilized .30-06 and .30-30 caliber rifles, leaving them undergunned, plus inaccurate, since telescopic sights weren't available then and some didn't even consider scopes to be generally "sporting".

Hunting has fortunately come a long ways since then, in terms of ethics, techniques and regulations, as even some species currently considered of great worth and importance, like rhinos and lions, were then treated as vermin to be eradicated. Why did we make the shift in attitudes and approaches? Because effective conservation requires firstly accepting responsibility and then doing what is responsible to ensure sustainability, regardless of personal ethics.

Here's hoping you all enjoy a memorable and wonderful September, engaged in activities afield and additionally as ambassadors and advocates elsewhere that reflect your concerns for and appreciation of nature and all the people involved in hunting who help sustain it as an important conservation tool.

