

BRITISH COLUMBIA, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, NUNAVUT, YUKON TERRITORY

FALL 2013

Mountain Hunter™

Fair chase... No fences™

FEATURE STORIES
A Canadian Safari

Two Brothers,
Two Billies



Guide Outfitters
Association of British Columbia

Wildlife Stewardship is our Priority



ABOUT SHANE

Shane Mahoney is considered one of the leading international authorities on wildlife conservation. A rare combination of historian, scientist and philosopher he brings a unique perspective to wildlife issues that has motivated and inspired audiences around the world. Named one of the 10 Most Influential Canadian Conservationists by Outdoor Canada Magazine and nominated for Person of the Year by Outdoor Life Magazine, he has received numerous awards including the Public Service Award of Excellence from the government of Newfoundland and Labrador and International Conservationist of the Year by Safari Club International. Born and raised in Newfoundland he brings to his writings and lectures a profound commitment to rural societies and the sustainable use of natural resources, including wildlife and fish.

Thank you to Sports Afield for permission to reprint this article.

False Distincti

In my first article in this series I made the point that all hunting activity is about more than the meat. I believe this is true, even of the most dedicated meat hunter. I know of no hunting culture where the only value of hunting was the meat. In a poignant example of this fact, we may recall that once the last remnants of the great Native American tribes had been rounded up and forced onto reservations, they would routinely ask that the domestic cattle they were provided as rations be set free from their corrals so they might pursue them on horseback and kill them in the same manner they had once pursued the teeming buffalo.

This unbelievably sad image of once proud and free peoples being reduced to caricatures is compelling in many regards, but clearly shows that while the buffalo was a source of meat, the experience of its pursuit and lethal capture was in itself a matter of great significance to the lives and spirit of these cultures. There are so many lessons buried in this image of such unsurpassed horsemen pursuing lumbering cattle in the full view of those who deliberately destroyed their way of life that it is tragic beyond belief! Yet such were the still vibrant memories of their hunts that nothing, not even destitution, could prevent them from tasting that unforgettable reality we hunters so intimately understand.



CONSERVATION MATTERS™

with Shane Mahoney

Trophy Hunting – Part 2 ns and the Risks They Bring

Yet, in society today, even among some of us who hunt, there is a belief that “trophy” hunting is different, being about one thing and one thing only: the head, or horns, or cape or full mount – take your pick. Individuals interested in returning with these remembrances of the hunt are of a different breed, it is suggested. They travel to foreign countries; care little or nothing for, and waste the meat; desire and demand only the biggest and the best of specimens; and are all wealthy.

As I previously pointed out, almost all of us collect mementos from our hunts, so I will not belabor this point further; it simply does not distinguish one form of hunting from another. But what of these other elements of trophy hunting so many believe are distinguishing? Are they

accurate? Are they true? Can they be used to separate “trophy” hunting from other forms of hunting? Not really, and certainly not significantly in my opinion.

Let us take the issue of travel to foreign countries. While it is certainly true that thousands of hunters from North America will travel to European, Asian and African countries every year, far more, millions in fact, will hunt out of state or province every year. Indeed the preferred destination of American hunters by far, is Canada, hardly a “foreign” destination, although of some measurable cultural difference certainly. The motivations of these hunters are really no different than those who travel to another continent: they are pursuing a new experience, a different landscape, perhaps different species, or

more abundant or larger specimens. They are not, in the main, wealthy, though some are, of course; but they do generally pay more, considerably more, for their out-of-state/province experience. In this way, they contribute significantly to the economies of other parts of the country or continent, other than where they live.

Certainly a great many of these individuals will, given the opportunity, shoot the largest and the more magnificent of the animals they see. Furthermore, given that they have paid a higher fee and travelled further in pursuit of a preferred destination for their hunt they may have more opportunity to do so; however, this does not mean that they are guaranteed a perfect specimen, or one of a certain size antler or horn. Nor does it mean that their

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primary motivation was to secure such a specimen. They were seeking a chance to acquire a good specimen, certainly, or they'd be daft to spend the time, energy and money to travel. In the main, for these millions of hunters, taking home some part of the animal they have killed will be important to them. Thus the hide of a grizzly bear, the antlers of a caribou or the skull and horns of a sheep will almost certainly travel home with these hunters, just like the cape of an eland, the tusks of an elephant, or the hide of a leopard with hunters who have travelled to Africa. So, I ask: "Who is the trophy hunter?"

Indeed, even when it comes to the matter of meat the lines of demarcation are not at all clear. Certainly for hunters who travel a very long distance from home, the primary rationale for their hunt may not be the meat of the animal they pursue. However, just like stay-at-home resident hunters, a very large number of the North American hunters travelling to far destinations on this continent do in fact take the meat, or some portion of it, home. Perhaps this is another "trophy"? Furthermore, in

the vast majority of cases any edible meat must be recovered from the field by law. Friends, colleagues or other fortunate individuals who have access to it then use such meat. It is certainly not wasted or treated as unimportant. It is so important, in fact, that laws ensure its removal and use! Ethical hunters abide by the law.

This situation pretty much parallels what happens when a hunter shoots a buffalo or elephant in many African destinations. No, the hunter does not transport the elephant steaks home, but he does, by virtue of his successful hunt, make it available to willing people who will certainly not waste it. And, no, the meat was not the primary motivation of the North American hunter who pursued the elephant; nor is it for the mountain sheep hunter from Utah who travels to British Columbia in pursuit of an animal there. Nor for the hunter from Turkey who travelled to Spain in pursuit of Ibex. So, I ask, again: "Who is the trophy hunter?" All of these people, or only those who travel to hunt the markhor of Pakistan or the elephants of Tanzania?

less, acceptable. We see clear evidence for this in every poll taken: trophy hunting is the least supported, behind so-called sport/recreational and meat hunting. Those opposed to hunting know this very well and exploit it. Those who do not understand hunting are easy converts to this position because such hunting is viewed as frivolous, wasteful and self-aggrandizing.

So let's not suggest the terminology does not matter. It does, and we should drop it from our vocabulary. As I argued in the Spring 2013 article, we cannot show it is distinct anyway – so why give the opponents of hunting an easy target that is merely a term of convenience? By focusing on one aspect of the hunting experience – the taking of a memento or remembrance of the hunt – we fail to recognize that all hunters have always celebrated their success and wished to remember the experience.

We, as human beings, have turned our creative talents towards this for millennia, through visual art, dance, storytelling, and sculpture. I do not see how we can use this now to set so-called "trophy" hunting apart. Hunting has many gradations and varieties and, in the end, is a highly personal experience. What today must always separate the true from the false in hunting is fair chase and legality—not whether the tusks of a fallen elephant are taken home, or whether we hunt in a foreign country, pay a lot to do so, hunt relatively rare or unique beasts, or personally consume the meat.

There is not one of the true among us who does not hunt the experience, and not one among these who does not wish to remember it. In this, there is no distinction among hunters. We should not dare to create one.

This, it seems to me, is an important question. While the term "trophy" is only a convenience, its widespread use serves to undermine support for hunting by encouraging misconceptions about what motivates the hunter and by appearing to differentiate various forms of hunting, and therefore inevitably leading to the notion that some forms are more, or

The Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia (GOABC) wants to start a fundamental shift among hunters from caring about hunting to caring about all wildlife. Ranchers care about cattle and anglers care about fish, but hunters seem to only care about their sport. Hunters must be committed to the responsible use of wildlife resources and passionate about preserving a diversity of wildlife species. The GOABC is a strong supporter of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model, which stipulates that law and science should be used to manage wildlife. This model is the result of hunters and anglers who were dedicated conservation. As anti-hunting pressure becomes louder, it becomes increasingly important to continue and enhance the legacy of the hunter conservationist.