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Preface

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Preface

As a modern engagement with nature, hunting is a much-debated and often highly controversial undertaking. Its critics portray it as a cruel anachronism, unnecessary and irrelevant, while its proponents argue not only its legality, but also its capacity for inspiring concern for wild nature and its use as both a management tool and mechanism for wildlife conservation. In few regions of the world has this contrasting view of man's original and longest lasting profession been so forcefully expressed as in North America.

Born out of a remarkable if incredibly destructive phase of resource depletion in the first two centuries of European colonisation, the North American approach to conservation has been highly successful in rescuing and recovering wildlife species, in maintaining a wildlife abundance on both public and private lands, and in generating an enormous wild-life-centred economy. Furthermore, it has maintained to a remarkable degree a democratic access to wildlife. These are real and measurable achievements, warranting study in this time of unprecedented wildlife depletion and extinction worldwide.

Indeed, such an examination is long overdue, particularly when one considers that hunting, for food and recreation, lies at the very heart of conservation in both Canada and the USA. Thus, any inquiry into hunting's modern relevance must include study of what for more than a century has prevailed over this vast area of North America and which today, despite massive social change, remains a vigorous, complex and thriving effort to conserve wildlife through a largely sustainable use approach. Even today, tens of millions participate regularly in legal fair chase hunting. As a tradition, it remains embedded in the fabric of these nations.

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