

HUNTING AND TRAPPING

HUNTING

Hunting, the stalking and killing of animals, was once thought to be essential to human survival. Hunting has probably been practiced since the Ice Age, when plant food became scarce. Dogs may have been trained to hunt, and they were possibly eventually bred for their specialized skills starting in the Neolithic era, the New Stone Age.

Throughout history, native peoples in most parts of the world were hunter-gatherers. ("Gathering" is foraging for plants and also for the remains of animals either killed by other predators or dead from natural causes.) Settlers who moved from European countries to other parts of the world also depended largely on wildlife for their survival. As farming and raising animals like sheep and cows spread and societies became more industrialized, hunting and gathering were replaced by agriculture in many parts of the world.

Although subsistence hunters still exist today, in many parts of the world hunting is practiced mainly for "sport." The "sport" involves the seeking, pursuing, and killing of wild animals, referred to as "game," including birds, called "game birds," using primarily firearms.

In the U.S. alone, hunters kill more than 200 million animals every year. This number does not include the many animals who are wounded, crippled, orphaned, or forced to flee from the area where they were living. It also does not include animals killed by U.S. citizens who are hunting in other countries.

Three areas of the world—West Africa, Indonesia and Malaysia, and South America—are regions where hunting is threatening many species of wildlife with extinction at a higher rate than elsewhere. People in economically challenged regions and in areas where there are military conflicts often turn to eating and selling wild animal meat and parts.

Who are the hunted?

The animals killed annually in the U.S. include 42 million mourning doves, 30 million squirrels, 28 million quail, 25 million rabbits, 20 million pheasants, 14 million ducks, 6 million deer, and thousands of bears, moose, elk, antelope, cougars, wolves, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, boars, turkeys, geese, swans, and other woodland creatures. (These statistics were compiled by The Fund for Animals with data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state wildlife agencies.)

In Africa, nonhuman primates such as chimpanzees, bonobos, and monkeys are among the wild animals hunted, killed, and eaten by local people and exported around the world. The World Society for Protection of Animals (WSPA) states, "Although ape meat represents only a small proportion of the enormous bushmeat trade [the hunting of any animal that is not traditionally regarded as a desirable food], it is the greatest threat facing chimpanzees, gorillas, and bonobos." When logging roads are built, hunters can go deeper in the forest to hunt animals. The meat is sold to foreign markets and natives. Many non-African hunters travel to Africa to shoot several species of large animals.

In Asia and Africa, elephants are killed for their ivory and skin, which are exported worldwide. Turtles are killed for their meat and shells. In Asia, parts from wild tigers, bears, antelope, and other animals are used in medicines, although the effectiveness of these medicines has never been scientifically proven.

Many marine animals are hunted and slaughtered (see Fact Sheets: Fishing and Marine Issues; Marine Mammals). Sharks, for example, are hunted for their fins, mainly for shark-fin soup. Once their fins are sliced off, the bodies are thrown back into the ocean.

Most common reasons given for perpetuating the tradition of hunting for sport

- Hunting is a time-honored tradition.

To perpetuate hunting because it has been going on for a long time is the same rationale used for decades to justify slavery and to deny women equal rights. Tradition alone is not an accurate moral barometer.

- To reduce animal overpopulation.

When people mention "overpopulation," they are almost always referring to a specific species. In the U.S., it is usually deer. Of the 200 million animals killed by hunters in the U.S. annually, only an estimated 3-to-4 million, less than 2%, are deer. More than 98% of animals, all species other than deer, are not "overpopulated." (For deer, see below: "It is more humane to kill animals than to let them die of starvation.") The primary causes of species overpopulation are over-hunting of predator species and loss of habitat, both of which problems are created by humans.

- It is more humane to kill animals than to let them die of starvation.

The population of animals such as deer is carefully managed by government agencies. To earn revenues from the sale of hunting licenses and other hunter-related economy boosters (such as the sale of hunting gear and clothing, cabin rentals in hunting areas, hiring guides, and so on), the number of deer is maintained at a high level. This is accomplished by government regulatory agencies such as the various state departments of fish and game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

- Permitting hunting of primary predators
- Manipulating the environment to promote low growing plants on which deer feed
- Allowing more males than females to be killed, to guarantee more offspring the following season

Most often, the animals hunted are the large, strong ones, rather than the weak ones most likely to die of starvation, so saying hunting will keep weak animals from suffering is not valid.

- Hunting is natural for all species.

When a modern human is the hunter, the competition is uneven (see **Types of hunting**, below). The hunter is often using a high-powered rifle. Most deer do not perceive anything as far as the range of a big-game rifle (up to 366 meters / 400 yards) as a predator or a source of danger. A wolf at that distance, even though detected, would be totally ignored. Even the much smaller range of a bow (about 15–23 meters / 50–75 feet) is barely of concern to deer. They may start to keep an eye on a hunter at that distance, but the flight instinct does not kick in until it is too late. Hunters also use motor vehicles and helicopters to chase and kill animals. If it were "natural" for humans to kill and eat animals, we would have the ability to chase the animals at high speeds without the use of vehicles, and we would have teeth that can tear into the raw flesh of an animal.

Types of hunting

- Rifle and shotgun hunting
- Bow hunting

Despite modern high-tech bows and arrows, many studies indicate that more than 50 percent of the animals targeted are crippled but not killed, and that they either bleed to death or become infested with parasites and develop diseases.

- Canned hunting

Tame exotic animals are kept in private fenced areas and killed by hunters who pay a fee. Animals killed in canned hunts may come from private breeders, animal dealers, circuses, or zoos. Often hand-raised and bottle fed, they lose their natural fear of people. Some facilities also provide the option to clients of "killing" their animals remotely via the internet and having the carcass shipped to them.

- Baiting

Piles of food are left as bait and habituate the prey species to a particular spot. When the animals approach the food, they are shot at close range.

- Contest kills

Shooters use live animals as targets and win money and prizes for their kills. This is a spectator sport, with crowds cheering the shooters.

TRAPPING

Some animals are trapped for the fur industry. Others are trapped in the name of wildlife management. Still others are called incidental or "trash" animals (unintended species caught and injured or killed in traps).

The types of traps include legholds, snares, and conibear traps. Both targeted and non-targeted animals (including companion animals and endangered species) are caught in traps. While caught in traps, animals may suffer severe physical injury, psychological trauma, thirst, hypothermia, and predation. They may remain in traps for days or longer before dying or being killed, often by bludgeoning so as not to damage the animal's valuable pelt.

In the U.S., fewer than 150,000 people trap, each earning on average less than a few hundred dollars a year from trapping. Even so, the federal government continues to expand trapping on public lands, including National Wildlife Refuges.

Wildlife management

Historically, the response to conflicts between wildlife and domestic animals such as cattle and sheep has generally focused on killing wildlife by trapping. This approach, however, is coming under increasing scientific and public scrutiny because non-selective removal often fails to provide long-lasting resolution of conflicts and raises animal welfare concerns. When animals are trapped in an area, others of the same species continue to move in, filling the habitat vacancy and taking advantage of the availability of food, water, and shelter.

As human development progressively encroaches on wildlife habitat, conflicts between wildlife and people increase. Humanized landscapes—whether agricultural or suburban—offer wildlife an abundant supply of food, water, and shelter. Most conflicts involving wildlife result from people either intentionally or inadvertently providing wildlife or their prey with food. Reducing the availability of food sources of interest to wildlife is the most effective way to reduce or eliminate unwanted encounters. Successful programs have included practices such as protecting companion animals and their food, cleaning dirty grills in urban areas, and protecting livestock in agricultural areas. Communities that have adopted such practices often see a marked decrease in conflicts and a reduction in the number of domestic animals lost to wild animals.

Delicate balance

Humans are starting to realize the importance of not eradicating predator species. The practice of allowing resident predators to survive is beneficial for the environment and for preserving species

diversity and ecological integrity. For example, when wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park in the U.S., the elk population decreased, which allowed willows, once devastated by overgrazing, to grow again. The willows supported many other species, including birds and beavers, and soon the beaver population increased rapidly. Their dams created ponds and wetlands for many species, which were then able to return to the area.

Resources

Fact Sheets:

Animals in Entertainment
Fishing and Marine Issues
The Fur Industry

Websites:

"Coexisting with Wildlife." Animal Protection Institute (API) and Born Free USA
http://www.bornfreeusa.org/a7a_coexist.php **OR** <http://tinyurl.com/al9hqf>

"Inside the Fur Industry: Trapping Maims and Kills Animals." People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)
http://www.helpinganimals.com/wildlife_trapping.asp **OR** <http://tinyurl.com/be8lcw>

"The Economics of Hunting." The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)
http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/campaigns/wildlife_abuse/hunting_economics.html **OR**
<http://tinyurl.com/75cho5k>

"Reproductive Speed Protects Large Animals From Being Hunted To Extinction." *ScienceDaily*. 17 May 2007.
<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/05/070516071747.htm> **OR** <http://tinyurl.com/dcore8>

"The Thrill of the Kill: Captive Hunts." The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)
http://www.hsus.org/wildlife_abuse/campaigns/canned/ **OR** <http://tinyurl.com/c95j9c>

"Trapping and Fur Trade: Cruel and Unnecessary." Animal Protection Institute (API) and Born Free USA
http://www.bornfreeusa.org/a7b_trapping.php **OR** <http://tinyurl.com/b3vaay>

"Un-Bearable Trophy Hunting." The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)
http://www.hsus.org/wildlife_abuse/campaigns/bears/ **OR** <http://tinyurl.com/d8f8vn>

"Why Sport Hunting Is Cruel and Unnecessary." People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)
<http://www.peta.org/issues/Wildlife/why-sport-hunting-is-cruel-and-unnecessary.aspx> **OR**
<http://tinyurl.com/6xk8323>