

FROM THE EDITOR



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In this Issue

The Boone and Crockett Club runs hard and runs deep—126 years of hunter-conservation. Today's Club leadership led by Bill Demmer, Morrie Stevens, Tim Brady, and Ben Hollingsworth is operating at a level not

seen in over a century! And while it is absolutely a group effort consummated by an entire organization, these gentlemen have brought a level of wisdom and a humble commitment to servant leadership that ultimately benefits every citizen of our country and this North American continent. My undying respect and appreciation I extend to them.

As editor of *Fair Chase*, I welcome you to the spring issue. From cover to cover, you will feel the depth of this organization. Be it chasing critters, chasing policy, or chasing knowledge, it is all here, presented by the finest minds in the conservation community. At first glance, one might wonder whether we have lost sight of our target with articles concerning Asia and Africa. Not so. James Gibbs article on Argali conservation takes me back in time to the late 1800s when our continent's habitat and wildlife were in great peril. Hostile politics on one side of the mountain, the pain of scraping out a meager existence on the other makes for excellent reading with many lessons entwined.

As for the Dallas Safari Club's black rhino saga, every hunter needs to know this story! Science-based conservation in the crosshairs of animal rights activist terrorism. From this chaos, the hunter-conservation community must develop a plan of action.

My particular favorite is "Fair Chase Hunting," by the legendary Jack Ward Thomas, past chief of the U.S. Forest Service who also served as the University of Montana B&C Professor where he regularly contributed to *Fair Chase*. These submissions remain the gold standard over a broad range of topics from forestry to ethics. Reprint requests continue to roll in at the headquarters for these masterpieces. Between Jack and Dan Pedrotti Jr., we have presented contrasting evidence

within our pages recently that hunting is both a right and a privilege. Oh, what great fun philosophy at the highest levels can prove to be! For me, hunting on my Kansas ranch is a right I dare anyone to try to extract. But climbing the Wyoming mountains looking for bighorns while clutching a permit it took 15 years to secure is a privilege. Assistant Editor Keith Balfour recently summed up the distinction quite eloquently: "Is hunting a right or a privilege? Which it is, is an important discussion to have. I've heard it argued both ways, and with conviction. If we go strictly by definition, then hunting is a privilege because a privilege is something that can be taken away. A right, on the other hand, cannot be lost."

Jack Ward Thomas continued in his article stating, "In the United States, the right to keep and bear arms is constitutionally assured. While many may need arms to hunt, hunting is not guaranteed under our constitution. Hunting is left uncovered as a privilege to be repeatedly earned—year after year—by those who hunt. In any democracy, privileges are maintained at the will or sufferance of the people at large."

In the final analysis, hunting is both. Individually and spiritually, hunting is a right. Societally, however, it is a privilege. If this is true, then the future of hunting depends on how hunting is viewed by the majority of the citizenry—most of whom do not hunt and are easy prey for misinformation about hunting. It would be best then not to get too hung up on hunting being a right and dismissing the options of others. We're outnumbered.

A quick reminder of last issue's article "Disinterested Science" is the perfect lead in to Wini Kessler's and Steve Mealey's contributions which refer heavily to "global warming" and "climate change". Could there be more polarizing terms in today's English language? Is this science, fact, theory, a scare tactic, an agenda driven tool, politics, or all the above? Yes, it is. What it is NOT is a part of the Boone and Crockett Club's Strategic Plan. Supporting, protecting, and advancing the sportsmen-led North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is front and center! That's where the real traction can be found. ■

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