

TROPHIES MATTER TO ALL HUNTERS



TROPHY HUNTING HAS DEEP ROOTS, DATING TO THE TIME HUMANS HUNTED FOR SUBSISTENCE. THE BEST HUNTER GOT THE MOST ANIMALS. HE¹ EARNED THE ADMIRATION OF WOMEN AND HIS PEERS. THE DEAD ANIMAL WAS A PRIZE, BUT SO WAS THE ADULATION. KEEPING A REMINDER OF THE HUNT PROBABLY DIDN'T OCCUR TO A HUNGRY CRO-MAGNON. WHEN CIVILIZATION REDUCED THE NEED FOR SUBSISTENCE HUNTING, PLAUDITS WERE GIVEN TO SUCCESSFUL SPORT HUNTERS, WHO STARTED SAVING ANIMAL PARTS AS TOKENS OF THEIR PROWESS. IN EUROPE, SPORT HUNTING BECAME A PREROGATIVE OF THE ELITE, WHO DISPLAYED THEIR TROPHIES IN GREAT HALLS.

During westward expansion in the U.S., market hunting, settlement, and the development of repeating firearms led to wholesale killing and a diminished emphasis on the value of single animals. This profligacy eventually inspired our conservation movement, marked first by protection of dwindling game populations. At the same time, people who didn't live on the frontier became distanced from the hunt. They came to question the killing of animals for sport.

After World War II, rebounding big game populations in the U.S. once more drew hunters afield. But the nature of hunting changed again, as sportsmen increasingly focused on exceptional animals. The motives of these hunters during the last 50 years have redefined sport hunting. Many hunters say they have no interest in trophies, and many who *do* seek them will never put an animal in the records books. On the other hand, the wealth and social stature of prominent trophy hunters, the proliferation of trophy hunting as the main theme in magazine cover stories, the allocation and cultivation of private land for trophy hunting, and the growing numbers of outfitters specializing in trips for trophy game indicate that a shift has occurred within the hunting culture. For many sportsmen, filling a tag or the freezer is no longer enough.

Five years ago, I committed to a study of post-war changes in big game hunting and how those changes affect our wildlife policies. The results of my research point to trends that should interest hunters. Trophy hunting is clearly influenc-

ing the way big game is managed in the United States. (Box 1).

THE ESSENCE OF THE CHASE

Historically, sport has been central to the collection of trophies, be it in the hunting field or in the team games marked by Super Bowls and Winston Cups. Sport entails a contest that can be won or lost, a challenge not easily met. Sport hunting may not be fair in the sense that most game is ill-equipped to kill the hunter. But the hunt's outcome is not certain. The animal can escape. This uncertainty is what makes hunting sport for the hunter. If results were guaranteed, there would be less anticipation and a lower level of satisfaction when the animal was bagged. Except in the case of game that is extraordinarily hard to hit or stop, *killing is easy*. The chase or stalk cannot be if it is to qualify hunting as sport. The cat that plays with a mouse may in fact be extending the chase. It is a reenactment of the crucial stage of the hunt: the stalk and the pounce. Cats sometimes lose their prey when they play in this fashion. They must know the prey might escape. But they would rather chase than kill. When the kill apart from the chase becomes a measure of a hunt, it cannot reasonably be considered sport.

Hunting's recorded history also supports the notion of the chase as competition. Until the hunter gets the upper hand, his quarry is in control. It dictates the playing field and determines how close the hunter can approach—either by its choice of location or by a conscious decision to lie still or flee after sensing the hunter's presence. The hunter reverses fortunes when he finds game in his sights. At that

point the animal has lost control of events. Then the outcome of the hunt depends on the hunter. The hunter can still forfeit the contest with a botched shot. Or he can voluntarily forego a kill.

The hunter who kills has won. The hunter who botches the shot has lost. The hunter who earns a shot but decides not to shoot has . . . well, what? He has won if he is satisfied that he could have killed, that death was just a trigger pull away, and if winning to him is simply besting the animal. However, he has not won if he concedes the possibility of a miss, or if he has decided that to win he must kill.

To a subsistence hunter, the success of any hunt is mainly contained in the carcass. That is what has been won: meat, hide, bone, and blood, antler and hoof, or claw. There is nothing beyond the physical prize. If the kill is shared, the hunter becomes a provider, winning gratitude and perhaps admiration from his dependents. He may have acquitted himself with Herculean strength and super-human tenacity, with uncommon skill and extraordinary marksmanship. He may have just been lucky. No matter. The kill is what counts. Without the kill there is no meat. Without meat, the others have no cause to celebrate his prowess. The kill affords the hunter recognition as well as sustenance. Both, it may be argued, are needs.

Theoretically, the sport hunter who fails is almost as happy as if he had killed because he has been challenged and given the chance to prove himself. He has experienced pursuit and a moment of truth, and he can look forward to other hunts that may yet reward him with a kill. Oddly enough, this is

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¹ In this article, "he" and "man" are used generically to indicate persons who hunt. Trophy hunting has been predominantly a male activity; however, it is surely not my intent to exclude the significant (and growing!) numbers of women who participate. My own outdoors skill programs for women confirm this recent trend.

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seldom how sportsmen seem to think. A long-time outfitter observed that most hunters want to kill. To paraphrase:

"Hunters want to get game. That's why they hunt. If they tell you differently, don't believe them. The object of hunting has always been to get game, not to see coun-

hinge-point of the hunt, the instant at which effort brings success and erases the specter of failure. The shot has always been a defining moment. Some hunters would have their critics believe that it has become ancillary.

Killing is not the evidence of a hunt; it only *produces* the evidence.

sportsmen emphasize—perhaps to an artificial degree—the aesthetic values of being outdoors, the respect and admiration they have for the game, the challenge afforded by the chase, and the service done by hunting as a game management tool. Few hunters say that killing is the most important part of hunting, no matter that the kill is the climax, the

WHAT MAKES A TROPHY?

Trophies, broadly defined as evidence of achievement, are present just about anywhere you find people. But just as a Super Bowl ring signifies more than does a football letter from a Class B high school, so some big game trophies have come to mean more than others. As they have been accepted as a measure or reflection of the hunter, they have spawned a secondary competition among hunters. Trophy standards become ever higher as the hunting motive evolves from self-satisfaction, to competition for ranking among a circle of friends, to achieving top honors in the broader hunting community.

A trophy hunter's standards differ from those of a subsistence hunter, because he gives the animal significance beyond its value as meat. A subsistence hunter might say, "I like venison, and this deer seems young and fat." A sportsman seeking a trophy is less interested in the perishable parts of the quarry, or its accessibility, than its value as a subject for stories after the hunt.

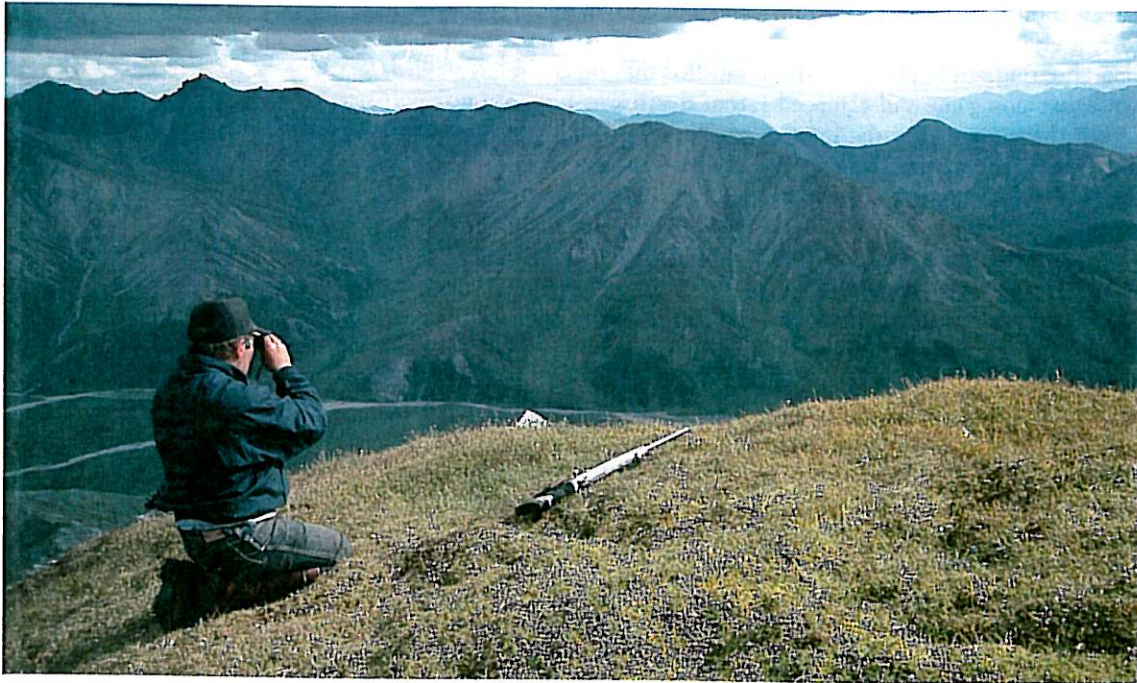
A trophy must last. But beyond that, it must *say* something. A trophy represents the hunt. It also has come to reflect the hunter's outdoor skills and physical prowess, selectivity, and marksmanship. This subtle transfer of attributes is key to an understanding of trophy hunters (is *he* not a fine specimen, to have shot something so grand?). The trophy animal is in this way akin to the four-wheel-drive pickup bought by someone who fashions himself an outdoorsman and wants everyone else to know it. Much of the value of the trophy lies in its meaning and appeal to people who have not been on the hunt.

Without a standard, there is no trophy. The same is true in athletic competition. A trophy is given to a contestant who has proven himself or herself superior to other contestants. A quick sprinter can earn a trophy only if his or her times are kept and compared with those of other sprinters. The performance counts for ranking only as it compares to a standard and other performances. Beyond the stage of self-satisfaction, a trophy hunter must be willing to compare his kill with that of other hunters, to compete.

try or hike new trails or relax around a campfire far from the office. Those are bonuses. But a hunter who loads his rifle is putting his reputation as a predator on the line. Even if he doesn't really like hunting or killing, he'll try to shoot something because the people back home will judge him by his trophy. That's why nice people who go hunting can become intolerable after a few days without luck. In the back of the mind is a killing imperative."

Defining the essence of the hunt has never been easy. Wary now of people who disapprove of hunting,

Evidence of having hunted successfully can matter a great deal to sportsmen. Recognition by peers remains a powerful hunting motive. It is natural for a hunter to want to say he has killed, not just hunted. A hunt with nothing to show for it is, to many people, like an unpublished manuscript—evidence of effort but not of success. Then, too, there are hunters to whom the effort or process of hunting counts for little. They are like the person who tells the author at a book signing that he would love to write but in truth would love to have been published.



HOW DOES HUNTER BEHAVIOR INFLUENCE GAME MANAGEMENT?

One traditional way to measure animals is by carcass weight. Long popular in New England deer camps, that method survives. It is axiomatic that a big deer is better than a small deer. Nobody says why. Though a big deer is typically an old deer and old deer should be more experienced at eluding hunters, a big deer isn't necessarily more wary than a small deer. It is more conspicuous, and more hunters are apt to shoot a big deer than a little deer. In any healthy ungulate population, young animals will outnumber the old ones. For these reasons, there are typically fewer big deer than small deer. Scarcity determines trophy value, just as it determines the value of precious stones. Gold is worth more than copper, not because it has greater utility but because it is less common.

Hardened antlers are as permanent a record of hunting achievement as is an affidavit of carcass weight. Antlers are more interesting because they are unique and tangible. Enthusiasm for big antlers grew in the U.S. after zoologist William T. Hornaday (with Madison Grant) started the National Collection of Heads and Horns in 1906. Ironically, the collection was assembled to save for the public and science a representative assortment of fine mounted specimens of native fauna. Hornaday, who at the time feared that many big game animals would become extinct, donated several dozen of his own hunting trophies. While he later sharply criticized sport hunting as the main cause for the depletion of big game populations, Hornaday's horn and antler specimens were conspicuous for their large size. He had not hunted to gather representatives of various cohorts in a population, or collect females equally with males. Hornaday showed the hunter's weakness for that part of the animal that has since become almost synonymous with the word "trophy." Big horns and antlers are impressive because they are uncommon. Rare animals, like rare gems, tug at the souls of men.

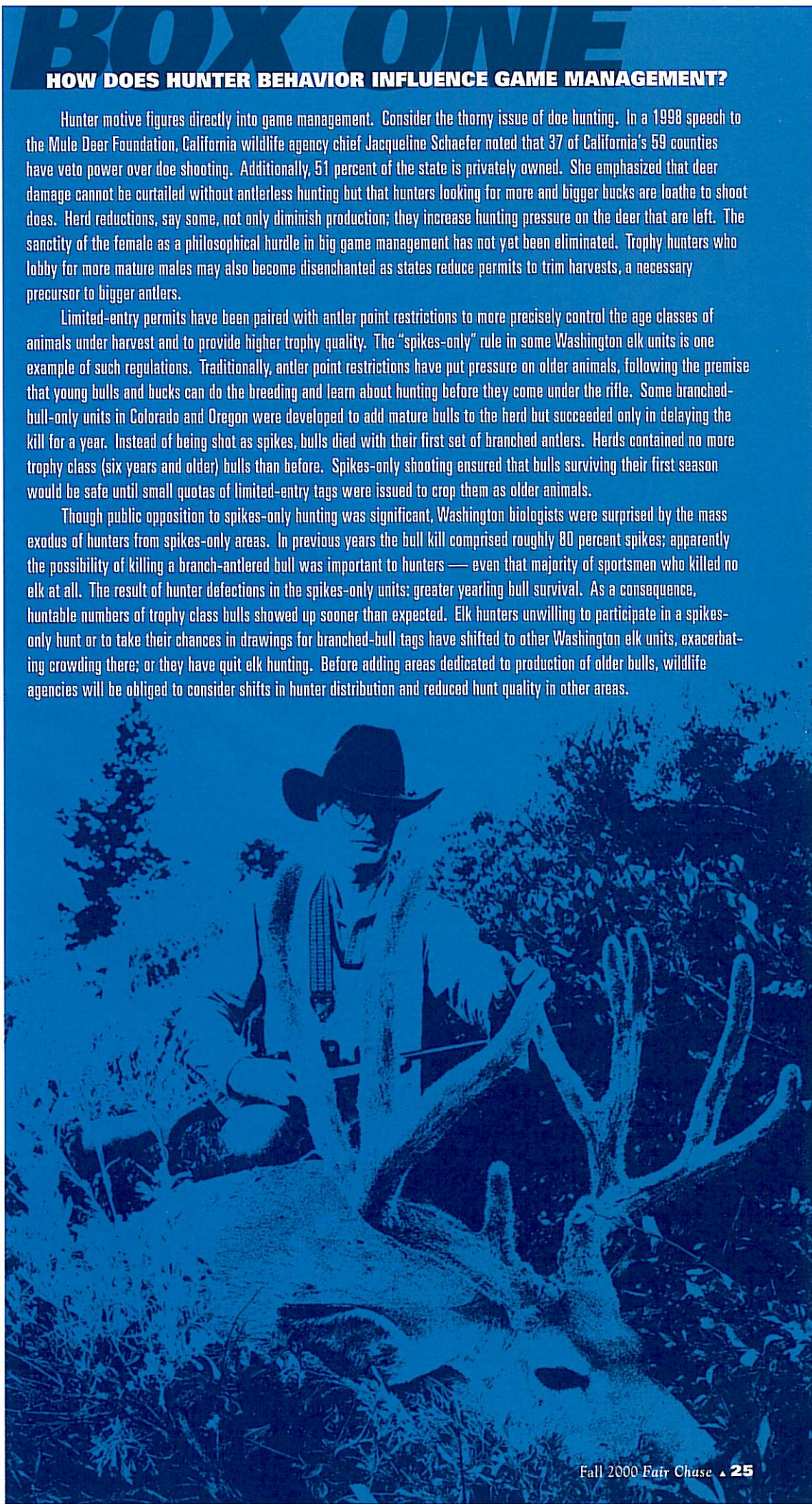
UNDERSTANDING THE TROPHY HUNTER

Having a set of big antlers above the mantle or on a den wall

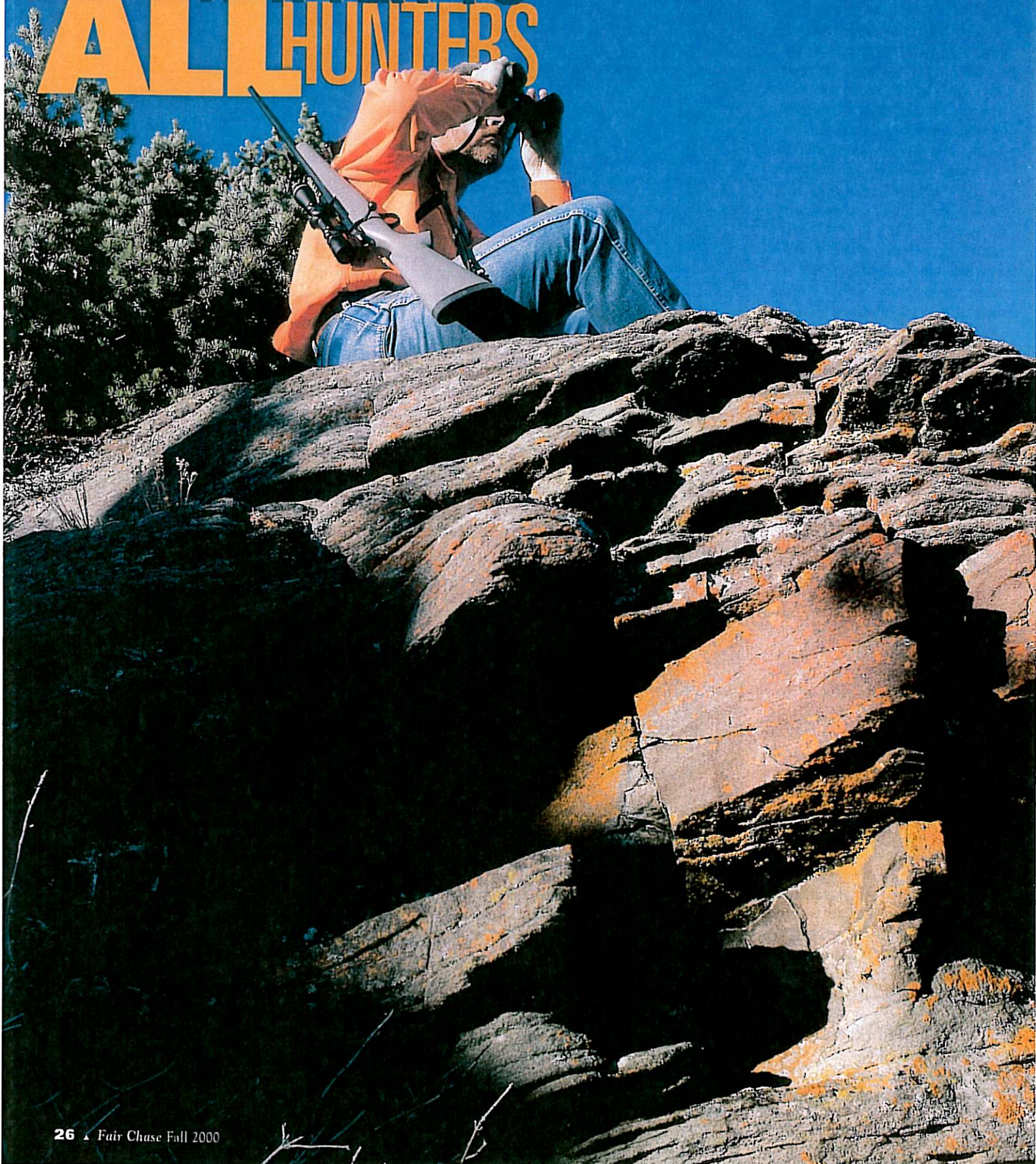
Hunter motive figures directly into game management. Consider the thorny issue of doe hunting. In a 1998 speech to the Mule Deer Foundation, California wildlife agency chief Jacqueline Schaefer noted that 37 of California's 59 counties have veto power over doe shooting. Additionally, 51 percent of the state is privately owned. She emphasized that deer damage cannot be curtailed without antlerless hunting but that hunters looking for more and bigger bucks are loathe to shoot does. Herd reductions, say some, not only diminish production; they increase hunting pressure on the deer that are left. The sanctity of the female as a philosophical hurdle in big game management has not yet been eliminated. Trophy hunters who lobby for more mature males may also become disenchanted as states reduce permits to trim harvests, a necessary precursor to bigger antlers.

Limited-entry permits have been paired with antler point restrictions to more precisely control the age classes of animals under harvest and to provide higher trophy quality. The "spikes-only" rule in some Washington elk units is one example of such regulations. Traditionally, antler point restrictions have put pressure on older animals, following the premise that young bulls and bucks can do the breeding and learn about hunting before they come under the rifle. Some branched-bull-only units in Colorado and Oregon were developed to add mature bulls to the herd but succeeded only in delaying the kill for a year. Instead of being shot as spikes, bulls died with their first set of branched antlers. Herds contained no more trophy class (six years and older) bulls than before. Spikes-only shooting ensured that bulls surviving their first season would be safe until small quotas of limited-entry tags were issued to crop them as older animals.

Though public opposition to spikes-only hunting was significant, Washington biologists were surprised by the mass exodus of hunters from spikes-only areas. In previous years the bull kill comprised roughly 80 percent spikes; apparently the possibility of killing a branch-antlered bull was important to hunters — even that majority of sportsmen who killed no elk at all. The result of hunter defections in the spikes-only units: greater yearling bull survival. As a consequence, huntable numbers of trophy class bulls showed up sooner than expected. Elk hunters unwilling to participate in a spikes-only hunt or to take their chances in drawings for branched-bull tags have shifted to other Washington elk units, exacerbating crowding there; or they have quit elk hunting. Before adding areas dedicated to production of older bulls, wildlife agencies will be obliged to consider shifts in hunter distribution and reduced hunt quality in other areas.



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accords the hunter a unique prestige. It is evidence that this man is more than a husband or father or business associate or social acquaintance. He is a hunter. He has gone into untamed places and wrested from them the meat and bone of wildness. He has harnessed the violence of gunpowder to do his bidding. He has navigated where no paths exist, stayed where no beds were prepared, accomplished a bloody and elemental task, and returned. The quality of the antlers evidence not only discernment and self-discipline but the physical and mental acumen that define uncommon men.

A hunter is a type of explorer; a token of the chase has an element of "firstness." The explorer does not deal in the predictable. His passion is for the new and the uncharted. Each hunt brings fresh experience. Each trophy is novel in its dimensions and form. Visitors cannot see his trophy or its exact likeness anywhere else. The hunter has not settled for a duplicate. He has chosen for himself a unique prize. When hunters speak of big game taken by one of their ranks, they say "Jim's deer" or "Bob's elk." But the possessive language conveys more than just property rights. It is a statement of particularity. The one-of-a-kind trophy symbolizes the individual nature of each hunt and the individualism to which many hunters aspire but fail to achieve in everyday life.

The quality of a trophy does not necessarily reflect the hunter's effort, resourcefulness, physical prowess, or endurance. Among the biggest whitetail bucks ever taken in Nebraska was a deer that bolted out of a thicket in front of two teenagers with rifles and an older woman with a deer tag. After the shooting stopped, the buck was dead. None of the hunters had seen the deer before.

Despite the random nature by which many trophies find their way into records books, the prestige associated with putting one there—or perhaps simply the celebrity of being recognized in print—remains a strong pull for many hunters. Partly that's because a trophy symbolizes physical achievement. Athletes are almost alone now in earning their salaries with strength and speed.

They are well paid because their fans have pedestrian jobs at desks and find heroes in people who do not. Athletes become heroes, again in part, because they are a gifted few. They have distanced themselves physically from the masses.

Hunting affords the man of substandard physique but with plenty of money the chance to become a hero too. It allows him another persona. Returning with a trophy, he has what success in business alone cannot bring him: the respect of people who worship physical superiority. The kill signifies that he "has what it takes," whether the killing required physical effort or not. Wilderness skills, endurance, resourcefulness, and animal cunning have marked successful hunters for centuries. The hunter who does not use them can still let his audience assume that he has them. Conceding that a hunt was bereft of physical challenge is admitting it could have been completed by anyone with enough money to buy the opportunity. Physical prowess, self-reliance, initiative, and courage accrue to the man who consistently proves himself an able hunter, because historically the ablest hunters have had these traits.

If personal glory is the motive for collecting trophies, the process—the hunt itself—contributes little. It is only the vehicle by which a kill is accomplished. The hunt cannot be measured; the trophy can. And because the trophy is tangible and durable, it will stand as testimony to the hunter's achievement. The trophy is the measurable product that, by itself or as a rung in a ladder to other rewards, lures competitive men. The measure of the trophy becomes the measure of the man. In part, the trophy takes the place of meat once brought home to feed a hunter's family. Peers and, ironically, competing hunters take the place of family in recognizing a hunter's achievements.

To the adventurous man of means, trophy hunting offers these temptations: 1) another avenue of competition, to show that he is a winner; 2) a chance to add physical accomplishments to his resume; 3) the challenge of mining unexplored possibilities: a new game, with new rewards; 4) the excitement of risk—


something every successful entrepreneur savors; 5) a different circle of friends to impress; 6) the release of predatory energies that must be controlled in everyday life.

Records book listings lure crooks even as they inspire ethical hunters. In 1932 Prentiss Gray, who authored the first Boone and Crockett

BOX TWO

LOOKING AHEAD... WHAT CAN HUNTERS EXPECT?

- More public attention to hunting, especially trophy hunting, and public judgments concerning motive
- Increasing public opposition to "high tech" hunting equipment that dilutes the primitive contest
- Heightened alienation of hunters, politically, and socially
- Continued low hunter recruitment among youth (due to logistic constraints, high cost, social stigma)
- Focused attacks on trophy hunts by animal advocates who may tolerate subsistence hunting
- Defensive, "hunker" behavior among hunters, ever more conscious of their image
- Reduced public acceptance of meat and management as justifications for killing game
- Diminished hunter influence in the determination of state wildlife policies
- More sophisticated equipment from manufacturers to meet demand for rifles with ever-greater reach



records book, noted that Club officials had discovered moose antlers steamed and the skulls split (to boost spread measurement), and that additional points had been glued to elk antlers. One clever taxidermist built a set of "world record" sheep horns by fitting sections of several horns together—and sold it for a high price. Interestingly, when Prentiss Gray assembled the first trophy listings, trophies were ranked by the longer horn or angler.

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Later Boone and Crockett books listed final scores and rankings. The first edition of the records book using the current scoring system copyrighted in 1950, appeared in 1952. It had both score and ranking, with the owner's name and hunter's name, plus the year, locality of the kill, and a few selected measurements. That format has been retained to date.

Trophy hunting is a selfish effort, but no more so than a pianist's rehearsals for a competition or intense basketball at the playoffs. Success in each endeavor brings a public reward.

CHANGES AFIELD

A primary method in my research was magazine content analy-

sis. As magazines reflect reader preferences, they also influence readers. To say that venerable outdoors publications define the hunt might be overstatement; but they certainly shape the way in which readers *perceive* the hunt. No other venue has yet surfaced that more cleanly packages hunting. Changes in the published

image of hunters reflect not only their evolution as a group, but also changes in the society judging them. The shift away from photographs of dead game in some publications, for example, may stem from a perceived need for "cleaner" representations of killing in magazines that wind up on coffee tables and in waiting rooms.

In 1967, *Field & Stream* shooting editor Warren Page predicted in the title of a feature article that "Hunting Will Never Be The Same." That was a safe bet. But in this unusual article, Page went farther:

First, he wrote, private land will become more important to hunters, as hunting quality on pub-

lic land deteriorates. Secondly, management for big game will emphasize quantity over quality to keep hunter numbers up and state coffers full. While more public land will be set aside for recreation, hunters will face increasing restrictions there, especially as concerns use of motor vehicles. Hunter safety programs will proliferate; certificates will be required of all young hunters. Hunting accident rates will continue to drop.

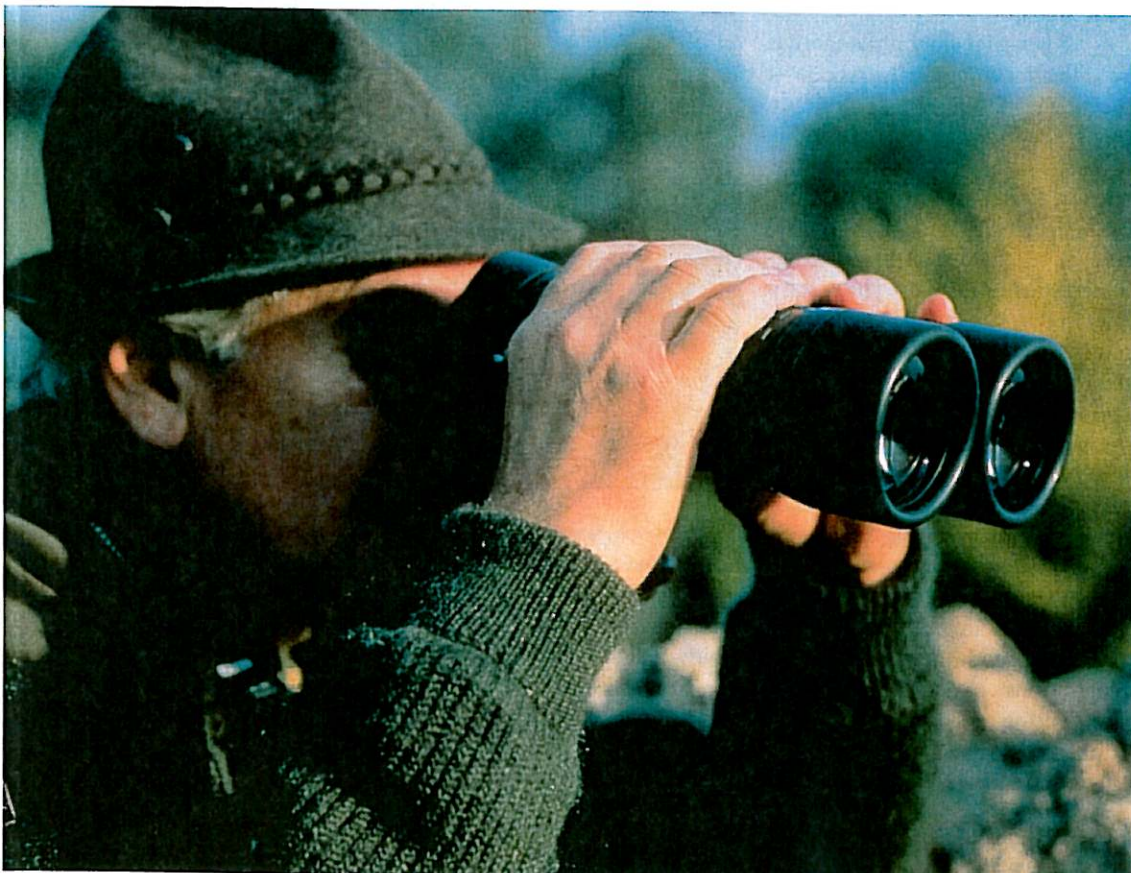
Page wrote that the biggest threat to sport hunting was human fecundity. He recited predictions that the U.S. population would be 74% higher in the year 2000 than it was then (1967), up to 340 million. Human pressure on wildlife habitat, he continued, would reduce the number of places available to hunters. Private landowners, under pressure to provide more recreation for more people, would shut down access or charge for it.

"The fact is that in many ways U.S. hunting is trending toward the European method . . . The scheme whereby ranches charge daily hunting fees, in effect sell the right of trespass, is another straw in the wind. It reaches its peak in Texas, where public-owned land is scarce, and ranchers realize that a rich game population on their acreage increases its annual income. How much relation this has to the fact that the Texas whitetail herd has built up to over three million head, or that the 1966 harvest was nine times the count of 1941, I don't know . . .

"We are indeed in many ways and areas swinging toward the European system. The efficiency of that European approach in raising shootable game is undeniable even if the hunting thereof is limited to thousands rather than to millions."

Page was right in most of his predictions, though after emphasizing high-volume game harvests for some decades, state agencies have increasingly set aside areas as "trophy" units stressing quality over quantity, where hunters stand a better chance of finding a mature animal and encounter less competition from their fellows. As for his prognosis about European-style hunting, the signs are still here.

Save for the Page essay, almost all other articles sampled were sim-



ply reference points in time; they did not directly address the issues central to this study but had to be interpreted as to theme and hunter motive and method. To summarize, articles written to entertain readers—"story" and "adventure" articles—became less frequent between 1932 and 1997. To my surprise, so did articles focused on trophy hunting! But shortly after World War II, *Outdoor Life* and *Field & Stream* began publishing more and more "how to" articles—features that informed readers about new hunting methods and shooting techniques that would improve their odds for success. These articles became popular because there was more hunting opportunity than there had been for some time, and a wash of servicemen now home to enjoy it. Also, the country had become more urban. Hunting was no longer part of every youngster's upbringing. People had to be taught how to hunt effectively.

The steady decline in numbers of trophy hunting articles after the war was due partly to a de-emphasis on foreign game. Pre-war adventure stories included tales from Africa and India, places where few hunters of that day would travel. Post-war, magazines concentrated on places within reach of sportsmen eager to try out a new rifle or bag a bigger buck. These articles seldom featured records book game. Publishers aiming to serve large numbers of readers could ill afford to focus solely on tactics and places for records class animals.

In addition to magazine content analysis, I also interviewed several dozen people with strong hunting backgrounds or connections to the hunting industry. They offered more insight as to changes in big game hunting, particularly regarding trophy hunting. Many had noticed a change in hunter motive during their lifetimes. "I still hunt mainly for meat," said one. "But lots of hunters I know are hunting for big antlers and the prestige that comes with them." A purveyor of hunting gear agreed. "We sell expensive binoculars and rifle scopes to serious hunters. We find them more willing than ever to buy the best; and the reason, I think, is that they're selective.

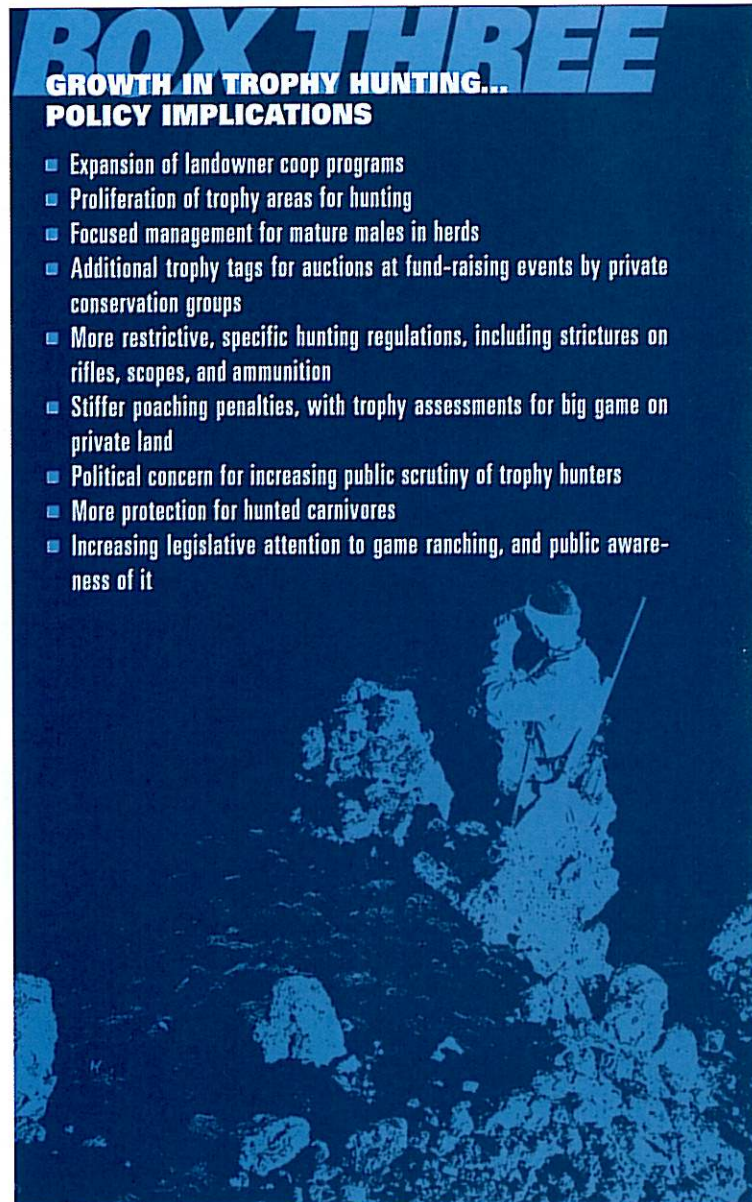
They want every advantage if they see a super-duper animal."

They also indicated that they had seen more competition among big game hunters. "In Texas, everybody wants to get a buster whitetail," said an entrepreneur who manages hunting leases. "The competition is keen, and if you have property that produces huge antlers, you get to charge a big price for access." The editor of one outdoors magazine likens the competition for trophy big game to an adolescent drive to be the biggest man. "It's vanity, pure and simple. You see it in teenagers with powerful cars and in hunters rewriting the records books. Hunters who pay the most money don't get more hunting time or a different experience, just bigger deer. It wasn't that way when I was young."

Most interviewees agreed that trophy hunting was a defensible sport. "It makes no difference to a dead animal whether it was shot to feed a family, or by a rookie out to kill the first thing he sees, or by a trophy hunter," observed one rifleman. "Hunters who shoot only mature males take fewer animals than less selective hunters, so the herd benefits." Another sportsman said: "In Texas, the ranches manage for big deer because hunters pay them to. Plenty of deer would be there without management, but trophy quality wouldn't be the same, and the ranchers wouldn't get as much money from hunters. Trophy hunting directly benefits deer by giving landowners an incentive for improving deer habitat." Still, many people who do not hunt see trophy hunting as indefensible. An editor noted that outside his office in New York City, trophy hunting is widely denounced. "Hunters can champion it among themselves because they understand it," he said. "To people with urban upbringing and liberal ideas, it's an outrage."

There was also concern over the direction of big game hunting in the United States. "It's becoming more and more like Europe," said one rancher who established a fee hunting operation for hunters after big mule deer. "It's not bad or good; it's just the way things are. In some ways, I'd like to see hunting as it was when I grew up in the

1950s and 1960s, but those days are gone. We can still have big deer and good hunting. But not everyone will have an equal chance at either." An executive at a firearms company stressed that his firm served a hunting public steeped in traditional American culture.



BOX THREE

GROWTH IN TROPHY HUNTING... POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Expansion of landowner coop programs
- Proliferation of trophy areas for hunting
- Focused management for mature males in herds
- Additional trophy tags for auctions at fund-raising events by private conservation groups
- More restrictive, specific hunting regulations, including strictures on rifles, scopes, and ammunition
- Stiffer poaching penalties, with trophy assessments for big game on private land
- Political concern for increasing public scrutiny of trophy hunters
- More protection for hunted carnivores
- Increasing legislative attention to game ranching, and public awareness of it

"They buy their licenses over the counter and hunt on public land. They have a lot of fun at little cost, and they think hunting is as much a right as it is a privilege. It is both. Unfortunately, times are changing, and low-cost hunting for the masses is a tradition that's slipping away. Fee hunting will increase; so will the investments wealthy hunters make in their sport."

My research indicated that a variety of factors will shape the fu-

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ture of hunting (Box 2). The pursuit of trophies is becoming a more prominent part of the hunting culture, and interest in trophy hunting has been on the rise. Generally, hunters who spoke to me of trophy hunting said that they approved of it, the majority observing that there is nothing "wrong" with a selective search for exceptional animals, so long as the hunter obeys the law and behaves ethically. Some hunters told me proudly that they were trophy hunters and considered the challenge of killing records book game the epitome of big game hunting. There was general agreement that trophy hunting has been condemned by people who do not hunt. Hunters placed some of the blame for a sullied public image on Safari Club International's awards program, because it emphasizes quantity as well as quality in trophy collecting, and because it is unabashedly designed to confer prestige to successful hunters.

There was an expected consensus among interviewees and other people I spoke with that hunting rifles, scopes, and ammunition are much more effective than they were before World War II. Catalogs and elk hunter surveys bore out this conclusion. Greater reach (more power and accuracy at long range) benefits all sportsmen, not just trophy hunters. But they also agreed that trophy hunters are the biggest beneficiaries, because they have fewer shooting opportunities than less selective hunters. Most hunters I spoke with indicated that a more effective rifle drained some of the challenge from a shot; but trophy hunters added that the constraints imposed by a high trophy standard more than offset any advantage afforded by sophisticated equipment.

The magazine record suggested that sportsmen have shown increasing interest in reading about how to hunt better themselves and are less interested now in reading about the adventures of other hunters than they were early in the study period (1930s). The rise in frequency of "how-to" articles and a decline in "story" and "adventure" articles shows that readers want to *participate*. Still, these trends do not indicate that competition among hunters for the

recognition that comes with taking big trophies is obscuring the traditional contest between hunter and quarry. Many of the hunters I spoke with indicated that the main contest in hunting remains between the hunter and his quarry.

CONCLUSION

The character of sport hunting is evolving, but so is the nature of the society that judges it. The perception

Sport hunting has shaped the management of most big game animals and their habitat, because it has provided the bulk of the funding for that management. As trophy hunters become a more distinctive part of the hunting culture and define an agenda to produce bigger, more mature animals, changes in policy are likely to follow (Box 3). In the U.S. and other industrialized nations, protection of the natural world will



of hunting in the public eye can be skewed by misinformation and stereotypes. Shifts in public opinion about hunting or hunters do not necessarily reflect changes in the hunt. Motives and behaviors of hunters seem to be important issues to people outside the hunting culture who try to understand the sport; however, trophy hunting in particular is difficult to explain and, thus, to defend. The role of hunters in wildlife conservation is well published but not yet widely appreciated. At the same time, firearms appear more often as implements of crime than as sporting tools, and people who carry them have become less and less popular. Recruitment of young people into the hunting culture in the U.S. has been hampered in part by the increasing cost of hunting, in part by urban upbringings that do not include hunting or shooting—or peers who approve of them.

probably remain a politically sensitive issue, as wild places and creatures succumb to human demands. However, knowledge of natural processes and conservation policies will likely diminish, as electronic entertainment replaces field sports among youth, and anthropomorphism becomes more prevalent on television and in movies. The commercial value of big game animals should ensure their survival and that of hunters until public disenchantment with hunting demands stewardship of wildlife only for its esthetic value. The egalitarian tradition of sport hunting in the United States is already imperiled. However, because it is a tradition dear to many people and still supports a system of wildlife management not easily replaced, big game hunting in the United States will take a long time dying. ▲▲▲

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