



The first organization

I ever belonged to was the *Deutsche Jagdschutz Verband*. Shortly after becoming a hunter at age 16, I registered for membership in the largest hunting organization in Germany. I knew full well that my responsibility towards preserving the German hunting heritage would be well represented by belonging to this organization.

More than 90% of Germany's 300,000 hunters are organized in the *Deutsche Jagdschutz Verband*. Membership in this organization is voluntary though it is assumed as part of becoming a hunter. The *Deutsche Jagdschutz Verband* oversees all hunting activities in the country. It lobbies for hunting interests in regional and national decisions affecting the future of hunting and wildlife conservation. Through its work, it encourages dialogue between the hunting and non-hunting public. One of its primary goals is to promote excellence in hunting behavior.

The organization addresses public sentiment pertaining to behavior and recommends improvement to its constituency. Some recommendations may result in modifications of hunting law. In its capacity, the *Deutsche Jagdschutz Verband* also guides curricula development for hunter education. The strong public relations built by this 50-year old organization have been instrumental in preserving Germany's rich hunting heritage while ensuring adaptability to respond to public opinion. Hunters in Germany understand the valuable role this organiza-

tion plays in preserving their unique hunting heritage.

When hunters are asked to identify what makes hunting in North America unique, most answers center on the democracy of the hunt and the public trust of wildlife. Public ownership of wildlife and its allocation through law rather than markets or land ownership is the distinctive feature for democracy in the hunt. This system evolved as a rejection of the European system of privileged access. The North American hunting heritage, as it is often referred to, is founded on the asserted notion of individualism founded on the cornerstones of freedom and equality.

Independent of economic and social status, the individual hunter in North America is afforded an equal opportunity to pursue game for personal enjoyment. There are few strings attached. Being a hunter does not mandate belonging to a hunting organization, nor does it demand a commitment to preserve hunting traditions or even to adhere to standards of excellence. In essence, it requires only to be lawful by obtaining proper licensing and following hunting regulations. Because of this strong individualism, behavior varies widely among hunters and with it, the approval of hunting by the non-hunting public. Efforts to address public disapproval are tedious since the absence of an organization such as a *Deutsche Jagdschutz Verband* makes it notably difficult for hunters and non-hunters to engage in a constructive dialogue.

Instead of a large representative hunting organization with semi-mandatory membership and standards of excellence, the opposite has taken place in North America. Fueled by an initial shortage of game in this century, hunters focused their attention on conserving individual species. This specialization led to the formation of a myriad of species-specific groups, each with its own unique char-

ter for conservation. Today, the gamut of groups are as diverse as the species and ways to hunt.

Hunters in these groups gather funds for habitat protection and voice opinions on behalf of their favorite game. Decades of hard work have proven extremely successful in producing huntable surpluses of the most desired species. Today, regulated and controlled access through laws and regulations safeguards these flourishing game populations from impacts of a growing recreation industry. Yet, the price for this success as measured in public approval of hunting has not been insignificant. Throughout North American hunting history, these organization have accomplished little in creating a positive image for recreational hunting.

Differentiation can go too far and become disassociation, which has happened to the American hunting community. Throughout this century, hunters have done their own thing with little communication among groups. An aggressive science directed at game restoration has dominated the realms of what it means to be a hunter in modern times. With ethics and beauty pushed aside, quantity often means more than quality, and the only truth of hunting seems to be the satisfaction of personal desires. This has led us to our current inability to preserve the hunt.

In western states poor behavior by hunters is considered the single most important cause for declining public access to private lands. Landowners are fed up with disrespectful behavior some hunters show for private property including trespassing, driving off roads, and littering. Instead of public hunting, landowners increasingly opt for regulated and controlled private hunting by outfitters and their clients. As a result, much of the most productive private lands in the west are leased by commercial interests and are no longer available to the populace. While hunters are

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NEWSWORTHY

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE HAILS VOLUNTEER-PARTNERSHIP ENHANCEMENT ACT

stunned in disbelief, private land is closed off at an alarming rate. The lack of an organization focussing on improved conduct has hunters turning to state wildlife agencies for help. Faced with the prospect of a shrinking constituency, agencies are now taking on the challenge of improving hunter behavior. Ideally, this responsibility should fall upon individuals and a representative organization. The lack of a unified voice for the American hunter is a threat to the very notion of the democratic ideal of the hunt and the essence of the North American hunting heritage.

While we need to acknowledge the benefits of differentiation, we must seek a new, higher integration for establishing representation and fostering excellence among the endangered hunter. Hunters belonging to different species-specific groups share one thing in common and that is the passion for the hunt. Perhaps, exploring the dimension of this passion from a historical, ethical, social, and philosophical perspective will provide an opportunity to characterize the ethical modern hunter and to seek an acceptable definition for hunting. Promoting this type of hunter through education, management, and representation may lead to some stratification among hunters based upon behavior.

We as hunters are presently confronted with a situation that appears superficially similar to others we've dealt with previously, but is, in fact, significantly different, it is the hunter that may become extinct this time. Interpreting such a situation through the prism of past experience of continuing differentiation will inevitably lead us further astray. By focusing on the ethical, historical, social, and philosophical dimensions of the North American hunting heritage, hunters may regain a sense of community, while preserving the individualism of the hunt. ▲▲▲

A new law allowing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to expand the use of volunteers and partnerships and simplify donations made to specific national wildlife refuges was applauded by Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark as "a historic step." President Clinton signed the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998.

"This is a very significant piece of legislation for this agency because volunteers are critically

important to our ability to meet our wildlife conservation mission," Clark said. "It will allow the service to take giant steps in three very important areas: in the recruitment and use of volunteers, in the expansion and use of partnerships, and in simplifying the rules governing financial donations to specific refuges. We're very excited about all that this bill will make possible and look forward to putting these new pieces in place."

— NEWS FROM THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

ELK DECOY HOOKS UNLICENSED CHEYENNE ANGLERS

In addition to the ability of spotting cautiously rising trout, unlicensed anglers should also keep their eyes peeled for elk.

That's the upshot of a somewhat humorous encounter in September on the Pole Mountain section of the Medicine Bow National Forest between Laramie and Cheyenne.

That evening Wyoming Game and Fish Department officers set up a stuffed elk along a road to check the law compliance of archery hunters. A truck drove past the decoy, pulled off the road and parked. The two men began fishing a small creek nearby.

The anglers worked upstream toward the concealed truck of game warden Mark Nelson who was watching the

decoy. So the officer asked the anglers for their licenses.

One man replied he purchased his license in April 1997, the other said he hadn't bought one. As Nelson was issuing the citations, the angler had the revelation that it was actually April 1998 not 1997.

"Fine," said Nelson. "Produce a fishing license dated prior to today to the court, and your ticket will be dismissed."

The other angler said, "I guess I'm just 'had.'" (Using a considerably spicier term.)

"Yeah, I guess you are," Nelson agreed with a chuckle.

"Had" by a stuffed elk.

Both men paid \$100 fines to Albany County Court.

— WYOMING GAME & FISH NEWS

B&C MEMBER HONORED
Boone and Crockett Club Member, William B. Ruger has been awarded the Medal of Honor from the Camp Fire Club of America. He has made the shooting community recognize their obligation to preserve our firearm heritage for future generations. His generous endowments cover a wide range of issues including education and conservation, and he has taken the leadership role in endowing the future of outdoor activities. For these reasons and many more the Camp Fire Club of America has awarded him their Medal of Honor.

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