

# THE VALUE OF ETHICAL HUNTING THROUGH *Storytelling*



## B&C'S TENETS OF FAIR CHASE

Hunter ethics. Fundamental to all hunting is the concept of conservation of natural resources. Hunting in today's world involves the regulated harvest of individual animals in a manner that conserves, protects, and perpetuates the hunted population. The hunter engages in a one-to-one relationship with the quarry, and should be guided by a hierarchy of hunting ethics including the following tenets:

- 1. Obey all applicable laws and regulations.**
- 2. Respect the customs of the locale where the hunting occurs.**
- 3. Exercise a personal code of behavior that reflects favorably on one's abilities and sensibilities as a hunter.**
- 4. Attain and maintain the skills necessary to make the kill as certain and quick as possible.**
- 5. Behave in a way that will bring no dishonor to the hunter, and show no disrespect for the hunted or the environment.**

Do you have a short story that highlights the value of ethical hunting and illustrates a tenet of Fair Chase? Send your story to Karlie Slayer at [Karlie@Boone-Crockett.org](mailto:Karlie@Boone-Crockett.org)

### THE MEANING OF SUCCESS

I had been hunting hard for days with my professional guide. We saw plenty of animals but I never saw a mature male I wanted to harvest. At the end of the hunt, I could tell my guide was quite disappointed with what he considered a very expensive but “unsuccessful” hunt. To his great surprise, I gave him a generous tip and thanked him for a wonderful hunt. I explained that hunting for me is not about a kill or bringing home a trophy. My satisfaction with a hunt derives from the entire experience, amazing encounters with countless animals, and being in the wild.

Ultimately, my guide was not only relieved, but also somewhat enlightened by how pleased I was with the experience. I have hunted with him since that first “unsuccessful” hunt, and more than once we have discussed—now with mutual pleasure—passing on several massive animals. ■

**Tenet 3: Exercise a personal code of behavior that reflects favorably on one's abilities and sensibilities as a hunter.**

### A HUNTER'S MOMENT

For years I have argued for the moral legitimacy of hunting. I have argued that hunting is moral for the basic reason that it provides food for the hunter and the hunter's family or even their friends. But, for the past 100 years, hunting has also been an efficient tool for game management and enhancement. It has been a tool for conservation.

But, I have also argued that beyond its utility role as food provider and game manager, the hunter hunts for the quality of the hunt itself, for the immediate experience in the life-death continuum of the natural community. Even if food and conservation are



not primary in the mind of the hunter, the experience ought to be because such participation is a sacred moment in the life of the hunter and death of the prey. This is what it means, in my view and that of Aldo Leopold, to be a companion or fellow citizen of the land.

But, as time goes on, the hunter learns that there always has to be a proportionate reason for the taking of an animal's life beyond food and conservation. That such a reason is not secondary but primary, especially if food and conservation are not the primary intention, but rather, the hunting experience. There can be a time and it often happens, that one can no longer take the life of the animal. One must, morally speaking, pass up the shot; let the animal live even though nature has provided the animal for the respectful taking.

This happened to me three years ago. While deer hunting, I shot at and knocked down a fine buck. Thinking he was dead, I approached him. He jumped up and stumbled away from me. I shot him again. But, the following shot did not kill him. I had to dispatch him up close, merely a few feet away, with my handgun. I saw the life go out of his eyes. I knew at that moment, I could not do this again, though the kill was morally and legally justified. I could not do it again.

Last year, while deer hunting on opening day morning, a six-point buck stood in front of me about 100 yards away. He was an easy shot. I had him in my

scope. I did not fire. A few minutes later, he was trailing two does. Again, I did not fire at either the buck or the does, though all would have been legal and morally acceptable. I passed. The next day, again, I saw the does knowing the buck was near. I did not shoot.

I hunted all week. I did not see them again. I know if I had, I would not have fired. I intend to deer hunt this season and the rest of my life. Should nature provide me with a deer, I will choose again whether or not to shoot, whether or not I have sufficient and proportionate reason to take the animal's life. If not, I hope he/she will be successful in making new deer.

***Tenet 5: Behave in a way that will bring no dishonor to the hunter, and show no disrespect for the hunted or the environment.***

#### **DUCK HUNT**

My father was a passionate duck hunter. As a boy I wanted to be a duck hunter too. I would badger him to take me along every time he went hunting. Sometimes I was able to wear him down. I had a Daisy pump action BB gun that I carried so I could "shoot" if an opportunity presented itself. I didn't get many ducks.

One afternoon we were in our blind and waiting for a flock of ducks. Our luck in getting birds to decoy was spotty that day. Low gray clouds hung over the

valley with no wind or rain. Mostly the ducks we saw went about their business and ignored us and our spread. A flock would tip our way and give us a look every once in a while. This was agonizing for a boy with a BB gun who wanted to shoot a duck. Suddenly, a flock of mallards swung our way. The birds must have seen something they liked about our spread and committed to a landing. As the ducks dropped their landing gear over the decoys someone called, "Take 'em!"

Two birds dropped and the rest flew away along with the big greenhead that I had desperately tried for.

I was a little disgusted to say the least. If the ducks had landed, I was sure that I would have been able to score. If hunting was about getting ducks then waiting until they landed seemed like it would be way more productive. So, I asked my dad, "Wouldn't it be easier to shoot them if we wait until they land?"

He looked at me for a second with one of those fatherly-type looks and said, "Well, it probably would be easier but that's not the way we do it. We give the birds a fair chance to get away by shooting while they are flying. It wouldn't be sporting to shoot them on the water, that's too easy. It wouldn't be fair."

Fair Chase. Pass it on.

***Tenet 5: Behave in a way that will bring no dishonor to the hunter, and show no disrespect for the hunted or the environment.***