

PRO HUNTING ARTICLE

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Works Cited

Driscoll, Sally. "Point: Hunting is the Ultimate Primal Sport." *Points of View: Hunting* (Jan. 2008): 2. *Points of View Reference Center*. EBSCO. [Library name], [City], [State abbreviation]. 17 Sep. 2009
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Point: Hunting is the Ultimate Primal Sport

Thesis: The sport of hunting restores the innate connection of mankind to nature and ultimately benefits individuals, society, and the environment in numerous ways.

Summary: Hunting is one of the oldest activities known to humans and, along with fishing, the only sport which can take credit for the survival of the human race. While food can be easily procured from restaurants and grocery stores, wild game offers truly free-range, organic meat--a cut above the factory-farmed pork and chicken so readily available. Hunters also learn many things about nature and gain an appreciation for the keen instincts and highly developed senses of wildlife. In addition, hunters are responsible for ensuring the stability of animal populations and help maintain a healthy biodiversity; the fees and taxes paid by hunters support many state conservation and wildlife programs as well as the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program, which provides funding for research, training for hunters, and conservation and development of wildlife habitats. Hunting can also be an important rite of passage from youth to adulthood, not only in indigenous cultures, but also in contemporary American society, where social problems often ruin young lives.

Introduction

Hunting is one of the oldest activities known to humans; it satisfies something deep inside humanity and is the ultimate primal sport. In fact, hunting and fishing are sports upon which the human race can base its survival. Hunting used to be primarily a male activity, just as gathering and cooking used to be primarily female activities, but now the sport attracts both men and women who yearn for a primal connection to nature. Hunting is not for everyone, yet those who don camouflage and track the footprints of a deer or bear will often proclaim that hunting is as good as it gets.

The Original Free-Range Meat

Millions of Americans eat meat but do not even raise and butcher it themselves, let alone hunt wild game. Our society makes it easy for civilized carnivores to enjoy a slab of beef or a chicken dinner with little effort. One can stop at any supermarket on the way home from work and pick up a tidy package of pre-sliced meat, and even less effort is required to order from a restaurant menu.

In either case, few people think about where the meat has come from, which is a good thing, because it likely came from a factory farm in which animals were injected with antibiotics, sprayed with insecticides, artificially inseminated, and confined in cages from the day they were born. As for the method of slaughter, a quick jolt from a stun gun or an effective slash across the throat would be the

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most humane, but reports from animal welfare organizations indicate that slaughterhouses are not always that kind.

On the other hand, the venison and duck bagged by a hunter come from animals that have spent their entire lives in their natural environment, foraging for berries or tracking down their own prey; females have given birth and nurtured their young. The hunter takes the animal with one quick shot and the creature succumbs to its predator, to be eaten as nature intended, part of the ancient contest called survival of the fittest. The reward for humans is truly free-range, organic meat, the healthiest and most natural of diets.

The Hunter in Nature

Hunting requires the development of many skills, not the least of which is how to track an animal. In doing so, one learns a few things about nature that cannot be absorbed from watching nature shows. The hunter learns to appreciate the keen instincts and senses that animals possess. A deer, for example, can smell the scent of a human being hundreds of feet away, thanks to a few hundred million more olfactory scent receptors than possessed by humans. Bears are among the smartest mammals, able to use a twig or rock for a tool, and are believed to have memories that help them navigate their way to the best fishing streams. Their ability to climb trees is especially noteworthy; a hunter learns quickly that it is not so easy to outsmart a bear.

Knowledge of an animal's diet can help a sports enthusiast determine the best hunting places. Bears tend to eat plenty of acorns in the fall, as often evidenced by acorn shells left in scat droppings. A knowledgeable hunter can then scout around groves of oak trees for the target, or, if it is not bear hunting season, at least be wary while passing through. Hunters learn much about the habits of animals. For instance, bears often turn over rocks to search for insects, leaving behind a recognizable trail which is especially helpful when mud or snow have not captured observable footprints.

The hunter also learns the importance of remaining alert in the woods at all times. He or she needs to step quietly in order to hear twigs breaking across the creek, or animal snorts that may point to an elk behind a tree. Hunters learn that wind direction can work for or against them, by conveying their scents toward or away from the prey. One learns about patience and the importance of taking careful aim. Hunting also exercises the muscles and cardiovascular system as one follows animal tracks deep into the woods, sometimes for miles and miles, while the fresh air fills the lung and invigorates the entire body.

The Hunter as Conservator of Nature

In the past, hunters occasionally hunted species to the point of extinction, but that was before regulations were established. In the twenty-first century hunters understand the concept of sustainability. They are responsible for ensuring the stability of animal populations, and for helping maintain a healthy biodiversity.

The fees for licenses and taxes paid on hunting arms and equipment support many state conservation and wildlife programs as well as the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program, which provides funding for research, training for hunters, and conservation and development of wildlife habitats. Hunters of migratory waterfowl have paid for millions of acres of wetlands that provide habitats for birds and many other species, made possible by the Federal Duck Stamp program. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation supported the acquisition of millions of acres of land for elk and many non-game animals. These natural environments are used not only by hunters, but also by researchers, photographers, birdwatchers, and many others who value nature.

Furthermore, hunters keep destructive animal populations in check. Several states, including Ohio, South Carolina, and North Carolina, depend on hunters to keep the wild boar population under control. Wild boars eat agricultural crops, carry diseases that threaten domestic pigs and humans, and threaten native plants and animals, including ground-nesting birds and sea turtles. A similar situation exists on the island of Mona in Puerto Rico, where wild goats and pigs also threaten the endangered iguana. Hunting can negate the need for chemical control of invasive species, and is much less destructive to the environment.

The Hunter and Society

Hunting is a sport that not only benefits the individuals, but society overall. Hunters protect farm animals from predators such as wolves, coyotes, raccoons, mountain lions, and bears. Hunting protects human lives as well; every year, dozens of people are killed and thousands are injured in car

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accidents caused by deer overpopulation. Each deer taken by a hunter helps to reduce the risk of such tragedies.

Although hunters often venture into the woods alone, hunting is hardly considered a solitary sport. Hunting cabins are usually filled with friends and family members who enjoy the social camaraderie, and children can have fun while also learning hunting skills from experienced adults. In fact, some professionals promote hunting as an excellent activity for building character and teaching the value of the natural world.

Hunting can also serve as an important rite of passage from youth to adulthood, not only in indigenous cultures, but also in contemporary American society, where social problems often ruin young lives. Hunting teaches young people responsibility and imparts valuable lessons about the cycle of life, the food chain, wildlife and environmental conservation. The hunter learns that animals are not something to be taken for granted.

A Natural Advantage

The sport of hunting has often been plagued with spoilers, especially as humans have struggled to determine appropriate uses for technology. True sportsmen have no use for computer-assisted remote hunting, which is why dozens of states have passed laws banning it. Nicknamed "pay-per-view-hunting," the activity makes a mockery of the fair chase, the component that divides the sport of hunting from the mere act of butchery. In fair chase, humans must prove they have the skill to hunt an animal, while the animals have a sporting chance to get away.

True sports enthusiasts rely on their knowledge of animals, tracking skills, and adeptness at weaponry rather than the gimmicks of "extreme hunting" activities that can give the sport a bad name. Ethical hunters use technology responsibly, carrying on the legacy of the fair chase and supporting a cultural heritage that has been with humankind since the beginning. From rocks and spears, to bows, arrows and firearms, tools have symbolized what it means to be human, and helped to insure the survival of humanity.

Ponder This

1. The vocabulary used in a persuasive essay is intentionally chosen to help promote the argument. Can you locate several examples where the terminology is intended to sway you to this position?
2. The author claims that hunting is a primal, innate human activity. Do you think this is an opinion or a fact? Does the author provide adequate information to back up the statement?
3. Would the addition of more facts and statistics strengthen the argument overall, or does the author provide adequate information? Explain your reasoning.
4. To the best of your knowledge, does the author confront the most pressing issues facing hunting today? Are there issues not considered in this essay?

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By Sally Driscoll

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