I had occasion recently to reexamine my views on the subject of sport hunting. Between
seven and ten million Americans kill animals in the pursuit of pleasure each year. The num-
ber does not appear to be on the increase—if anything, statistics would indicate the ranks of hunters
may be declining slightly. Nonetheless, those who pass through the woods each year in pursuit
of Bambi, Tpayper, and their friends cling fiercely to their right to engage in the time-honored
tradition of killing for sport.

We are not talking subsistence hunting here, though many hunters are quick to point out that they
cut the animals they kill. (This justification is designed to quickly categorize as a hypocrite anyone who eats
meat and dares to criticize hunting. That the subsistence-hunting argument often works in deflecting criticism of hunting always
amazes me. People who eat meat do not take pleasure in tormenting animals before consuming them. It is doubtful that people
who work in slaughterhouses develop the sense of kinship and eager anticipation shared by the hunting fraternity. The ethical
debate over the eating of a worthy issue for discussion, but it has no bearing on the rightness or wrongness of killing
for sport. Hunting represents an active, premeditated intention to seek out and destroy; meat-eating, the result of cultural condi-
tioning, embodies a less clear intent. It is doubtful whether most people truly comprehend that the consequence of eating meat
is the death of an animal. There are no arguments to support the claim that the glorification of the hunt by the hunter has its
parallel in what is going on when a person sits down to dinner.)

The biological arguments hunters have traditionally advanced to support their position have been exposed as spurious. Manip-
ulation of habitat (through clear-cutting and artificial feeding) and harvest practices (prohibiting the taking of females to en-
sure unnaturally high herd reproductive rates, for example) ensure bumper crops of many species (e.g., deer) highly desired
as game animals. Game-management rationale has been: the more deer there are, the more likely it is that the hunter will
be successful in his quest for a kill and, therefore, the higher the probability that he will return next year to hunt and spend
In truth, when left alone, nature seeks a balance and man's in-
tervention is seldom if ever, needed.

Hunters tend to be preoccupied with the "species." Their posi-
tion seems to be that by killing individuals the health of the "species" is guaranteed. Categorizations, as Plato observed, are
man-made constructions that help us organize our world. They are abstractions. There is, ontologically speaking, no species,
no forest, no "mankind," outside the realm of the human mind.
"Mankind," for example, is just our term for a collection of
individual people. A species is just a group of like individuals.
The moral impact of this is that actions are judged as right or
wrong based upon their effect on individuals. To say we harm mankind is to affirm the harming of a finite number of
individuals, each of whom suffers and experiences distress perso-
nally. This is a critical point with respect to hunting. Because
a species is an abstraction, it does not—cannot—encompass
suffer, or enjoy life. Only individuals have those capabilities. A
species cannot die—although a species may cease to be if all
of its members die—but dying, like living, is reserved for indi-
viduals. The sport hunter's claim that he is concerned with the
well-being of the species is a hollow one: what the sport hunter
is concerned with is the proliferation of individuals as targets.

I will not address the hunter's arguments that because of hunting there are more and healthier
animals than in past years. These biological arguments have been shown to be invalid.
However, there is one issue I shall address. Hunters often argue they are fulfilling the niche as
predator of game populations, that somehow they are fulfilling a natural role. Predators take the
old, the weak, and the infirm. Sport hunters take the best, the healthiest, the prime contributors to the genetic pool of the group. Hunting, there-
fore, is an inverse form of natural predation and the antithesis of natural selection.

I have a friend who hunts, and in particular, enjoys hunting
with a compound bow. Now, if ever any invention was more
effectively designed to cause pain than a broadhead arrow (with
the possible exception of a steel-jaw trap), I, for one, don't wish
to know of it. Imagine a razor-edged projectile penetrating
through your skin and flesh and stopping lodged deep in the
vital organs that keep you alive. The excruciating pain causes
you to run blindly, trying to get away from the agony that has
engulfed your body. The arrow, which sends a violent reminder
of its presence each time you move, is causing you to hemorrhage
so that, finally weakened by bleeding and tortured by a pain
no mind can grasp nor any words describe, you die—a testament
to another being's skill with this diabolical weapon.

Most states have laws that make it a crime to cause an animal
to be tormented and tortured or to suffer needlessly. Most civili-
zied people recoil in horror at descriptions of cruelties indi-
viduals perpetrate on animals. How hypocritical that we exempt sport hunting from our list of unacceptable activities
of tormenting and torturing animals! No arguments, based on tra
tional "economy," or biology can justify the premeditated, in-
tentional, searing out of a living creature with aful intent
to kill it with no mention of an activity that intentionally causes
suffering.

Why then do millions of people engage in this brutish and
indefensible practice? Albert Schweitzer once remarked that the
roots of cruelty are not so much deep as widespread. I would
seldom dare to disagree with Dr. Schweitzer, but I am afraid
that, after reexamining sport hunting, I believe here, at least,
the roots of cruelty are deep. Sport hunting is the murder of
another life, the ing, is no less repulsive because the being is
of another species. It is murder because it is undertaken with
not only an awareness of the consequences of the action, but
also the intention of killing a living creature.

That any rational person would or could enjoy inflicting pain
and causing suffering to another creature is repugnant. Even
more offensive is that adult human beings can—and do—
neutralize and glorify murder. Both of these observations
become more disturbing when we recognize that this behavior
is intentional and those who engage in sport hunting will put
forth every effort to justify their actions. Many will scoff at
the suggestion that sport hunting is murder, arguing that murder
is the kind of action that is banned by our laws. But we are
really talking about the perpetration of murder, about actual
murder. The sport hunter's claim that he is concerned with the
well-being of the species is a hollow one: what the sport hunter

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ONE MAN'S VIEW OF
SPORT HUNTING

By David K. Wills

Opposite: "If every invention was more effectively designed to cause pain and suffering than a broadhead arrow, I don't wish to know of it." Hunters often argue they fill the niche of predators of game populations.