



# Wildlife Biologue

## *You Asked About Hunting*

Hunting wild animals has been a way of life for mankind throughout history. The hunting of deer, bear, ducks and other animals has provided people with food, clothing, and shelter for centuries. Without the meat and skins provided by wild animals, the American colonists would not have survived the difficult, early years in this country. The valuable hides of furbearers hunted and trapped, such as beaver, fox, otter, lynx and pine marten, were critical to the survival and livelihood of many settlers in the New World.

Hunting today is strictly regulated by state and federal governments. Wildlife managers use hunting as a tool to help conserve and manage wildlife habitat populations. In addition, hunting also provides billions of dollars annually to the economy.

### **Personal Enjoyment**

There are many personal rewards that give hunting a special character, place and value as part of America's heritage. Hunting is a unique way for an individual to interact with

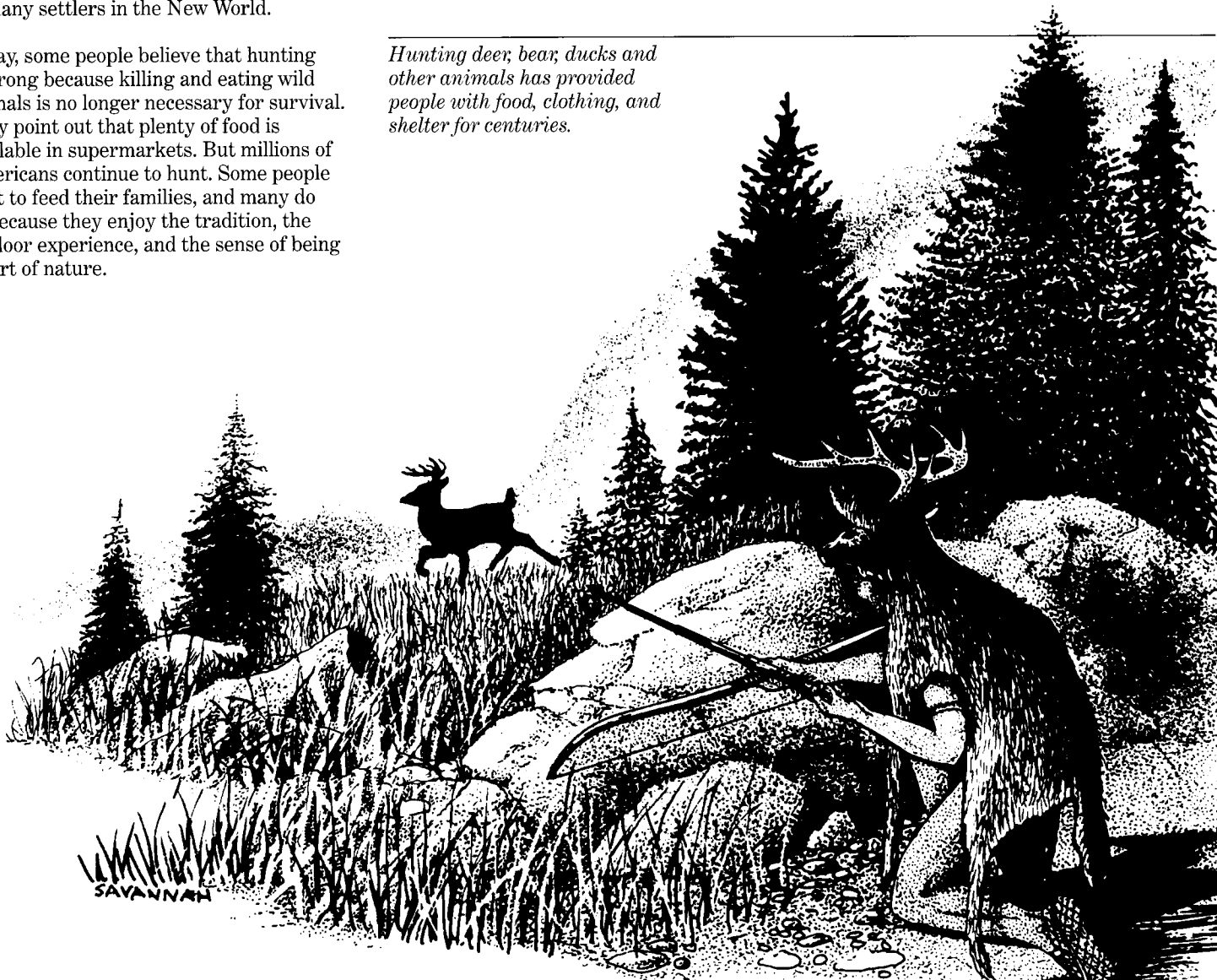
nature, and helps a person learn about the outdoors. Hunting is an outdoor activity that can be enjoyed together by husbands and wives, parents and children.

New friendships and a sense of good sportsmanship can arise from a day spent hunting. It also provides an opportunity to engage in good physical exercise and refresh one's mind and spirits. Many people consider game, such as wild goose, rabbit, pheasant, or deer, to be a delicacy.

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Today, some people believe that hunting is wrong because killing and eating wild animals is no longer necessary for survival. They point out that plenty of food is available in supermarkets. But millions of Americans continue to hunt. Some people hunt to feed their families, and many do so because they enjoy the tradition, the outdoor experience, and the sense of being a part of nature.



## Wildlife Management

Hunting is also used as a tool to help manage wildlife. For example, deer can become so numerous that there is not enough food for all of them, especially during the winter. Without hunting to reduce their numbers, many would starve or become sick. A herd of hungry deer can quickly strip the vegetation that provides them and other animals with food and cover.

Too many deer can also lead to auto accidents when they cross highways in search of food. Deer may also damage property by eating corn or fruit trees because there is not enough natural vegetation for them to eat in the forest.

Outbreaks of disease can occur when wild animals become too plentiful. For instance, small carnivores such as raccoons and foxes are susceptible to rabies and distemper, which they can transmit to cats, dogs, farm animals, and even people.

## Benefits to Society

Hunters have been the backbone of wildlife conservation programs in the United States. Because hunters spend time in the outdoors and learn about animals and their habitats, they are strong supporters of programs to help conserve wildlife and the environment.

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Many people do not realize that hunters also provide a major source of funding for wildlife conservation. Hunting license fees support the management, law enforcement, research, and educational programs of state wildlife agencies.

Federal excise taxes on guns, ammunition and archery equipment provide more than \$150 million each year. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service annually distributes these funds to the states to support state wildlife conservation and hunter education programs.

Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps (commonly called Duck Stamps), purchased mostly by waterfowl hunters, provide about \$20 million annually to buy wetlands habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Since 1934, more than 4.5 million acres of refuge lands have been acquired with Migratory Bird Conservation Fund revenues.

Hunting also supports many businesses and provides an extra source of income for farmers who lease their land to hunters. According to a survey by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, in 1996 hunters spent more than \$20 billion on transportation, food, lodging and equipment for hunting.

## Hunting: A Personal Choice

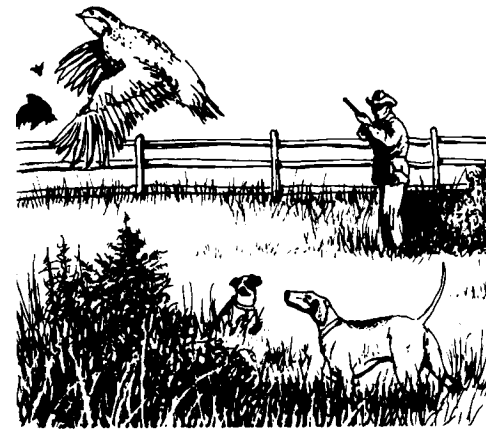
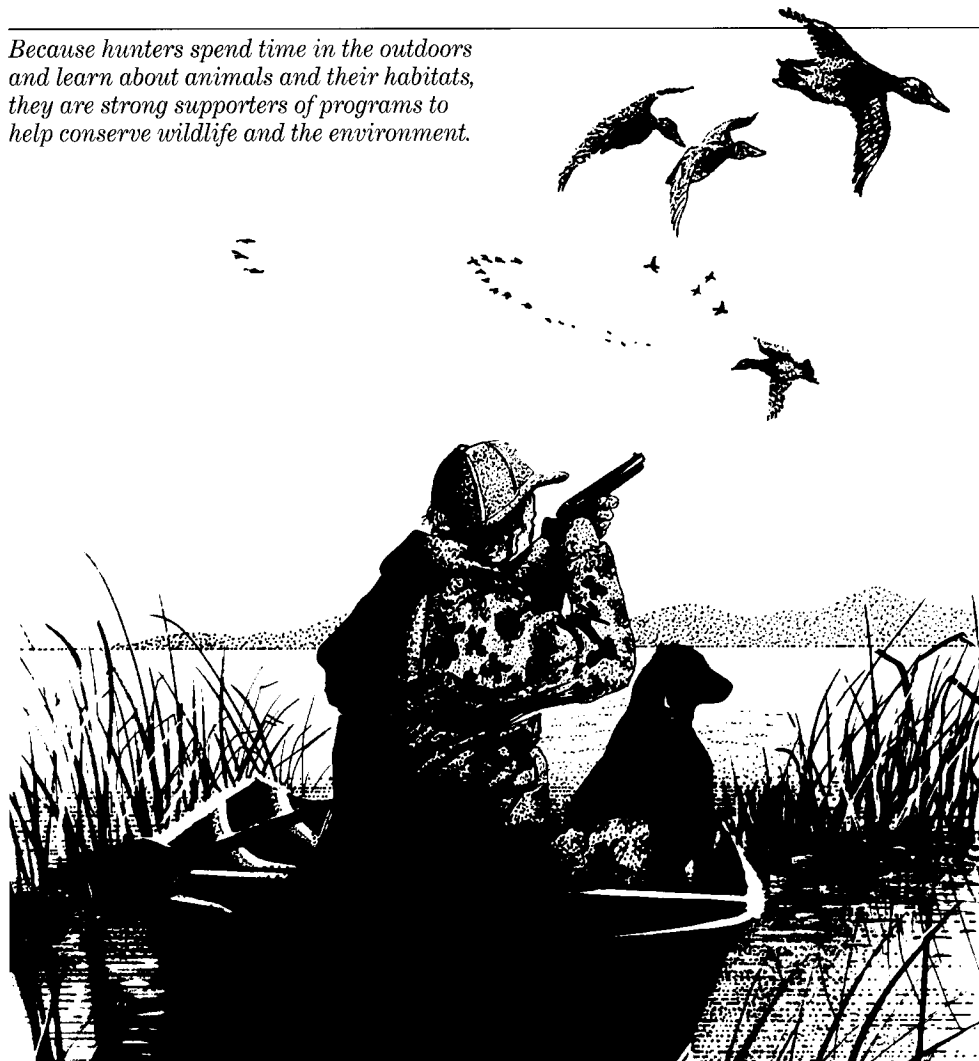
Many people oppose hunting because they think it causes animals to become endangered. Large-scale, uncontrolled commercial or "market" hunting that occurred in this country in the 19th and 20th centuries did imperil animals like the buffalo. Today, hunting regulations are set each year by federal and state agencies and are enforced by conservation officers, often called *game wardens*. In addition, biologists study hunted species, such as waterfowl, and if their numbers become too low for any reason, hunting is further restricted or even prohibited. In general, hunting regulations are designed to ensure hunters' harvests are compatible with each game species' ability to sustain viable numbers.

Wildlife biologists today agree that legal hunting is not a threat to our wildlife. The real threat to wildlife is the destruction of habitat—forests, wetlands and other wild places animals need for food and cover. No species can survive if it has no place to feed, rest, and rear its young.

Some people would never dream of killing a wild animal. Others believe that hunting is a natural part of the human tradition. Whether or not to hunt is a personal decision. But if hunters and nonhunters respect each other's choices and work together on behalf of wildlife, we can preserve America's rich natural heritage for future generations to enjoy.

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
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March 1998