



Game Trails

Conservation and outdoor news from the DSC



NEW LOOK, NEW HOME FOR CONVENTION

Don't miss the most exciting hunting show of the year.

A new look for the Dallas Safari Club with *Sports Afield* convention will be rolled



The 2010 Dallas Safari Club with Sports Afield Convention will be held January 7-10 at the Dallas Convention Center.

out on Jan. 7-10, with a new venue and hotel, an updated logo, and an expanded show floor with nearly 1,100 booths. At "First Light," outfitters, guides, publishers, firearms makers, and every type of gear for going afield will be available in one place over the four-day run of the convention. Twenty-five thousand visitors are expected at the best hunting show on the planet.

The theme this year is "First Light," borrowing from the Hemingway line that at first light, everything is true. Indeed, for hunters, there is nothing more exhilarating than the first light of a hunting day, the promise of what is to come, and the joy that yet another hunting season has dawned.

The convention opens to the public on Thursday, Jan. 7, at 10 A.M. at the Dallas Convention Center, with 300,000 square feet of exhib-

its. The Hyatt Regency Reunion will host the gala evening events, such as the Ladies Luncheon, Life Member Breakfast, and the evening banquet and auctions, where \$3 million in dream hunts, firearms, artwork, and gear will be available. All proceeds from the auctions go to support Dallas Safari Club's missions and programs in conservation, outdoor education, and hunter advocacy.

On Thursday night, Jan. 8, DSC will host the presentation of the prestigious Conklin Award. Also at the evening events, the club will announce the winners of the Peter Hathaway Capstick Hunting Heritage Award, the Malek Golden Award, the Outstanding Hunting Achievement Award, the Dallas Safari Club Outfitter of the Year Award, the Colin Caruthers Young Hunter Award, the Dallas Safari Club Award of Excellence, and the Outdoor Educator of the Year Award.

TEXAS GOVERNOR URGES HUNTERS TO GIVE BACK

Rick Perry stresses importance of leaving a legacy.

Gov. Rick Perry (R) applauded conservation groups during a speech last fall at a monthly meeting of the Dallas Safari Club.

Gov. Perry began his speech to the 175-plus members and their guests simply: "I'm home with people that share a love of the outdoors." He praised sportsmen, specifically Texans, for keeping the outdoors beautiful, but questioned how long it will stay that way.

"You've got to ask yourself, 'What are we doing to ensure our grandchildren will experience that unmatched sensation of hooking into a really keeper bull red or watching two bucks clash in the middle of the rut, hearing a tom gobble when you've put your best call on?'" Perry continued, "The way I see it, folks who love the outdoors . . . have a responsibility to leave a legacy."

That legacy takes a team effort from government, individual investment, landowners, private business, and well-protected rights, according to Perry.

Equally important are the conservation groups in the nation that are introducing young people to the outdoors.

"I'm especially impressed with the strategic approach that (the club) is taking to conservation," Perry said. "Through Outdoor Adventures, you've been introducing thousands of young people to the joys of the outdoors . . . and teaching them that hunting is a honorable pursuit."

Perry also pressed DSC and other groups to do more. He urged them to view their time outdoors as a privilege to be protected and handed off to future generations.

The governor related the story of his daughter's first whitetail hunt in South Texas, and concluded that our outdoor experiences "give our life a richness, and that is why we work so hard, so that we can have those moments of awe" with our children and grandchildren in the outdoors.

Contributors to this story were Thomas Phillips of Lone Star Outdoor News and Jay Ann Cox of Dallas Safari Club.



Texas Governor Rick Perry (right), a DSC Life Sponsor, pins his son, Griffin, as a DSC Honorary Life Member as Dianne Fletcher of the membership committee looks on.

THOMAS PHILLIPS



Game Trails

continued

**SPORTS
AFIELD**
THE PREMIER HUNTING ADVENTURE MAGAZINE
PARTNERS IN
CONSERVATION

THE MYTH OF EDEN, PART 2

Last issue, Shane Mahoney explained how the idea of a “return to Eden” is a distortion of reality. Here, Mahoney elaborates on this idea and its damaging effects on wildlife and hunting.

For generations, our institutions of public education have been engaged in providing subtle distortions of man’s real place in nature, both historic and present. The story presented by virtually every high school textbook describes the lives and economies of the Native Peoples of this continent (and of South America) at the time of European dis-

covery, and we need to reflect on the powerful influence of this tale and how it has influenced public perceptions toward hunting.

Those engaged in this enterprise were not fringe elements, crackpots, or the uninformed, but some the most trusted and admired of our citizenry: our educators. Furthermore, they were not intending to adversely influence societal views on hunting. While that was not their motivation, I believe they may have done so by strongly influencing how society perceives man’s rightful actions towards the natural world. In describing a fairy-tale existence for early

Americans, our historians and educators not only created a caricature of diverse and noble races, but also led the public to desire an Eden that never existed, one where man and nature co-existed in some perfectly balanced and mutually understood existence. While the death of animals occurred, it was somehow sanctified and blameless.

We all know this story: Five hundred years ago, the North and South American continents stretched like an unbroken carpet of wilderness where wildlife ran free and abundant and man lived in simplicity and took only what was necessary, never altering the great wilderness (read Eden) in which he lived. Added to this picture was the notion that relatively few humans lived here anyway, and thus man’s impact was, inevitably, light. Living entirely within nature’s cycles, North American natives

did not manipulate their environment but softly tread along its natural pathways, taking only what they needed for the very basics of life. As a result, the world Europeans discovered was bountiful, perfect, and full, an Eden ultimately defiled and reduced by their rapacious greed and failure to adopt the soft tread of the Native Americans. *Oh, if we could only return to such a reality, so the enticing tale runs.*

The power of this image should not be underestimated. It has had lasting impact on the public mind and value system, providing a presumably real-life example of an ideal world that we should emulate, one where man can passively exist and where wildlife and wilderness abound. Combined with the increasing detachment of modern North American society from the realities of nature, this prevailing historical myth leads the uninformed public to the conclusion that the disruption and manipulation of nature is a modern phenomenon that moves us away from the ideal world we discovered five centuries ago. The extension of this logic is that many of man’s modern activities, such as hunting or logging or other uses of wild resources, are not only wrong in scale but they are also wrong in kind. In other words, such activities are morally and ethically wrong, and somehow unnatural.

What this view of history fails to convey, of course, is the reality of the New World when Europeans arrived. Instead of a region of few and primitive people, it was inhabited by many tens of millions, with a mosaic of cultures equal to or greater than that of Europe. These peoples spoke some 1,200 different languages, practiced large-scale agriculture and irrigation, cleared vast tracts of land through prescribed burning, and built cities that were among the largest and most advanced in the world. While the cities of Spain, France, and England ran rivers of sewage through their streets,



Wildlife thrives today in North America because of policies, laws, and financial support structures put in place and maintained by hunters.

WAYNE VAN ZWOLL



Game Trails continued

**SPORTS
AFIELD**
THE PREMIER HUNTING ADVENTURE MAGAZINE
PARTNERS IN
CONSERVATION

some cultures in the New World lived in equally large metropolises with water and sewage systems comparable to the great centers of Roman culture. They developed highly complex societies with elaborate rituals and religious institutions; architecture rivaling the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians; practiced aggressive warfare; and saw their cultures and fortunes rise and fall for reasons that included both environmental and human elements. In short, they were very much like us.

These were the realities of North and South America at the time of “discovery.” To create and sustain such societies required immense natural capital and it is certain that these peoples drew extensively from nature and worked diligently to improve their livelihoods

by manipulating it to a very considerable extent. They were neither few nor primitive, and they did not live an Edenic existence. Rather, they engaged the natural world just as humanity has since our emergence, and participated fully in the exchange of food and energy that has always required the death of wild creatures, not only for mankind but for every other living organism as well. Yet, despite the empirical evidence we have for this, the myth of our historical Eden continues to be promulgated, and new recruits to its position are continuously arising.

Carried along in the slipstream of this historical fantasy is the notion that hunting is now an unnecessary and violent pastime that has no place in a modern and progressive (read: civilized) world. We should, rather, be able to return to an idyllic time, where somehow the death of animals was not part of the equation of man’s existence. Of course, this is not the only myth being applied against hunting. By virtue of our technological and especially agricultural advancement, it is said, we can find a way out of the laws of nature which have inevitably required the death of one component of nature for the life of another. While this interpretation may encompass all animals, even domestic livestock in the vegetarians’ point of view, the most virulent opposition to animal death seems to be in the arena of wild creatures. This probably suggests that bears and deer somehow experience death differently from chickens and pigs, or that their lives are worth more. How this logic works, I am not sure.

What I am certain about, however, is that the debate over hunting’s relevance and legitimacy in modern times is a highly complex issue. It is the product of

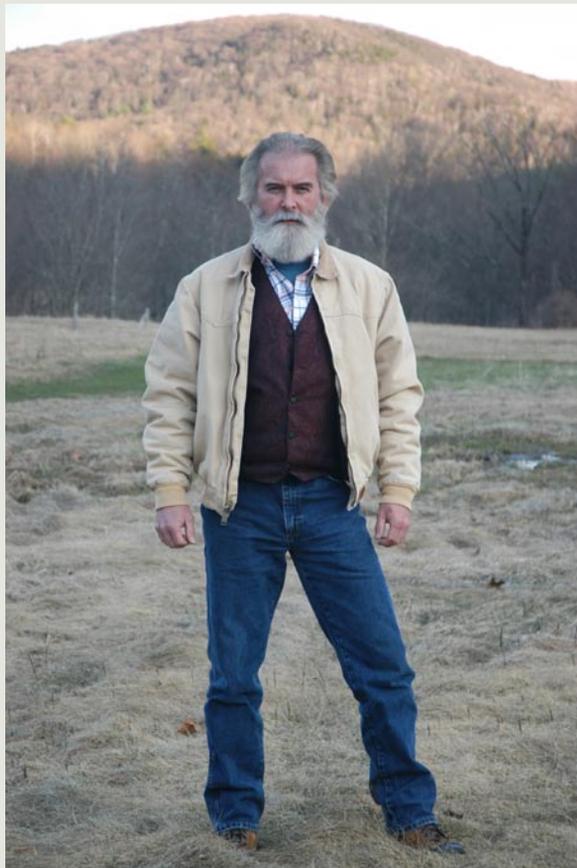
many recent and historical trends in society, including the understandings we have been given of how Native Americans related to the natural resources of this continent (and South America). Once we begin to carefully dissect the real reasons why our hunter-led conservation movement is so frequently misunderstood and misrepresented, we will find that no simple short-term solution exists for maintaining our successes for wildlife or for convincing the public of why hunting remains relevant in today’s world.

Instead, we will come to realize that a determined and ongoing effort in education will be essential. We will embed our history of achievement in the public discourse, or we will find ourselves increasingly marginalized.

Wildlife does not exist by accident. It thrives today in North America because of a wondrous network of policies, laws, and financial support structures largely put in place and maintained by the small percentage of those who hunt and fish. Perhaps in some distant future, society at large will pay for what we have carried for a century or more; but even if this were true would not the history of our achievement be worth telling? The reality is that no feasible alternative model for wildlife conservation is yet within our reach, and may never be. The North American Model is an achievement of historic significance, and the only continental model of conservation in the world today. It is not a myth, nor a utopian dream. It is a shining and crystal reality.

Yet your friends and neighbors, most likely even your own children, have no idea of how the North American Model came about or why it matters. Who will tell our story? Who will ensure that educators begin to explain how it is that wildlife thrives in our midst? Who will challenge the myths and replace them with truth?

—Shane P. Mahoney



Shane Mahoney is a philosopher, scientist, and hunter, and an expert on the North American model of wildlife conservation.

SHANE MAHONEY