

# LAW ENFORCEMENT SESSION

## PROPHETS OF DOOM . . . OR LEGITIMATE CONCERN?

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Is it possible that you and I stand here today as an accomplice in one of the greatest crimes ever perpetrated against our natural resources? Are conservation agencies in America today failing to come to the rescue of an endangered specie called the American hunter?

If wildlife conservation organizations in the United States were to learn today that an epidemic of hoof and mouth disease was spreading through out wildlife population, we would immediately sound the alarm. We would work day and night to control the epidemic, and if the situation were to become serious enough, we would call in all who would help to join in our fight to protect our wildlife. We would warn that a cancerous plague was destroying our wildlife and that one of our major recreational activities was in danger. In short, we would press the panic button because we would be facing all the symptoms of a disease which could totally destroy hunting in America.

And yet today, in fact this very minute, while we in the field of wildlife conservation bask in our self-satisfaction of having repopulated the Southeast with the whitetail deer or having brought the alligator back from the brink of extinction, there exist a menace fully as deadly as hoof and mouth disease. This menace slowly creeps across our nation, and we do nothing. We are kidding only ourselves if we fail to recognize the fast-growing anti-hunting sentiment in this country as a well financed and well organized coalition of the arch preservationists . . . those who are opposed to killing anything, at anytime, for any reason . . . and the anti-gun group . . . those who are opposed to the ownership of firearms for any purpose.

For generations, many Americans have viewed hunting as a right which could not be taken from them. Few stop to realize that hunting is actually a privilege for which they must pay. The cost of the privilege of hunting involves more than the mere cost of license. It includes the responsibility which hunters must assume. The responsibility of obeying game laws, the responsibility of respect for property rights, and the responsibility of hunting safely. Those who would violate the law, those who ignore the rights of the property owner, and those who become hunting accident statistics do a disservice to all hunters by providing accessible ammunition to those who would deny us the privilege to hunt.

Since World War II, the American people have been consolidating themselves into belts of urban and suburban populations. For the first time we are facing a generation of Americans without any prior association with firearms, hunting, or sportsmanship. To further complicate the situation, we must face up to the fact that a large number of the younger generation are completely "turned off" by firearms and any sort of killing because of the Vietnam war. It appears that a majority of the urban newspapers and national radio and television networks in the country are completely hostile toward the ownership of firearms, shooting sports in general, and the whole concept of hunting.

"Friends of Animals", a New York based group of misguided and unknowledgeable individuals, is pouring a great deal of money and talent into the anti-hunting campaign to help spread the lies, half-truths and insinuations to all who are gullible enough to swallow their propaganda. We can no longer laugh these people away because they have the money to buy the space and the names

to attract the attention of the previously uncommitted majority of non-hunters. Well known Hollywood personalities have allowed themselves to be caught up in the hysteria being perpetuated by "Friends of Animals."

January 1971 was the beginning of a major campaign by this group to eliminate hunting in the United States in its entirety. It was then that NBC television aired a show titled "Say Goodbye." This show, sponsored by the Quaker Oats Company, advertised itself as a documentary, dramatizing the plight of the endangered and vanishing species. What the film actually did was to portray hunters as ruthless killers and hunting as the cause of most all our wildlife problems. One scene in particular was staged so as to arouse the emotions of millions of Americans and was a real tearjerker for those who did not know it was faked. Most of the film had been obtained through personnel of the Alaska Game & Fish Department and had showed a female polar bear with two cubs, being shot with a tranquilizing dart as part of a research program. The narrator on NBC didn't bother to explain the tranquilizer and the viewer was left no alternative but to conclude that the bear was being killed by a hunter hunting from a helicopter. The purpose was quite clear. The viewer was to conclude that hunters are horrible people as he watched close-ups of the polar bear twisting on the ice, supposedly in her death tremor as her two small cubs looked on helplessly. As the cubs were shown walking away from their mother, after the tranquilizer had taken effect, the narrator was heard to moan, "Grieve for them — and for us." Of course, they didn't bother to show the mother and her cubs walking off, unharmed, a little later.

In 1971 legislation prohibiting the killing of various game animals was either introduced or passed in 10 states. In Colorado the legislature closed the season on buffalo, prohibited the hunting of antlerless deer and spike elk, and all this despite the fact that authorities of the Colorado Division of Game, Fish and Parks made it clear that their state had more deer and elk in some areas than the range could support.

In Connecticut, four bills were introduced in the legislature which would have prohibited hunting and trapping outright.

In New Jersey, "Friends of Animals" managed to stop a special deer hunt planned for the over-populated Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and this same group is now going into court in an effort to stop all deer hunting in that state. This group has also announced that they intend to have legislation introduced in congress that would ban shooting, trapping, or any other form of killing any wildlife on all federal public lands, including national wildlife refuges, military reservations, and U. S. Forest Service lands. If you stop and think about this for a few minutes, it should send shivers through your blood stream because, quite simply, this would be the beginning of the absolute end to hunting in the United States. And if you think it can't happen, talk to the people in Colorado or in New Jersey.

Hunting is much more than a major recreational activity. It supplies meat for the tables of America and it is an absolute necessity for the proper management and future well-being of wildlife populations. The solution to problems of decreased populations needs the application of science, not emotion. These arch-protectionists, in their ignorance of nature's laws, seek to destroy the fish and wildlife that sportsmen and conservation agencies have worked for years to conserve, enhance and perpetrate.

"Friends of Animals" would have you believe that hunters are responsible for the scarcity of many wildlife, but actually, few of the birds and mammals listed as rare and endangered by the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife were ever hunted to any great extent. Most are the victims of pollution, land filling, land clearing, or other massive environmental changes that have destroyed one or more of the essential elements of their habitat.

The three major threats to wildlife today are illegal hunting, land misuse, and human encroachment; however, these three grow insignificant as a threat to wildlife when compared with the possibility of all hunting being prohibited. Can you imagine what would happen if all hunting were stopped tomorrow?

First of all, the money that is the lifeblood of all conservation agencies would no longer be available. Habitat improvement would cease from lack of biologists and the protection officer would no longer stand between wildlife and the outlaw. In some areas the outlaw minority would be left free to poach without hinderance and would soon clean out the area. In other locations wildlife populations would explode and the farmer would suffer from crop damage and the loss of his poultry flocks. Carrying capacities would plunge to new lows, and finally, malnutrition and disease would wipe out specie after specie. Those who would ban hunting fail to realize that wildlife cannot be stockpiled and that if hunters do not harvest the surplus, the herd may very well be doomed.

Ecology is a much-used and popular word in America today. Many people who use it have no idea what it means but they do know they are sick and tired of pollution, pesticides, litter, dredging, damming, channelization, strip mining, and all the other sores that fester our environment. Unfortunately, few of these new ecology converts understand the ethics that most hunters follow, or the role hunters fill. Many forget that hunters were the ones who began this country's conservation movement long before the word ecology became popular, and that these same hunters all along have led the battle to keep waters clean and the wilderness wild. Now, hunters must assume a new responsibility. They must act, both as individuals and in organized groups to combat the anti-hunting movement on all fronts and at all times. Hunters must weed out the hoodlums in their own ranks. They must take advantage of available hunter safety training and make every effort to improve their safety record.

The future of hunting demands that wildlife agencies take advantage of every opportunity to make sportsmen of all hunters. The test of a successful hunt must be shifted from a full bag to a pleasant day in the field.

Each of us must get involved. We must act as individuals right where we live . . . by answering the challenge of an anti-hunter at a civic club or by writing a letter of refutation to the local paper when it reprints some anti-hunting handout.

Coordinated action must be taken by sportsmens clubs and other interested groups. Undesirable legislation can be successfully combated on either the state or federal level by an organized effort, and this must be done. Newspapers, television and radio stations are extremely sensitive to opinions expressed in the mail they receive. The hunter is being beaten into submission by the newspapers and television, and he is not fighting back. For example, when the "Say Good-bye" show was shown on NBC the Quaker Oats Company reported that it received 50,000 letters praising the show but only 20 attacking it. This should be enough to convince anybody that hunters are not doing their job. If the hunter fails to protect the future of his sport, no one else will.

Unless we are willing to seize the initiative . . . to battle the lies . . . the half-truths . . . and the insinuations, "Friends of Animals" will prove itself more deadly to wildlife in America than hoof and mouth disease could ever be, and our own inaction will brand you and me as accomplices in this crime against nature.

## THE PROPHETS OF DOOM

*By Ray Henry*

Those of us who live and work in the southeastern part of the United States, who love nature and the great out-of-doors, are the most fortunate people in the world. Within the area that makes up this association may be found the most infinite variety of out-door recreation. There are rugged mountains with cold swift, tumbling rivers and streams gentle rolling land with quiet valleys and slow meandering streams, and flat, level lands with swamps and marshes. Natural and man-made lakes in addition to the free-flowing rivers make this area unique for water-oriented activity.

We can hunt for deer, bear, boar, turkey, grouse and numerous small game species. We can fish for trout, muskellunge, walleyed pike and a great variety of warm water species native to each region. We can swim, ski and enjoy boating on some of the cleanest, most beautiful lakes to be found. We can camp, picnic, hike and enjoy nature on federal and state parks, federal and state forests, Tennessee Valley Authority, Corps of Engineers and other public lands in addition to the numerous private facilities. The Game and Fish agency in each state maintains wildlife refuges and wildlife management areas where all wildlife is managed and protected.

Yet, with all these things, almost daily I read in a book, a newspaper or magazine, hear on the radio or see on television that the air, lakes and streams are polluted and in the near future will not be suitable for human needs—that most desirable wild birds, fish and animals are nearing the point of extinction, and that future generations will not have an opportunity to hunt and fish and enjoy nature as we have—that woods and fields are being destroyed to make way for shopping centers, highways and subdivisions which will eventually not only eliminate all wildlife, but deplete the air of the oxygen necessary to sustain human life—that at the rate the human population is increasing there will not be enough space on earth to accommodate the people, to say nothing of the wild birds and animals.

To these prophets of doom, I say, you are wrong—**YOU ARE WRONG!** Sure, we have pollution—sure, we have changing habitats for wildlife—sure, we have a population explosion, but just as surely, we have intelligent men and women working on each of these problems.

As the pendulum swings in the direction of a particular need, or a particular problem, the human mind—the greatest thing in all creation—begins to function and a solution is forthcoming. With the power of rational thought, man will gain the wisdom to control his environment. The history of man is a continuing story of thinking and learning, profiting by mistakes, solving problems and making improvements. In his comparatively short history, man has transformed and will continue to transform the world to fit his needs.

Most of us forget that a few short years ago most of our cities and factories dumped all their waste materials into rivers or streams without any thought of a treatment facility; the outhouses were built over creeks or drained directly into them. Wild birds and animals were hunted and sold commercially—traffic in hides and carcasses was extensive with little or no protection for the wildlife. The primary source of energy for industry, railroads and heat was coal, the smoke from which not only clouded the sky, but blackened the land as well. Woods and fields were burned annually, destroying the timber, the wildlife, the humas in the soil, and when the rains came, eroding the land.

The Water Quality Act of 1965, which established the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration and the Clean Water Restoration Act of 1966 turned the tide of water pollution. The Water Quality Act gave the Federal Government the authority to establish uniform basic requirements for a