Hunters in Autos Exterminating Big Game

Unless Law Prevents Slaughter by "Sportsmen" in Motor Cars
Our Wild Game Will Disappear, Says William T. Hornaday

OUR grandfathers hunted elk and buffalo until there were none; our fathers pursued antelope and mountain sheep until they were shot out; this generation is hunting deer and birds from automobiles. What will the next generation hunt? Rabbits?" and William T. Hornaday, with his brown eyes blazing wrathfully, pointed an accurate forefinger at his questioner: Mr. Hornaday, director of the New York Zoological Park, was discussing his pet topic, game conservation and the utter vandalism of the lawmakers permitting the use of automobiles in hunting.

"There is not the slightest doubt," he said, "that if things are allowed to remain for the next three years as they have been during the last three, there will be no wild game left excepting wolves and coyotes, short-horned and white-tailed. This deplorable state of things is due, according to Mr. Hornaday, to crude and ineffective game laws, which allow ridiculously liberal bag limits, open seasons which are nothing less than exterminatory, the use of automatic and pump guns, and worst of all, the automobile, swift, silent, and terrible in its efficiency -- as a destroying agent.

"Two years ago," he continued, "I drove up into the White Mountains. The second day of the open season I met an automobile coming out as we were going in, with four deer draped on it. Three years ago last fall, fifteen or thirty deer were taken out of an area within a radius of five miles from a so-called wildlife reserve camp in the Adirondacks. More than 200 hunters had gathered there, and one driver was made with thirty-one men working together. The next year the number of deer taken was twenty-two; the following twenty-three, and last fall, during the first six weeks, two specimens were brought in.

"There is an example of what is happening to game of all kinds all over the United States. With the exception of North Dakota and New York, where the sportsmen have waked up to its diabolical efficiency, the automobile is unpreventable, and, it is working particular havoc with the grouse and quail of the West. It is in great favor with the elephant hunters of India, and is in inevitable service in the wholesale slaughter of kangaroos in Australia. It's wrong, and it should be stopped. And if our lawmakers don't stop it soon, nature will, for in a few years there will be nothing left for automobiles to go after.

"Men who used to go on a hunting expedition over the week-end would drive in a buggy for hours after their train ride from the city, then walk on into the woods carrying their trests and paraperals with them. It took a whole day to arrive at their camping place and another to return, and left one day to shoot, with a double-barrelled shotgun. They usually brought home a few woodcock, quail, or rabbit, perhaps. If they had good luck, a deer, and considered that the outings had been a gracious success, and he had, measured roughly by the standards of good sportsmanship and looked at as a health-giving change, a little recreation in the open, and not a riot of bloodshedding.

"Nowadays a hunter decides to go out for an easy, and he calls up three or four friends. They start out in his high-powered motor, and in a few hours drive over a hundred miles -- the auto has brought good roads with it -- saving a day or two in transportation. Then they pile out of the car, heat up the brush, shooting whatever game they find there, and when the field is exhausted, hoist aboard the car and set off another fifty miles.

"Sometimes the law as to bag limits is observed, often not. But when a State allows a man to take twenty-five grous, two good-sized flocks, as South Dakota does, for instance, and there are five men in the party, and the open season is a whole month, what do the grouse stand? Or, if a man may shoot ten birds a day every day for seven months in the year he has as many in Nebraska or twenty, as early as Aug. 1, when the birds are just little chicks hardly able to fly, as in the case in Colorado, it is to be wondered at that North American game is becoming extinct.

"Every one knows the story of the bison, how they disappeared in 1884 and never came back. The million of passenger pigeons went the same way, so quickly that no one realized that they were in danger until it was too late. The beehive, or eastern pinnate grouse, that used to thrive on the open plains of New York, Long Island, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine, was a bird of the open country, and so was easily found and killed until it is now wiped out everywhere excepting on the island of Martha's Vineyard. Here Missipimassus established a State hunting reservation in 1907 with a stock of twenty-one birds. They thrived until in 1911 the number was thought to be about 200. But last spring a destructive fire swept over the island, destroying all but 65 of them all up with the exception of perhaps, a hundred.

"The grouse is fast becoming exterminated. The great ask was shot out years ago for its gallinaceous value of oil. The Carollina partridge was killed by farmers because it ate fruit and became a bril- liant plumage was available for millinery purposes. The antelope is so far gone that the United States has proclaimed a three season for ten years, but it is too late. The animals are delicate and have many natural enemies, among them wolves, and they are too few to sur- vive.

"By way of don't come of these men who go out in autos armed with guns that spit out five fliers in four seconds, hunt down deer. A wall is a wary creature and dangerous, and if a man kills for the killing of killing, only a good, savage wolf will give him just as much of a thrill as a frightened antelope. Be- sides, that would be a real loss to the community. A man who goes out with a gun which is loaded and excited by its own recoil, and has his picture taken on his return, sitting in his automobile with two or three hundred carcasses grouped around him, reminds me of a mink, or a skunk that kills just for the sake of it.

"It is a good thing for the youth of our country to learn to shoot straight, camp out, and take care of themselves outdoors, but at the same time they should teach the proper value of the nation's game-reserves, and that it is unpardonable to do more than their share of shooting. These things will have to be drilled into the coming generation unless our game, quail, and partridge are to become as extinct as the dodos. Let them be taught moderation and the need of adequate laws, with less liberal bag limits and longer close sea- sons.

"Varieties of wild animals and birds which have been decreed cannot come back if we are not careful in spectating in whatever particular is in control of land. This has a marvellous taste and capacity for the small piece of the farm, including 145 kinds of sweetmeats and the recipes of 129 troublesmell novels."

"This country is responsible for terming 2,000,000 hunters bare out on the remain- ing game which we have left, with an ab- surdly small number of Game Wardens to watch them. The game, particularly the gage, has reached a stage where they cannot stand another open season. Even with a six-year close season it will be hardly enough for them to come back. The hunt has failed to do it in all localities, rare where the twen- ty-nine measures were treated like as many sick children."

"But we are going to fight for a six- year close season for them. The Penn- sylvania Wild Life Protection Fund has been established to help the country's sportmen to save our vanishing game from the game hogs. We are about to form a campaign, a great drive, ever the eighteen States, all of those west of the Mississippi excluding Arkansas, Mis- souri, and Texas. Some of the things we are going after are, a total open season of only two weeks, to begin six years after May 1, 1913; a limit of four grous per day, or four quail; no use of pump or automatic guns, and no use of automobiles in hunting."

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