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# The Morality of Hunting

Robert W. Loftin\*

In recent years, philosophers have begun to devote serious attention to animal rights issues. Most of the attention has focused on factory farming and animal experimentation. While many of the arguments used to justify sport hunting are shown to be spurious, the paper defends sport hunting on utilitarian grounds. The loss of sport hunting would also mean the loss of a major political pressure group working for the benefit of wildlife through the preservation of habitat. Peter Singer argues that "the shooting of a duck does not lead to its replacement by another." I argue that, on the contrary, the shooting of a duck leads to the production of other ducks and other life forms that are not shot at.

In recent years, there has been increasing interest among philosophers in animal welfare. Books such as Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* have caused us to think far more deeply about our fellow creatures than ever before.<sup>1</sup> Most of the attention has been focused on two areas where animal abuse is indeed acute—scientific experimentation and factory farming. Singer has made a powerful case on utilitarian grounds against the gross abuse of domestic animals in agribusiness and research. In simplest terms, his position is that a self-consistent utilitarian is obligated to reduce the suffering of all sentient beings, not just human suffering. Another influential voice speaking out against the abuse of animals has been that of Tom Regan who objects to the same things that Singer objects to, but for different reasons.<sup>2</sup> Regan rejects utilitarianism as an adequate ethical theory to ensure either human or animal welfare, and finds it necessary to ascribe rights to animals (and humans) based on their intrinsic value. In sharp contrast to Regan and Singer, the nonanthropocentric moral theory defended by C. H. D. Clarke, for instance, ascribes intrinsic value not to individual animals, but to the biotic community as a whole.<sup>3</sup> This position has clear affinities with the land ethic of Aldo Leopold, which finds intrinsic value in the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community as a whole.

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\* Department of Philosophy, University of North Florida, 4567 St. John's Bluff Road, S., Jacksonville, FL 32216. Loftin teaches a variety of courses including environmental ethics and field ornithology. He has served as President of Duval Audubon and Vice-Chairman of the Florida Audubon Society. The author wishes to express deep appreciation to J. Baird Callicott for numerous helpful suggestions and much encouragement.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Avon Books, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> In many articles, especially "The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 5 (1975): 181–214, and "Animal Rights, Human Wrongs," *Environmental Ethics* 2 (1980): 99–120.

<sup>3</sup> C. H. D. Clarke, "Autumn Thoughts of a Hunter," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 22 (1958): 420–26. See also J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair," *Environmental Ethics* 2 (1980): 311–38.

Although the differences between the animal liberation approach of Singer and Regan and the land ethic approach of Leopold and Clarke appear to be clear-cut, this clarity begins to break down when one examines their differing attitudes toward hunting, especially sport hunting. The land ethic condones sport hunting as well as subsistence hunting. The position of animal liberation, however, is more complicated. While it follows quite directly from the basic principles of both Singer and Regan that *sport* hunting is an immoral activity, there appears to be disagreement over *subsistence* hunting by technologically primitive people. There are a few Indians and Eskimos who still live by hunting and fishing. Even though they could be fed in other ways, say, with imported vegetables, that would put an end to their cultures; it would destroy their traditional way of life. Regan's position seems to be that the life of an animal has intrinsic value and it is as wrong for a subsistence hunter to violate the rights of an animal as for a sport hunter to do so. Singer, however, can probably countenance the subsistence hunter if the loss of his culture and way of life will cause more total pain and anguish than the suffering of the animals he kills. At one place Singer argues against our eating fish on the grounds that we are rapidly fishing out the oceans and thus destroying the culture of traditional peoples:

All over the world small coastal villages that live by fishing are finding their traditional source of food and income drying up. From the communities on Ireland's west coast to the Burmese and Malayan fishing villages the story is the same. The fishing industry of the developed nations has become one more form of redistribution from the poor to the rich.<sup>4</sup>

Singer's position here, I believe, leaves the door at least partway open for those supporting sport hunting—for why, if it is all right for the Burmese or Malaysians to fish for a living, thus inflicting suffering on fish, is it not all right for me? Perhaps Singer can handle this objection by pointing out that there are many alternatives for me, but none for the Burmese villager. However, in order to make sure that he does not slide down the slippery slope and end up in the same camp with the advocates of the land ethic, a more substantial response seems to be required.

In this essay, within the context of the viewpoints of animal liberation and the land ethic, I explore some of the difficult moral issues raised by sport hunting and place hunting itself in a wider context of general environmental concern and concern for the welfare of animals more particularly. I argue that sport hunting, unlike commercial hunting, benefits both game and non-game animals by helping to preserve the habitat of both, and that on these grounds it is morally permissible.

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<sup>4</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, p. 178.

It is important to note at the outset that this essay is entitled the *morality* of hunting rather than the *ethics* of hunting. I want to focus attention on the morality of hunting *per se*, not the specific code of conduct of the ethical hunter as opposed to the unethical one. The so-called ethical hunter is one who observes the game laws, doesn't hunt out of season, etc. Leopold, for example, was very much concerned about sporting ethics and particularly about the spirit in which the hunter pursues the game. His position might be summarized thus: there is nothing intrinsically wrong with hunting, so long as it does not endanger species or degrade biotic communities; the moral value or disvalue of hunting depends on how one goes about it. He is quick to condemn the gadgeteer and the waster. His description of the modern duck hunter, who has been convinced by the modern sporting press to substitute hardware for woodcraft, drips with contempt.<sup>5</sup>

I grant, accordingly, that hunting, done in the right way and at the right time can be an important source of value to some human beings. My question, however, is whether the pain, suffering, terror, and death inflicted on the quarry should count for something and whether this suffering is great enough to override the loss of value to humans from prohibiting it. Not to take the interests of other animals into account or not to consider their interests equally with our own is what Singer calls "speciesism."<sup>6</sup> Since Singer, nevertheless, is apparently willing to weigh the survival of the culture of traditional fishermen against the suffering of the fish, is it not also justifiable, in the case of "ethical" sport hunting, to weigh the value of hunting to hunters against the suffering of game animals?

Hunters are a rather embattled group at this point, and use a variety of arguments to defend their sport. In any debate on this issue, emotions run high, and bad arguments abound. One set of arguments that hunters often use is that they are actually doing the species a favor by hunting it. In its general form this argument is analogous to the overpopulation arguments with which we are now familiar in a human context. The argument runs as follows: unless animals are hunted they will breed to excess and overpopulate the range beyond its carrying capacity. This will degrade the habitat through overuse and the game will be subject to starvation, parasitism, and disease inflicting an equal or greater amount of suffering on the animals. Under natural conditions, populations were controlled by predators, but the predators are now rare. Many predators do not coexist well with man, and some of them are dangerous. Therefore, reintroduction of predators, while it has a romantic appeal, is impractical except on a very limited basis. Thus, human hunters must occupy the niche of the absent predators and cull the game herds. This actually benefits the species by improving the gene pool. It also benefits individual specimens, since it is no less painful and terrifying (indeed, it may be significantly more so) for an animal to be hunted and killed by a natural predator or

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<sup>5</sup> Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 180-81.

<sup>6</sup> The term was coined by Richard Ryder, *Speciesism: The Ethics of Vivisection* (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for the Prevention of Vivisection, 1974).

to die of starvation, disease, or old age in the wild than to be hunted and killed by a man. Thus, there is no rational moral reason that one should not hunt.<sup>7</sup>

This argument is acceptable with certain restrictions. The problem is that hunters often fallaciously extend the argument to cover all species in all times and places. This is a serious error, for there are many game species that will *not* overpopulate and stress their respective habitats, although there are some that will. Generally speaking, the larger herbivores, such as deer, elk, bison, feral horses and donkeys, feral hogs, moose, and antelope, will overpopulate and degrade their range under certain conditions. But some game animals are themselves predators—most bears, wolves, cougar, lynx, and bobcat are the pitiful remnants of the populations of natural predators that once kept the herbivores under control. (The coyote is a singular exception.) The overpopulation argument can provide no grounds for hunting these animals. One suspects that a major reason for hunting the predators has historically been that human hunters wanted to eliminate their competitors, so that there would be more deer and quail for them to shoot.<sup>8</sup> In my view, predators (with the possible exception of the coyote) ought never to be hunted, except in the very rare cases where individual rogues may pose a genuine threat to human life.<sup>9</sup> I believe that the best traditions in American hunting would benefit from sharing the game with natural predators.<sup>10</sup>

The fact is, though it is never admitted in hunting apologetics, that most game animals (nonpredators as well as predators) will not overpopulate. Most game animals are birds: quail, turkeys, grouse, ducks, geese, doves, woodcock, snipe, rails, coots, and gallinules. None of these will overpopulate and stress the range, though some geese sometimes cause severe crop damage. Nor will the smaller mammals, such as squirrels, racoons, rabbits, or opossums. There is a significant body of research to show this.<sup>11</sup> Take quail for example: if at the beginning of the

<sup>7</sup> This argument is so common it would be tedious to cite instances. T. H. Logan and A. Egbert, "The Florida Deer Story," *Florida Wildlife* 35, no. 4 (1981): 27, may be taken as typical.

<sup>8</sup> John G. Mitchell, "Fear and Loathing in Wolf Country," *Audubon* 78, no. 3 (May 1976): 20. Also, Cleveland Amory, "Man Kind? Our Incredible War on Wildlife (New York: Dell, 1974), part 3.

<sup>9</sup> Six people have been killed by grizzly bears, for example, in Glacier Park alone. Bill Gilbert, "The Great Grizzly Controversy," *Audubon* 78, no. 1 (January 1976): 62; also, *Audubon* 83, no. 1 (January 1981): 13. Even so, the tide is starting to shift in favor of the bears: people are warned to stay out of the grizzlies' shrinking range.

<sup>10</sup> See Leopold's essay, "Thinking Like a Mountain," in *Sand County* for an especially compelling and early development of this point.

<sup>11</sup> Durward L. Allen, "Hunting as a Limitation to Michigan Pheasant Populations," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 11 (1947): 232-43.; D. L. Allen, *Michigan Fox Squirrel Management*, Michigan Department of Conservation, Game Division Publication 100; D. L. Allen, "Ecological Studies on the vertebrate fauna of a 500 acre farm in Kalamazoo County, Michigan," *Ecological Monographs* 8 (1938): 347-436; H. Campbell et al., "Effects of Hunting and Some Other Environmental Factors on Scaled Quail in New Mexico," *Wildlife Monographs* 34 (August 1974); B. Gladding and R. W. Saarni, "Effect of Hunting on a Valley Quail Population," *California Fish and Game* 30 (1944): 71-79; J. J. Hickey, "Some American Population Research on Gallinaceous Birds," in E. A. Wolfson, ed., *Recent Studies in Avian Biology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955), pp. 326-96; R. J. Raitt and R. E. Genelly, "Dynamics of a Population of California Quail," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 28 (1964): 127-41. As always, the variety of the natural world defies simple generalization. A. T. Bergerund believed that overhunting was one important cause of the decline of the Caribou in Newfoundland, in "The Population Dynamics of the Newfoundland Caribou," *Wildlife Monographs* 25 (1971).

breeding season there are ten quail on 100 acres of cover, and at the end of the breeding season there are fifty, there will be ten again at the beginning of the next breeding season *whether they are hunted within legal bag limits or not*. Hunters argue that they are only harvesting the surplus, that if the quail are not hunted they will die anyway from predation, parasitism, disease, or starvation. That may be generally true, but it is different from the overpopulation argument. If the species does not overpopulate and degrade the range, why hunt it?

The hunter replies that it is no more painful and terrifying to an animal to die from a gunshot wound than from the claws of a Cooper's Hawk, or from disease, starvation, or old age in the wild. (So why waste the meat and sport?—as if naturally culled animals were not food for something.) This is a hard claim to test, but I think it overlooks the instance of crippling. No matter how conscientious and careful a hunter tries to be, he is going to cripple some animals which escape to die a prolonged death in pain and agony. His ideal may be "one bullet, one buck," but in actual practice it can never work that way. It is inevitable that hunting takes this toll.<sup>12</sup>

It is perhaps ironic that the more primitive weapons, the bow and the muzzle-loading rifle, which are greatly superior to modern firearms in terms of cultural value, are far inferior in killing power, and, unless the hunter is especially careful, may well result in a higher rate of crippling. It seems a certainty that these weapons result in a slower and more painful death in any case.<sup>13</sup>

The second thing wrong with the overpopulation argument is that hunting doesn't cull the herd in the right way. *Natural* predators benefit the prey populations by eliminating the old, the very young, the sick, and the weak, simply because these individuals are easier to catch. Modern sport hunting, on the other hand, inverts the natural attrition and removes the largest and best conditioned animals from the herd. This is a particularly severe problem with the trophy hunting of the larger ungulates, the object of which is to obtain a record-setting pair of horns. The hunter deliberately selects the dominant male in the herd, the individual most fit to pass along the best genes. This has been a deep concern where breeding populations of the game are small as, for example, especially in the case of bighorn sheep. The Canadian bighorn sheep authority, Valerius Geist,

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<sup>12</sup> Chapman et al. found crippling of Dusky Canada geese at one area in Oregon to be 14.3 percent during the 1965–66 season, but only 8.4 percent the next year. The difference was due to an intensive effort by the game managers to educate the hunters. "The Status, Population Dynamics and Harvest of the Dusky Canada Goose," *Wildlife Monographs* 18 (1969); Atkeson and Hulse, "Crippling as a Factor in Gray Squirrel Hunting," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 16 (1952): 230–32. For data on crippling of pheasants see D. L. Allen, "Hunting as a Limitation to Michigan Pheasant Populations," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 11 (1947): 235. My argument assumes that the hunter makes every effort to recover crippled game, but, unfortunately, this is not always the case. A biologist in Utah examined the bodies of 358 unrecovered deer. He found many more fawns and does than bucks. It is clear that there is a very strong tendency to let the illegal or undesirable cripples go. W. L. Robinette, *Deer Mortality from Gunshot Wounds*, leaflet 295 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1947).

<sup>13</sup> Victor B. Scheffer, *A Voice for Wildlife* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 41.

believed the removal of older dominant rams by hunters also upset the social hierarchy of the herd, and resulted in excessive fighting and harassment of the ewes by younger rams, resulting in lower reproduction and scattering of the herd as well as actual physical injury.<sup>14</sup>

In my judgment, however, the most serious argument that can be advanced against sport hunting is the inevitable infliction of severe pain and prolonged agony, until death mercifully intervenes, upon animals that escape the immediate possession of the hunter. The kill is not always—probably, indeed, it is not usually—“clean.”

I take this to be a serious reason to regard hunting as an immoral human activity, but not a decisive reason. Let us look for a moment at what arguments can be made in favor of the moral value of hunting. I leave discussion of the cultural values, the edifying effects of hunting on the character of the hunter and so on, to other writers. There is a great body of literature on this subject. The best defenses of hunting of this kind are essentially mystical in flavor, for example, the hunting stories of William Faulkner, especially his short novel, *The Bear*, and the poem of Gary Snyder contained in collections like *Turtle Island*.<sup>15</sup> From this perspective, hunting is an essentially atavistic activity which links man to the natural world and teaches him that food does not come from the supermarket shelf, wrapped in cellophane. But I do not intend to pursue this line of argument. Instead I wish to present a much more prosaic and pedestrian argument based on sheer, unadorned, unadorned pragmatism.

I want to argue that the result of a prohibition on hunting would be detrimental to the biosphere, and indeed to the animals themselves. It is certainly true, as hunting apologists insist, that the sport hunter wishes to preserve the game. In this respect, the sport hunter apparently differs from the *market* hunter. In a classic diatribe against hunting, Joseph Wood Krutch has objected to sport hunting on the grounds that people enjoy it.<sup>16</sup> His position is that people ought not to enjoy killing other animals. Perhaps they shouldn't, but killing for pleasure is obviously preferable to the other kind of killing that used to take place in this country and still takes place in many parts of the world today—killing for *profit*. It is ironic that Peter Singer in the discussion of fishing by technologically primitive people cited above does not

<sup>14</sup> Valerius Geist, *Mountain Sheep: A Study in Behavior and Evolution* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971). This conclusion has been disputed by R. E. and F. B. Welles, *The Bighorn in Death Valley*, Fauna Series, no. 6 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. National Park Service, 1961).

<sup>15</sup> See William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses* (New York: Random House, 1942), pp. 191–331. For a rich collection of interpretive essays and background material see F. L. Utley et al., *Bear, Man and God: Seven Approaches to William Faulkner's The Bear* (New York: Random House, 1964), which also contains the text of the novel. Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island* (New York: New Directions, 1974), especially “The Hudsonian Curlew,” pp. 54–57.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Wood Krutch, “A Damnable Pleasure,” *Saturday Review*, 17 August 1957, pp. 8–9, 3940; in . . . *And Even if You Do* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1967), pp. 295–302.

rule out killing for profit, since he specifically says fishing is their source of "food and income."<sup>17</sup> The sport hunters and their spokesmen are fond of pointing out that sport hunting has never led to the extinction of a species.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, commercial exploitation, killing for profit, has done so repeatedly.

Many of these tragic stories are well known, so I will not repeat them, but I can't resist telling one of them because it is so interesting, and because it has a happy ending. In the 1940s we thought the Japanese feather trade had exterminated the short-tailed albatross. This species nested only on small islands in the vicinity of Japan. However, albatrosses, like most other highly pelagic birds, have a long-delayed sexual maturity and immature birds wander away from the breeding colonies for several years before they start to nest. Unbeknownst to the Japanese feather hunters, eighteen immature short-tailed albatrosses were wandering the oceans far from the breeding colonies at the time they thought they had killed the last one! Today there are about 100 short-tailed albatrosses in existence, all of them descendants of these eighteen who escaped destruction by being absent from the colony.<sup>19</sup>

The commercial exploiter is usually caught in a "tragedy of the commons" situation.<sup>20</sup> In most cases it is not rational for him to forbear killing the last albatross, because if he doesn't, someone else will, and the resource will be destroyed anyway. The only way out is "mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon."<sup>21</sup> As much as I deplore trapping and the fur trade generally, at least this much can be said for the killing of the baby seals which has attracted so much

<sup>17</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, p. 178.

<sup>18</sup> What has happened almost invariably is that sport hunting has become a contributing factor to the final demise or near demise of a species after the population has been reduced to a remnant from some other cause. After the giant herds of bison were killed off by the hide hunters, the remainder broke up into scattered bands which were often shot to the last animal for sport. In 1881 Lord Lorne shot three bulls from the first herd of bison seen in many years near Red Deer, Alberta, where he was on tour; see David Dary, *The Buffalo Book* (New York: Avon, 1974). The chief cause of the demise of the passenger pigeon was market hunting, especially taking the squabs from the nest, but the birds were also taken for every other imaginable purpose including hog feed, feathers for bedding, and live targets for trap shooting; see A. W. Schorger, *The Passenger Pigeon* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973). Habitat loss was probably responsible for the extinction (if it is extinct) of the ivory-billed woodpecker, but the birds were shot for food, taxidermical curiosities, and "to see what they looked like." Scientific collecting was also a factor, especially in the Suwanee River region of Florida. In 1905 one commercial scientific collector was successfully prosecuted in Florida; see James T. Tanner, *The Ivory-billed Woodpecker* (New York: Dover, 1966). The reasons for the near extinction of the whooping crane are not well understood, but hunting was a factor; see Robert P. Allen, *The Whooping Crane* (New York: National Audubon Society, 1952), p. 14. With the peregrine falcon, hunting of a different kind has been a problem: not trying to kill the falcons themselves, but taking them from the wild to use in falconry!

<sup>19</sup> Hiroshi Hasegawa and Anthony R. DeGange, "The Short-tailed Albatross," *American Birds* 36 (1982): 806-14; the significance of the immature birds was pointed out to me by Diana Matiessen in a lecture to the Florida Ornithological Society, October 1982.

<sup>20</sup> Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968): 1243-48.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1247.



public attention: it is a regulated hunt and the harp seal is not in danger of extermination.<sup>22</sup>

The sport hunter has a greater stake than anyone in preserving the game. The only way to preserve the game is to set aside habitat for the species. The loss or prohibition of hunting would mean the loss of one of the most effective pressure groups in existence working to preserve such natural areas. They have the money and the interest to make a difference in the political process where land-use decisions are made.

Setting aside natural areas has benefits too numerous and obvious to mention, not the least of which is to provide habitat for non-game animals. Everything from song birds to snails benefits from another wildlife refuge—hunted or not. This argument applies only to the U.S.A. and other nations which make distinctions between game and non-game species. The one anti-hunting group I do belong to is the *Legge per la Abolizione della Caccia* of Italy, where everything that moves is regarded as legitimate game for the gun or, worse, the snare.

Those of us who are not hunters, but who have worked closely with hunters in the last decade, have seen a very real and very significant shift in the attitudes of hunters and of those agencies which represent their interest, such as state game and fish commissions. In Florida, the Game and Freshwater Fish Commission is working very hard to benefit non-game species such as terns and skimmers, the bald eagle, the seaside sparrow, the manatee, and many more,<sup>23</sup> and the hunting community generally supports these efforts.<sup>24</sup> Thus, there is a sense in which we can regard the game animals that fall to the hunter's gun as martyrs. Without them, those of us who are interested in preserving some remnant of the natural world would lose many battles that we now win. The animals that die, some of them in fear and pain, are dying for a reason, though they are not aware of it, and their deaths should be seen as a sacrificial act in the best sense.

Here I am accepting as valid and extending what Singer has called the "replaceability argument."<sup>25</sup> According to this argument, the suffering and loss of life of one animal killed by human beings for their purposes is acceptable if that

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<sup>22</sup> For the Alaskan fur seal see *Audubon* 72, no. 2 (March 1970): 114–15. For the Canadian harp seal see Cleveland Amory, "Let's Save the Seals," *Good Housekeeping*, March 1980, pp. 60–64. Though Amory points out that the Canadian government supervises the hunt and sets the quotas, he assails them for this. Even he does not claim the seals are in any danger of extinction. For another point of view see W. McClosky, "Bitter Fight Still Rages Over the Seal Killing in Canada," *Smithsonian* 10, no. 8 (November 1979): pp. 54–63.

<sup>23</sup> This observation is based on my personal experience in working for the benefit of wildlife in Florida over the past decade.

<sup>24</sup> One study showed that the three largest hunters' magazines increased their coverage of environmental issues by one-third between 1968 and 1970. E. R. Belak, Jr., "The Outdoor Magazine Revisited," *Journal of Environmental Education* 4, no. 1 (1972): 15–19.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 100.

individual animal is replaced by another. This is what Leslie Stephen had in mind with his famous quip, "The pig has a stronger interest than anyone in the demand for bacon. If all the world were Jewish, there would be no pigs at all."<sup>26</sup> I want to extend the replaceability argument by pointing out that in ethical hunting, according to the best modern standards, not only are individual game animals replaced by others of their own species, but habitat set aside for them benefits other species which are not hunted. Although Singer, who rejects this application of the replaceability argument, asserts that "the shooting of a duck does not lead to its replacement by another,"<sup>27</sup> I think that this is an excessively narrow interpretation of the verb "lead to." While shooting a duck *per se* doesn't create another duck, it does *lead to* the production of another duck and many other animals through the financial contributions of the duck hunter and the efforts of those who represent his interests.

It would be easy for anti-environmental forces in this country to set the hunters and the anti-hunting environmentalists at odds. There is constant friction between the two groups, typically over whether or not hunting will be permitted on some particular piece of land. As things now stand, it is easy to drive a wedge between these two factions and thus dilute them both.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, we can work diligently to improve the quality of hunting not in the sense of furnishing more animals to shoot at, but in terms of the value of the experience to the hunter. The single most alarming trend in hunting today is the trend toward *artificial* hunting, including game ranches featuring guaranteed hunts of exotic species in fenced areas, pen-reared birds that are released ahead of the hunters, and the like.<sup>29</sup> The most effective weapon against this kind of hunting is probably ridicule—especially from other hunters. One can imagine what scathing things Leopold would have had to say about this *ersatz* hunting.

To sum up then, we may conclude, following Aldo Leopold, that legal and ethical hunting which tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community is a good according to pragmatic ethical principles, since the prohibition of such hunting would likely result in intolerable loss of habitat for both game and non-game animals. In accepting this position, nonetheless, we may still, as Leopold did, demand a higher standard of self-restraint among hunters,<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Quoted by Singer from Leslie Stephen, *Social Rights and Duties* (London, 1896).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>28</sup> For the complexity of this issue see John G. Mitchell, "Bitter Harvest: Hunting in America," *Audubon* 81, no. 6 (November 1979): 104–29. For irate letters to the editors of *Audubon* from non-hunters see the July, September, and November issues cited above.

<sup>29</sup> Cleveland Amory, *Man Kind*, p. 157–167. According to "Bitter Harvest," *Audubon* 81, no. 4 (July 1979): 81, it costs \$750 to shoot an axis deer and \$350 to shoot a mouflon sheep in Texas. This problem is compounded by the fact that exotic species have escaped and are now ranging outside the game ranches competing with native deer.

<sup>30</sup> Leopold, *Sand County*, 178.

and expect that this self-restraint, as the ultimate source of ethical value in hunting, will foster attitudes appreciative and protective of wildlife generally. As Leopold put it in his discussion of the sky dance of the woodcock:

The woodcock is a living refutation of the theory that the utility of a game bird is to serve as a target, or to pose gracefully on a slice of toast. No one would rather hunt woodcock in October than I, but since learning of the sky dance I find myself calling one or two birds enough. I must be sure that, come April, there will be no dearth of dancers in the sunset sky.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.