

FROM THE PRESIDENT



William A. Demmer
PRESIDENT
Boone and Crockett Club

A critical pillar of the Boone and Crockett Club is the notion and promotion of fair chase and the associated ethical responsibilities of the hunter-conservationist. The idea of fair chase hunting connects the hunter with the moral

choices that one has to make in connection with one's prey, other hunters and society in general. With the leadership provided by former Boone and Crockett Member Aldo Leopold, the idea of ethics was incorporated into man's relationship with the land. Aldo Leopold's body of ideas evolved into what he titled the "Land Ethic." The Land Ethic connects the hunter-conservationist with a set of moral choices relative to how our land and habitat are to be managed and used. The Boone and Crockett Club has been the North American leader in promoting ethical hunting and land-use ethics for years.

Theodore Roosevelt proselytized in 1887 (the year he formed the Boone and Crockett Club) that for the hunter-conservationist's voice to be heard, it would require the moral underpinnings of ethics. That axiom is as true today as it has ever been. Our community still has much work to do if we are to guarantee the right to hunt for future generations. Our communications to the non-hunting public in particular needs to be replete with our respect for the prey and for the land. The hunter's relationship with the land has been critical in reestablishing bountiful numbers of North American big game. With human populations expanding throughout this continent, greater demands for water and space will be placed on the land and the hunter's needs will best be heard if they are framed in an argument that includes ethics.

The ethical challenges and choices that we as hunter-conservationists face within

our sporting passions provide a powerful training opportunity for our younger charges. The challenges of parenting are as tough today as they have ever been. I am now the father of five with the addition nine years ago of my wife Linda's three children. Teaching, modeling, and inspiring proper thought and behavior is still a constant challenge. My relationship with hunting and the land that my family enjoys has been a wonderful tool to teach and guide ethical

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thought. Beginning with early gun safety, safety lessons, and the associated discipline, I found the perfect carrot-and-stick combination that could inspire proper behavior. My sons (four plus a son-in-law) were eager to listen and learn about the skills and associated ethics required to maximize the enjoyment of shooting and hunting. We as hunters have that special opportunity to teach life's lessons in regards to ethical behavior; for where else is the subject of ethics so up front and personal? Today's business climate and political environment that capture much of our media's attention provide little inspiration regarding ethics. From my personal experience in running a Michigan business, the auto industry in their fight for survival spent little attention to business ethics. Here again, fair chase ethics provide fertile grounds for societal behavior modeling.

Our Boone and Crockett Club recently held its 28th Triennial Awards celebration in Reno, Nevada, honoring the cream of North American big game trophies submitted over

the past three years. What is unique about our awards is that each hunter's trophy, in order to qualify for our records book, must be certified to have been taken "under fair chase hunting conditions." Fair chase is defined as the ethical, sportsmanlike and lawful pursuit and taking of any free-ranging, wild, native North American big game animal in a manner that does not give the hunter an unfair advantage over such animals. To that end, the Boone and Crockett Club's goal is to inspire the hunter to learn about his prey, its habitat, and embrace whole heartedly the ideals of fair chase.

The four-day awards celebration, led by our Records Division Vice President Eldon L. "Buck" Buckner and his adjutant, Dr. Richard T. Hale, was the best ever. The Friday evening dinner honored the Generation Next. The Generation Next honorees were the young hunters whose animals qualified for entry in the Club's big game records program. North American hunters age 16 and younger accounted for 155 of the trophies accepted into Boone and Crockett Club's *28th Big Game Awards Book*, and 22 of these young hunters were in attendance. All were celebrated by highlighting their stories along with pictures of their animals. It was duly noted that well over 40 percent of the age 16 and under hunters celebrated in Reno were young women. Our hunting community (in particular, hunting fathers) are doing their duty inspiring non-traditional hunters into our sport. When it was my turn to speak, I used the words of President Emeritus Lowell Baier challenging these youths to become ambassadors of our cause in promoting fair chase. Rarely is there an opportunity to attend an event for us hunters that so enraptures the attendees as our Club's Triennial Awards Program celebration.

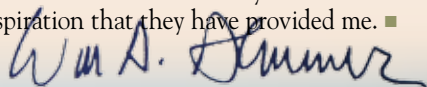
We hunters are in the minority of the North American population, and it is critical for the long-term health and survival of our hunting passion that we all become ambassadors at some level. Our future conservation science must focus on the relationship between the public, wildlife, its



habitat and the hunter. Educating the hunter, the landowner, and the public about our hunter-conservationist ethics is critical for hunting's continued acceptance. Think about the impact of the expanding human populations in North America coupled with a warming climate; the resulting scenario will create more competition for nature's sustaining resources than at any time in modern history. My scientist friends tell me that the human dimension side of wildlife management is the next evolving frontier demanding critical research.

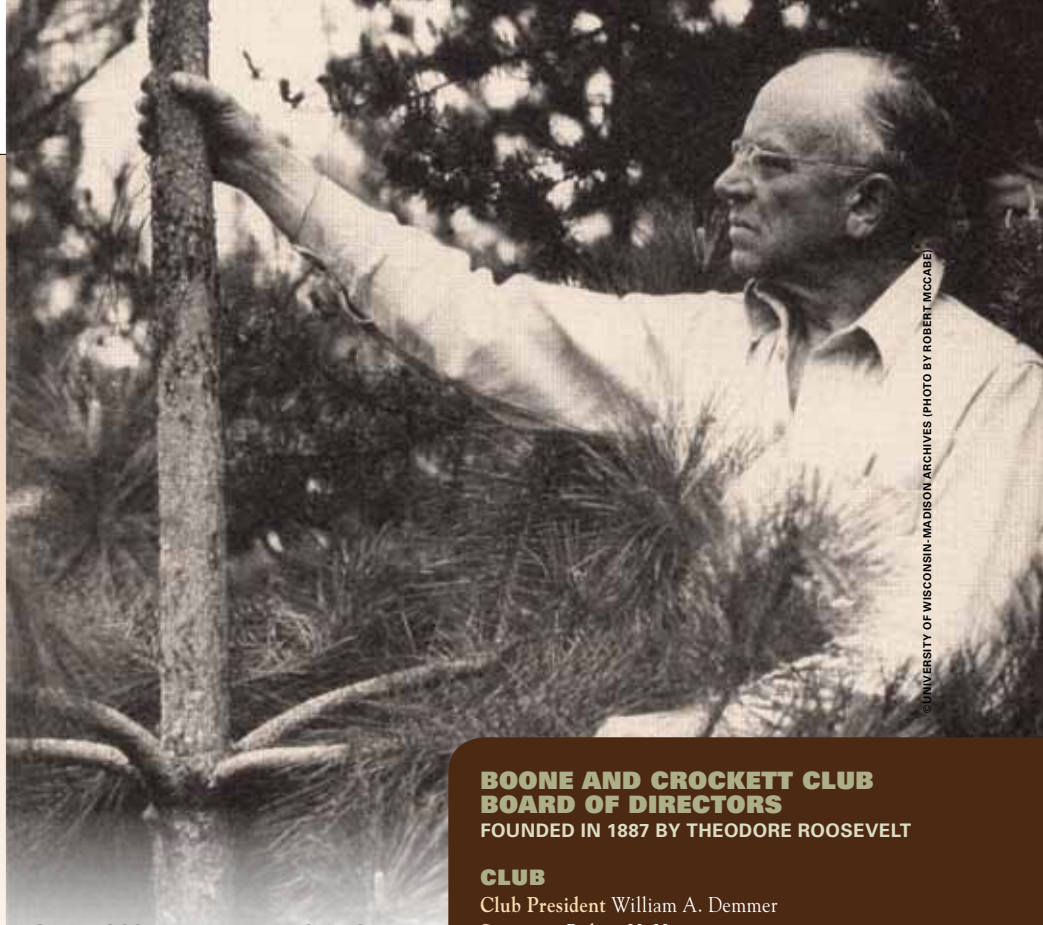
Values will be one of the driving forces in decision-making regarding the choices that our wildlife specialists will have to make. U.S. Fish and Game Chief Dan Ashe spoke at a recent AFWA (American Fish and Wildlife Association) conference and told the audience that our specialists may have to choose in this resource competition as to just what species will be saved. Our community must be in that debate, and we must be prepared with ethical arguments. We must build the ethical arguments that bring our policy makers and our legislators together for the benefit of our community. Our scientific arguments will be for the head, our ethical arguments will be for the heart.

The Boone and Crockett Clubs thought leaders participating in this issue of *Fair Chase* with me will be Dr. Michael Nelson, chair of conservation ethics at Oregon State University, and Dr. Hal Salwasser, former dean of the Oregon State University School of Forestry and also the Boone and Crockett Club's first endowed chair while teaching at the University of Montana. Dr. Nelson has read everything that Aldo Leopold has written and will discuss conservation, science and ethics, while Dr. Salwasser, who received his doctorate under Dr. Starker Leopold, will discuss extending the Fair Chase Ethic to a Land Stewardship Ethic. I want to thank them both personally for all that they have done for our community and for the inspiration that they have provided me. ■



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Leopold in 1946 measuring the growth of the pines planted at the Shack. He once wrote: "The only conclusion I have ever reached about trees is that I love all trees, but I am in love with pines."



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON ARCHIVES (PHOTO BY ROBERT MCCABE)

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Conservation, Science, and Ethics

By Michael P. Nelson

Chair of Conservation Ethics, Oregon State University

Can does not imply ought. Wildlife science is the purveyor of information about the ability of a population to endure being hunted, but it is not the purveyor of ethics.

The conservation community has a longstanding relationship with both science and ethics. But the relationship between conservation, science, and ethics might be more complicated than is at first apparent.

For the most part, wildlife science informs us, with respect to conservation, about what is technically possible and about the ecological consequences of various management prescriptions. For example, wildlife science can determine recruitment rates for given populations of animals, helping us understand the impacts on that population from over-harvest. This kind of information is critical, because conservation must be based on the best available science (“The best science available will be used as a base for informed decision making in wildlife management,” as the Boone and Crockett Club puts it). But those facts, important as they are, do not by themselves justify a certain conservation practice. The conservation of wildlife populations is as much a matter of values as of facts. Recent improvements in our thinking have affirmed this, and we often add values to our formula for sound conservation.

This commitment to discourse about values often comes in the form of an acknowledgement of the importance of social science, which can describe whether, why, and how much we value the preservation of wildlife populations or other conservation goals. Social science, as a systematic description of an important element of our world (namely, values), is also a critical element of science-based management. The role of social science in conservation is, however, often misunderstood. While social science can tell us what people believe or value and why, social science

(or even social science and wildlife ecology together) are still not an adequate basis for conservation.

Like wildlife ecology, social science does not justify a certain conservation approach. That requires us to evaluate what we ought to believe, or, in other words, to justify conservation. This is the product of ethical discourse.

An ethic is a belief. A belief about what is right or wrong, good or bad; a belief that inspires certain actions. A conservation ethic is a formal articulation of

a belief about what is proper human conduct with regard to the land. A more specific example, a hunting ethic would articulate a system of proper thought and conduct between humans and certain kinds of non-human animals. A hunting ethic should explain both how we hunt, and why we ought to hunt.

We currently seem better equipped to handle science than we do ethics. Sometimes the temptation is to try to move directly from the sciences (both ecological and social) to some action; to move from those descriptions about the world provided by the sciences to prescriptions for action. But any argument concluding that we ought to behave in a certain manner, any argument with a “should” or “ought” in its conclusion, must have, as a matter of logic, two kinds of premises, not just one. The first kind of premise will be empirical: this is the way the world is, this is the way the world will be. This is the realm of the sciences, and this is what it means to base conservation on the best available science. The second kind of premise will be about values: this is what is worthy, this is what is important, this is what must remain. This premise is not the realm of the sciences. Only with both premises, but by neither alone, will we arrive at a prescription for action.

Arguably, conservation is at a crossroads. Successful navigation will require a renewed thoughtfulness. Going forward, conservation needs to be versed both in science and in ethics. This recognition has many implications; following are just a couple.

First, the justification of conservation will depend ultimately upon a fusion of science and ethics. Some of our former ideas about justification will have to go, most notably the idea that science alone can deliver justified conservation practices. For example, the fact that biologists affirm that a given population of animals can, or cannot, be hunted, does not imply (all by itself) that it is right or ethical to hunt that population. Can does not imply ought. Wildlife science is the purveyor of information about the ability of a population to endure being hunted, but it is not the purveyor of ethics. We have more work to do if we want to justify actions.

Second, this fusion of science and ethics will require us to become more adept at a new kind of discourse—ethical discourse. Conservation will, therefore, require some novel collaborations, articulations, and defenses. Few of us are an Aldo Leopold. Few of us can combine scientific rigor with ethical acumen and sufficiently powerful prose. We have the ability—historically unprecedented—to engage in conversation with our fellow citizens. But we need a wise and thoughtful conservation vision to communicate, a vision that can compete successfully and inspiringly in the current marketplace of ideas.

Only together can we craft that vision. ■

For Leopold, hunting was both a scientific experience and a recreational one. In the field, he usually recorded in his hunting journal the sex, age and weight of his catch.

Extending the Fair Chase Ethic to a Land Stewardship Ethic

By Hal Salwasser
B&C Professional Member

An ethic is a principle concerning behavior to others. The Golden Rule, a version of which is present in many cultures, is an example of a person-to-person ethic about right behavior. Fair chase is an ethic about person-to-animal behavior when hunting. It is not present in all cultures and is not practiced by all in any particular culture. Ethics are personally adopted, voluntary guides for behavior and action. When such guides become mandated, as through government law or regulation, they are no longer an ethic; they are the law, where the only ethic involved is whether to follow the law.

Fair chase is not the law, nor could it ever be. As a law it would be unenforceable and it would weaken its power to influence personal choice. Laws absolve the individual of moral choice and discernment of right behavior other than to follow the law; we must obey without choice or pay a consequence if caught in violation. That does not always deter violation.

Professional member and founder of science-informed wildlife management, Aldo Leopold, said of hunter ethics, *it is how you behave on the hunt when no one is watching you. That is, it is a voluntary, self-imposed code of conduct. We behave in ways that signify our moral choice and personal commitment, not because the law tells us to do so.*

Our American culture has ethics and laws about treatment of others, including animals, e.g., water and air quality and species at risk of extinction. It has no ethic about how one should treat land, the ecological systems which provide the resources necessary for survival and well-being. Aldo Leopold proposed such an ethic more than half a century ago. It is embraced by many, but it is not as widely embraced by a community as is fair chase by hunters, and certainly not by society as a whole. For example, our approach to energy development rarely respects land as a community in which we are a mere citizen with responsibilities to communal well-being. However, at a price, e.g., likely higher energy prices, more ecologically sensitive practices are available. Our history of forest practices and livestock grazing also shows that we are only lately—and sometimes reluctantly—changing those

relationships to more fully respect the land community.

The community of hunters, led by Boone and Crockett Club members and other like-minded individuals, championed and instilled fair chase many decades ago as the prevailing ethic in our culture about behavior by human predators toward their prey. It was in response to a cultural lack of ethics about human predator-wild prey behavior. The prey in this case would not continue to exist at

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sustainable and harvestable numbers without productive and diverse land at scales ranging from habitat patches to continental landscapes. It is time for the descendants of those visionary leaders to take the ethic of fair chase to its next level and embrace land as something to be treated with respect, reverence and care for its long-term well-being.

Leopold's Land Ethic is the land extension of fair chase. With human population careening toward 9 to 10 billion by mid-century, we have no time to lose in righting our relationships to the places that sustain us. And every journey begins with one step in one's home territory.

Federal and state laws mandate how public lands and waters are to be managed to perpetuate their productivity and contributions to society. Those laws are largely based on science and societal values of the mid-1900s, essentially fixed in that era. But science and societal values change with time. In the mid-1900s, we still thought and talked as if we could regulate nature and control undesired events such as large fires. We cannot. Recent science has shown that ecosystems are immensely complex, dynamic and often unpredictable. It has shown that global climate is changing at a faster rate than occurred in past eras, that human activities have augmented natural forces of change, and that consequences will have significant impacts on wild places and wild flora and fauna. Neither of these new

understandings is reflected in current law. Federal and state land agencies are struggling with how to manage and protect resources in their responsibility under laws that are not suited to current times and understandings, often held in check by groups whose existence is tied to the old laws.

Such is not the case with private lands, whose owners and managers can adapt to new scientific and experiential knowledge, new societal values and new market forces more readily. They do not need new laws to tell them to change or to constrain such change. Hence we are now seeing a surge in private lands managed for conservation as well as commercial enterprise. In some notable examples, such as the Western Landowners Alliance and similar groups across the nation, owners are forming alliances with other owners and working closely with state and federal conservation agencies and academia to advance their ideas and values.

There have also been great advances in tribal natural resources management since the 1990s. Some of the strongest examples of a land ethic in practice are occurring on Native American reservations. There would be even more if tribes are relieved of historic federal regulatory laws and policies. It is now common for animals hunted on reservations to qualify for the Club's Big Game Records Program.

Private and tribal lands could be where the wildlife conservation action will take place in coming decades, and they are where application of a Leopoldian land ethic can most prominently show society a new way that doesn't sacrifice human well-being for the environment or vice versa. There is great opportunity for the hunter-conservation community to encourage and reward these largely private and First Nations initiatives, not through regulatory law but through incentives and relief from regulatory law in proportion to accomplishments toward the care and long-term stewardship of nature and culture in their fullest richness. ■



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the history of
conservation.