

by Peter Flack

# The Fair Chase Guild - What Is It?

I attended an historic meeting on Tuesday 18 October 2016. Or at least in time to come, I hope people will look back and say it was an historic meeting. Fittingly, it was held under canvass at the HQ of SA Hunters and chaired by its President, Gerhard Verdoorn. Present were ten other people - including the CEO, Conservation Manager and Manager Hunting Affairs of SA Hunters - most of whom had walked the long road over the past year leading to the establishment of The Fair Chase Guild, which was formally announced at the SA Hunters Congress on Friday 4 November 2016.

“Oh, yet another hunting body,” I hear you say through your yawn. “We have dozens of those. They are all the same.” Really? Without wanting to be rude, do you know what fair chase hunting is? It is the hunting by fair chase rules of wild animals in their natural habitats on a sustainable, legal and unashamedly ethical basis.

Does your hunting association have as its main aim the promotion of fair chase hunting pursuant to a three year public relations strategic plan implemented by one of the top PR firms in the country? Is your association prepared to put R1.5 million per annum behind this initiative? Or does your hunting association only defend hunting on a reactive basis as and when hunting is attacked and then only weeks or months after such attack and in media read or watched only by hunters?

And can I hear you say, “What difference is PR going to make? PR is all about spin doctors and trying to make crooks look like Mother Theresa!” Is that so?

To begin with, the Fair Chase Guild PR campaign involves:

- During the hot summer months monthly meetings with members of the media at which short presentations will be made on some aspect of fair chase hunting. The presentations will be provided to them in written form to do with as they wish.
- Monthly visits during the cool winter months with members of the media to shooting ranges, game ranches and hunts to demonstrate the practical application of fair chase hunting.
- A weekly clipping service showing every article in every publication, which deals with hunting and conservation.
- The publication of an article on fair chase hunting at least twice a month in some media outlet other than hunting magazines, which may or may not deal with articles previously published in the media. The Guild wants to move away from just preaching to the converted.
- The development of promotional material demonstrating the benefits of fair chase hunting to be distributed to non fair chase hunters.

The aim of The Fair Chase Guild is not only to become the “Go to” organization for the media when they wish to discuss hunting related issues but also to encourage hunters to join and discover, to the extent they have not already done so, the pleasures of hunting according to fair chase rules. To be part of an

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association of like-minded people who share common values and aims. To be able to look anyone in the face and proudly explain and promote what The Fair Chase Guild stands for and does. To know that if any member contravenes the rules of fair chase hunting and is found guilty of such conduct by his peers, he will be disciplined by them and possibly expelled from the Guild - depending on the severity of the breach - without recourse to litigation.

The aim of the Fair Chase Guild's PR programs is also to help explain the benefits of fair chase hunting to the uninitiated who may or may not hunt themselves and especially to those who are undecided about or even partially opposed to some kinds of hunting.

The Fair Chase Guild has three initial subsidiary aims, the conservation of our wildlife and wildlife habitats, the education of young people into the benefits of fair chase hunting and the development of a data base of game ranchers who offer fair chase hunts and abide by the rules of fair chase hunting so that we can recommend them to local and international hunters. And while it is not a specific aim, as part of its public relations programs, the Guild will obviously look to support the initiatives of others that promote fair chase hunting. Similarly, the Guild will support those programs that conserve our wildlife and wildlife habitats and oppose those that do not without duplicating the efforts of SA Hunters in this regard.

So, who can join? Anyone.

Do you have to already be a fair chase hunter to join? While this would obviously be an advantage, it is not a prerequisite provided you sign the Guild's Rules and Regulations and Indemnity and abide by them in the future.

Do you have to be a member of a hunting or conservation association? No, but every member of The Fair Chase Guild, to the extent he is not already so, must become a member of SA Hunters.

Well, how do I become a member? Very simple. Send us a one page email or letter telling us about yourself and why you would like to become a member and one or more of our Founder Members will call you back, discuss your application and then notify you whether your membership application has been approved or not. Alternatively, approach two or more Founder Members and ask them to propose and second you, respectively, for membership and then leave it to them to make the necessary arrangements. Remember, however, that the granting or refusal of membership is in the sole discretion of the Founder Members.

Can I become a Founder Member? Yes, by becoming a member in good standing of The Fair Chase Guild on or before 31 October 2017.

Who is behind the formation of The Fair Chase Guild and how is it to be financed? Good question. Always "Follow the money!" The idea behind The Fair Chase Guild arose after the Cecil debacle when every hunting association seemed to be caught unawares by the worldwide condemnation and, for the most part, acted like a bunch of rabbits caught in the headlights.

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A small group consisting of Koos Barnard, Fred Camphor, Derek Carstens, Gerhard Damm, Peter Flack, Neels Geldenhuys, Lizanne Nel, Danie Terblanche, Johan van de Giessen and Gerhard Verdoorn met at SA Hunters to see whether there was another way to deal with this and other similar issues. All were tired of being painted with the same brush as people involved in canned killings, the domestication of wildlife to produce exaggerated horn lengths and unnatural color variants and other aberrant, illegal and/or unethical behavior which reflected negatively on fair chase hunters. All were keen to do something about this and most at the meeting represented numerous other hunters of a similar persuasion. And so the idea of The Fair Chase Guild was born.

It was soon realized, however, that the operations of the Guild would be expensive. So, how to finance it? Many of the Founder Members were also prepared to become Founder Sponsors and commit R1 000.00 per month each to this end for the next three years. Having said this, membership is open to all, the minimum contribution being R800.00 per annum or the amount of the SA Hunters annual membership fee from time to time.

Sponsorship will be offered to corporate members and people will be invited to become Patrons of The Fair Chase Guild. Large Bore Patrons will contribute a one off payment of R100 000.00, Medium Bore Patrons R50 000.00 and Small Bore Patrons R25 000.00.

Should any of the affairs of the Guild need to be decided by a vote, then every member will have one vote for each rand he has paid directly to the affairs of the Guild. In this regard, the Guild will share certain services with SA Hunters for which it will pay, including banking services, although the financial affairs of the Guild will be separate from those of SA Hunters and under its own direct control.

The Fair Chase Guild is looking to establish links to and relationships with other like-minded people and organizations within and outside Africa. The Guild is looking to build a membership base of at least 300 Founder Members, Founder Sponsors and Patrons in the first year of its operation. Failure to do so will result in the Guild ceasing to operate as, clearly, the absence of 300 people who believe sufficiently in the benefits of fair chase hunting, will mean that this is neither a sustainable or viable movement and none of us want to limp along like the fifth wheel on the SA Hunters wagon.

For more about Peter Flack, his books, articles, DVDs, blog and SHAC, see his website [www.peterflack.co.za](http://www.peterflack.co.za)