

by Gerhard Damm

# Women And Sustainable Hunting

The Working Group Artemis of the CIC, International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey, Working Group Diana of the Netherlands organized the 3rd International Women and Sustainable Hunting (WaSH) Conference in Wageningen, The Netherlands in July. The huntresses from Europe, Africa, Asia-Pacific and North America made highly educative and interesting presentations on a host of different topics. The main focus of the presenters centered on education concurrent with the Artemis & Diana missions to convey hunting tradition for future generations, with the center of attention toward species protection, conservation and sustainability.

Prof. Ron Ydenberg of the University of Wageningen mentioned in his opening address that the question addressed by this conference is whether and how the long-standing traditions of hunting and falconry can be combined with contemporary concerns of species protection, conservation and sustainability. Ydenberg compared this work to architecture, in which fundamental structural considerations are able to find new and better expression with modern materials and methods. He concluded that the values and aspirations of CIC Workgroup Artemis and Workgroup Diana will, be able to develop this ambitious objective.

The Conference Brochure contains a host of very readable articles like the accomplished falconer Helen McDonald's (UK) opening piece "Dedicated to all Hunting Amazons". McDonald concludes "This [Conference Brochure] will play a part in helping a wider audience to understand that the fragility and complexity of ecological systems is intrinsic not only to conservation biology, but to enlightened hunting culture". In a second paper McDonald highlights that education in field sports is often ignored by the vast expanding urban population and talks about nature learning in primary school through falconry, a highly successful project in the UK.

Fiona Capstick (South Africa) highlights the role of African women in hunting and providing food for their families from prehistory to modern times. She proudly claims that today women occupy every imaginable kind of work connected with the hunting, be it as professional huntresses and bush pilots, outfitters, booking agents, ranch owners and breeders of game animals, taxidermists, wildlife veterinarians, wildlife artists, owners of prestigious firearms manufacturing companies, specialists in gun engraving, stock-making, gun checkering and gun-smithing, firearms auctioneering, leaders in outdoor journalism and youth education, office bearers in international hunting organizations, film producers, pro-hunting advocates in the political arena, designers of safari clothing and authors of prize-winning books on hunting.

Soňa Supeková, President of the CIC Working Group Artemis, presents an excursion through the history of hunting in Europe, Supeková explains the hunting cultures of Central Europe and the women's role. She concludes that the modern society of Slavic communities in Central Europe could not exist without the active participation of women in falconry and hunting. They became more active and educated not just for hunting as an activity, but as a way of life and a tool for the sustainable conservation of wildlife and nature.

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Mary Zeiss-Stange (USA), expert of the CIC US Delegation, talks about “North American Dianas: hunting for tradition”. Women are now beginning to appear on the covers of sporting publications, like Shooting Sportsman, Field & Stream, Hunting, and Sporting Classics, covers that would have been unimaginable a few years earlier. The mainstream media are following suit. Suggestive of the breadth of public interest, National Geographic ran a major cover story on women taking up hunting in November 2013, and Aljazeera America did likewise in February 2015. The question posed on one of those Shooting Sportsman covers—“Are Women the Future of Hunting?”— is looking ever more reasonable to ask.” And she concludes that female hunters provide a powerful platform for nature education in the 21st Century because they find it pretty easy to be green, in both theory and practice. At the same time, they are not hesitant to talk about the thornier side of the life/death cycle in which hunters participate.

Marina Lamprecht (Namibia), member of the Executive Committee of NAPHA, reflected how important it is to educate local people about hunting and create opportunities for them. In Namibia, the Namibian Professional Hunting Association empowered many talented people working in safari hunting (as skimmers or trackers for example) and since 2001, more than 300 Namibians could qualify as a guide or Professional Hunter. Lamprecht highlighted that the value [of animals] beyond meat and hide, makes trophy hunting a beneficial tool for conservation. Hunting employs more people at better salaries, with more training, skill recognition and promotion opportunities, than any other form of agricultural land utilization in Namibia.

Heli Siitari (Finland), President of the CIC Division Policy & Law, explained that even abundant game species benefit from local effort for conservation - like Black Grouse in Finland. As the ecology, behavior, and breeding habits become widely known, local hunting clubs, by adapting hunting season to the biological and ecological needs of black grouse, contributed greatly to the increase grouse numbers. A win-win situation for the local hunters and species conservation

Ineke Smets (New Zealand) expounded that New Zealanders are losing touch with nature, its processes and its importance. It is now these small groups of dedicated and passionate individuals, including organizations such as the Wingspan National Bird of Prey Trust, that help educate and promote the importance of falconry. They link people back to nature. By targeting keen hunters, passionate naturalist and by captivating children there may be hope that people are reminded of what keeps them all alive - Mother Nature, Smets said.

Janneke Eigeman (The Netherlands), Manager Communications of the Royal Dutch Hunters Association, explained were the theory of the golden circles, made by management guru Simon Sinek was leading. Sinek states that successful brands tell people why they do things, unsuccessful brands tell people what they do! In her workshop during the conference she told participants about the challenges and successes of using this approach when explaining hunting to non-hunters.

Laurens Hoedemaker, Director of the Royal Dutch Hunting Association and Vice President FACE, followed-up saying that the authentic, straightforward story of hunting and the hunter has found broad support in today's Dutch society. A large majority of Dutch people and politicians now support hunting. In fact, the new legislation on nature protection and hunting which passed in 2015 was amended in

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parliament, in support of hunting.

Catherine E. Semcer (USA) stated that research shows that women are more likely than men to be persuaded into anti-hunting positions and to participate in anti-hunting activism. For this reason it is critical that women who hunt lead and expand outreach efforts to non-hunting women and convince them of hunting's utility to the conservation of wildlife. Urbanization, deforestation, and biodiversity loss have led to people - mainly kids, having less and less interaction with nature and consequently know a little about hunting and conservation. This limited information may lead to a huge number of anti-hunting campaigns, Semcer said. In her presentation and workshop Semcer reviewed what is known about all of these elements within the post- Cecil environment, how they are impacting sustainable hunting programs and begin the process of developing a women-led campaign to persuade women to reject calls to end or create unwarranted restrictions on hunting worldwide.

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