

National HUNTING DAY

1 MAY 2021



NATIONAL HUNTING DAY RSA: 1 May 2021

A great initiative by CHASA (Confederation of Hunting Associations of South Africa) led to the inauguration of a National Hunting Day for South Africa! This day will be celebrated annually on the first Saturday of May. Our first-ever National hunting Day celebrations will thus be on 1 May 2021.

The purpose of the day is to create a positive awareness about hunting and celebrate the spirit of hunting. It is time for hunters to unite and celebrate our heritage!

Why do we hunt?

The hunting of wild animals is an emotive issue, drawing fire from anti-hunting organisations, environmentalists as well as many ordinary citizens. But it also has its supporters, some of whom argue that hunting is a valuable source of income and that it contributes to the conservation of wildlife, that can be used to protect threatened species and be put to other good uses.

From our research, conducted in South Africa, we established that hunting contributes immensely to economic development.

The research found that hunters (consumptive wildlife tourist) spend double and more the amount than non-consumptive wildlife tourists. Non-consumptive wildlife tourism refers to bird watching, game viewing and trails, to name a few.

By our calculations trophy- and biltong-hunters contribute a combined R13.6 billion (\$909 million) to the South African economy in the 2017/2018 season. This is only the direct contribution. If one would like to determine the economic impact of hunting one also needs to determine the indirect and induced impact. For their part, biltong hunters spent on average R58 000 (\$4 000) per season. When multiplied with the number of frequent biltong hunters in South Africa (200 000), it totals R11.66 billion. What makes the spending of hunters so important is that hunting mainly occurs in rural areas, which are in dire for economic development.

In addition to the aforementioned, hunting creates jobs, particularly in rural areas where employment is most needed. Research conducted in three of the top hunting provinces – the Northern Cape, Free State and Limpopo provinces – showed hunting created 31 500 jobs in the three provinces – 17 806 in Limpopo, 9 072 in the Northern Cape and 4 558 in the Free State.

Typical employment created directly includes guides, professional hunters, skimmers, trackers, catering, housekeeping, maintenance, conservation management, anti-poaching and taxidermy, to name a few. Most of the land used for hunting in South Africa was originally farmland used for crops, cattle and other farming activities. To transform the land for hunting purposes required spending on new infrastructure, including for example accommodation, staff accommodation, cooling rooms, slaughtering facilities and meat processing facilities. Recent research conducted by one of my PhD students found that the average spend by product owners on infrastructure is just over R7 million (US\$ 490 000), with some even spending up to R30 million (US\$ 2.1 million). This all adds up to infrastructure development in rural areas. This again created an economic stimulus in these rural areas.

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Other benefits of hunting include:

Species conservation

There is more wildlife in South Africa than there was 50 or 60 years ago. There is now an estimated 19 million head of game in the country compared to 1950 when there were less than half a million individuals left.

The reason for this is that there is more land under conservation in South Africa today than in the 1950s or 1960s, mainly driven by hunting which gave wildlife an economic value. It is estimated that the private wildlife industry is managing an estimated 20 million hectares, compared to the +-6 million hectares owned by the state (national parks, provincial parks and other state-owned conservation areas).

These private reserves rely heavily on hunting to keep their businesses going and hunters need game to hunt. Therefore, private reserve owners often need to breed game for this purpose.

One consequence is that species such as the tsessebe, roan antelope, sable, bontebok and rhino have been saved from extinction as private wildlife reserve owners breed with these species, as it has financial gain for them. Hunting, therefore, remains truly relevant to South Africa, and southern Africa.

There are probably as many reasons to hunt as there are hunters, but the core reasons can be reduced to four: to experience nature as a participant; to feel an intimate, sensuous connection to place; to take responsibility for one's food; and to acknowledge our kinship with wildlife. It should not be surprising that these four themes echo through the extensive literature of the hunt.

Almost all hunters say, in one way or another, that they hunt in order to experience nature directly as a participant, not simply a spectator. To be sure, hunters are spectators, but the fact that they are carrying a rifle or a bow gives an edge to hunters' observations. It is a cliché among hunters to tell of how the scurrying of guineafowl on autumn leaves brings the hunter to full alert.

Closely related to the desire to be immersed in nature is the pleasure of getting to know places intimately. It's not NATURE in the abstract that draws hunters afield so much as it is the nature of particular places that hunters return to year after year. These places are given names that evoke a memorable hunt or a memorable folly ("Remember the time when George lost his boot and kept hunting with a barefoot?")

The topography, the forest cover, the smells of decaying leaves and of course the memories of the spot where a buffalo flushed with their heart-stopping, thunderous take-off 10 yards in front of you!all this and more gets embedded in what can only be described as rootedness. Hunters will return to a hallowed place even when it has gone past its prime as habitat for game.

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Recent surveys have revealed a slight uptick in the sale of hunting rifles largely attributed to what Tovar Cerulli and others have called “adult-onset hunters.” These hunters, like Tovar himself, are being drawn to hunting out of a desire to take charge of their food.

Several recent cultural shifts have fuelled this interest in hunting: growing discomfort with industrial farming and food safety (growth hormones, antibiotics); the locavore and organic farm movement; and a desire to take a direct hand in putting food on the table. No doubt there are many more consumers who recoil at food that does not come wrapped in plastic film than there are people who prefer to shoot or catch at least a portion of their annual consumption of meat and fish. But the latter group is not to be ignored, not least because they are bolstering the ranks of hunters.

Finally, another personal reason that draws men and women to hunting is the need to acknowledge that we are, after all, also animals with a long history of predation, a history long enough to have been encoded in our genes. To be sure, our capacity to create cultures with rituals, norms, and ethical restraints makes us distinct from the other creatures with whom we share the planet, but to deny that part of us that is wild is, as Florence Shepard insists, to deny what it is to be fully human. Hunting, as Florence Shepard reminds us, compels us to acknowledge our participation in the food web.

To think that being a vegetarian or vegan removes us from the killing of animals is, as Tovar Cerulli makes abundantly clear, an illusion that conveniently avoids acknowledging the multiple ways we are locked in a struggle with nature, a struggle that has defined and continues to define who we are. We are not only shaping ourselves, but we have also had — and continue to have — a huge impact on our environment

The Cultural Importance of Hunting

Just as it is important to keep wildlife wild for its own sake, it is also important to keep it wild for our sake. Without a clear distinction between wild and tame and between humans and wildlife, we would quickly lose our bearings. Human culture, even at its most rudimentary level, has always rested on the distinction between “us” and “them.”

To be sure, “them” included not only other species but also humans who lived across the river or over the hill on the horizon. Our species has a long and sorry history of treating humans who don’t speak our language, or don’t look like us, or don’t believe what we believe, as though they were subhuman—i.e., like wild animals.

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But eliding the differences between the wild and the civilized as some animal advocates urge will not usher in an age of comity between humans any more than it will usher in an age of lions and lambs living in harmony. That's not the way things work. The wild—the other—is necessary for us to understand our place in the world and our ethical obligation to preserve and protect the wild. This is no doubt at least part of what Thoreau meant when he famously claimed: "in Wildness is the preservation of the World."

This said, hunters face challenges not so much from the "antis" as from the subtle and not-so-subtle influences of the market that may, if not checked, weaken their claim to the high ground of sustainability.

So, Why Hunt?

Humans have an incredibly broad repertoire, cultivated over millennia of evolution and the concurrent shaping of culture. It provides us with an expansive sense of what it means to be a human being. Hunting is an indelible part of our repertoire and like stunning athleticism, astonishing scientific discoveries, and sobering ethical reflection on what it means to be human, hunting has its place in teaching us who we are.

So that is the way we celebrate hunting.... In all its forms.

Join CHASA, PHASA and other like-minded associations and let's celebrate our right to hunt. Be part of the hunting future on legacy and celebrate 1 May ... Our National Hunting Day!

#phasa #chasa #nationalhuntingday #jagdag #hunting #huntingheritage

Celebrating Our
*Hunting
Heritage*