



# Maine Guide Tips

## “Hunting & Conservation”

Complimentary Information from the Maine Professional Guides Association

Millions of Americans are interested in conservation and wildlife, but those who oppose hunting may not be aware that *hunters are the largest contributors to conservation*, paying for programs that benefit all Americans and wildlife.

Hunters' role in conservation is an important story for future generations of conservationists to know, so that they understand the facts about these first environmentalists – and how today's sportsmen and sportswomen continue contributing to the development of our conservation and wildlife management.

**Over 100 Years Ago** – America's first environmentalists — hunters and outdoorsmen — established the conservation tradition in our nation. This tradition has become known around the world as the “*North American Conservation Model*” and is regarded as the *most successful approach to wildlife conservation ever introduced*. The vital components of this model include:

- Wildlife is a resource owned by the whole public, not by any private persons.
- Surplus wildlife would be allocated by law.
- Science is the proper means for conducting wildlife management responsibilities.
- Regulated hunting is an integral part of wildlife management.
- Hunting opportunities would be available to all citizens, not just an elite few as was the practice in most parts of the world.

**Over 50 Years Ago** – These sportsmen environmentalists fought for the additional laws that created a new system of scientific wildlife management that would rescue many species of wildlife from near extinction and would set aside millions of acres of important habitat to help ensure future wildlife abundance.

### Wildlife Facts

Some people oppose hunting because they feel that by preserving wildlife, it will increase. Wildlife, however, is a resource that cannot be stockpiled. If any annual overabundance of game is not harvested, nature often takes over in a cruel and harsh way.

- Weather, more than any other factor, often decides the fate of wildlife. Just as wildlife will flourish under ideal weather conditions – mild winters and bountiful springs – the opposite is true when seasons are harsh.
- In a harsh winter, oversized white-tailed deer herds deplete all available food and merciless death by slow starvation is inevitable. Predators attack the hunger-weakened herd. Disease and parasites add to the toll. Most often, the end result is a weak, unhealthy herd with far fewer deer than would be present if hunters had taken a reasonable surplus in the fall.

- Research shows that a healthy white-tailed deer herd, reasonably sized to make the most of available habitat, can be reduced each year by as much as 40 percent with no ill effect on the future population. Hunters in Maine rarely take more than 15 percent of the herd. Yet, if left alone, a white-tailed deer herd can double in size in only two years, quickly deplete available food supplies and face certain mass die-offs.
- This management concept is even more evident with game birds. Birds like grouse have an annual mortality rate of 75 to 80 percent whether hunted or not. Turkey populations are likewise regulated far more by factors of feed, cover and weather, than by hunting.
- It is apparent that hunting is a useful part of today's wise game management practices. By teaming habitat improvement with carefully regulated hunting seasons and bag limits, our professional conservationists make sure that hunters take only the surplus of game populations.

Today, all 50 states, including Maine, have a well-organized wildlife conservation agency, financed primarily by hunters and anglers, to protect and scientifically manage all wildlife.

### Money for Conservation

The cost of managing our wildlife is extremely high, with millions of dollars spent each year. But unlike other state agencies, the fish and wildlife department receives little support from taxes paid by the general public.

Instead, the majority of their operating funds come from hunters and anglers. *Sporting enthusiasts are paying, as they have for many years, nearly all the bills for practical wildlife conservation* — and paying them not just for their own benefit, but for that of all citizens.

Dating as far back as the 1920s, sportsmen and women have paid the lion's share for conservation. Through license fees and special excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment, they currently *contribute more than \$4.7 million each day* nationwide for the benefit of wildlife.

The knowledge of how this money is gathered and how it is spent contributes greatly to an understanding of the overall conservation picture — and the hunter's important place in it.

- License fees are the largest portion of the sportsman's contributions to the state fish and wildlife departments, presently totaling more than \$1.1 billion per year.
- Because of the many ways license fees are used for the benefit of all wildlife, the purchase of a hunting license — whether by a hunter or non-hunter — is one of the best contributions that can be made today for conservation.
- A milestone occurred in 1937 with the passage of the Pittman-

Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. Strongly supported by hunters, this legislation transferred receipts from a 10 percent excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition from the general treasury to state wildlife conservation programs.

- This tax was raised to 11 percent during World War II and now adds \$163 million per year for wildlife conservation programs.
- In 1970, again with hunter support, the Dingell-Hart Bill was enacted, making a 10 percent excise tax on handguns available for wildlife restoration and hunter safety training. Proceeds from this tax provide some \$41 million per year.
- The archery community entered the picture in 1972 with the passage of the Dingell-Goodling Bill, specifying an 11 percent excise tax on archery equipment. The proceeds, which now amount to some \$25 million per year, are also used for wildlife restoration and hunter safety training.
- A similar tax on fishing equipment contributes some \$100 million a year.
- All proceeds from these excise taxes are divided among the 50 state wildlife agencies. Each state's share is based on its land area and number of licensed hunters and anglers. *Funds cover about 75 percent of the bill for approved wildlife and fish restoration projects and total some \$560 million per year.*
- The combination of these taxes has formed one of the best programs ever devised for the benefit of wildlife, game and non-game species alike, and has enabled the states to greatly expand their conservation activities.
- An important stipulation of the Pittman-Robertson (P-R) Act is that proceeds may not go to any wildlife agency that turns over any P-R revenue to other state programs. This has prevented a number of state legislatures from diverting funds provided by hunters and anglers into their general funds.
- Another important provision is that states, in order to remain eligible for P-R funds, must employ trained wildlife specialists. This has encouraged many universities to introduce courses in wildlife management and related biological studies.
- More than half of the revenue generated by the P-R Act is used to buy, develop, maintain and operate wildlife management areas. These activities include planting feed and cover, re-stocking game, constructing marshes and ponds for waterfowl and providing watering places for wildlife in arid areas.
- Another major use of these funds is research, which contributes to sound wildlife management and disease control.
- Almost every one of the 50 states has used P-R funds to obtain a collective total of some four million acres for wildlife refuges, wintering range, wetlands and public hunting grounds — more than the total acreage of the state of Connecticut.
- Land paid for by taxes on arms and ammunition also provides the non-hunting public with state-owned recreation areas.

### Organized Outdoor Enthusiasts

Whatever their favorite pastime, many Americans with a serious interest in the outdoors join together in organizations, like the Maine Professional Guides Association, working to sustain and improve the quality of our natural resources.

Whether members of a national organization or local club, sporting enthusiasts are often the only ones who put practical conservation to work in individual woodlots, fields or streams.

It is estimated that hunters spend more than \$690 million a year developing wildlife habitat through licenses, tags, permits

and other fees to hunt on private land.

Local clubs and their members work with the owners of large tracts of private land to open more acreage for a wide range of outdoor recreational uses. They consistently urge their fellow outdoor enthusiasts to respect the property of others and to observe the rules of outdoor etiquette.

The nation's lumber industry provides a good example of the benefits of this hunter-landowner cooperation. Today, hunting is permitted on more than 90 percent of the roughly 70 million acres of woodlands managed by the forest products industry.

Coalitions like Maine's Sportsman/Forest Landowner Alliance founded by the Maine Professional Guides Association continue to work hard to maintain this cooperation, and the access to private lands that all Maine's citizens can still enjoy.

These efforts do not benefit the hunter alone. It contributes to America's outdoor heritage, benefiting every citizen.

### Wildlife's Population Explosion

Many species of wildlife that are hunted are not only secure today, but even, in many instances, far more numerous than they were before the turn of the last century.

Efforts by hunters have increased the populations of many kinds of wildlife to record numbers and have returned many species to parts of the country that had been stripped of native wildlife by commercial exploitation and unchecked development.

- **White-tailed Deer** – In 1900, less than half a million white-tailed deer remained in the nation. Today, conservation programs have returned the whitetail population to some 30 million. Source: Whitetails Unlimited, 2006
- **Ducks** – In 1901, only a few ducks remained. Today, there are over 31 million ducks populating the United States and Canada. Source: Ducks Unlimited, 2006
- **Elk** – In 1907, only about 41,000 elk could be counted in the U.S. Today, populations in 10 Western states total about 1 million. Source: Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, 2006
- **Wild Turkeys** – By the early 1900's, the wild turkey population was under 100,000. Today, the population is over 7 million birds. Source: National Wild Turkey Federation, 2006
- **Pronghorn Antelope** – About 50 years ago, the total U.S. population was only about 12,000. Today, the population of over one million. Source: Texas Parks and Wildlife, 2006

### Maine Sportsmen in Perspective

- Sportsmen support more jobs in Maine than the University of Maine, one of our largest employers (8,800 jobs vs. 8,000).
- Annual spending by Maine sportsmen is more than the Gross State Product for arts, entertainment and recreation (\$581 million vs. \$376 million).
- Maine sportsmen annually spend more than the revenues from commercial seafood landings (\$581 million vs. \$362 million).

### Thanks to our Sources

The National Shooting Sports Foundation; International Fund for Animal Welfare, Wildlife Conservation Forum 2004, Professor Valerius Geist, University of Calgary; US Fish & Wildlife Service: 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation; Economic Importance of Hunting in America, 2002 IAFWA; USDA Forest Service, 2003; Wildlife Management Institute; Wildlife Conservation Fund of America.