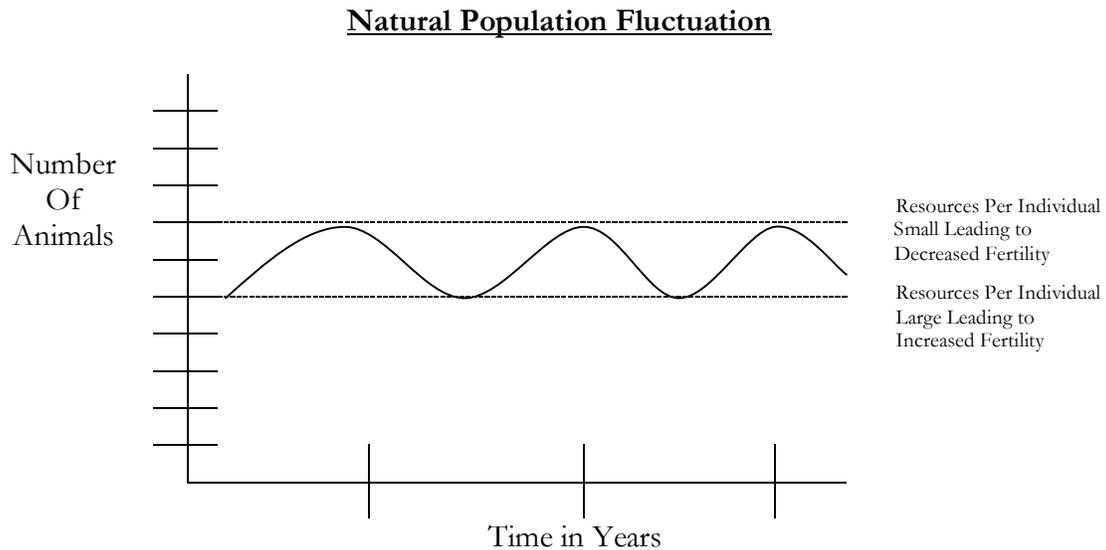


RESPONDING TO PRO-HUNTING ARGUMENTS©

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Hunters have misled the public for so long about hunting that much of their propaganda has become ingrained in our society. A good example is the idea that killing (or, as hunters so delicately refer to it, “hunting”) reduces wildlife populations. Hunters have known for decades that the truth is just the opposite – that generally, if a large number of animals are hunted/killed, that will actually *increase*, rather than decrease, the population. It is therefore important for people who oppose hunting to understand the basic dynamics of animal populations so that they can educate others about the fallacies of pro-hunting arguments.

Generally, wildlife populations have a natural high and low between which they fluctuate rather gently. The reason for this is that as the animals gradually increase, resources such as food and water become increasingly scarce and animals begin to die, causing the population to gradually decline. As the population declines, resources become more plentiful for individual animals, to the point that they are well-fed, well-hydrated, and therefore fertile. This means that their reproduction gradually increases, leading to an increase in the population and the cycle starts anew. On a graph the natural population fluctuation looks like this:



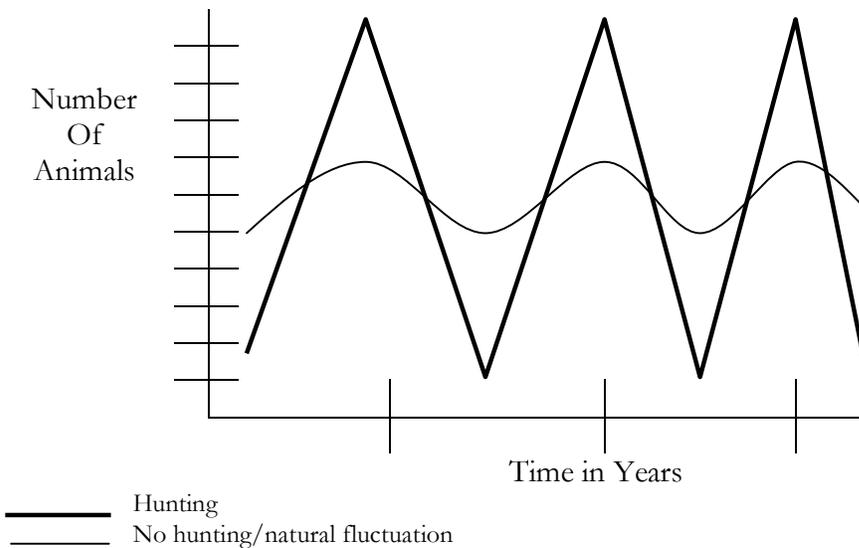
Understanding this basic wildlife population dynamic is essential to understanding the specious nature of pro-hunting arguments. Over the years I have learned that people who favor hunting generally make the same arguments, all of which are without merit. Those arguments, and my responses, are put forth below and I hope that you find them useful.

1. Hunting Reduces The Number Of Animals.

False. Hunters have known for decades that when they hunt/kill a significant number of animals it will artificially inflate the population. That then allows the hunters to tell the public that there is an overpopulation so that more animals must be hunted/killed. As an example, think of deer. Every year hunters take pains to advise the public that many people are injured or killed when their vehicles collide with deer and that the deer must be killed in order to save human lives. That is a shameless misrepresentation since it is hunting/killing which actually keeps the number of deer so high. Without hunting the deer population would not be so high.

Hunting/killing actually causes radical fluctuations. Hunters typically kill a large portion of an animal population so that relatively few animals are left to share the food, water, and other resources. In fact, the number of animals remaining is much lower than with the natural fluctuation. That means that the resources are much more plentiful per individual animals resulting in much greater fertility. That increased fertility means much more reproduction and a subsequent population explosion. Thereafter hunting eliminates a large portion of the population and the cycle begins again. On a graph the radical fluctuations caused by hunting look like this:

Radical Population Fluctuations Caused by Hunting



As this demonstrates, the high point of the natural fluctuation is well below the high point of hunting. Thus, without hunting the deer population would be more stable and there would be many fewer deer.

Again, using deer as an example, every year hunters kill a large portion of the population. That leaves relatively fewer animals to compete for food, water, etc. which means each animal gets significantly more. Consequently, the survivors are

well-fed and well-hydrated, leading to increased fertility, many more births, and a population explosion the following year. The following year the hunters argue that there is a deer overpopulation and that for public safety. they must again kill a large portion of the population.

Hunters call this “wildlife management” but I call it propaganda. By killing large numbers of animals hunters purposely keep wildlife populations artificially inflated so that year after year they can convince the public that hunting is necessary. This technique is actually taught in the wildlife management courses as a means of insuring that the public will allow hunting every year and that there will be a lot of animals for hunters to kill, or, as they put it, “harvest.”

For a more in depth discussion on the speciousness of hunting please see the article by Professor David Favre and Gretchen Olsen in the Animal Law Section’s newsletter from Spring 2000 which is on the Animal Law Section website. Their article is entitled “Surplus Population: A Fallacious Basis for Sport Hunting.

2. Hunters Are Just Doing What A Natural Predator Would Do.

False. Hunters actually function the opposite of a natural predator and, consequently, are detrimental to the overall fitness of an animal population. Natural predators benefit prey populations by killing individuals with the weakest genes (i.e. those that are weak or diseased) so that they do not reproduce – that leaves the individuals with the strongest constitutions (i.e. genes) to reproduce. That is what Darwin called “survival of the fittest.” Natural predation therefore enhances the overall strength and health of an animal population by eliminating the weakest animals, and their genes.

Hunting, on the other hand, does just the opposite. As a friend once said, “When was the last time you heard of a hunter shooting a sick or diseased animal?” Rarely happens. Instead, hunters shoot the healthiest animals – those that are the “trophy” specimens. Thus, hunters do not benefit animal populations by eliminating the sick and diseased animals. Instead they eliminate the healthiest animals, and their genes, leaving the sick and diseased animals to reproduce which, in turn, weakens the overall population health.

3. Hunters Love Nature.

False. Hunters often say that they love nature, including the animals they hunt/kill. This is tortured reasoning. Hunting is a kind term for killing. People who love something do not kill it – instead they protect and nurture it. Loving is the antithesis of hunting and if hunters truly loved animals they would not kill them.

4. Hunting Is A Family Tradition.

Hunters frequently justify their killing on the basis that it has always been a family activity. This is the proverbial “because that is how we have always done it” argument. Just because that is what their family has done in the past does not make

it a good or healthy activity. In fact, it is an unhealthy activity because it teaches children that killing is not only acceptable but a sport – that killing another living creature is recreation. It conveys a disrespect for other living creatures – the idea that they exist merely for the pleasure of humans and that humans may kill them at their will. It is a cruel and selfish view of the world. There is no reason that families that have hunted/killed together in the past cannot continue to spend time together – they can still “hunt” but with cameras and binoculars instead of guns. It is every bit as challenging and sporting, and teaches children a healthy respect for life without sacrificing innocent animals.

As others have pointed out, the argument that “This is how we have always done it” has been made throughout the ages to justify some untenable traditions such as slavery and prohibiting women from voting. Fortunately, in both those instances our society matured through compassion and hopefully the same will happen with hunting/killing.

5. Other States Allow Hunting.

This is the old “everyone else is doing it” argument. As our mothers said “just because other people are doing it does not make it right...if everyone else jumped off a cliff would you do it too?”

6. The People Of Michigan Have Voted To Allow The Department Of Natural Resources To “Manage” Our Wildlife.

That is because most people do not realize that the Department of Natural Resources is comprised primarily of hunters so that the hunters are “managing” the wildlife for hunters – not for true nature lovers. This is an extraordinary case of self-dealing. The fox is truly in charge of the hen house.