



STEVE'S WORLD OF HUNTING & FISHING

BY STEVE STAINKAMP

Extremes...and a Return to Common Sense

"There is...one quality which perhaps, strictly speaking, is as much intellectual as moral, but which is often wholly lacking in men of high intellectual ability, and without which real character cannot exist—namely, the fundamental gift of commonsense." Teddy Roosevelt, the Outlook, November 8, 1913

I'm all for saving the spotted owl and Austin's golden-cheeked warbler. I love whales, salamanders and snail darters, shoot, all God's creatures. But where do we draw the line between wildlife and human life, when there is a conflict between the two? Is there a middle ground?

Don't we deserve a right to make a living, raise a family, do with our land as we please? Can we protect the critters—and humans, too? For starters how about a return to common sense?

"The deer have overrun my place," the Kansan complained. "Before," he continued, "we could use depredation tags—or landowner tags—to cull some of the deer that have been devouring our corn and maize and eating up profits. But no more! The wildlife folks have done away with the tags, and there's an overpopulation of deer on my ranch and surrounding ranches."

Even worse, my friend went on to say, "When we were able to destroy nuisance animals, and we tried to put the meat to good use—like feeding the hungry—we were told we could not. The venison didn't have the USDA stamp." So what happened to destroyed "surplus" deer? They wound up being dumped in ditches. What a waste of our precious resources.

A number of states have "feed the hungry" programs for hunters that provide much-needed meat for families down on their luck. The State of Texas has a program I've used, and many of my friends as well, that allowed us to leave deer we shot with meat processors all across the state. It's handy, it's

quick, and deer venison is put to good use. It is handled and processed properly, distributed to local families in need. Might states like Kansas adopt such a program? Should the Kansas rancher have been allowed to cull nuisance animals—and feed the hungry?

One need not look far to find glaring examples of a pronounced lack of common sense in America. In Austin, for example, deer have become virtually domesticated and threaten to overrun and overwhelm that city's residents. I know. I had them all over my deck at night, clomping around noisily, eating up my veggies and flowers. And sadly, every day I'd see them on the road dead, hit by motorists or worse, crippled. Austin residents love to have deer in their neighborhoods, but they're conflicted about what to do about overpopulated deer herds.

Some of us bow hunters suggested that local officials use responsible, ethical hunters to cull deer and feed the hungry. You'd have thought we suggested they burn Bambi at the stake. The outcry from citizens could have been heard all the way to Wichita! Kill Bambi? Perish the thought!

Austin's solution for thinning deer is birth control. Hey, why not? The plan was as follows: introduce birth control pills to the water supply so Bambi and friends could practice safe sex. I'd still be laughing if the idea weren't so ridiculous.

Here in Bandera I've heard landowners complain that local law prevents them from hunting on their own place if said property is smaller than a prescribed number of acres.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition, defines common sense as, "the unreflective opinions of ordinary people" or "sound and prudent but often unsophisticated judgment." Well, there you have it. Guess those of us demanding a return to common sense must lack sophistication. In a nutshell, we are merely "ordinary people." I admit it; guilty as charged!