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Author(s): Andrea L. Smalley
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“Our Lady Sportsmen”: Gender Class, and Conservation in Sport Hunting Magazines, 1873-1920

by Andrea L. Smalley, Northern Illinois University

In 1968 Outdoor Life ran a retrospective piece that examined the turn-of-the-century origins of this popular sportsmen’s magazine. In the article, editor William Rae noted, with some dismay, that two out of the first three stories in the December 1905 issue featured women hunters, including the tale of a “tireless Diana” who left her corset at home in order to take to the fields. “One wonders,” Rae commented dryly, “whether men really were men in those days, as we have been led to believe.” Clearly, Rae found the spectacle of sport hunting women unusual, and he assumed that their presence in the pages of a hunting periodical called into question the masculinity of earlier sportsmen. The connection that Rae and Outdoor Life readers made in 1968 between hunting and masculinity remains a commonplace. As feminist scholar Mary Zeiss Stange argues, hunting “might be, in the popular mind, the most male-identified cultural pursuit.”

This “men-only image” of hunting has influenced historians as well, leading them to interpret the rising popularity of hunting, fishing, and camping at the turn of the century as evidence of an emergent primitive masculinity. Nationally circulated magazines devoted to these outdoor activities such as Outdoor Life, Field and Stream, and especially Forest and Stream made their debuts in this period, and many historians have used these sources to show that upper- and middle-class white men were reformulating their gender identities, in part, through their involvement in recreational hunting. Other historians have probed the same sources to prove that these men culturally transformed hunting through a gendered definition of “sportsmanship,” while they legally reformed hunting through conservation. These magazines, historians suggest, provided a forum for the “hunting fraternity” to articulate both their version of masculinity and to build a political group identity as “sportsmen.”


Yet even a casual survey of early sportsmen’s magazines reveals that they were never exclusively male spaces. From the start, *Forest and Stream* embraced women as part of its potential audience, contending that women’s “countenance and sympathy” were crucial to the magazine’s success. Toward that end, editors introduced a regular “Ladies Department” in 1877 as proof of the journal’s commitment to being “a ladies’ paper” as well as “a gentleman’s paper.” *Field and Stream* followed suit in the 1890s, creating “The Modern Diana” column for women. Nearly every issue of these influential hunting journals—as *Outdoor Life*’s William Rae noted decades later—included women as the subjects of articles, advertisements, photographs, and cartoons. The magazines also invited women’s “contributions upon all topics,” and women responded by submitting articles, editing columns, and writing letters to the editor. Female editors not only conducted special women’s columns, but also wrote regular general interest features, including Cornelia “Fly-Rod” Crosby’s “Maine Department” in *Field and Stream* and Ruth Alexander Pepple’s trapshooting column in *Outdoor Life*. Women’s conspicuous presence in these magazines—and sportsmen’s apparent advocacy of their participation—complicates the more familiar masculine image of sport hunting and begs explanation. What were women doing in sportsmen’s magazines?

Answering this simple question exposes the interrelationships between turn-of-the-century notions of gender and the political/legal construction of conservation. Outdoor journals in this period not only popularized field sports but also promoted wildlife conservation campaigns that demanded the cultural and legal reform of hunting. By including women in the pages of their periodicals, sportsmen-writers and editors defined recreational hunting in a way that disassociated it from subsistence hunting, market hunting, and unproductive indolence. The magazines did not portray the sport


Women's images routinely appeared in advertisements for hunting and fishing equipment. As the gender-neutral language of the ad copy shows, advertisers saw nothing incongruous in linking women with outdoor sports. From Forest and Stream, January 30, 1909. Courtesy of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

as an exclusively masculine enterprise, but instead connected certain of women's "essential" qualities to "correct" forms of hunting in contrast to "common" or even "immoral" methods of taking game. Periodicals like Forest and Stream associated "our lady sportsmen" with an updated and upgraded image of hunting, thus linking the gender- and class-based politics of leisure to environmental policy and use.4

Many historians have examined leisure, investigating everything from cabarets and movie theaters to parks and parades. A number of those accounts have identified the turn of the twentieth century as an era of cultural transformation when leisure became an arena in which men and women articulated and contested particular formulations of gender identity and class consciousness. Historians have, however, disagreed about the specifics of this cultural change and the direction of cultural transmission. "Traditional" accounts pointed to the urban upper and middle classes as the originators of new social norms, arguing that change "trickled down" to the masses. More recent studies have argued that working-class amusements

represented an “alternative culture” that working men and women jealously guarded as a sphere of “distinctive and autonomous activity” outside the workplace. Historians have also disagreed about the transformative power of leisure to effect social, political, or economic change, alternatively arguing that recreation could be either a challenge to the status quo or an accommodation to it.5

While saloons and amusement parks have elicited spirited historical debate, hunting has provoked far less disagreement. Historians who have addressed the topic usually agree that recreational hunting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was dominated by upper- and middle-class white men who advanced a “code of sportsmanship” that combined manly restraint and self-mastery with a primitive masculinity that emphasized virile strength and wilderness survival skills. Theodore Roosevelt often makes an appearance in these studies (usually dressed in leather fringe) as the archetypical turn-of-the-century hunter: an elite, white, urban easterner beset with gender, class, and racial anxieties. Beyond the realm of culture, historians also generally concur that the rising popularity of sport hunting in the period had direct political, social, and environmental consequences. Studies by Steven Hahn and Karl Jacoby, for example, reveal how white, upper-class sportsmen wielded their social authority and political power to prescribe and limit the conditions under which people could use environmental resources. In a final area of agreement, historians insist that women hardly mattered in the hunting field. While scholars concede that women might occasionally hunt, their participation is interpreted as either insignificant or, at most, vaguely threatening to the manliness of the sport. In this historiographical context, women’s presence in sportsmen’s magazines appears as a minor anomaly in an overwhelmingly masculine pastime.6


Certainly men predominated in the sport, and women's presence in sportsmen's magazines did not necessarily translate into gender equality in the hunting field, or anywhere else for that matter. But the fact that women appeared so frequently in the magazines that created, disseminated, and popularized sport hunting's image represents more than just a curious deviation in an otherwise masculine story. The ways in which outdoor periodicals positioned women in relation to recreational hunting reveals the connections between turn-of-the-century gender ideals, class-based definitions of leisure, and the politics of progressive environmental policy. Hunting reformers wielded a gendered language in their magazines that included contemporary assumptions about women's nature as a way to promote their political agenda and to legitimate their conception of "correct" hunting. The mixed-gender image of hunting constructed by sportsmen's journals also complicates explanations of the social origins and historical significance of heterosocial leisure. These magazines encouraged women to share men's outdoor pursuits as a way of upholding, rather than undermining, Victorian notions of respectable, family-centered recreation. Finally, sportsmen's willingness to include women in their picture of outdoor recreation suggests that the relationship between masculinity and recreational hunting was not as obvious or as exclusive as historians have imagined. Elite sportsmen were less concerned with protecting a "men-only" definition of hunting and were instead more interested in establishing sport hunting's methods as the only legitimate ways of taking game.

**Game Butchers, Pot Hunters, and Sportsmen: Turn-of-the-Century Hunting Reform**

Hunting differs from other popular recreations in that its origins as a human activity are prehistoric, and over the broad sweep of time it has taken a variety of forms. Even in the late nineteenth century some Americans still relied on wild fish and game for a significant part of their diets, while others hunted for profit, killing game and selling it commercially. These different forms of hunting co-existed and overlapped with recreational hunting.

making it difficult to distinguish between the kinds of hunting practiced solely as sport and taking game for subsistence or for the market. But, before the Civil War, few people concerned themselves with making that distinction since wildlife populations seemed inexhaustible. By the 1870s, however, concerns about rapid industrialization and the commercial destruction of wildlife prompted recreational hunters to insist that the time had come for hunting reform. Elite sportsmen took aim at subsistence and market hunters, labeling them “game butchers,” “fish pirates,” and “pot-hunters” in contrast to the “gentleman” who practiced a British-style sportsmanship. It was no coincidence that nationally circulated periodicals devoted to recreational hunting and fishing appeared at the same time. *American Sportsman* began publication in 1871, and *Forest and Stream* appeared soon after. By the time *Field and Stream* and *Outdoor Life* debuted in the 1890s, sportsmen’s magazines had already begun the work of creating and popularizing an image of reformed hunting associated with recreation and respectability.\(^7\)

But sportsmen were not content with merely extolling their form of hunting in the pages of a magazine. Redefining legitimate hunting as only a sport required both rhetorical and political strategies. One way elite hunters sought to advance and protect their conception of the sport was to champion game law reform in their journals. *Forest and Stream*’s well-born founder and editor, Charles Hallock, and his successor, George Bird Grinnell, used the pages of the periodical to press for stricter regulation of hunting, including closed seasons, bag limits, licensing for hunters, and the protection of certain non-game species. These magazines set out to do more than just raise public interest in the goals of conservation, they also proposed wildlife legislation, circulated petitions, and organized sportsmen’s clubs that lobbied for wildlife and habitat protection. Historians have noted the significant influence of sportsmen in these early years of conservation and agree that sportsmen represented “the first organized group to press for wildlife preservation.” Hunting journals represented an effective vehicle for politicizing sport hunters and raising awareness of environmental problems. *Forest and Stream*’s influence in the conservation movement extended beyond its immediate audience to the general public through reprinted articles in newspapers such as the *New York Times*.\(^8\)

Sportsmen’s conservation campaigns, however, were colored by class interest. Legal limitations on hunting and fishing advocated by *Forest and Stream* represented an assertion of economic power designed to reserve cer-

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tain environmental resources for the recreation of upper- and middle-class urbanites while denying the same resources to those who hunted for profit or subsistence. Early outdoor journals reflected this class-based prescription for the “proper” relationship between people and nature. These magazines celebrated the gentleman hunter—and the racial, ethnic, and class positions which sport hunters generally occupied. As Forest and Stream maintained in 1888, training in the hunting field was necessary “to secure the survival of the fittest intellectually and morally” over the incursions of “clay [sic] and Tartar and Latin races,” as well as to prepare for “sectional wars or class wars at home.” The magazine also attacked sport hunting critics, accusing them of “setting class against class.” It was clear, Forest and Stream’s editor complained, “everything done or promulgated by the upper or authoritative classes is keenly scrutinized by the inferior.”

As outdoor journals identified sport hunters as part of the “upper and authoritative classes,” they also distanced their audiences from the excesses of lower-class “game butchers” and “pot hunters.” Elites routinely linked subsistence hunting to African Americans and the rural poor and claimed that such forms of hunting and fishing only “demoralized man, and in many cases led to crime.” Hallock’s address to the second annual National Sportsmen’s Convention in 1875 drew a clear line between sportsmen and those Hallock termed “unclean creatures.” Hallock urged his fellow sportsmen to do “missionary work...among the unlettered. The great mass of those who shoot—the small farmers, bushrangers, frontiersmen, (to say nothing of the negroes of the South, who all use guns),” he continued, “have not the instincts of sportsmen.” As one contributor to Forest and Stream noted with dismay, “any lazy negro” who was “probably in debt to the man that fed him the year before on his promise to work” could “gather together a pot metal gun and one or two starved curs” and “range the woods and shoot down whatever he sees.” Only licensing fees and game laws,


sportsmen believed, could prevent the taking of game for any other but recreational purposes.\textsuperscript{10}

Despite the fact that outdoor writers used a language tinged with class—identifying sport hunters as those “gentlemen of means fond of outdoor sport with gun and rod”—hunting and fishing magazines frequently claimed that “something besides wealth and position” made for true sportsmen. Contributors bristled at accusations that the wildlife legislation advocated by Forest and Stream served only the elite. Editor Grinnell contended that “laws prohibiting the destruction of game...are not for the advantage of any narrow clique.” “Mohigan” agreed, arguing in 1902 that “what is free to all and for the benefit of all cannot be properly termed ‘class’ interest. It is idle to suppose for a moment that the preservation of game and fish acts detrimentally to the poorer classes.” In fact, sportsmen claimed, in working for game law reform and wildlife conservation, they were assuring democratic access to pleasures of hunting and fishing. But outdoor journals made clear that they were protecting only recreational forms of hunting. In an 1881 editorial, Grinnell denied that the magazine “favored measures which would make the enjoyment of legitimate sport [emphasis added] by the poor man more difficult.” In 1912, Forest and Stream further explained the proper relation between work and recreation. “The wealthy man and the hard working citizen seek the outdoors for rest, and are praised for their foresight,” the magazine declared. But “society, being a straight-laced mistress, decrees that the poor man must first provide for his own and his family’s wants before his shooting and fishing excursions shall receive her endorsement.” It was “society,” then, and not elite sportsmen, who decided that legitimate hunting belonged in the realm of leisure.\textsuperscript{11}

Redefining hunting as belonging exclusively to the category of leisure was a major part of the political project undertaken by outdoor journals to reform hunting. Forest and Stream made the point clearly in its first issue, declaring that the journal would consider and encourage only activity that was “of value as a health-giving agent or a recreative amusement.” Hunting and fishing, according to these magazines, counterbalanced the “over-civi-


Forest and Stream's cover photo from December 1912 shows how race, class, and gender figured into the magazine's definition of respectable recreational hunting. Courtesy of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

lization" that threatened to degrade the mental and physical conditions of urbanites. “Luxuriant living, congregating...in confined spaces, as must be in all city life,” and the “non-necessity of actual daily labor by the possessors of acquired or hereditary capital” required that the well-to-do engage in some sort of physical activity to offset the psychic strain of purely intellectual exercise, Forest and Stream maintained in 1888. The effect of field sports on the “commercial classes” was similarly beneficial. Recreations with rod and gun functioned to “keep our race sound in mind and body.”12

Reforming hunting's image, however, required more than just identifying it as leisure. Certainly the “small farmers, bushrangers,” and “negroes of the south” that sportsmen railed against found recreation in their shooting and fishing excursions. Sport hunting periodicals, therefore, had to identify their methods of taking game as respectable and restrained in contrast to the practices of lower-class “pot-hunters” and “game butchers.” Again, editor Hallock emphasized the point, writing in Forest and Stream's initial issue that the periodical would only consider those outdoor activities “in vogue among

respectable people.” Sportsmen did not consider working-class amusements such as dog-fighting, cat-worrying, and pugilism to be acceptable sports. Hallock outlined these boundaries of respectable recreation, writing: “Nothing that demoralizes or brutalizes, nothing that is regarded as ‘sport’ by that low order of beings who, in their instincts are but a grade higher than the creatures they train to amuse them, will find place or favor in these columns.” Outdoor journals reinforced this image of hunting as respectable recreation by grouping blood sports with other leisure activities of a genteel character such as bicycling, photography, and nature study. Forest and Stream offered readers “Sporting News from Abroad,” as well as departments devoted to drama, kennel, archery, book reviews, and yachting. Leisurably pursuits covered in sportsmen’s journals also included “athletic sports and those out-door games in which ladies can participate.”

In fact, the participation of “ladies” proved to be critical to hunting reform. The general, non-hunting public often found it difficult to distinguish between sport hunting and other forms of taking game. On the surface, these activities looked remarkably similar. Self-proclaimed “sportsmen” might kill enormous quantities of wildlife, just like market hunters. “Sportsmen” might consume the products of their hunting and fishing forays, just like subsistence hunters. So in order to identify sportsmen’s methods as “proper,” hunting and fishing magazines used gendered language and images, attributing to sportsmen the qualities of “manliness,” but also using turn-of-the-century assumptions about women’s natures to mark sport hunting as obviously different from subsistence and market hunting. When outdoor journals advanced a heterosocial image of hunting, they communicated to their audience the virtues that made sport hunting worthy of legal protection. While many historians maintain that men only reluctantly allowed women to join the sport hunting fraternity, the evidence from sportsmen's periodicals suggests that men did not perceive the sport as an exclusively masculine pastime. Instead, they created an image of hunting that reflected and embraced women’s gendered identities. Male writers and editors not only affirmed female hunting competence but also asserted that women’s participation would reform hunting, making it a modern, respectable recreation. Consequently, women’s presence in the hunting field did not “challenge middle-class patriarchy” as much as it upheld middle-class respectability.

“Good Sportswomen” and “Modern Dianas”: Images of Women in Sportsmen’s Magazines

An 1894 *Forest and Stream* commentary titled “Woman Out of Doors,” made the connection between gender and modern, respectable recreation explicit. The article began by noting that “it is not so many years ago since in the minds of the majority of the better class of the community that there was something disgraceful about the recreation of outdoor sports. Then the man who went shooting or fishing was thought to be shiftless, worthless, and very likely given to drink.” A woman “seen abroad with gun or fishing rod would have had small chance of escaping arrest as a lunatic. Her reputation would have been gone.” But times had changed, the journal argued, and “gradually field sports for men came to take their proper place as legitimate and wholesome recreations.” Not coincidentally this change initiated “woman’s interest in field sports,” and *Forest and Stream* insisted that “now it is no unusual thing to see a woman fishing a stream, following the dogs, or sailing a yacht.” Outdoor magazines stressed the difference between this modern, reformed picture of hunting as a respectable avocation and an earlier view of hunting as a lower-class occupation. These changes in hunting’s image meant, *Forest and Stream* claimed, that now there was “no good reason why there should not be as many and as good sportswomen as there are sportsmen.”

Despite the advantages of a mixed-gender image of hunting for sportsmen’s political purposes, *Forest and Stream* conceded that some still debated the social consequences of encouraging women’s participation in outdoor sports. Editor Hallock reported overhearing “an animated discussion upon the merits of deer shooting as a pastime for the fair sex” in 1880. One man supported the idea of sport hunting women, arguing that he would enjoy female companionship on his outdoor excursions. The other “contended that shooting game was unladylike and not in accord with his ideal of womanly character.” Hallock politely bowed out of the debate, writing “the **FOREST AND STREAM** having been appealed to maintained a discreet silence.”

Hallock’s diplomatic response notwithstanding, *Forest and Stream* rarely “maintained a discreet silence” about the propriety of female sport hunters. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, male writers routinely argued that hunting was an acceptable activity for women. As proof, contributors cited precedents drawn from Europe. Sport hunting journals reported that “though not yet introduced into this country, ‘gunning’ is becoming quite a fashionable sport with the ladies of the French nobility.” *Forest and Stream* editors noted that in Great Britain “many of the

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Male-authored articles often included the experiences of female hunters, implicitly acknowledging that sport-hunting women experienced the same thrills and frustrations as did sportsmen. From "A Sojourn on Buck Bayou" by "Tripod." *Forest and Stream*, January 9, 1909. Courtesy of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

highest ladies in the land" had taken up positions “on the moor, gun in hand, along with enthusiastic shooters of the sterner sex.” Women in the United States, like their male counterparts, could rest assured that in pursuing field sports and practicing British-inspired sportsmanship they were emulating the behavior of the aristocratic classes in Europe. Outdoor journals also suggested that women, more often than men, sought out respectable recreations. “It is a little strange,” observed *Forest and Stream* in 1911, “that so many women should be taking up sport, rifle shooting and games at a time when the great mass of men go to look on at contests in which they themselves play no part and of which betting is one of the most objectionable features.” While women could not “hunt the forests and rivers as men hunt them, through thickets and over rapids unattended,” sportsmen’s magazines maintained that so long as “proper observance of the rules of decorum and comfort” were followed, women could enter the hunting field.17

Having established that sport hunting was an acceptable recreation for women, outdoor journals proceeded to demonstrate the ways in which women's presence elevated hunting into the realm of respectable leisure. In the past "a man who went gunnin' or fishin' lost caste among respectable people just about in the same way that one did who got drunk," opined Hallock in 1885. Even sportsmen could be accused of turning a camp hunt into "a grand drunk." If men shared the hunting field with women, though, the result would be a more refined environment. "Women's presence," argued Forest and Stream, "has almost entirely obliterated the use of bad language and hard swearing." Sportsmen, too, benefited from the improved conditions created by heterosocial hunting. As contributor C.L. Bradley told men, "A camp that is not fit for your wife and children is not fit for you."18

This heterosocial picture of hunting envisioned by male writers in outdoor journals, however, did not involve a promiscuous mingling of the sexes. Rather, it conformed to a Victorian formulation of leisure as familial and domestic. According to one male author, women's primary role in the hunting camp was to make it "sunny and cheerful, and moreover, [to] keep the man animal on his good behavior." Contributor L.F. Brown encouraged men to share their outdoor diversions with their wives, sisters, and daughters, chiding men for "allowing your mother or aunt who has been wrenched for months by household duties while making you comfortable to assume that you do not desire her company in the woods." Forest and Stream further argued that women would have "a benign and wholesome influence" upon their husbands "by becoming partners in their pastimes and exercises as well as in their bed and board." If a "man's young love should accompany him to his scenes of pleasure, his out-of-doors pursuits and natural studies," the magazines suggested, her feminine presence would always act as a restraint and inhibit ungentlemanly conduct. Indeed, argued Forest and Stream in 1873, "woman can never be out of her sphere; she must always exert her softening influence."19

Women's "softening influence" not only marked hunting as respectable, it also distanced recreational hunting from the harsher, homosocial worlds of hunting for subsistence or profit. By including women, early hunting and fishing periodicals clearly identified sport hunting as a leisure activity that


Sportsmen's magazine evoked the classical image of the huntress Diana when they enthusiastically endorsed archery for women. From *Forest and Stream*, December 28, 1912. Courtesy of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Photo by E.H. Weston.

ought to be legally protected. In 1909 *Forest and Stream*'s editor claimed that an increasing number of women were “accompanying their husbands or brothers on fishing or shooting excursions.” Grinnell noted approvingly that “up to within a few years it has been unusual for women to indulge in these sports, it has been taken for granted that such sports were unsuited to women, but we believe this to be wholly a mistake.” Male writers classified hunting among a larger category of outdoor recreations in which women could engage. A woman could “ride horseback, shoot, row, climb mountains and fish with the same ease and proficiency that she can preside at a social function or indulge in a literary lucubration.” Such a woman was “not backward in proclaiming her love for recreation and its allied sports.” On the contrary, as *Outdoor Life* argued in 1899, “if there were more young ladies like her, the world would be a wiser and a healthier world.”

In fact, sportsmen's magazines contended, women could excel in the realm of recreational hunting. Grinnell insisted that a woman could perform

in the hunting field “as well as her male companion.” Male writers offered numerous stories that portrayed women as “expert markswomen” and accomplished hunters. One correspondent to Forest and Stream reported in 1873 that a “true Diana” existed “perfectly authenticated. Of course she eschews the golden bow and silver arrow, at least for game, and takes to a breech loader.” The young woman “never missed a bird,” killing forty-three grouse in one day and fifty-one the next. Companies such as Ithaca Gun and Winchester Shotguns often featured women in their advertisements, usually those who had won national shooting competitions which were also covered by the magazines. In 1877 the magazine featured “a Western Diana” who killed a panther with “a shot of which Leatherstocking himself need not be ashamed,” and E.A. Stange told Outdoor Life readers in 1904 about a “Mountain Heroine” who calmly brought down a wildly fighting bear. These stories of western women hunters carefully blended images of rugged frontierswomen with genteel respectability, much in the same way as upper-class sportsmen like Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell combined their recreational hunting with their fantasies of living as frontier “Indian-fighters,” ranchers, and fur traders.21

Although outdoor journals offered stories of hardy frontier women or “Western Dianas” that seemed to recall a female hunting heritage, they more often insisted that women sport hunters represented what was modern about contemporary recreational hunting. Magazines frequently portrayed men’s hunting as a pastime that recaptured a primitive or pioneering male hunting tradition. Quite different was the “modern Diana,” whose hunting, while linked metaphorically to a classical origin, signified nevertheless a new realm of feminine activity. The distinction was important, for the political reforms advanced by sportsmen required a break from the past and a new standard for human-wildlife interactions. Grinnell and managing editor, Charles B. Reynolds, asserted this view in an 1894 Forest and Stream editorial, writing that “as a civilized people we are no longer in any degree dependant for our sustenance upon the resources and methods of primitive man.” In this context, the existence of sportswomen proved that modern hunting had diverged from previous “primitive” forms. Before this turn-of-the-

century redefinition of hunting, “it was unheard of for a woman” to pursue such outdoor sports, Forest and Stream claimed in 1909. The changing times were evident in the hunting field where, in earlier decades, “no woman would have handled a gun, much less a rifle, or would have dared to beard a lion or a tiger in the field, or have dreamed of a day on the moors all to herself or taken a hunting box with a string of hunters for the winter.” Yet in the twentieth century, the magazine boasted, women did all these things. The “modern Diana, with her zest, her joie de vivre and her independence,” declared Forest and Stream in 1911, “has apparently come to stay.” Casting sport hunting women as new-fashioned allowed these magazines to negotiate the tension between the modern and anti-modern impulses inherent in both sport hunting and conservation. Sportsmen could associate certain aspects of modern hunting with femininity while still envisioning men’s hunting as a direct link to some primitive past.22

If women made sport hunting modern, then sport hunting, in turn, could transform women into modern beings. Contributor Arthur Rice approvingly noted that “the young women of to-day are gaining in stature and robust qualities, and while this applies probably chiefly to the class possessing wealth, leisure, and the opportunities for physical development, it is a hopeful sign of still better things to come.” Field sports prepared women for new “liberties outside the parlor.” As Forest and Stream argued in 1903, women’s position in society had been “that of an inferior.” Woman’s “lack of physical strength, to fight for the things she desired,” the magazine opined, obliged her “to take second place.” But in the modern era, things had changed, and “woman’s position in civilization, and above all in America, [was] constantly improving.” Sportsmen took a prescriptive tone when they advised women to “practice [hunting’s] arts for building up a strong constitution.” Male writers argued that women should “share in the outdoor recreations of men,” since “civilization’s best promises and hopes for the future are vitally interwoven with the dignity of labor by clear-headed, clean-minded women.”23

Outdoor magazines also emphasized the Victorian feminine virtue of nature appreciation and connected that quality to the romantic traditions from which their formulation of sportsmanship was derived. The hunting reform movement advocated a scientific and aesthetic understanding of nature that distinguished the sportsman from the “common” hunter. Male


writers, however, portrayed women as being "peculiarly qualified to enjoy the lively experience and charming scenery which are the usual accompaniments and accessories of hunting and fishing." Indeed, confessed editor Grinnell, "most men are wholly blind to many things which a woman sees clearly; she possesses certain intuitions which are hers alone, and which give her a ready and clear comprehension of many things that the average man can approach only by slow and clumsy methods—if, indeed, he can approach them at all." While a man might live, camp, or hunt in the wilderness, contended L.F. Brown in Outdoor Life, "by instinct of intuitive truth, woman beholds nature best. Men may love to festoon words and write of gold-dusted air, ruby-tinted dusks...the rhapsody extended AD NAUSEUM. But the woman is not content with mere word-painting. She sees nature, but her faith and intuition make her see 'Him who is invisible,'—her God." 24

While sportsmen may have asserted that part of their formulation of "correct" hunting included an aesthetic appreciation for nature, many men felt that such sentimental attitudes about wildlife were at odds with their masculine identities. In fact, outdoor journals derided sport hunting critics for their "morbid over-sensitiveness and misplaced pity." Game, according to Forest and Stream, was merely "a good thing to eat, a part of the earth's produce for the use of man." Theodore Roosevelt agreed, taking several popular nature writers to task for their anthropomorphic animals stories in the well-publicized "nature fakers" controversy in 1907. By including women in their magazines, however, sportsmen could show how reformed hunting, rather than being barbaric and inhumane, was instead imbued with women's romantic, nature-loving sensibilities. Sportsmen's periodicals could contain sentimental or even anthropomorphic depictions of wildlife, so long as they were attributed to women. Women might see God's face in nature, but the male hunter saw "nature in the manner God meant he should see it—namely, done to turn and with some wild grape jelly to go with it." 25

"Not much of a woodswoman": Women's Voices in Sportsmen's Magazines

Women, however, did not appear in turn-of-the-century outdoor periodicals as mere images in men's hunting stories. Most sportsmen's journals discovered, as Outdoor Life's trapshooting editor, Ruth Alexander Pepple noted, "that the surest way to interest women in outdoor sports and pursuits is to


let another woman who has ‘been there’ do the talking.” Women regularly participated in the sport hunting dialogue, often filling the gendered roles sport hunting men had created for them. Contributing articles that displayed their “natural” predisposition for aesthetic appreciation and sensitivity, women sometimes depicted hunting in sentimental and ambivalent terms that clashed with male depictions of the sport. As one woman confessed in Forest and Stream’s ladies’ column, “I dread to kill an insect, and have been ridiculed for rescuing common flies from death.” Nevertheless, this correspondent listened “with seeming interest and delight” to her husband’s “tales of bloodshed, wounded birds, etc.” Nellie Bennett told Outdoor Life readers that she had sworn off hunting after she had killed her first deer. Looking at the dead buck, she found she “wasn’t a bit elated.” Another woman recalled that the sight of a wounded moose had made her so sorry that she “could hardly keep back the tears.” Forest and Stream contributor Margaret Ridley argued that “it seemed cruel to slay God’s creatures” and concluded that “in reality man had no right to invade the domain of the wild and disturb its citizens with his destructive engines.”

Women questioned the ethics of hunting not only in their narratives but also in sentimentalized fiction and poetry that often used anthropomorphism to personalize the animals they described. A 1906 Outdoor Life story criticized the “would-be hunter” whose greed overcame “every consideration of humanity.” The author, H. C. Wheeler, painted the fictional male grouse hunter in an unflattering light, accusing him of leveling his gun “at the anxious mother who stands unwavering before him, courting death rather than desert those whom she loves.” Hattie Washburn’s story, “The Widow of the Prairie,” described the death of a meadowlark whose sorrowing mate was forced to care for her brood alone. “If her dear mate had been spared,” Washburn wrote, “how diligently would he have foraged until the sodden field yielded him its richest store.” In the end, the meadowlark female was “left mateless, childless, and homeless. And all because a thing created in God’s own image possessed a rifle and a savage pride in his marksmanship.”

Even though such sentiments seem inconsistent with the overall message of sportsmen’s periodicals, women’s empathetic descriptions of “cruel sport” in their stories were not meant as condemnations of recreational

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hunting. Rather, women were neatly filling the niche men had carved out for them in the larger public relations project of hunting reform. Female-authored hunting narratives tinged with remorse conveyed the idea that recreational hunters were humane individuals who acted with restraint, respected wildlife, and understood its intrinsic value. A close reading of women's fiction and poetry reveals that the forms of hunting they criticized were those that sportsmen themselves campaigned against: hunting during nesting seasons and the killing of non-game species, for example. So while men made the scientific and utilitarian arguments for wildlife legislation in their magazines, women's writings provided the moral and emotional justifications for wildlife conservation.28

Women also collaborated in creating an image of hunting as respectable, heterosocial leisure, compatible with Victorian notions of family recreation. Female writers promoted shared outdoor activities as elements of a companionate marriage. An article entitled, "Woman in the Field," asserted that any woman, "no matter how much of a 'town mouse' she may be," would "enjoy standing by her husband's side on a sunny slope where the quail are scattered, and see him make a good shot." Mrs. D. concurred in 1898, writing in Forest and Stream: "I go with my husband everywhere. No bush is too thick, no stream too deep, no forest too dark, no hill too high, that I cannot follow him, and the best part is that he enjoys having me go with him." Even women who had no experience with hunting expressed a desire to share in their husbands' hobbies, even if they were a bit unsure as how to proceed. "I do believe all the wonderful pleasures of the outdoor life are not and never were intended for man alone," wrote one correspondent. "I want to go hunting with my husband. I get along very nicely fishing, but on the hunting end of it I seem to be terribly inefficient. I am like other women; many a time I have been called a 'good fellow' and the 'best chum he ever had' on other sorts of trips, but I want to hunt."29

Like their male counterparts, female contributors to outdoor magazines emphasized the health benefits of these outdoor activities, thus firmly situating hunting in the category of recreation. "Intelligent people," argued Bertha McE. Knipe in 1909, "are glad to be reminded by no uncertain voice of the right way of living, of the wholesome way to work and play, and build up character and the home." Women who had "lost their health" in delete-

29A Woman Who Wants To Hunt," Outdoor Life, July 1915, 64-65; "Woman in the Field," Forest and Stream, July 1890, 126; Mrs. D., "Woman in the Wilds," Forest and Stream, March 24, 1894, 245.
rious urban environments were encouraged by Ruth Alexander Pepple to seek a cure from “the one physician who can answer every time as positive to a permanent cure...old Doctor Outdoors.” After her Montana hunting junket in 1906, Alice M. Simpson encouraged other women to emulate her example. “If women would only realize the benefits physically of such a trip,” Simpson maintained, “I am sure many would arrange to take it.” Hunting trips with their husbands also provided upper- and middle-class women with opportunities for leisurely vacations, even if they did not hunt themselves. As Simpson argued, “A woman need not go on every hunt and can find many things to entertain her when the men are away from camp.” Sallie assured other sportsmen’s wives that although she often accompanied her husband on shooting trips, she “did not shoulder a gun and march with him over the fields and through the woods,” but instead enjoyed her time back at camp “with those of my own sex.” Even those “sportsmen’s wives” who stayed at home recognized the difference between hunting as healthy, respectable leisure and other, baser recreations. “There is a vast difference,” wrote one correspondent, “between a sportsman and a ‘sporting-man’.”

While many of women’s contributions to these magazines reinforced sportsmen’s heterosocial formulation of recreational hunting, other female-authored articles and columns reflected nineteenth-century formulations of gender that situated women in the household, far from the hunting field. In early installments of Forest and Stream’s “Women’s Department,” female editors advised women to limit their contributions to the column to issues that fell within their sphere. Those subjects could reasonably be included in a “gentleman’s paper” because, as column explained in 1877, “we have never forgotten [the hunter’s] home and home interests. In bestowing a certain share of our attention upon these matters we have inevitably touched upon much which comes under the ken of ladies.” Some readers, through letters to the editor or the specific women’s columns, expressed hesitation in entering what seemed to be “a publication so essentially belonging to the ‘lords of creation’.” A request from Forest and Stream for ladies’ contributions prompted “Emily Jane” to ask: “What can we say that will do for the pages of a paper that seems almost entirely devoted to sports pertaining to stream, field, and woodland? Generally speaking we are not ‘much’ as huntresses, and no great adepts at the art piscatorial.” Another woman confessed that “gunning is beyond the abilities of either my brain or body.” Though men asserted that “good sportswomen” were as common as “good sportsmen,”

women expressed doubts that gender was insignificant.\textsuperscript{31}

By the early twentieth century, women's writings in sportsmen's magazines had moved beyond the boundaries of special women's columns, and female-authored hunting narratives became more common. But unlike male writers who depicted women as proficient hunters, women more frequently described themselves as inexpert and measured their inadequacies against a male standard of outdoor aptitude. In \textit{Forest and Stream}'s story of "A Woman's First Moose Hunt," Mrs. A. W. C. failed to fire at the first moose she saw and allowed him to escape unscathed. "A man would never have missed such an opportunity," she wrote. In a 1909 article, Margaret Ridley derided her hunting abilities, commenting, "I was not much of a woodswoman, it is true." A man, she wrote, "would be better qualified than I could possibly be!" Even the "Outdoor Life Girl," Nellie Bennett, conceded that "what I didn't know [about hunting] would make a very long story."\textsuperscript{32}

Women's hunting narratives in the first decade of the twentieth century also depicted the hunting field itself as an inhospitable environment for women. Following a rough trail on her first moose hunt, Mrs. A. W. C. was "paralyzed with fear." Yet there was "not one bit of danger," she discovered later, "and [the men] all knew it." Even the inhabitants of those wilderness landscapes could threaten women, according to Julie Caroline O'Hara's \textit{Outdoor Life} story from 1907. When O'Hara slipped away from her camp, she found herself face-to-face with "a huge, genuine, live Indian!" Mocking her own "womanly fears," O'Hara reported that she cried out in terror, "Take my life, but do not scalp me! It would be so frightfully unbecoming." According to these turn-of-the-century women, hunting belonged to "the masculine realm of pastimes." If a woman wished to "invade" this domain, argued Anne O'Hagan in 1902, "she must adopt the masculine virtues. She must learn to regard discomforts with gayety, to reserve all her tears until she is home again, and in the seclusion of her own room, to divorce her 'moods'—a woman of moods is a scourge and an abomination in a camp."\textsuperscript{33}

Most women saw hunting as part of the masculine realm, even as sportsmen denied that this recreation belonged exclusively to men. But the eagerness with which men courted their cooperation convinced many female


\textsuperscript{33}A. W. C., "A Woman's Moose Hunt," \textit{Forest and Stream}, 482-83; Julie Caroline O'Hara, "My Camping Adventure," \textit{Outdoor Life}, June 1907, 559; Anne O'Hagan, "Camping for
Trapshooting reportage in sportsmen's magazines approached near gender equality at the turn of the century with female competitors featured almost as frequently as men. In fact, Outdoor Life's regular trapshooting column was written by a woman. From Forest and Stream, August 3, 1912. Courtesy of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

contributors that women's position was changing, at least in the world of sport hunting. In 1879, when Forest and Stream attempted to limit the women's column to topics of a domestic nature, readers responded with derision. "Rebecca" translated the injunction that "the Woman's Department is to be practical" to mean "never jump the garden fence. Stay within the inclosure." On the contrary, she suggested that "when we are in the FOREST AND STREAM we will be out of doors too." Editor Grinnell, in turn, gracefully conceded women's rights to define their own column, confessing that "when it comes to the Woman's Column he resigns everything." By the early twentieth century, some female readers still wondered if their interest in sport hunting and sportsmen's magazines was considered socially acceptable. Jay Way, a "Sportsman's Daughter," noted in Women," Forest and Stream, August 16, 1902, 125. For other examples see Laura A. Scott, "Hunting Jervis Inlet, B.C.," Outdoor Life, February 1907, 155; Dorothy Doolittle, "A Girl's Version of a Turkey Hunt," Outdoor Life, November 1905, 918; Delma Noel, "A Woman After Grizzlies," Outdoor Life, October 1907, 347; M. S. W., "A Woman on a Game Preserve: A Superintendent's Wife Who Tried but Failed to Become Reconciled to a Life in the Forest," Forest and Stream, October 2, 1909, 528-29.
1918 that when “a middle-aged and very domesticated woman” stopped at a newsstand, she was not expected to buy a “Gentleman’s Magazine,” especially when “‘Good Housekeeping,’ ‘The Ladies’ Home Journal,’ etc. are staring her solemnly in the face.” Yet, “with a shy, apologetic glance toward the above-mentioned treasures,” Way always “reach[ed] for a copy of Forest and Stream.”

“Is the Editor of FOREST AND STREAM a Woman’s Rights Man?”

Some women reached even further, interpreting sportsmen’s invitation to participate in the reform of hunting as a sign that other political and social reforms might be in the offending. Early on, men’s favorable depictions of sport hunting women seemed to some as a step toward equality. The “proper sphere of woman in the world” was one of the issues the first women’s column in Forest and Stream identified as a matter for discussion. “It behooves us women,” opined a Michigan sportswoman in 1880, “to improve every opportunity that is presented for us to come to the front and show that we are competent to write, speak or vote, just as the case demands. We as a class are not thought to be quite so inferior to the opposite sex as we were in days gone by, yet there is still existing a feeling of superiority over us.” She went on to wonder if “the editor of FOREST AND STREAM is a woman’s rights man. I do not think he would have been so kind as to give us a column in his paper if he had expected it to be filled with lines utterly devoid of sense.”

By the turn of the century a few female contributors to sportsmen’s magazines were taking an even stronger tone, arguing that women no longer needed to be “slave[s] of conventionality.” In two Outdoor Life articles in 1900, “Marjorie” likened women’s obsequious behavior to that of a “spaniel beaten for chicken-killing” who “fawns at the feet of its chastiser and licks the hand that agonizes it.” The writer complained that there was still “much that is spaniel-like in every good woman.” Outdoor recreation proved to “Marjorie” that a woman “unaided by anyone of the all-sufficient egotistical sex” could “hunt, fish, chop wood and most efficiently ‘rustle’ for herself if she has to.” The “bread and meat earned literally by the sweat of her brow,” she continued, could be “wondrously sweet and satisfying.” Women’s ability to hunt and camp demonstrated that there were “but few things man done which a good healthy woman cannot do—and generally do better than

34““To the Ladies, Greeting!” Forest and Stream, December 11, 1879, 890; “Women’s Column,” Forest and Stream, December 25, 1879, 938; Jay Way, “From a Sportsman’s Daughter,” Forest and Stream, March 1918, 190.
he with similar practice." In the end, "Marjorie" declared that women no longer needed to be "obedient" to the "capricious and illogical dictates" of gender expectations. If women could competently perform in this seemingly male domain, then the gender conventions that excluded them from other spheres of public life also seemed open to question.36

Marjorie's dissatisfaction with turn-of-the-century gender roles, though, was not shared by all sport hunting women. Some of the women most actively involved in promoting both recreational hunting and conservation denied any interest in political equality with men. Ruth Alexander Peppe soothed male readers of Outdoor Life by assuring them that sport hunting women had not "gone clean over to the suffragettes." Cornelia "Fly-Rod" Crosby was a vocal opponent of women's suffrage throughout her long life, despite her unreserved support for women's recreational hunting and fishing. While she thanked "kind Providence" that it was no longer considered "unladylike for a woman to be a good shot or a skillful angler," she saw no reason to change women's political status. Crosby insisted that she was "a very strong anti-suffrage woman" and that she had "too much faith in the men of the United States to want to vote." In fact, Crosby asserted, most of the women she encountered hunting and fishing in the Maine woods opposed suffrage, except for two women from New York. But while Crosby rejected the vote, she was no political wallflower. "Fly Rod" was an activist in the field of conservation, supporting stricter game codes for the preservation of wildlife and licensing for hunting guides. Crosby's biographers suggest that her anti-suffrage stance was crucial to her work in the "masculine spheres" of outdoor recreation and conservation. By eschewing political equality with men, Crosby did not arouse the same kind of hostility as did political radicals of the time. For "Fly-Rod," conservation was a far more important reform than suffrage.37

Like Crosby, sport hunting men dismissed the premise that mixed-gender leisure necessarily led to mixed-gender politics. In 1879—one year before a "Michigan sportswoman" asked if the editor of Forest and Stream was "a woman's rights man"—the magazine had gone on record as being "opposed to 'woman's rights' in an Anthonian or Walkerian sense," although it supported women's "rights to health and happiness." By the second decade of the twentieth century, male writers and editors became even more deliberate about separating heterosocial leisure from political reform. It was an incipient "sense of rebellion and revolt" that drove some women "to enter the

same sports as men,” the editor argued in 1911. The modern “craze for sport,” Grinnell predicted, would result in “the masculine development of women.” Still, sportswomen were not to be found in “the ranks of suffrage,” the journal insisted, and if activists like “Rose Pastor Stokes had an outdoor hobby,” they would not “waste [their] time” agitating for social and economic reform. In 1912 Forest and Stream made clear that heterosocial leisure and heterosocial politics were antithetical concepts, arguing that “man never yet objected to woman taking part in his outdoor recreation” but “among this class of women, how many are suffragettes? None.”

Though sportsmen had no desire to change the gendered nature of the political sphere, they were nonetheless quite interested in another kind of political reform. The conservation campaigns initiated by sport hunters and their magazines in the 1870s came to fruition early in the twentieth century, with passage of the first federal wildlife statute, the Lacey Act, in 1900. Legislative cooperation between the United States and Canada led, in 1918, to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which was designed to strengthen the earlier federal legislation to protect migratory waterfowl. By the 1920s, most states had adopted some sort of game regulations that preserved wildlife and environments for recreational use. Conservation-minded hunters, their organizations, and their journals had succeeded in raising public interest in the protection of wildlife for aesthetics and sport. In the process, sportsmen reformed and redefined hunting, transforming its popular image from a disreputable, lower-class vocation into a respectable, upper-class avocation.

Gender played a role in this cultural and political transformation. By including women in sport hunting, nineteenth-century outdoor journals distinguished this pursuit from the types of hunting conservationists wanted to prohibit. Once sportsmen achieved their political goals, however, women ceased to be critical to sport hunting’s image and by the 1920s, women’s position in these magazines had shifted. The nineteenth-century effort to depict hunting as heterosocial leisure faded as outdoor periodicals increasingly characterized hunting as an essentially male recreation in which women might occasionally join. Gone were the women’s columns and the discussions of superior female hunting abilities. Forest and Stream’s turn-of-the-century “expert markswomen” were replaced in 1930s issues of Field and Stream with “a snappy field of skirted scatter-gun swingers” who were “very, very eye-filling.”

What were women doing in sportsmen's magazines? Paradoxically, they were there to construct the image of what may be "the most male-identified cultural pursuit." While historians have stressed the connections between "blood sports" and masculinity, turn-of-the-century sportsmen wielded gender in a far more complicated and contradictory way. Outdoor periodicals advanced a definition of sport hunting that included both primitive, virile masculinity and modern, respectable femininity. While men represented the long human history of hunting, women symbolized those qualities of recreational hunting that elevated the sport above all other forms of wildlife use. It was on that basis that sportsmen argued for conservation legislation. Using a gendered language of conservation, journals located legitimate hunting within the realm of genteel leisure while characterizing other forms of hunting as low-brow, disreputable, and unsportsmanlike. Only when subsistence and market hunters were legislated from the field in the twentieth century did sportsmen begin to describe their sport in exclusively masculine terms. Yet the perception persists that hunting has always been a jealously guarded, male preserve. Women's presence in outdoor journals, however, confounds the familiar stereotypes and adds a new dimension to conservation historiography. In other words, the "modern Dianas" and "lady sportsmen" prove that sport hunting's history can reveal more than just "whether men really were men in those days."41