

Hunting is more than a matter of taste

Why a person hunts was never of much interest to me until the recent concern about falling hunter recruitment. Believing the desire to hunt begins with small-town demographics and opportunity, I was both intrigued by and skeptical of "The Mindful Carnivore: A Vegetarian's Hunt for Sustenance" by Tovar Cerulli (Pegasus Books, New York). To my surprise, this book not only documents a vegetarian's odyssey into the carnivore's world, it is a 288-page recipe for becoming a competent and conscientious hunter.

Despite a boyhood of fishing and frogging with sportsmen mentors, the author was not a typical hunter-to-be. The book portrays the story of a sensitive lad, fearful of inflicting pain on fellow creatures, who becomes a vegetarian in his late teens. Conscience-stricken over our footprint on the natural world, he associates with like-minded college students before moving to New York City, where he becomes a vegan, the ultimate meat-avoider. Concerns about animal welfare and the sustainability of the natural world continue into adulthood: He marries a vegetarian and grows so obsessed with the sanctity of life, he will not kill a woodchuck that ravaged his garden food supply.

Intelligent as well as sensitive, Cerulli comes to realize logging, tilling and predator control also are everyday necessities for plant-eaters. No matter what he eats, animals will die. Desiring protein, he dabbles in carnivory, gradually accepting the eating of eggs and fowl. He even resumes trout fishing. Hooked by the naturalness of eating wild fish, he begins to toy with becoming part of the food chain – a hunting



carnivore. He recognizes the merits of eating venison, then enrolls in a hunter safety course that emphasizes safety and respect.

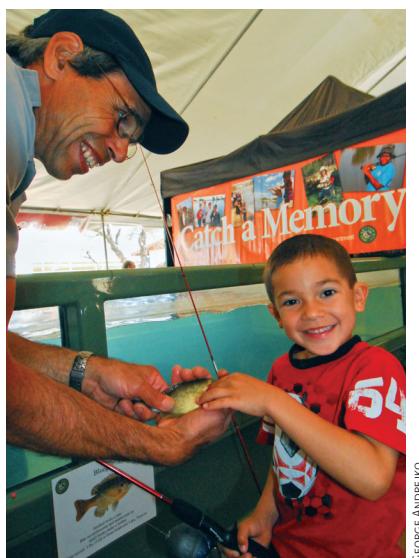
What follows is a three-year apprenticeship. Hunting and the justification for it are examined from historical, philosophical and ethical perspectives, based on the teachings of people ranging from Gandhi and the Dalai Lama to José Ortega y Gasset and Edward Abbey. Hunting methods and behavior are honed by friendly hunters and lonely sessions in the Vermont woods. Cerulli's sincerity cannot be questioned as he unsuccessfully stalks deer with bow and arrow, muzzleloader and scoped rifle. Finally, he becomes not only an ethical hunter, but a competent one. When the time comes to shoot and butcher a buck on his own, it is a prelude to taking a deer a year.

Cerulli's book contains several epiphanies, including a realization that consumption of plants does not reduce the number of animals killed; rather, the production of grains, vegetables and fruits reduces the presence of certain animals far more than hunting does. Realizing that hunting, like gardening, is being part of nature, Cerulli grows to accept his deer hunting as a natural role. Although killing one's food should, and does, cause remorse, it also fosters awareness – which buying cellophane-wrapped chicken cannot. Cerulli eventually decides that in the arena of human emotions, responsibility is more important than guilt.

-David E. Brown

All books reviewed in this column are available at local bookstores, through online booksellers or from the publisher.

Outdoor Expo Draws 33,000 on Weekend, Record 5,000 on Youth Day



The Arizona Game and Fish Department's 2012 Outdoor Expo drew 33,000 people over the March 31-April 1 weekend at the Ben Avery Shooting Facility in Phoenix.

In addition, a record 5,000 schoolchildren, teachers and chaperones attended the Expo Youth Day on Friday, March 30, meaning 38,000 people total attended over the three days.

The three-day total is the second highest in Expo history behind last year's 42,000. Officials attributed the slight drop in attendance to near-record heat on Saturday.

The Outdoor Expo is an annual event conducted by Game and Fish to give the public the chance to learn about wildlife-related and outdoor recreation activities, including wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting, archery, shooting sports, camp-

ing, off-highway-vehicle recreation and boating recreation.

In addition to the many activities, more than 160 exhibitors were on hand, including sportsmen's and conservation organizations, government agencies, and commercial vendors of outdoor products and services.

The Gold Sponsors for the 2012 Outdoor Expo were Cabela's and Airpark Dodge/Ram/Chrysler/JEEP. Silver Sponsors were the Weatherby Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Bronze Sponsors were Remington and Winchester Ammunition. Other sponsors were White Flyer Targets, Diamond Ridge Development and HomCo Ace Hardware Tempe.

Next year's Outdoor Expo will be held March 23–24, 2013, at the Ben Avery Shooting Facility.