

# Confessions Of A Hunt Saboteur

## A Real Sab Story

**Y**ou already share my opposition to sport hunting. So I won't bore you with my own objections. Instead you are sure to find more fun my true adventures as a hunt saboteur.

But wait, you might be an imposter. You might even be a hunter. If so, you'll learn what to expect, and you'll be better prepared to foil my attempts at sabotage. I'll take that risk. I invite greater challenge, and I have nothing to hide.

1985

Rhode Island followed a trend among its neighboring states and enacted its first "hunter harassment" law. No one in the short history of that small state had ever sabotaged hunting. No one. Yet its visionary legislators, acting on behalf of future generations of Baby Crocketts and Daniel Boomers, outlawed it anyway. They also should forbid shooting passenger pigeons and harassing woolly mammoths.

My friends and I were awestruck. Hunt sabotage? Great idea! Thank you, Rhode Island, for inspiring us to action. So one fine morning, on the first Saturday of bowhunting season for deer, we threw all prudence to the wind and ferried to Prudence Island (human population: 100). The island hosts the greatest concentration of deer in New England (deer population: 400). And on the first Saturday of bowhunting, the greatest concentration of hunters.

Being neither as suicidal nor as foolhardy as you may suppose, we traveled under the protection of a reporter and a photographer for the state's only major newspaper. As though we were the only major news. In addition to sabotaging hunting, we intended also to challenge the constitutionality of the new law. (I will leave those deadening details to the lawyers.) In order to challenge any law in court, some criminal first must be arrested for violating it. So we volunteered to throw

away our good names and to enter the dark underworld of crime.

Not so easy. A news media leak about our expedition alerted both the hobby hunters and the game wardens of our motives. Hunters declined to file charges against us, and wardens refused to arrest us. Their lack of cooperation in achieving our second goal only contributed to the further success of the first. In short, we had a field day. Some hunters waited atop tree stands, so sometimes we waited below tree stands. Unintentionally having wakened one hunter asleep in his stand, I still wonder if that qualifies as harassment.

Most hunters silently stalked deer, so mostly we noisily stalked hunters. On two occasions either our noise was not loud enough or the deer were just too tame. The hunters took aim (upon deer, not upon us) and were just about to release the bowstrings. BOOM! The blasts from our fog horns twice sent deer fleeing to safety. Hunters shouted numerous threats. Arrows in bows may break my bones, but names will never harm me. One baffling epithet was, "Get a job!" Let's see now: one college librarian, one school custodian, one wood carpenter, and one housewife and mother. Quite an unsavory band of thugs. But fully employed.

That long and treacherous day concluded when eight hunters and we four unsavory hunt sabbers with photographer in tow (never leave home without one) congregated around an impaled deer. Impatient for the doe to bleed to death, one cutthroat hunter then cut her throat. Shouting erupted, shoving ensued. Hunters and sabbers all lost their heads. Withdrawing from the altercation, I sat beside the dying deer, looked her in the eye, and accompanied her on this side of life as she slowly entered the other side.



1986

Like first love, that first hunt sab stands out in memory more than any other. Still seeking arrest, never being obliged, we stuck to the mainland for the remainder of the season. The next year, we returned to that island several days before the start of the bowhunting season. Before the season? We still took a stand against hunting. During a single day, we located and dismantled twenty tree stands. When I visualize a baffled bowhunter barking up the wrong tree while thinking, "I could have sworn I erected my stand here," even today I still burst out in laughter.

1987

I moved from divine Providence, a small city compared to my megalopolis birthplace, New York City, but a city nonetheless. Seeking the life of a country bumpkin, I moved to eastern Connecticut, where I rented a home in a private wildlife refuge, where I still live to this day. Not quite wilderness, but nature nonetheless. Signs everywhere declare "No Hunting." I was ready to rest on my mountain laurels until one November day when shotguns rang out. The wildlife refuge abuts a river, and a loophole in state regulations permitted duck hunting from the refuge's tidal zone and adjacent waters. Hunters were banned from the refuge itself. Shotgun-shell litter deeper inland, however, testified otherwise.

Hunters seldom blasted away on weekday mornings, but dependably arrived Saturdays before dawn. When they illegally hid on the mainland, I attempted phoning the game warden whose line forever remained busy. And when I summoned local police, they advised me to phone the game warden. I soon learned not to bother playing telephone tag. Legal or not, duck hunters holed up in blinds make very easy targets. So drawing upon my experience as a deer hunt sabber, I adapted to my environment and became a duck hunt sabber. Legal or not.

**1988-89**

By the start of next season, I perfected an effective technique. On Friday night, I pack for next morning. Boom box radio with tapes of obnoxious noise. (Not wolf howls, those ducks don't know from wolves.) Spare batteries in shirt pockets. (Those in the radio freeze up on frigid December dawns.) Fog horn. (Large size, which simulates a shotgun blast.) Dog whistle. (To perplex retrievers.) Camera. (Even without film, it makes hunters behave.) Smoke bomb. (For hasty retreat from hunters who don't behave.) Walking stick. (The look of authority.) Canteen. (No telling how long will be out there.) Binoculars and bird guide. (A safe disguise.) State waterfowl hunting regulations. (If hunters are not legal, then I am.) Proper ID. (In case of my arrest.) And pen and paper. (To jot down the hunters' boat number, for the rescue team that finds my body.)

Duck hunters usually are ready for legal blast off one-half hour before sunrise. That's when I first appear, posing as a bird watcher. As I walk past them, I say good morning while noting their boat number. After inscribing that number and revising my will, I reappear. If they are ashore, I stand adjacent to their blind. If they are afloat, I form a triangle with them, positioning boom box on one diagonal and myself on the other. One if by land, two if by sea. If boom box noise does not scare away approaching ducks, the fog horn blast does. Upon my first blast, most hunters depart for points unknown. But first

they must unload weapons, retrieve decoys, and dismantle blinds. Thus they've already wasted most of the morning, the prime hunting time. They could seek a game warden, but they're more interested in killing ducks than killing time. Occasionally, truly sporting hunters accept the additional challenge I offer them and they refuse to retreat. As the day lingers on, we engage in meaningful dialog. Really. Perhaps they respect my balls. Probably it's my smile. I always remain calm and joking, and hold no personal grudges against them for their mistreatment of ducks. Likewise, I hope they hold no personal grudges against me.

**1990**

During the summer, while hiking in the woods with friends, I joined others diving off a footbridge into a river. But I did not land right. I broke my back and injured my spinal cord. It happens to the best of supermen. A slight case of total paralysis below the waist. After eighteen weeks in the hospital, I returned home in time for the duck hunting season, in time to hear the shotgun blasts. Seated in my wheelchair, I swore that next year I'd get out there with the duck hunters again, even if on crutches.

**1991**

And I did. Crutches and all. Of course I took the added precaution of venturing with friends. But I was so slow that we never caught up with hunters despite attempts on three mornings. Plus the bag limit was only three ducks that year. We'd hear their blasts, but they'd reach their bag limit and depart by the time we'd arrive.

**1992**

I had arrived. Although I had traded my walking stick for a pair of crutches, I crutched nearly full speed. And no longer did I need the security of companions. So I was back to my old tricks. Except for one big surprise. I was arrested for hunter harassment. The local newspapers ran a story about that event. They could have headlined it, "Lone Cripple with Crutches Arrested for Harassing Four Hunters with Guns," but they titled it something more benign. The newspaper accounts

generated much support from local residents. Long dismayed about duck hunting in the so-called wildlife refuge, people wrote letters, made phone calls, signed petitions, attended meetings. Our local state representative got involved. And bureaucrats from the state wildlife agency even made a field trip to the site.

**1993**

Before the next season, the waterways along the wildlife refuge were banned to duck hunting.

**1994-95**

Deprived of my favorite hobby, I admit to minor regrets about the ban. I still make forays upriver, but not so often. It's just not the same as defending my own turf.

But wait. For the second time in its history, a nearby state park will be opened to deer hunting in January 1996. Most local residents are outraged, especially because the park will be open only to hunters for an entire week. I now have a hunting license, free to paraplegics. I plan on gaining admittance as a hunter. What then? Stay tuned. Loony-tuned. □

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