

Hunting Turns Boys Into Men of Heart, Scientist Claims

Speaking on January 31 at Safari Club International's annual conference in Reno, Dr. Randall Eaton, an evolutionary psychologist claims that hunting is the right medicine for turning boys into men of heart. "Men evolved to protect and provide. Around the world for hundreds of thousands of years, boys became men by proving themselves worthy as hunters. To this day among hunting-gathering societies, successful hunting qualifies a man for manhood and marriage," Eaton said.

An award-winning author and TV producer, Eaton said that the primary dimensions of masculinity are warring, sex, hunting and sport, but according to Eaton only hunting connects men profoundly to nature. "The instinct to hunt awakens spontaneously in boys, but the taking of a life opens the heart and tempers that instinct with compassion. If we want to transform boys into men who respect life and are responsible to society and the environment then we need to mentor them in hunting as a rite of passage," he said.

Eaton is convinced that hunting teaches empathy and that it would be a less competitive, more peaceful world if more men hunted. "The hunt is the ideal way to teach universal virtues, including generosity, patience, courage, fortitude and humility," Eaton said.

He pointed to wilderness survival programs in which delinquent boys' lives were successfully transformed by subsistence hunting. He said, "Hunting is good medicine for bad kids because it's good medicine for all kids."

Eaton also encourages vision quest and artistic expression as rites of passage for initiation of adolescent boys to adulthood. He said, "Modern civilization has forgotten the critical importance of properly initiating boys to men. I think that hunting as rite of passage is a major answer to the social and environmental crisis."

According to Eaton, hunting is justifiable in terms of its benefits to environmental conservation. He said, "Look at Ducks Unlimited. Never have so few done so much for the environment. They've permanently conserved over ten million acres of wetlands." But, he said, the social justification for hunting lies in its positive influence on the development of our youth.

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