

letters

To the Editor:

This is with reference to "A Commentary on Visitor Statistics" (*Park Science*, Spring 1991, p. 17).

I did not expect to read an ode to killing under the above title. Surely Mr. Lovaas, as a Regional Chief Scientist, is far from needing the flesh of pristine wildlife to feed himself, no matter how tender the flesh of the creatures he kills.

Did it ever enter his mind that reveling in "being alive," flexing his muscles, etc., might have been equally enjoyed by the "fine bull moose" he killed? Not only does he verbally exult over what he destroys, he vicariously exults over what he might have killed – "a gorgeous, rollicking grizzly bear."

Such sentiments are philosophically out of context for the National Park Service. Such self-congratulatory prose and policies cause the public to question whose hands the fate of our wildlife is in, as they are increasingly doing with the so-called National Wildlife Refuge System.

Sincerely,

Mary Kelly Black

Park Service Employee

Al Lovaas Replies

Hunting is not philosophically out of context for the National Park Service, at least not on millions of acres where it is legally mandated. Ms. Black aims her anti-hunting sentiments at the wrong target; I don't make the rules.

Ms. Black obviously cares deeply for wildlife and I am disturbed she apparently believes I do not. I was trying to convey my respect, admiration, and love for wildlife and its habitat, to which I have devoted a long career, and I regret I was unable to express those feelings adequately.

Taking wildlife for food only deepens my respect. During every meal of moose flesh my thoughts return to the wild spirit of the animal I killed and of the wilderness which nurtured it. The previous year I contemplated similarly the deer I had killed in the old growth forests of the Tongass near Sitka. To tell the truth, however, I was never really sure just which of the six was represented on the platter at any particular meal. (The season bag limit was reduced to five in 1990 and four in 1991 because the population decreased after two tough winters and overbrowsed range).

As for the National Wildlife Refuge System, it was initiated in 1903 by President Theodore Roosevelt, a mighty hunter.