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First deer at 70

World authority on management authors book on his battles

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Editor's note: To accompany Deer Camp '09, we've asked athletes, prominent figures and outdoorsmen to relate their first deer kill.

On Nov. 4, 2009, Eugene Lapointe bagged his first deer — an eight-point whitetail buck taken on a farm outside of Ottawa, Quebec. What makes this deer special is that this year he turned 70.

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"A good friend, who is a Canadian government official, owns a farm about 45 minutes drive from Ottawa," Lapointe said. "Last year he convinced me to come deer hunting at his farm.

"In 2008, I saw many deer, but no legal bucks. This year, on my last day of hunting, about five minutes before sunset an eight-pointer walked out of the woods and I got him with one shot. I had to wait until it was dark before tracking him, and it took awhile following the blood trail with a flashlight.

"I gutted him out and waited four hours for my friend, who came out with his tractor to bring the buck out of the woods. My wife says that the smile on my face was ample proof of how I felt about bagging my first buck."

The buck may have been Lapointe's first deer, but it was hardly his first wild game he bagged this year. On Oct. 21, he killed a large cow moose, the sixth moose that he has taken in the last decade. While not his first season hunting, this year has been the "best hunting season ever," Lapointe said.

Lapointe began hunting 63 years ago. When he was nine months old, his family moved to a Canadian national park where his father was stationed as a game warden and fire lookout in an extremely remote area. They were the only people in residence for miles.



Eugene Lapointe Eugene's friend, the owner of the farm on which he hunts.

At the age of four, dad got a promotion and they moved to the park's entrance. By age seven, Eugene was helping put food on the table, snaring hares and grouse and catching trout.

"When I was growing up in Quebec, there were no deer, so we hunted small game, bears and trapped beaver and other fur-bearing animals," he said. "I got my first lessons in sustainability and conservation there.

"If a small river did not produce enough fish, we knew to leave it alone and fish the lake until more fish came back into the stream. When the grouse and hares went down in one area, I put snares out in another, so the populations could rebound."

The Lapointe family was certainly resourceful. Not only did an annual bear provide meat, but, "We would take the fat from bears father killed and render it down to make soap," Lapointe said.

They made their own medicines as well. "Beaver kidneys were used as a curative for almost any illness."

His mother was a former schoolteacher. There was no school for him, so his mother taught the family about one hour per day 365 days of the year.

He did not attend formal school until age 12, but he still considers nature and his parents as having taught him more about ecology and conservation than any class he ever has taken. His early experiences have also given him special understanding of how indigenous peoples depend on nature to survive; something which has enabled him to rise to international recognition in conservation of natural resources.

Ultimately, Eugene went to college and then law school. For 14 years he served in the Canadian government in international programs, which included CITIES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, which governs the multi-billion dollar a year international export and import trade of wildlife, and moved to Switzerland. During that time Eugene managed to get out every year to hunt small game, waterfowl and moose.

In 1982, he was appointed Secretary-General of CITIES, which meant relocating to Switzerland.

This position, however, made him a target, when his perspectives on sustainable use differed with those from some environmental activists.

Lapointe left his post at CITES dramatically on November 2, 1990, when he was dismissed by UNEP Executive Director Mostapha Tolba. The campaign to remove him was led by a handful of U.S. officials and 28 major NGO's, who, according to Lapointe, "claimed I had become the worst criminal on the planet."

His crime was advocating a sustainable use philosophy that allowed for scientifically directed hunting of whales, elephants, and other animals, especially in situations that respect local cultural values.



Eugene Lapointe Prior to the buck, Lapointe killed a large cow moose, the sixth moose that he has taken in the last decade.

Thirty months later, a Panel of Judges of the United Nations described Lapointe's dismissal as "capricious and arbitrary," resulting from " ... the worst case of character assassination in the history of the United Nations."

In a unanimous decision, the Judges vindicated Lapointe, awarded him financial compensation, ordered his reinstatement, and forced the UN Secretary General to write a letter stating "Mr. Lapointe had fulfilled his duties and responsibilities in every way and in a highly satisfactory manner."

This whole story is laid out by Lapointe in his recent book, [Embracing The World's Resources: A Global Conservation Vision](#) (Sherbrooke, Quebec: Editions du Scribe, 2003, \$27 incl. shipping) that should be required reading for every student studying conservation and ecology, everyone concerned about the future of hunting and every decision-maker trying to fashion sustainable resource-use policy.

In 167 passionate pages, Lapointe lays out a pragmatic philosophy of sustainable use and presents considerable data on the state of many wild animals that seldom appears in the media. His defense clearly shows why poverty is the biggest force working against conservation. Then he describes the attack on him and the organizations that did it.

Lapointe takes after the extremist NGO's whose real "green quest" is the pursuit of the greenback dollar. He explains why his pragmatic approach to conservation runs into conflict with green fundamentalists — his approach does not generate the crises necessary for their fund-raising. It soon becomes clear that this is why Lapointe got the hatchet.

According to Lapointe, eco/animal rights NGO's, such the Species Survival Network, a coalition of over 60 NGO's who claim to be "committed to the promotion, enhancement, and strict enforcement of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)," may be more of a threat to whales and other wildlife than a supportive resource, as they perpetuate so many falsehoods.

After being exonerated, Lapointe felt that he could do more good for wildlife outside of CITIES, so today, he is the President of [IWMC World Conservation Trust](#), a global coalition of experts and wildlife managers promoting sustainable resource use guided by science that has offices around the world.

His combination of formal and informal training gives him unique credentials to draw upon for such work that makes him one of the most influential people in the world on [international wildlife trade](#)

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He spends considerable time each year traveling around the globe, seeking to support and establish policies of sustainable use of resources that permit hunting and fishing. So much time is spent traveling that he confesses that he has had some years when he did not return to Quebec to renew his roots in the hunt.

In Switzerland, where IWMS is based, he has enjoyed tagging along on chamois and boar hunts, but he was never there long enough to complete the lengthy classes necessary to get a hunting license.

About 10 years ago he decided that had to change, and since then he has made his annual fall pilgrimage to Quebec. He considers it a time of "spiritual renewal," as well as getting some organic meat for the table.

From his perspective as a global advocate of hunting, considering the scars from his battles at CITIES, one might wonder what he thinks is the future of hunting.

"Actually, I am hopeful," he said. "I still have confidence in our ability to move forward. I see a recovery of realism as people come to see the sensationalism that has been so dominating in international wildlife conservation policy. In some ways the animal rights types seem to be self-destructive.

"Also, I think the realization that wild game meat is the real organic food is catching hold. The harsh economic times may be helping us, by sending more people into the woods to get that healthy food for their table."

The battles that he currently is focusing on are CITIES "uncontrolled, unwarranted and ineffective listings" that he feels impede wise sustainable use: getting people to see that harvesting elephants in Africa is important to wildlife conservation and local economic health;

insuring that polar bears taken legally by hunters should not be banned from importation into the U.S.; and establishing sound management of the bluefin tuna trade before it is ruined.

Lapointe has already had a good year of big game hunting, but there is one more challenge, he said. In between trips abroad, he is planning on taking a wild boar in Florida.