

## A Hunter's Library



*A few selected books from the author's hunting library.*

When the frost is on the pumpkin there are only two things we should do. Either came up and go to the field or curl up and read a good book. When I started to build my hunting books collection I sought the advice of those more experienced than myself, both hunters and hunting writers. Now with a few more hunting seasons behind me some have asked my opinion on books with which to start or add to their libraries, so let us begin to fill those bookshelves.

The foundation of any hunting book collection must begin with "African Game Trails" by Theodore Roosevelt. Our twenty-sixth and my favorite president was, in his time, a world-renowned hunter, conservationist, soldier, and scholar. This book is Teddy's account of the epic 1909 East African safari undertaken by him and son Kermit. The Smithsonian Institute commissioned the Roosevelt party to collect specimens for the National Museum. At its conclusion the expedition

had collected a vast variety of plant life and over 1,100 animal specimens including 512 big game animals between Teddy and Kermit. This is the largest safari in history and Roosevelt's account of the hunting, people and places is both educational and thrilling.

Roosevelt put it in the proper perspective of the time in his last paragraph in the book. He wrote, "Kermit and I kept about a dozen trophies for ourselves; otherwise we shot nothing that was not used either as a museum specimen or for meat –

usually for both purposes. We were in hunting grounds practically as good as any that have ever existed; but we did not kill a tenth, nor a hundredth part of what we might have killed had we been willing. The mere size of the bag indicates little as to a man's prowess as a hunter, and almost nothing as to the interest or value of his achievement." My copy is a 1988 reprint from St. Martin's Press.

"Use Enough Gun" is author Robert Ruark's record of a lifetime of

hunting and the story of a man's education as a hunter from the teachings of his grandfather to the experience gained from hunting the world including twenty or so safaris. Much of that education came from his close association with the legendary Kenyan professional hunter, Harry Selby. Ruark was a widely syndicated newspaper columnist, a popular author, and a world class hell raiser.

Ruark writes, "If you have learned nothing else from hunting, you have learned patience and stubbornness and concentration on what you really want at the expense of what is there to shoot. You have learned that man can as easily be debased as ennobled by a sport, and that optimism is the most vital ingredient of any sort of chase, from girls to greater kudu. Boy does not always get girl, but there is satisfaction in the college try."

His works fall under my category of "Ripping Yarns." While you are stocking up add Ruark's "The Old Man and the Boy," "Something of Value" and "Horn of the Hunter." Most are available from Safari Press.

One of the twentieth century's great authors is indisputably Ernest Hemingway and his 1954 Nobel Prize for literature backs that up. Hemingway had a driving passion for hunting and fishing and the former is covered in depth in "Hemingway on Hunting." This is a collection of Hemingway tales of hunts in North America, Europe and Africa. In addition to his love of the hunt, he used his experiences as a tool to explore the fundamental issues of human nature. His talent for putting those experiences into perfect prose has given us some of the best hunting related stories ever.

Here are selections from books and essays; pieces written for Esquire, Vogue, True, Look and others; excerpts from letters; and some short stories including the classic tale of an African safari, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." "Hemingway on Hunting" is from The Lyons Press. While you're at it, add a copy of "Green Hills of Africa"

"The Best of Jack O'Connor" contains thirty-four selections of some of the finest work by the man who many consider the grand master of outdoor writers. O'Connor was a prolific ram hunter in the world's high places, a veteran of many safaris, and the holder of many big game

trophy records.

In his time he was the preeminent North American big-game hunter and gunwriter. He spent three decades as Arms and Ammunition Editor of "Outdoor Life" where many of the stories in this collection originated and was the world's most avid supporter of the .270 Winchester cartridge.

This collection was compiled by O'Connor and published in 1977 by The Amwell Press one year before his death. In the introduction O'Connor wrote, "If these stories have any lasting value, it is as a picture of what hunting was like in the golden days of the first six decades of the twentieth century. These days will never come again!" Also, pick up a copy of "Jack O'Connor: The Legendary Life of America's Greatest Gunwriter" by Robert Anderson.

The last three volumes of our "must haves" offer several lifetimes of exciting adventures and gripping writing from the "Big Three" of outdoors magazines. "The Best of Outdoor Life: One Hundred Years of Classic Stories" lets us hear from legends of the past such as Theodore Roosevelt, Aldo Leopold, Zane Grey, Ernest Hemingway and Jack O'Connor along with contemporary greats like Jim Carmichel and Jim Zumbo. The publisher is Cowles Creative Publishing.

"The Best of Sports Afield: The Greatest Outdoor Writing of the 20th Century" from Atlantic Monthly Press brings us the words of Col. Townsend Whelen, Nash Buckingham, Erle Stanley Gardner, Gene Hill, Anthony Acerrano, Grits Gresham, Elmer Keith, Thomas McIntyre, and much more.

"The Best of Field and Stream: 100 Years of Great Writing" published by Lyons and Burford adds Bob Brister, Robert Ruark, Archibald Rutledge, Russell Annabel, Warren Page and Ted Trueblood to the classic mix. Several of the authors mentioned, plus many others wrote for all three magazines at some time in their careers.

Now, let the internet assist you in hunting down these fabulous books. Excellent places to start are safaripress.com, ebay.com, half.com and amazon.com in addition to searching the name on Google. Happy hunting and enjoy the adventures. 