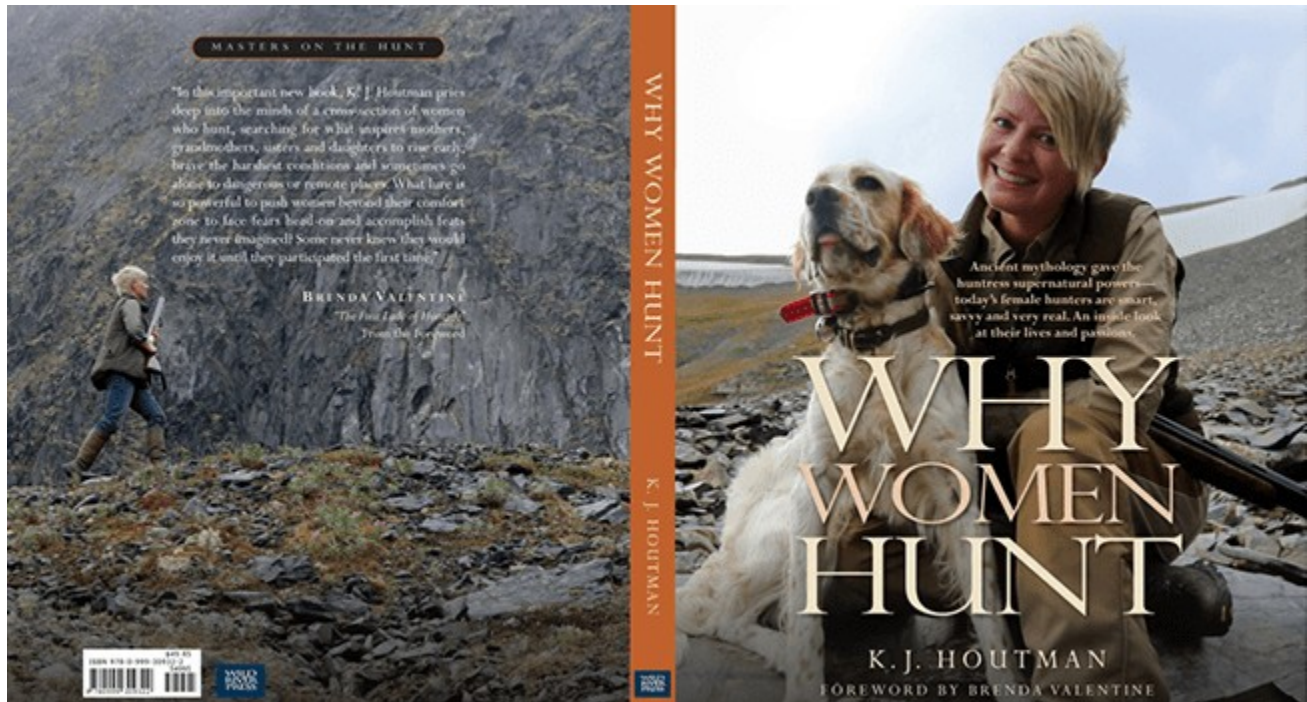


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## Discovering 'Why Women Hunt'- and Much More

By Bill Miller

For a long time, far too long, hunting has been “a man’s world.” However, a glimpse at social media today will reveal more and more women trying—and liking—hunting.



Successful hunting and fishing writer Kristine J. Houtman’s new book, “Why Women Hunt,” tells the stories of a wide range of women who have come to hunting and learned to treasure it. We recently interviewed K.J. to see what she learned from the extensive interviews it took to tell this story.

BM: Your previous hunting and fishing books were very different from this one. What made you choose “Why Women Hunt” as your next creative outlet?

KJH: The publisher wanted a book about women hunting, but neither of us wanted celebrity profiles. My hope was to write something where every woman could find herself in the stories; getting deep was integral for me. I asked each woman to tell me about a hunt that changed her, one that provided growth, empowerment and adventure. The goal was never a how-to manual, but rather exciting and endearing stories of lives changed.

BM: How did you select the women the book is about?

KJH: Many were women I’d met in my time in the outdoor industry and had a glimpse into their lives. Some were new and recommended by Brenda Valentine, who wrote the foreword for the book. The goal was a diverse group in age, hunting experience, types of hunting and geography.

BM: What was your favorite part of researching and writing “Why Women Hunt?”

KJH: Hearing their stories, digging deep at times into the memories and unlocking the emotion and the details. I was inspired by their bravery: some of them fearless and others simply meeting fear head-on. I enjoyed seeing the world through their eyes and discovering the joys and the pains that are a part of life—and hunting.

It didn't start out to be a coffee table book—but it is one! Once the publisher saw the quality of the stories, he wanted to invest more and make it a beautiful book. Getting the photography to elevate it was a challenge, but so worth it.

BM: Based on what you learned from these women, what is the greatest barrier for hunting today?

KJH: For women who weren't raised in a family that hunted, the biggest need is for mentorship, and almost all mentors were men in these ladies' lives. Life partners, coworkers, acquaintances through hunting initiatives like Camp Compass Academy or Becoming an Outdoor Woman or just a good circle of friends or family can open the doors. Honestly, many times they didn't know they would love it until they hunted for the first time. Invitation, encouragement and assistance with skill-building are key.

BM: Did you discover any commonalities, anything universally experienced or believed, among women who hunt?

KJH: Nearly all shared threads of disappointment regarding anti-hunter sentiment and social-media challenges. Most felt we could do a lot better job in how we talk about hunting where non-hunters and even anti-hunters are listening. More thumbs-up on encouragement and thumbs-down on keyboard warriors and judgment.

BM: What impact do you hope the book will have?

KJH: I hope it will open doors to hunting. I hope women will see themselves in the pages and become inspired for who they will be years from now.

BM: You weren't a lifelong hunter. What was your journey to hunting?

KJH: Well, my story is in the book, too. I didn't begin until I was in my 50s. I mean, no excuses ladies, if I can do this, you can, too. It's hard work for sure, but incredibly rewarding. I'm a better person for it because hunting challenges me to get outside my comfort zone and tackle things that are hard.

BM: With what you've experienced in your own hunting journey and what you now know after researching "Why Women Hunt," what is the most important advice you can offer?

KJH: Don't wait-go. Find someone you trust who wants you to succeed and ask all the questions. How do I use this scope on my rifle? What's it like to walk into the woods at oh-dark-thirty? How do I climb a tree stand? How do I field dress an animal I harvest? Sure, there's a YouTube video for absolutely everything, not to mention all the resources at NSSF's LetsGoHunting.org, but a mentor—and this is why NSSF's +ONE mentoring initiative is so important—is really what is needed. And it may take several people for the job.

BM: What would you say to the faction of women who are biased against hunting, either passively or pro-actively?

KJH: I've been hopeful that some anti-hunters will read "Why Women Hunt" and see a different side as they meet the women and hear their stories. Maybe it's wishful thinking, but what a great gift it would be for an anti-hunting family member this holiday season. I think if more women knew how a growing number of women are empowered and gain confidence through hunting, they'd see it in a different light.

BM: Do you think there's a best way for women to experience hunting and determine if it's for them?

KJH: First, it's probably not sitting in a treestand for eight straight hours in the cold the first time out. Consider turkey hunting or wingshooting instead. Second, don't set her up for failure and don't laugh when she can't hack it.

Women don't have to hunt every species on the continent to be authentic, either. Let a woman you're introducing pick what she wants to pursue and how much she wants to do herself. She may be all over that big-game hunt—or maybe not. She might want to learn every detail of gutting it and caring for the meat, or she may prefer to watch the first time out.

BM: What's the right or best role for men to play in creating hunting opportunities and a welcoming atmosphere for women in hunting?

KJH: Most mentors are men. Inviting, setting new hunters up for success, advising, skill-building and helping with gear and opportunity. As one of the gals, an inner-city Chicago resident, said, "You don't just decide to go hunting one day like you'd decide to go to the grocery store." Simplify and be patient, because no one can learn it all in one dose.

BM: For whom will this book make an appreciated gift and an interesting read?

KJH: I think any man who would like a daughter, partner or coworker to try hunting should consider reading this book and then sharing it with them. It will be a springboard for conversation. Of course, any woman who hunts or has questions about getting started in hunting would surely appreciate this volume.

BM: Best question for last: Where can people buy the book?

KJH: It's available exclusively from the publisher Wild River Press at [whywomenhunt.com](http://whywomenhunt.com). Enjoy it. I know how much I enjoyed putting it together.