

'Are they going to eat me alive?': trail runners become prey in newest form of hunting

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. What traditional sports involving animals can you think of?
2. Do you think traditional sports involving animals should be preserved?
3. What do you think about hunting for sport?

2 Key words

a. Match the correct word or phrase to each definition. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

barking
move

bushes
chase

protection
scent

foxes
hunting

trail
legal

1. _____: to change place or position
2. _____: the loud sound a dog makes
3. _____: help that keeps someone or something safe
4. _____: small plants with many branches, bigger than grass but smaller than a tree
5. _____: to run after a person or animal to catch them
6. _____: small wild animals with red or brown fur and a long tail
7. _____: the activity of trying to catch or kill animals
8. _____: a smell that people or animals can follow
9. _____: a path or way that people or animals use
10. _____: allowed by the law

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of some words.

1. The dogs follow the runner's _____ to find them.
2. This activity is _____ under the new law.
3. A(n) _____ is a wild animal with a long tail and red fur.
4. The dog began to _____ loudly when it heard a noise outside.
5. Animal _____ groups help keep animals safe.
6. We stayed away from the main _____ to avoid other people.
7. The dogs _____ the runners across the countryside.
8. When the dogs got closer, we had to _____ quickly.
9. _____ is the activity of trying to catch animals.
10. We ran through a(n) _____ to hide from the dogs.

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- 1 Would you like to be chased by dogs? Most people would say no. But now, more people in England and Wales are choosing to do exactly that. They run across the countryside while bloodhounds follow their smell. This activity may soon be the only legal way to hunt with dogs.
- 2 The government plans to stop trail hunting, where dogs follow an animal scent. Because of this, people are becoming interested in a new activity called "clean-boot hunting." In this activity, dogs do not chase animals. Instead, they chase human volunteers. Both animal protection groups and some former hunters support this idea.
- 3 In clean-boot hunting, bloodhounds and horse riders chase runners instead of foxes. On this day, I am one of the runners. I am joining the New Forest Hounds, feeling nervous but curious.
- 4 I am told this is not a blood sport. Bloodhounds are different from foxhounds. They do not attack or hurt people. Will Day, one of the hunt leaders, says the dogs are friendly and gentle.
- 5 Before the hunt starts, I have to get into a lorry with the dogs so they can smell me. They told me not to shower or use deodorant, so my body smell is stronger. This helps the dogs follow me later.
- 6 Will Day says he now believes this is the future of hunting. He explains, "Society moves on and you have to move with it." He says he was surprised by how fun the activity is.
- 7 They give the runners a head start. We run away from the dogs, leaving the paths and going through bushes and plants. Soon, we hear loud barking behind us. The sound gets closer, and my heart starts to beat faster.
- 8 Bloodhounds are very good at tracking people. People use them around the world to find missing people. On this rough land, they can run much faster than humans. We cannot escape.
- 9 When the dogs get close, we hide and stop moving. Soon, the dogs find us. They push us with wet noses and excited energy. Any fear disappears quickly. They are friendly and do not hurt us.
- 10 After catching us, the dogs lose interest and are ready to go again. During the day, we run many times and travel several miles. The dogs always find us. Being chased like this is scary but also exciting, and much more thrilling than a normal run.

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3 Comprehension check

a. *Identify if the sentences are True or False using information from the article. Correct the false sentences.*

1. Clean-boot hunting is an alternative to hunting animals and animal scents. _____
2. Clean-boot hunting involves hunting humans. _____
3. Clean-boot hunting is not supported by animal protection groups. _____
4. The writer is hunting humans. _____
5. Foxhounds are more dangerous than bloodhounds. _____

4 Key language

a. *Read the sentences below. Find sentences in the article with the same meaning.*

1. It is possible that this activity will soon be the only legal way to hunt with dogs.

2. It is necessary for me to get into a lorry with the dogs before the hunt starts.

3. Bloodhounds have the ability to run much faster than people on this land.

4. It is impossible for us to escape from the dogs.

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b. Complete the sentences with the modal verbs.

have to

may

have to

may

can

1. When it rains a lot, we _____ stay inside.
2. It is possible that you _____ see more people running in the park these days.
3. Dogs _____ hear sounds that people cannot hear.
4. I _____ wake up early tomorrow because I have an exam.
5. It is possible that this road _____ be dangerous at night.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- It is always wrong to kill animals.
- Animals shouldn't be trained to hunt.
- If a tradition is old enough, we have to always try to preserve it.
- Being hunted like the writer of the article sounds like fun.

6 In your own words

a. Imagine you are one of the volunteers who organises the hunting runs. You need to write short instructions for the runners on how they should prepare and what they should do during the run. Use the modal verbs from Activity 4 to help you.

Useful language:

Before the run, you should ...

You can wear any shoes you want, but it is a good idea to ...

During the run, you will ...

You can ... but you shouldn't ...

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- b. When you have finished writing, share your ideas with other students. Did you give similar tips? What are some of the differences?