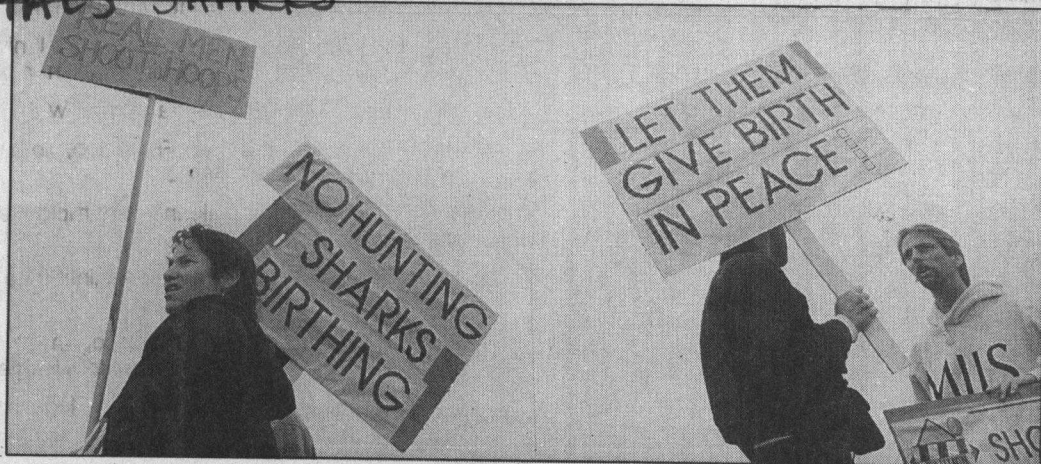


Animal rights activists arrived before dawn at Kirby Park, which overlooks Elkhorn Slough, to display signs protesting the bow-and-arrow shark hunt.



Is it a harvest of a resource or just a slaughter?



Bow-and-arrow hunters look for prey Saturday in the annual shark derby at Elkhorn Slough. Thirty-three hunters competed to see who could kill the biggest shark.

RICHARD HERNANDEZ — MERCURY NEWS

Bow hunters' 'shark derby' draws protests

BY TRACIE CONE
Mercury News Staff Writer

MOSS LANDING — Not two dozen protesters, nor a jeep that "accidentally" ran out of gas on the boat ramp, nor chilly weather could deter bow-and-arrow shark hunters at Elkhorn Slough on Saturday, the peak of mating season.

In fact, members of the California Bow Hunter's Association, who say

they are not strangers to negative publicity, used the attention to pooh-pooh protesters and preach about what they say are the environmental benefits of hunting.

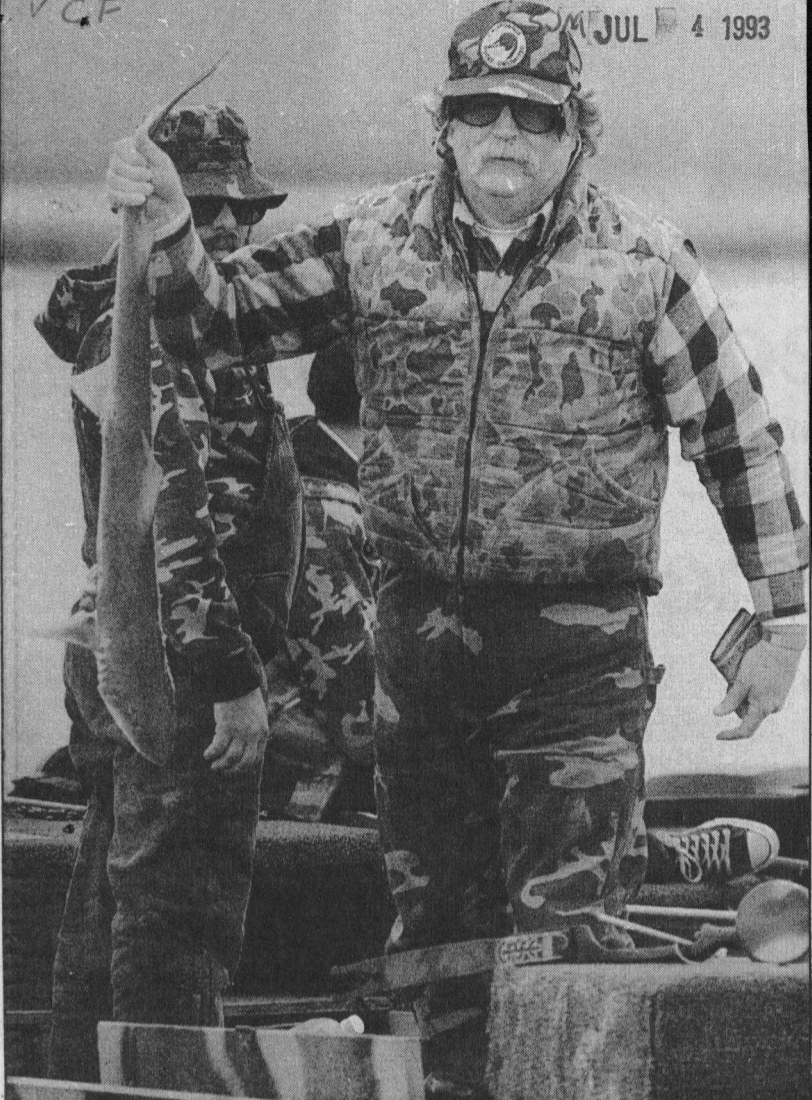
"They believe animals have emotions," said Butch Kughn, a bow hunting contestant from Sacramento. "I don't believe that. I believe that animals are a resource, but they are a renewable resource."

Saturday's low-key protesters, members of the Sierra Club, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the Animal Affairs Council and other environmental groups, arrived at Kirby Park before dawn. As hunters registered and prepared to launch their specially equipped archery boats, protesters lined up along the ramp leading to the wa-

See **SHARKS**, Page 6B

VCF

JUL 4 1993



RICHARD HERNANDEZ — MERCURY NEWS

An unidentified hunter displays his catch, a smoothhound shark that he took during the shark derby at Elkhorn Slough near Moss Landing.

'Shark derby' draws two dozen protesters

■ SHARKS from Page 1B

Some protesters jeered when boats backed into the water, but for the most part feelings were expressed silently by signs that read: "Where's the sport in a maternity ward massacre?" "Stop the Elkhorn Slaying," "Real men don't shoot sharks," and by one that had a picture of a shark pup saying "Bye, Mom."

"Shoot, these folks aren't nothing," said Mike Gramlich, a bow hunter from Vallejo who has been the target of protests since 1986. "You should have seen it the time a bus load of Berkeley college students showed up at one of our events with their purple Mohawks, earrings and pajama pants. We had fun with them."

As the sun rose and boats glided into the slough's calm, cold water, hunters perched themselves on platforms to get unobstructed views into the channels where estuarine sharks hide. Thirty-three hunters, including at least two children, competed to see who could kill the biggest shark.

Estimated take: about 20

The hunters were reluctant to talk about their catch for the day, but Sean Van Sommeran, who monitored the event for the Pelagic Shark Research Foundation of Santa Cruz, said about 20 sharks — mostly female smoothhounds and leopards — were taken.

Environmental groups are upset that the contest is held in the slough during the time many protected species of sharks are there to mate and pup. They also complain that while participants in rod-and-reel tournaments tag and release their catches, speared sharks can't be let go.

Though the California Bow Hunters' "Shark Derby" has been going on every Fourth of July weekend for 30 years, this is the first year that the Monterey Bay area has been designated a marine sanctuary.

"This isn't how we want our

'I come out here and see them flying American flags over their boats as if this were the American way — killing for nothing.'

— Cammi Charlton, protester

wildlife managed," said protester Lee Hulquist.

Pickets vs. hunters

Members of both sides staked out territory early, pickets near the water, hunters 50 yards away in the parking lot. The two sides spent pre-dawn time simply eyeing each other.

"The only problem we had was when that Jeep wouldn't move off the ramp. I had to threaten to give him a citation," said Moss Landing Port Director Larry Steffen, referring to a protester.

Steffen was prepared in the event of trouble. A half-dozen law enforcement officers — deputies from the Monterey County Sheriff's Department and the Fish and Game Department — watched from a distance. But the only sign of animosity was one on the door of the hunters' portable toilet that said protesters were not welcome to use it.

Laughing at each other

Protesters laughed at the restroom sign, and hunters, in turn, laughed at protesters' placards.

"Half of their signs are completely erroneous," said Gramlich. "It says we're out there killing females, but there's a 50-50 chance we're going to bring a male in. I'm waiting for one that says 'Have you hugged your shark today?'"

Protesters responded that any killing is wrong.

"I see kids willing to kill anything, and this horrifies me," said Cammi Charlton, a protester and teacher at Moss Landing Middle School. "I come out here and see them flying American flags over their boats as if this were the American way — killing for nothing. It has to stop."