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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Wow, I'll bet Deb will get people talking here! I moved a chunk about the writing to the end to keep the hunting content together. See if you like what I did with the 1975 college and "locavore." (I haven't heard it as "localvore" in quite a while, though that variant used to be more common locally.)

P.S. I asked Randy about pics. If he can't get any, I took some screenshots of a video on her publisher's website. I'd prefer not to use PR stuff on the cover, but I'm also a realist.

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 'I don't just want to read the landscape. I want to eat it.'

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 In a new memoir, Newfane writer Deborah Lee Luskin
3 tells about how and why she became a deer hunter

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 Mankind is a narrative species, argues Newfane author
6 Deborah Lee Luskin, and hunting has been one of its chief topics
7 for thousands of years. Now she is adding to the conversation.

8 Luskin's new book, a piece of narrative nonfiction called
9 *Reviving Artemis: The Making of a Huntress*, is the story of how
10 she, a New York-born Ph.D., a writer, and an educator, turned
11 herself into a Vermont deer hunter.

12 The book will be published on Nov. 4 by Sibylline Press.
13 The release date nestles close to Vermont's rifle and shotgun deer
14 hunting season, which runs from Nov. 15 to 30.

15 Luskin, 69, a Vermonter for 41 years who long served as
16 Newfane town moderator, started learning to hunt because she
17 was frightened of getting lost in the woods. Her book describes
18 the four-year journey of becoming a hunter, from its inception as
19 an idea to her discovery that she is a naturally good shot to page
20 230, when she finally kills her first buck.

21 "People say, 'Heard you got a deer,' and they want to
22 hear that story," Luskin told *The Commons* (where she was a
23 regular columnist and remains an occasional contributor). "As if
24 the story was just that moment between the time I sat down to
25 drink my water and the moment I shot the deer."

26 But that's not it, she said.

27 "It was four years getting there, and another two weeks
28 before he went into my freezer, and another week before we ate
29 it," Luskin said. "Then there's the afterlife, the story of how it
30 changed me. How I went into the woods that day and felt the tree
31 against my knee and had that sense of, 'I'm part of the forest.'"

32 "The trees are breathing. There's all this rich decay. I just
33 had that moment," she continued. "That's what I was hoping to
34 leave people with, this awe and connection to nature, and that I
35 have a place there."

36 Her new book touches, in a thoughtful, memoir-ish way,
37 on the history of Artemis, the Greek goddess of the hunt and the
38 wilderness. She writes about being a woman, the death of her
39 parents, the loss of a close friend, her long marriage to Dr.

40 Timothy Shafer of Grace Cottage Hospital, on becoming a mother
41 and raising three daughters, on searching for and finding hunting
42 mentors, on learning about guns and rifles, and on learning the
43 forest.

44 The only thing missing is recipes.

45 In a book rich with insight, Luskin frankly acknowledges
46 certain truths. The first is about hunting itself.

47 “When I heard the call to hunt, a voice from the universe
48 vibrated inside me,” she writes. “It was a sensation I couldn’t
49 ignore.”

50 Her second truth is fiercer.

51 “I’m more interested in becoming intimate with the
52 landscape of home than sightseeing in faraway places, and
53 photographing wild game isn’t high-stakes enough to motivate
54 me to learn how the flora, fauna, weather, time of day, time of
55 year, and animal behavior are all interrelated, because I don’t just
56 want to read the landscape. I want to eat it,” she writes.

57 Too many deer

58 As a hiker who has completed the Long Trail, which runs
59 the length of Vermont’s Green Mountains and is the oldest long-
60 distance hiking trail in the U.S., Luskin knows the land. Vermont
61 may have many farms and gardens, she said, but its essence is
62 mostly forest.

63 “I’ve been to the top of enough mountains in Vermont to
64 see that we’re mostly wild,” Luskin said. “The parts of the
65 landscape that we inhabit and that we think of as built up are the
66 very thin margin along the major arteries of roads. Most of
67 Vermont is still covered in trees, or is again covered in trees,
68 because there was a time when it was deforested.”

69 In 1942, Walt Disney produced a feature cartoon
70 featuring the evils of hunting. Called *Bambi*, it is the story of a
71 baby deer who loses his mother because “Man is in the forest.”
72 The film may have soured an entire generation on deer hunting.

73 Luskin, however, has never seen the movie and rejects its
74 premise. Instead, she embraces the newer idea that hunting does
75 a favor for the herd; it controls deer overpopulation.

76 “It is a very new idea that there can be too many deer,”
77 she said.

78 She remembers the pain she felt at the end of winter,
79 when she watched thin and hungry deer stagger out of the forest
80 near her home.

81 The wolves are gone. There are no more predators in
82 Vermont for deer. They reproduce in abundance. Yet the food
83 supply for them is diminishing.

84 “If there are too many deer, there will not be enough
85 food. If the winters are too warm, deer don’t die. There are more
86 deer than the land can support,” Luskin said.

87 So they die naturally.

88 “Coyotes will chase them down, and so will your family
89 dog. We’ve had deer here on our field that died because they got
90 hit by a car. Their legs get damaged, and a deer with a damaged
91 leg is a dead deer.”

92 She also pointed out that deer are “vectors of diseases
93 that can transmit to humans, like Lyme disease and other tick-
94 borne diseases.”

95 **A healthier food choice**

96 Luskin observed that hunting “is also an act of
97 conservation as well as a very low-carbon way of getting red
98 meat on the table.”

99 Eating venison should be considered healthier for both
100 the herd, the forest and the hunter, she said.

101 “It’s certainly healthier than eating beef from a
102 concentrated agricultural feeding lot or a CAFO, a concentrated
103 agricultural feeding operation,” she said.

104 “Commercial beef is raised in these feeding lots, where
105 the animals are in such crowded and poor conditions that they
106 have to be pumped full of antibiotics,” Luskin added. “It’s just

107 awful, and it's also not particularly healthy for the people who
108 consume it."

109 This kind of diet is also bad for the conservation of the
110 planet.

111 "It takes a lot of fuel, mostly carbon-based fuel, to grow
112 the corn that the cows feed, to transport them to run the
113 operation where they are slaughtered and butchered and
114 wrapped and shipped," Luskin said. "That's all a hugely, hugely
115 heavy carbon footprint, as opposed to eating locally and
116 seasonally. And if you want to eat red meat, there's none better
117 than venison."

118 Luskin eaten from local foodscapes since 1975, when
119 she was a college student, two decades before the word
120 "locavore" made its way into English.

121 "My sophomore year, I ended up in the natural foods co-
122 op, where we had to decide whether we were going to eat meat
123 or not," Luskin said. "And we agreed at the first meeting that we
124 would eat meat if we could find a grass-fed calf. This was in
125 northeastern Ohio, where there were still farms and some grass-
126 fed animals."

127 The students were influenced by the 1971 book *Diet for*
128 *a Small Planet* by onetime Brattleboro resident Frances Moore
129 Lappé. "So we had all learned that it takes 16 pounds of grain to
130 produce one pound of meat," Luskin said. (The agriculture
131 industry disputes that statistic, popularized by Lappé's book.)

132 "An enterprising young man in the co-op went out and
133 found the animal. Then we had another vote. Should we
134 slaughter the animal and eat meat, or let him live? And the vote
135 was to let him live, even though that meant he was going to go
136 into the barn for the winter, be raised on corn or on grain, and
137 then be slaughtered. So that was the beginning of my awareness
138 of where our food comes from and how far it travels."

139 Luskin and her family have continued the locavore
140 tradition. They have grown a pig for slaughter and done the
141 slaughtering themselves. They keep a large garden. They have 20

142 plump and happy hens who provide eggs and, occasionally, a
143 soup or a roast.
144 But in Vermont one cannot be a complete locavore.
145 When Luskin bakes bread, she acknowledges, she uses wheat
146 grown elsewhere. Her coffee and chocolate are also shipped in.
147 But adding self-caught venison to the diet takes the locavore idea
148 one step further.
149 "I think we're all healthier for eating local, wholesome
150 food," she said.

151 The intimacy of writing

152 Luskin may now be a hunter, but she is still first and
153 foremost a writer. A columnist, essayist, educator, book reviewer,
154 and lecturer, she is in the middle of writing two more books.

155 She has been a commentator for what then was Vermont
156 Public Radio. Her first book, *Into the Wilderness*, was published
157 in 2010 and won the Independent Publishers Gold Medal for
158 Regional Fiction. It will be republished in 2026.

159 To celebrate her new book, Luskin is working overtime:

- 160 • There will be a signing event at Wild Book Company
161 (47 West St., Newfane) on Sunday, Nov. 2, at 4 p.m.
- 162 • She will be reading at Brooks Memorial Library (224
163 Main St., Brattleboro) on Friday, Nov. 7, at 6:30 p.m.
- 164 • She will be signing books at ByWay Books (399 Canal
165 St., Brattleboro) on Sunday, Dec. 6, from 2 to 4 p.m.

166 She will also be reading and signing books in Burlington
167 and Boston.

168 "Writing is one of the most intimate things we can do
169 with a reader," Luskin said. "Writing and reading. What I write
170 comes out of my brain, my body. It goes on a page. Someone
171 reads it. It goes into their eyes, goes into their brain. It's in their
172 body. I mean, that's that's pretty sexy to me.

173 "And you can change people's minds, or you can at least
174 make them question what they believe or what they think they

175 believe,” she added. “And there’s no better way to do it than to
176 tell a story.”

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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