

Weather

Today: Cloudy, rain 50s.
Tomorrow: Rain, 40s.

East Point Tides:
High — 10:18 a.m., 10:38 p.m.
Low — 4:06 a.m., 4:58 p.m.

Ocean temperature: 43

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The Press



SERVING

SOUTHERN NEW JER

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Staff Photos by Rebeck

Hope and Cavit Buyukmihci use two-way radio while patrolling their preserve against hunters

Hunting Like War to Refuge Patrol

By G. PATRICK PAWLING
Press Staff Writer

UNEXPECTED WILDLIFE REFUGE — It looks like a lull in some guerrilla war.

Border sentries, walkie-talkies in hand, have been patrolling since dawn. The sound of invading forces — shots in the distance — have been heard, but so far there's been no contact.

The silence is uneasy. "You can never tell," says Cavit Buyukmihci, who owns the land being protected. "Right now, it's not too bad. But when they come, they come fast. They come like storm troopers."

Buyukmihci is talking about hunters. Deer hunters. Monday was the first day of the six-day deer hunting season, a time that Cavit Buyukmihci (pronounced Bi-uk-me-chi) dreads.

Nearly 20 years ago, Buyukmihci and his wife, Hope, bought 85 acres of wooded land in an area called Piney Hollow (mostly in Newfield) to give animals a break, a place where they couldn't be hunted.

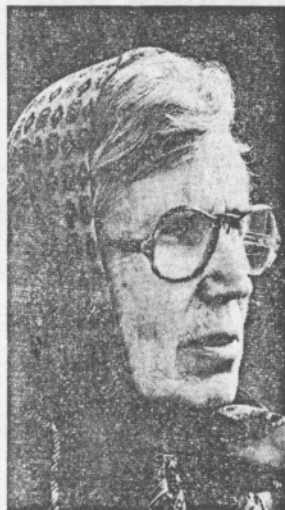
The trouble was, some hunters paid little attention. They trespassed on land despite posted warnings against trespassing, and they shot the animals the couple was trying to protect and study.

So, in a move that's come to be something of a tradition, volunteers help the couple patrol the borders of the wildlife refuge here from dawn to dusk when hunting season rolls around. They wear Day-Glo vests, report to the "home base" on their radios (the Buyukmihcis' house) and wait for the hunters to cross the boundaries.

Sometimes, they hide to catch hunters who have ventured onto the private refuge. If they hear a nearby shot, a patrol is dispatched to investigate. Mechanical goose callers are easy to detect, and they're sure to draw a crowd.

Patrolling isn't always easy work. Cavit Buyukmihci distinctly remembers the time he confronted a hunter who had ventured onto refuge land. When he walked up to talk to the

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HOPE BUYUKMIHCI



CAVIT BUYUKMIHCI

Hunting Season Like War to Animal Refuge Sentries

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hunter, a deer bounded away. The hunter was incensed that he missed a chance at a shot. He shouldered his shotgun and told Buyukmihci he was going to die.

Buyukmihci started reasoning with the young hunter, and it worked. But if he had been killed, there would have been no witnesses. That's the way it is in the woods when the nearest telephone is a half-hour away, and the nearest police car is even farther. The law sometimes belongs to the owner of the gun.

In June of this year, Buyukmihci says, he was ambushed while driving to work along the deserted dirt road that serves as his driveway. He says he was beaten by two men because he didn't want their dogs running on his property. (Dogs can run deer to death,

and they sometimes kill ground-nesting birds.)

Buyukmihci says he and his wife have been threatened more times than they care to remember. They claim their refuge, which has grown to an acclaimed 300-acre preserve, has been set on fire eight times.

One time, Buyukmihci said, someone broke into their secluded house while they were out and shot at a favorite picture hanging on the wall. Their mailbox is full of what appear to be bullet holes, and it's common to find trespassing signs shot apart or torn down. For 20 years, certain hunters have been saying they're going to stay — and the "weird" vegetarian couple who want to protect the animals are going to go.

"If they burn us, we'll live in a tent," says Buyukmihci. "We're not

going anywhere."

A fiesty metallurgical engineer who runs marathons at age 57, Buyukmihci calls hunters "heroes" with an air that doesn't suggest admiration.

"These are sportsmen?" he asks. "Real he-men."

On Monday morning, his pickup was posted on a dirt road at the corner of the property. Although someone was seen goose hunting on the preserve earlier in the season, there was little

trouble Monday. The presence of patrollers seems to have cut the trespassing and poaching to a minimum. Still, the picturesque paths were being patrolled and the borders guarded.

"More and more people know they can't get away with everything," Hope Buyukmihci says. "But some always try."

Ro Wilson, a Pennsauken woman who's a member of the Audubon Society, took the day off Monday so she

could help patrol. This is her fifth year. She was on duty before first light — and her reward was a rare glimpse of a great horned owl as the sun was rising.

As her shift ended at about 10 a.m., she came back to the "base" for duty on the base radio, some soy cheese and some cashew loaf straight out of the oven.

Although she'll be back on the job today, others will take her place. The vigil continues.



Buyukmihci radios in



Staff photo: by Dom Rebeck Jr.

Hope Buyukmihci and August Sexauer of Vincentown patrol flora-fauna sanctuary to warn hunters