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GEOG 270: Introduction to Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Drones in Hunting

Did you know that South Dakota has over 5 million acres of land that provides hunting opportunities for those in state and out of state? Whether hunting on public land or private land, the use of drones could turn an okay hunting opportunity into a great hunting experience that will leave a person with memories of a lifetime. The use of drones could provide hunters with knowledge and views otherwise missed from ground level but it is important to know the laws and regulations before doing so. There are a few different types of drones recommended for hunting purposes each with the hope in mind to provide the hunter with a new perspective and improved accessibility.

Whether you are deer hunting, goose, or duck hunting, the use of drones can be very beneficial to the success of the hunt. Speaking from experience, I am a very avid waterfowl hunter, in the fall I spend countless hours driving around in search of the perfect spot where geese or ducks are feeding. These evenings of driving around could easily be diminished through the use of a drone. Instead of driving around, I could use a drone to fly around and try to locate where the birds are at. With today's technology, I could even mark the exact location so I know where to go when it comes to setting up to shoot. When scouting I could also get a better estimate of how many birds are in a field or pond through the aerial footage. With this knowledge in mind, that I was able to gather through the use of a drone, I can then determine if there are enough birds around to make the hunt worth it and if there is any good cover to hide so the birds do not see me when they land.

Although using a drone seems like a wonderful thing to use while hunting, there are a few laws and regulations that are in place to protect wildlife. Since being introduced in hunting the Federal Aviation Administration has set up several rules, here are some to name a few: a drone must weigh less than 55 pounds, be registered, not flown higher than 500 feet or faster than 100 mph, etc. These rules are just ones put in place by federal regulations, they do not take into account the individual state laws put in place on drones. "Many states have banned the use of UAVs to scout and hunt deer or other game like Colorado, Alaska, and Montana. Some states haven't banned the use of drones but have banned hunting the same day you are flying the drone for scouting wildlife. However, some states like Florida haven't banned the use of drones in any way" (11lves). It is important to be informed of what rules and regulations your state has before trying to use a drone to hunt. Another important tip to remember is that "it is against the law to hunt game from a helicopter or any other aircraft. You can get fined with a minimum fine of \$2500. Because drones are also aircraft, this law applies to them" (11lves).

There are several drone options out there to choose from for any hunter looking to use one. Quadcopter ArenA breaks down the pros and cons of what they think are the top seven best drones to use for hunting. The seven drones range fly times between 15 and 30 minutes and can cost anywhere from \$100.00 to \$3,000.00. The top-rated drone, coming in with a 4.5-star rating, according to Quadcopter ArenA is the DJI Phantom 4. "The Phantom 4 has a 4K camera that captures high-resolution photographs and videos" and "it stays for nearly half an hour in the air with the help of a 5350mAh battery" (Quadcopter ArenA). The drone has a GPS, GLONASS, and Optical Sensing technology to make sure it never gets lost and avoids crashing into anything. According to the website, the Phantom 4's main drawback was regarding price due to being more expensive, but with a high price comes state-of-the-art functions and technology to benefit the hunter.

There are many benefits to using drones in hunting whether you are scouting, observing, or tracking the animals. Like anything else though, there are some downsides and controversy over

whether the use of drones in hunting takes away from the natural fair chase and actual skill required for hunting. "Many hunters are concerned that drones could be used to flush out big game and create easier targets" (11lves). Another worry for hunters is that the noise of drones will scare off wildlife. Although useful, drones can be "also used to harass other hunters, too. Spying on other hunters, or going after their game" (Dronesvilla) which is both unethical and unfair. People opposing drones in hunting also have brought up concerns with pushing animals to desired locations which disrupts the natural order of things and herds the animals to the hunter who then just has to shoot.

Overall, I understand both pros and cons of using drones in a hunting setting. I believe their ability to provide an aerial view and aid in finding the animals is beneficial but I see how some would say it takes away from the natural fair chase as stated in one of the articles. I do think if you want to use a drone you should be doing it ethically and not disturbing people and animals around you. There are many drone options out there with a wide range of prizes so it is important to do your reach before making such a purchase. When researching getting a drone it is also important to consider the many laws and regulations that the government and state have put in place to ensure peace and safety are being maintained. Drones allow hunters to see a lot of things they would not from ground level but they should remember the fines and fees that can come with not using them ethically or legally.

References

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