

Ending the War on Wildlife

FLICKR/ KEITH WILLIAMS/CREATIVE COMMONS



Compassion and Coexistence

One of WILDEARTH GUARDIANS' top priorities is confronting the cruel and inhumane treatment of wildlife through the use of traps, poisons and other barbaric practices and activities such as contest hunts. We are opposed to all practices that result in needless suffering and mindless killing of animals but we are especially opposed to the senseless killing of native carnivores because of their ecological importance as ecosystem engineers and because of their aesthetic beauty.

While people are responsible for individual acts of cruelty it is agencies, one federal agency ironically called 'Wildlife Services' as well as the individual state wildlife agencies, that are primarily responsible for allowing the bloodshed.

One of our primary and long-standing goals is to abolish the federal wildlife killing program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture which Congress created in 1931 and whose primary mission it is to kill native wildlife, including over 100,000 native carnivores annually. Likewise, we seek to reform state wildlife policies to prohibit the use of traps, poisons and contest hunts.

Science informs our policies and positions which means, for example, that we seek to prohibit or severely restrict trapping of endangered species such as lynx or wolverine. However, we believe science is not our only compass. We believe that ethics and compassion are our deepest guides which is why we want to altogether ban the use of traps, poisons, aerial gunning and contest hunts.

THE KILLING FIELDS



Since at least 1915, when Congress first began providing assistance to ranchers to kill wolves, the federal government has been in the business of killing native carnivores. Over the last century Wildlife Services has killed tens of millions animals. In 2013 alone the agency killed 4,378,456 animals, of which more than 105,000 were native carnivores, among them wolves, bears, mountain lions and coyotes. The animals are shot, poisoned, gassed, snared, and caught in leghold traps. The primary beneficiary of the massacre: agribusiness and western public lands ranchers.

Barbarism in Action

Under the guise of “wildlife management” most states allow all sorts of barbaric practices to kill animals, some of them sanctioned and also carried out by the federal Wildlife Services. Every year thousands of wolves, coyotes, bobcats and even critically endangered species like lynx and wolverine are trapped and killed. Why the slaughter? Some kill for the fur, some kill to eliminate competition for agribusiness and, sadly, some kill for no other reason than “fun.”

DICK RANDALL



TRAPPED: CRUEL AND UNUSUAL

Steel leg-hold traps are legal in almost every state and there are often no limits on the number or type of animals that can be caught and killed—whether for their fur or simple blood-lust. Trapping is indiscriminate meaning that many non-target animals are killed or injured by traps. Moreover trappers often are not required to frequently check traps.

CHUCK CARPENTER



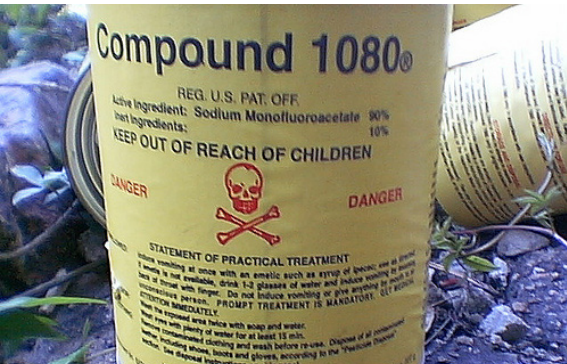
AERIAL GUNNING: SCORCHED EARTH FROM ABOVE

For decades now Wildlife Services has killed at least 25,000 coyotes per year from helicopters and small planes. The goal: to pre-emptively remove as many coyotes as possible from an area before livestock are pastured, and particularly to eliminate breeding coyotes, with their needs to provision their pups.



CONTEST HUNTS: BARBARIC, BUT MOSTLY LEGAL

Wildlife killing contests are legal in every state but California, which recently banned them. Contests hunts, many of them well publicized and sponsored events are on the rise, especially on public lands in the American West. While coyotes are the primary target of these events other animals includes foxes, prairie dogs and bobcats.



DEADLY POISONS: ONCE BANNED, NOW LEGAL

In 1972 President Richard Nixon issued Executive Order 11643 banning the use of poisons to control native carnivores on public lands. Under pressure from the livestock industry Ronald Reagan lifted the ban allowing M-44s and Compound 1080, two highly toxic poisons to be again used by agribusinesses to kill carnivores.

Compassion in Action: 2015 Work

DAVE JONES



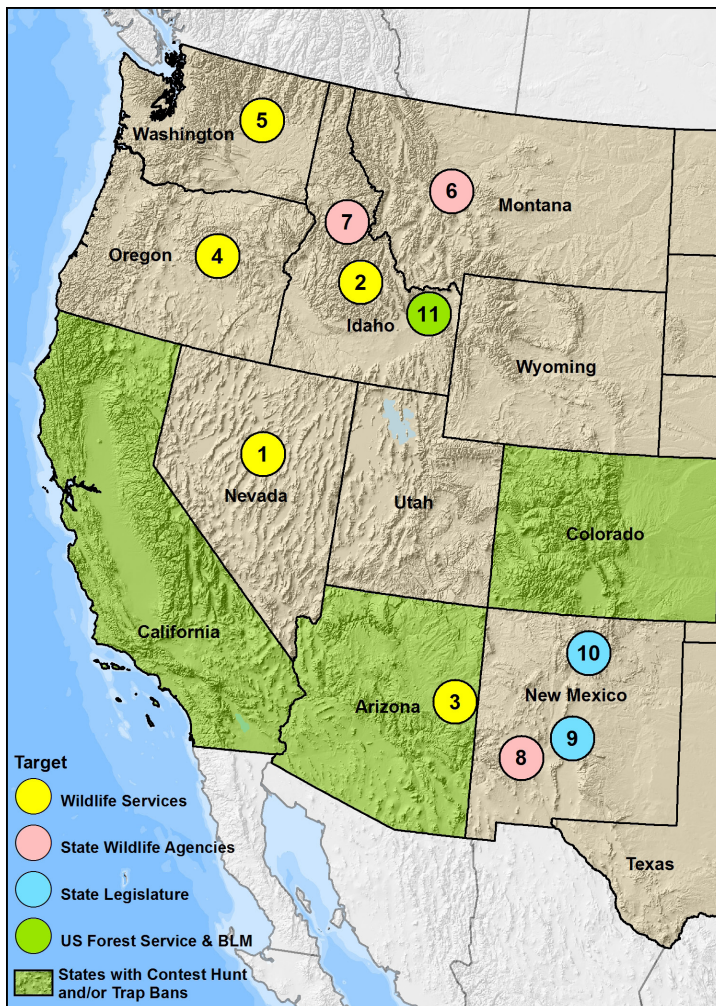
DAVE JONES



WILDEARTH GUARDIANS is working in state legislatures, the U.S. Congress, the federal courts and with the Obama Administration to secure a more compassionate future for native carnivores and other animals that are the targets of traps, poisons and people's perverse pleasure.

We work largely outside the paradigm of state game commissions, which are run mostly by old, white men who hunt and trap and which serve the interests of the status quo. While litigation, especially that which relies on the Endangered Species Act, is a powerful antidote to the arrogance and intolerance of state wildlife agencies we are also engaged in longer-term political work in state legislatures.

We are trying to advance an agenda of compassion for native animals in strategically selected states and on public lands where legal precedents can be applied broadly to other public lands and states.



As the map shows, WILDEARTH GUARDIANS is working throughout the West to confront cruelty.

1-5: Wildlife Services: The agency has a long history of arrogantly ignoring the law and insulating itself from considering environmental values. Each of these five lawsuits seeks to limit the discretion to trap, poison, shoot or otherwise kill native wildlife.

6-8; State Wildlife Agencies: State wildlife agencies often authorize trapping without considering the effects of trapping on endangered species. These lawsuits each seek to geographically prohibit or otherwise constrain the use of traps as a matter of state regulation.

9-10: State Legislatures: After failing to convince the state wildlife commissions to embrace fundamental reforms, we're now working in the New Mexico Legislature to ban trapping and contest hunts of coyotes.

11: Federal Land Management Agencies: We're in federal court challenging the failure of the forest service and Bureau of Land Management to exercise their right to ensure wildlife on public lands are protected from a contest hunt.

Our Vision of Coexistence



Native carnivores are important ecosystems actors. They increase biological diversity and provide free ecosystem services upon which we all depend. They have an inherent right to exist, and most people enjoy viewing them. For these and other reasons, trapping, contests hunts and other forms of barbarism must be outlawed and the Wildlife Services' lethal predator-control program must be abolished.

“If you read the brochures, go on their website, they play down the lethal control, which they are heavily involved in, and show you this benign side. It's smoke and mirrors. It's a killing business. And it ain't pretty.”

— Carter Neimayer,
Former Wildlife Services employee

In the case of Wildlife Services and protecting animal agriculture, we believe the time has come to mandate viable non-lethal alternatives to using dangerous toxicants, traps, and aerial gunning. While practical and time-tested non-lethal aids are available to the livestock industry and farmers, the federal government neither heartily uses them, nor does it spend significant resources developing new ones.

The long criticized “sledgehammer approach” to wildlife management must come to an end. Large-scale, carnivore-killing programs are unsustainable and environmentally harmful.

In order to prevail we believe we need to be both patient and persistent, using every tool possible to advance our vision. Our opponents have the benefit that the status quo serves their agenda of continued persecution of animals. However, we know that time, momentum and the American people are on our side and that it will only be a matter of time before we ban traps, end contest hunts and mandate an ethic of coexistence for agribusiness that prohibits the senseless killing of all native carnivores.



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