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JULY 2024 • CONSERVATION • EDUCATION • PRESERVATION



A **VISITOR** stayed all day
with the wolves below!

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We hope to give you something to look forward to every day!

THE MANY-SPOTTED TIGER MOTH



This is a Many-spotted Tiger Moth.

- Tiger moths are fairly common, and have excellent hearing
- They are toxic, which makes them resistant to many predators
- Tiger moths are active mid-summer to autumn and are native to western United States, and parts of northern Mexico
- Like many other Tiger moths, the adults do not eat



The Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center is pleased to announce that since August of 2023, we have raised \$19,835 in profits for the Coexistence fund exclusively from our wolves' artwork. This does not include other donations and funds that have already accumulated. This fund was created by CEO/Founder, Darlene Kobobel (right) prior to the reintroduction to gather funds that will provide non-lethal tools to ensure the ongoing success of wolf recovery in our state. These tools can be anything from fladry, range riders, fox lights, and even drones.

Lindsey Grigg (middle) works with ambassador wolf Raven, creating one-of-a-kind masterpieces.

Thank you to our supporters who have contributed to the survival of Colorado's wild population by purchasing a unique painting from our resident wolves.

LET'S KEEP COLORADO'S WOLVES OUT OF THE SPOTLIGHT

Marc Bekoff, PHD | marcbekoff.com | June, 27 2024

I recently read an online essay by Tracy Ross called Colorado makes it easier for ranchers to kill wolves that are attacking their livestock at night. I've also discovered that many people don't know about this highly questionable decision and are shocked when they hear about it. Colorado's new wolves were taken from their homes in Oregon, flown here, and the first five were released on December 18, 2023. Five more were shipped here and released shortly thereafter. The "Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Restoration Management Plan" drafted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) staff and passed by the Parks and Wildlife Commission included numerous provisions for direct and indirect losses suffered by livestock producers, as well as a projected schedule for the downlisting of gray wolves from endangered to vulnerable to fully delisted at which point the door will be wide open to the hunting of gray wolves. Thankfully, this latter provision was stripped out by a few brave commissioners on the basis that Colorado voters had elected to restore gray wolves as a "non-game species".

I'm thrilled to have wolves here and I know there are at two sides and many shades of gray for arguments for and against their residency in Colorado. And, let me be clear that I fully understand why some people love wolves and some frankly hate them. (Please see Colorado Wolves Receive Mixed Hellos and Muddy Media and The Hidden Slippery Slopes of Animal Reintroduction Programs.)

Nighttime spotlights may soon be in the arsenal of people who don't want wolves around and anyone could potentially kill a wolf who is thought to be a potential predator or thought to have already killed livestock. Ross' essay centered on this recent decision by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) commission who voted 6-4 to allow ranchers to use nighttime spotlights to catch wolves in the act of killing livestock or who people think are caught in the act of killing livestock. I use the word think because it takes a highly trained eye to know that getting a meal is a wolf's intention and I



Photo by: ygluzberg/istock

fear wolves who are not in the market for an easy meal—sort of like enjoying a meal via room service—also will be killed. As Grand County commissioner Merrit Linke rightly notes, "The ruling is a psychological win for ranchers who've felt they've been backed into a corner and attacked with no weapons."

Another concern is that the standard for who might be allowed to kill a wolf is pretty loose. Colorado's First Gentleman, Marlon Reis told me, "Among the many regulations the Commission passed was a provision that in the event Colorado Parks and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is too under-resourced to send a professional to investigate alleged wolf predation, they may instead issue a permit deputizing livestock producers or their designated agents (think: exterminators) to hunt down and kill wolves they believe to be predators." This simply means that almost anyone can kill a wolf who is thought to be a predator.

The CPW commission also approved a 45-day permit for "chronically depredating wolves" but there still is no definition for who these sorts of wolves are and if they truly exist in Colorado. This label is rather meaningless and open to different shades of interpretation.

What baffles me and many others is the fact that the people of Colorado voted to repatriate wolves, they were successfully released, and now the possibility that they can be killed within months of arriving looms if permission is given to turn on the lights.

Having a permit is not required at the time of predation

We also read in Ross' piece, "A permit is required to kill a wolf caught in the act, but it can be issued retroactively if an applicant can provide evidence meeting the criteria." So, what are the criteria that could sentence a wolf to death and how reliable are they? Sometimes trained carnivore biologists have difficulty knowing what happened in the past when they come upon a carcass that was purportedly killed was killed by a wolf, so what sort of evidence will be required especially when it might be very difficult to document in writing or on film a supposed predatory encounter that's in progress or one that previously occurred. Indeed, Carter Niemeyer, a wolf-predation expert, exonerated wolves in the death of dozens of cattle in near Meeker, Colorado after a large amount of misleading media hype blamed wolves for their demise. Along these lines, Wendy Keefover, a senior strategist for native carnivore protection for the Humane Society of the United States noted, "The truth is that less than one percent of cattle inventories die as a result of predation, and Carter's report exonerates wolves."

A weak burden of proof ominously looms

Here are a few more specifics of the decision to allow spotlights to be used to issue a lupine death sentence. CPW commissioner Dallas May, who voted for the use of spotlights, noted that the burden of proof will be on the ranchers, but he has more faith than I do in their being punished for their illegal killing(s). Reis notes, *"The Parks and Wildlife Commission vote is particularly disappointing given how hopeful many of us have been that Colorado would set a more humane standard for the co-existence of people and native carnivores. Instead, we are not only talking about killing our new wolves; we are passing regulations to make it legal with the most minimal burden of proof possible."*

Ross' essay also includes the following statement by CPW commissioner Marie Haskett, owner of JLM Outfitters in Meeker: "If CPW doesn't help them [purchase recording devices] they could take things into their own hands, she added, referring to a poisoning in Oregon, likely targeting a wolf, that led to golden eagles, dogs and other carnivores being poisoned, according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife." However, CPW approved the use of night aids *without* requiring recording devices. How hard is it hard to hit "record" if someone has such a device?

Without actual footage of a supposed predatory encounter what kind of proof will be offered and what will be acceptable? It's highly likely that many, if not most ranchers are not field biologists or ethologists and this is not a criticism of them. Rather, I have done extensive field

work on coyotes and watched other carnivores including wolves, cougars, and foxes and sometimes it's very difficult to know if they're out hunting or what they're really up to and it's surprising when something does or doesn't happen.

Because death is irreversible, a mistake about understanding a wolf's intentions can have serious consequences for the wolf and most likely their pack. (See Wolf Packs Suffer When Humans Kill Their Leaders.)

Not everyone has been pleased by the decision to use spotlights. In Ross' essay Darlene Kobobel, founder of the Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center, is quoted as saying, "Wolves have been reintroduced for less than six months and now we are requesting tools to kill them. . . Cattle have no defenses because they have been bred out of them. Therefore producers need to work harder when you have domestic animals in wild territory where bears, coyotes, lions, wolves and even dogs can be a threat." And, of course, when there are packs of wolves around, it can be very difficult to identify the culprit.

So, a very important question is how can we be sure that killing livestock was or is on a wolf's agenda? There are grave consequences when we're wrong. We must not be mistaken and that opens the door for false reports or reports that mistakenly tell us what a wolf was up to. Wolves are smart, sentient animals and it's not easy to get them to change their evolved ways of living and if they don't, they'll pay an awful price for just being wolves. There also needs to be a strong focus on, and commitment to, non-lethal methods and better husbandry practices such as required carcass removal.

Where to from here?

One huge question looms, namely, "Should more wolves be brought to Colorado?" This is at once a very difficult, important, and fair question and I hope everyone will do some deep thinking and feeling about what's at stake. Why break up packs where they were living and bring traumatized wolves to Colorado and then abandon them, perhaps for all the wrong reasons? More than one strong pro-wolf advocate has asked me, "Why bring wolves here if we're not going to do all we can to protect them fully and keep them all alive?" Many feel we are obliged to do so. I know some pro-wolf people think it's okay to trade off the lives of some individuals for the good of their species, but that discussion goes way beyond the scope of this short piece, which is keeping wolves out of the spotlight.

Wolves have become pawns and proxies in all sorts of wide ranging discussions of human-animal relationships including those focusing on biological, behavioral, ecological, psychological, economical, sociological, philosophical, legal, and demographical matters.

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However, right now it’s essential to zero in on keeping Colorado’s wolves alive by focusing on maintaining or enhancing the well-being of every single individual.

Many people who didn’t and still don’t want wolves in Colorado complain about their presence and they often get much of what they desire much of the time. The practice of “whine and win” works and often the ante goes higher and higher—ask for a finger and then go for all five fingers, a hand, or an arm. I can only hope that permission to use spotlights is never granted and that we at least give wolves time to acclimate to their new homes.

We brought wolves here and they deserve to be protected. It’s a double-cross to take them from their original homes, put them out here (or elsewhere), and then not grant them full protection, which means not killing them for simply being the animals who they are. (See The Hidden Slippery Slopes of Animal Reintroduction Programs.)

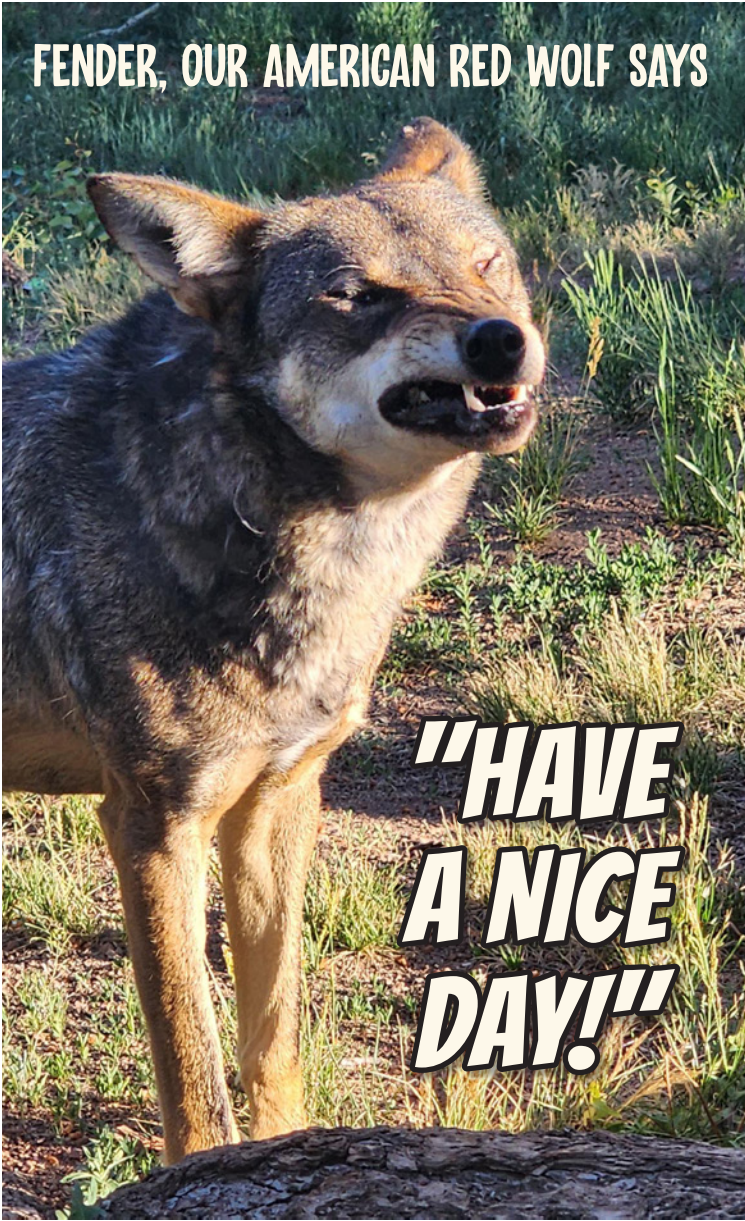
Someone once accused me of not really wanting wolves in Colorado and that’s an absurd accusation. I’m glad wolves are here and would like to know there are live animals out there, rather than corpses. Wolves need to be protected so they can at least have a chance to survive and thrive.

Allowing for even the possibility of artificial light to be used reduces the likelihood of the transplanted—some might say kidnapped—wolves to survive so why bring them to our magnificent state only to let them fall prey to humans who don’t want them around? For the most part, there are few if any surprises concerning the reception of the recent CPW decision on either side of issue, but frankly, I am surprised by the way some commissioners voted. The wolves are here and deserve to be fully protected.

What’s difficult for me and some others to reconcile is how some people who say they love wolves are willing to allow some to be killed. When people say they love animals and kill them or allow them to be killed, I say I’m glad they don’t love me.

Be that as it may, for now let’s focus on the main issue at hand—the lights:

Colorado has made it easier for ranchers to use artificial light to kill wolves in the dark. This door should never have been opened and let’s hope it never will be on the ground. Once it is it’ll be a difficult one to close. Let’s keep the lights off.



SHARING TRAIL WITH COWS? LAND, WILDLIFE, TAXPAYERS PAY PRICE

Delaney Rudy | Western Watershed Project

The article "Why you might have to share the trail with cows while hiking on Colorado's public lands," (June 2024) claims that hikers encountering livestock on public lands shouldn't panic because "the cows are supposed to be there." This statement suggests there is something completely natural about cattle in the fragile, arid and alpine ecosystems of Colorado. Although it may be something we've become accustomed to, it's not natural, and there are hidden costs of these grazing program: land degradation, wildlife killing and millions in taxpayer subsidies, in addition to the impact to one's recreational experience. In a report published last month, 32% of Bureau of Land Management grazing allotments in Colorado were failing to meet land health standards, with livestock identified as the cause of the problem. That alone represents 2.4 million acres of public land. Livestock grazing results in the degradation of streamside areas, leading to hotter stream temperatures and poorer water quality for native trout, ground compaction that can harm groundwater storage, and invasions of weeds such as cheatgrass. Livestock also remove a large portion of the vegetation that supports our elk, deer and bighorn sheep populations and provides cover for our endangered sage grouse. Diseases transmitted by domestic sheep are considered the greatest threat to bighorn sheep, our state animal. Public lands ranching significantly contributes to climate change by livestock emissions of nitrous oxide and methane, as well as loss of soil carbon reserves by the physical impacts of grazing (increased erosion, defoliation of plants and destruction of biological soil crusts), reducing the landscape's potential to sequester carbon. The social costs of carbon for grazing on public land are estimated to be about \$1.1-\$2.4 billion per year, not including the greater ecosystem costs from associated livestock management activities that reduce

biodiversity, carbon stocks and rates of carbon sequestration.

Beyond the loss of ecosystem services, the cost of subsidizing public lands ranching to American taxpayers is enormous. The current public land grazing fee is \$1.35 per month for one AUM (one bull or a cow and her calf), compared with the average Colorado private lease rate of \$21.00 per AUM on non-irrigated pasture in 2019. That amounts to a 93.58% subsidy. Direct government expenditures to administer public land grazing constitute an annual net loss to the taxpayer of at least \$123 million and more than \$500 million when indirect costs are accounted for. Those indirect costs include \$166 million federal dollars spent by USDA Wildlife Services last year, a national federal program that kills "nuisance animals," including hundreds of bobcats and bears, thousands of foxes and tens of thousands of beavers and coyotes last year alone, mainly to protect livestock operations. The Post's article also minimized the risk of conflict with livestock. An average of 22 people are killed by cows each year in the U.S., striking when compared with the average number of people killed in the U.S. by predators we are taught to fear: 0.75 for bears, 0.18 for mountain lions. There have been only two fatal wolf attacks recorded in the U.S. in the past century, in Alaska. The facts give pause to the fear-mongering around native predators and should be weighed against which animals are really "supposed to be there" on public lands. Public lands grazing accounts for only 1.6% of the forage feeding the American beef market, so perhaps public land users should feel stress when they encounter cows out on their public lands. They are right to be shocked that such a small fraction of our food comes at such a high price to our climate, tax dollars, recreational experience and personal safety.





SUNDANCE

is getting pets and providing entertainment to the 10am guests. Sundance is now 32 years old!



U.S. WILL KILL THOUSANDS OF BARRED OWLS

Matthew Brown | AP News | July 3, 2024

To save the imperiled spotted owl from potential extinction, U.S. wildlife officials are embracing a contentious plan to deploy trained shooters into dense

West Coast forests to kill almost a half-million barred owls that are crowding out their cousins.



Wildlife technician Jordan Hazan records data in a lab from a male barred owl in October 2018 in Corvallis, Oregon. U.S. wildlife officials want to kill hundreds of thousands of barred owls in coming decades as part of a controversial plan to help spotted owl populations. A female barred owl sits on a branch in the wooded hills in December 2017 outside Philomath, Oregon. Photo: AP Photo/ Ted S. Warren, File

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service strategy released Wednesday is meant to prop up declining spotted owl populations in Oregon Washington and California. The AP obtained the details in advance.

Documents released by the agency show up to about 450,000 barred owls would be sot over three decades after the birds from the eastern U.S. encroached into the West Coast territory of two owls: northern spotted owls and California spotted owls. The smaller spotted owls have been unable to compete with the invaders, which have large broods and need less room to survive than spotted owls.

Past efforts to save spotted owls focused on protecting the forests where they live, sparking bitter fights over logging but also helping slow the birds' decline. The proliferation of barred owls in recent years is undermining that earlier work, officials said.

"Without actively managing barred owls, northern spotted owls will likely go extinct in all or the majority of their range, despite decades of collaborative conservation efforts," said Fish and Wildlife Oregon state supervisor Kessina Lee.

The notion of killing one bird species to save another has divided wildlife advocates and conservationists. It's reminiscent of past government efforts to save West Coast salmon by killing sea lions and cormorants that prey on the fish, and to preserve warblers by killing cowbirds that lay eggs in warbler nests.

Some advocates grudgingly accepted the barred owl removal strategy; others said it's reckless diversion from needed forest preservation.

"The USFWS is turning from protector of wildlife to persecutor of wildlife," said Wayne Pacelle, founder of the advocacy group Animal Wellness Action. He predicted the program would fail because the agency won't be able to keep more barred owls from migrating into areas where others have been killed.

The shootings would likely begin next spring, officials said. Barred owls would be lured using megaphones to broadcast recorded owl calls, then shot with shotguns. Carcasses would be buried on site.

The birds are being killed by researchers in some spotted owl habitats, with about 4,500 removed since 2009, said Robin Bown, barred owl strategy leader for the USFWS. Those targeted included barred owls in California's Sierra Nevada region, where the animals have only recently arrived, and officials want to stop populations from taking hold.

In other areas where barred owls are more established, officials aim to reduce their numbers but acknowledged shooting owls is unlikely to eliminate them entirely.

Supporters include the American Bird Conservancy and other conservation groups.

Barred owls don't belong in the West, said American Bird Conservancy Vice President, Steve Holmer. Killing them is unfortunate, he added, but reducing their numbers could allow them to live alongside spotted owls over the long term.

"As the old forests are allowed to regrow, hopefully coexistence is possible and maybe we don't need to do as much shooting," Holmer said.

The killings would reduce North American barred owl numbers by less than 1% annually, officials said. That compares with potential extinction for spotted owls, should the problem go unaddressed.

Because barred owls are aggressive hunters, removing them also could help other West Coast species that they've been preying on such as salamanders

and crayfish, said Tom Wheeler, director of the Environmental Protection Information Center, a California-based conservation group.

Public hunting of barred owls wouldn't be allowed. The wildlife service would designate government agencies, landowners, American Indian tribes or companies to carry out the killings. Shooters would have to provide documentation of training or experience in owl identification and firearm skills.

The publishing in the coming days of a final environmental study on the proposal will open a 30-day comment period before a final decision is made. The barred owl plan follows decades of conflict between conservationists and timber companies, which cut down vast areas of older forests where spotted owls reside.

Early efforts to save the birds culminated in logging bans in the 1990s that roiled the timber industry and its political supporters in Congress.

Yet spotted owl populations continued declining after barred owls started showing up on the West Coast several decades ago. Across the region at least half of spotted owls have been lost, with declines of 75% or more in some study areas, said Katherine Fitzgerald, who leads the wildlife service's northern spotted owl recovery program.

Opponents say the mass killing of barred owls would cause severe disruption to forest ecosystems and could lead to other species, including spotted owls, being shot mistakenly. They also have challenged the notion that barred owls don't belong on the West Coast, characterizing their expanding range as a natural ecological phenomenon.

Researchers say barred owls moved westward by one of two routes: across the Great Plains, where trees planted by early settles gave them a foothold in new areas; or via Canada's boreal forests, which have become more hospitable as temperatures rise because of climate change.

Northern spotted owls are federally protected as a threatened species. Federal officials determined in 2020 that their continued decline merited an upgrade to the more critical designation of "endangered." But the USFWS refused to do so at the time, saying other species took priority.

California spotted owls were proposed for federal protections last year. A decision is pending.

Under Trump, government officials stripped habitat protections for spotted owls, at the behest of the timber industry. Those were reinstated under Biden after the Interior Dept. said political appointees under Trump relied on faulty science to justify their weakening of protections.

Genetic patterns of world's farmed, domesticated foxes revealed via historical deep-dive

Lauren Quinn | Phys.org | July 1, 2024



Photo: Anna Kukekova, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Domesticated animals play a prominent role in our society, with two-thirds of American families enjoying the companionship of pets and many others relying on animal products for their nutritional needs. But the process of domestication remains a bit of a mystery. Convincing wild animals they are safe enough to coexist and mate in enclosures and in close proximity to humans and other animals is no small feat. What does it take behaviorally and genetically for that to happen?

For the most part, the animals we've domesticated have been docile for so long that there's no easy way to go back and study the transition from wild to tame. A notable exception is the domestication of red foxes—raised in captivity for their fur—starting in 1896 on Canada's Prince Edward Island. A team from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has traced the process from its beginnings on the island to captive fox populations around the world, including some still in

operation today.

The work is published in the *Journal of Heredity*.

"We have the historical documents, we have genetic information about wild fox populations all over the world, and we obtained samples from foxes bred in North America and Eurasia. So we can really dig into the question of how foxes were domesticated and how their genetics were shaped by geography and time," said lead study author Halie Rando, an assistant professor at Smith College who completed her doctoral research in the Illinois Informatics Institute, now in the School of Information Sciences, at Illinois.

Rando, along with Illinois animal sciences professor Anna Kukekova and their collaborators, analyzed new and previously published mitochondrial DNA data from wild fox populations and from 10 captive populations in North America and Eurasia, including the site of

the famous Russian fox domestication experiment. They then cross-referenced historical records related to the intercontinental trade of foxes, changing fur demand and farm sizes, and breeding practices. Together, the data allowed them to determine the geographical origins of farmed foxes worldwide and understand the role of genetic diversity in the domestication process.

"When we do population genetics research, we're able to uncover history forensically," Rando said. "Looking at signatures that are in present populations, we can make inferences about the past."

Early fox farmers were motivated by the demand for the silver variant of red foxes. Trying to trap rare silver foxes from the wild was unreliable and difficult, but breeding them in captivity had its own challenges.

"The foxes were very hard to breed on the farms because they would get really stressed out and die or kill their offspring. It took a long time for them to figure out how to set up the breeding enclosures to reduce stress. Along the way, they were selecting for individuals that were better suited to the farm environment," Rando said. "They also managed to select for the silver fur color. Even without knowing any genetics, they figured out how to crack the code."

After that, the industry boomed, with Canadian foxes being exported across the world. The genetic analysis showed that every captive population the researchers surveyed—even those in Eurasia—originated from wild North American foxes. In fact, there were no traces of genetic markers from Eurasian wild fox populations, suggesting any attempts at domesticating local populations were abandoned or overtaken by North American genetics.

"This study helps to answer questions researchers have asked for years about the geographic origin and genetic background of these fox populations," Kukekova said. "Furthermore, some farm foxes may have mixed with native foxes through release events over the years in different locations. Occasionally, unexpected gene signatures show up in native populations, so our study may help to explain where they're coming from."

World War II interrupted demand, and the industry never recovered in North America. In the USSR, however, fox farms quickly rebounded, aided by the government-supported fur industry.

Overall, the genetic pattern reflects the more stable history of breeding in Eurasia. Although all the farmed foxes in the study were found to originate from North American wild foxes, populations in Eurasia were more genetically diverse, with greater representation from Alaskan and western U.S. genotypes in addition to common genotypes from Eastern Canada.

"Some gene signatures were very rare and found only in certain Eurasian farm populations," Rando said. "The presence of these rare signatures, along with more diversity overall in Europe, could be due to more stable population sizes there after World War II, whereas those rare types may have been lost when North American farms collapsed."

The study also sheds light on the famous Russian Farm Fox experiment, started in 1959 at the Institute of Cytology and Genetics (ICG) in Novosibirsk. The study originated with the selection of farm-bred foxes that showed the least avoidant behaviors around humans. Through successive generations, scientists selectively bred foxes with tame behaviors, eventually resulting in foxes as friendly as the family dog.

The current study sampled that population and analyzed it along with the others, finding no unique genetic origins for the Russian foxes. To Rando, this suggests that farm-bred foxes may have the same underlying capacity to develop friendly behaviors.

"I'd say we pretty conclusively demonstrated that the foxes in Novosibirsk are not meaningfully different from other farm-bred foxes in terms of their genetic origins. We also found that the populations in Novosibirsk were among the most genetically diverse captive populations, likely due to their meticulous pedigree records and carefully planned breeding," she said.

Kukekova added, "It's informative to know that this one successful endeavor in Prince Edward Island really had a huge effect on modern populations that persists to this day. The model can help us study domestication broadly and find gene networks leading to tame behavior, which is something that humans have been interested in for a very long time."

Yes, Fur Farming is Still Legal

61 percent of U.S. voters support a ban on fur farming — yet the \$22 billion industry is still legal in the U.S. and much of the rest of the world.

Jennifer Mishler | Sentient Media | March 17, 2023

Wearing fur has long been considered a symbol of status, wealth and luxury and, in some communities, part of a cultural tradition. Demand for fur has dipped in recent years amid increasing public concern over treatment of animals, sustainability and public health. “Fur has never been less fashionable,” Hannah Marriott wrote for the Guardian in 2020, following moves by Armani, Chanel, Gucci, Versace and other big names to eliminate animal furs from their product lines. Canada Goose, best known for its fur-lined winter coats, has since done the same.

Despite this trend, approximately 100 million animals are still farmed and killed for fur globally each year, according to most estimates. The use of fur trim to line coats and boots has kept fur production alive. It is likely that millions of animals are also captured from the wild for the \$22 billion industry.

What Is a Fur Farm?

A fur farm is an operation in which animals are bred and raised for their fur and skins, known as “pelts,” which are most often used in clothing and accessories. While some fur comes from wild-caught animals, around 95 percent is obtained from animals kept and killed on farms.

Are Fur Farms Legal?

Farming animals for fur remains legal in much of the world, including in the majority of U.S. states. However, in recent years there have been signs of a shift away from fur farming as local and national governments have implemented bans on the sale of new fur products.

Is Fur Farming Illegal in the U.S.?

There is no federal legislation outlawing fur farming in the United States, but progress on a smaller scale may signal the beginning of the end for this controversial industry.

In October 2019, California became the first state in the nation to ban sales of newly made fur products, with the exception of those produced by Native American tribes, as Governor Gavin Newsom signed a historic piece of legislation that

has now been in effect since Jan. 1, 2023. Citywide bans had already been passed by Los Angeles, San Francisco, Berkeley and West Hollywood.

While California’s ban was not the nationwide prohibition that animal advocates hoped for, most groups, including Humane Society of the United States, celebrated it as a victory won in the most populous U.S. state and a major economic blow to the fur industry. Of the \$574 million of U.S. fur clothing sales in 2017, California accounted for \$129 million — the most of any state.

The America COMPETES Act, passed by the House of Representatives on Feb. 4, 2022, included an amendment that would have effectively banned the U.S. mink industry by prohibiting the possession, trade and transport of farm-raised mink. This amendment was, however, not supported by the Senate and did not become law.

According to polling research, the public holds a negative opinion of fur farming. A March 2022 survey of 1,178 likely voters across the U.S. found that 61 percent were in support of a nationwide ban on fur farming. When asked whether they were in favor of a similar ban in their city, 65 percent of respondents answered in favor. A previous poll conducted in September 2020 had found that 71 percent of Americans opposed killing animals for fur.

Which States Have Fur Farms?

There are an estimated 250 fur farms across 21 U.S. states.

In 2021, the U.S. produced 1.44 million mink pelts, worth nearly \$60 million. Of those pelts, 579,460 were contributed by Wisconsin, which continues to be the nation’s largest mink producer. It is followed by Utah, which accounted for 319,690 pelts.

Which Countries Have Banned Fur Farming?

The United Kingdom was the first country to ban fur farming, passing the Fur Farming Prohibition Act in 2000. It was soon followed by Austria in



Photo: WeAnimals

2005.

Many nations have followed suit with bans that are already in place or taking effect in coming years, including Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czechia, France, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Estonia passed legislation in June 2021 that made it the first Baltic country to ban fur farming, set to take effect in 2026. Polling shows that three-quarters of Estonians oppose the breeding and killing of foxes and mink.

Have Any Countries Banned Sales of Fur?

In June 2021, Israel became the first nation in the world to pass a ban on fur sales, with one religious exemption. The public was strongly in favor of an end to the killing of animals for fur, with 86 percent of Israelis voicing support.

Citizens of the European Union have widely indicated that they are in favor of an end to the fur trade. On Jan. 3, 2023, an initiative called Fur Free Europe ended its collection of signatures after less than 8 months, with over 1.7 million signatures in support of ending fur production and sales, surpassing the 1 million needed to receive a response from the European Parliament.

As the public becomes increasingly opposed to the fur industry, more bans are likely to be enacted.

Which Species Are Bred for Fur?

Mink and foxes are typically reported as the animals most commonly farmed for fur, but several other species are raised on fur farms around the world. Like animals slaughtered for meat, most are killed at less than 1 year old.

Mink

Mink are semi-aquatic animals who, in the wild, spend much of their time in water, hunting in solitude and running actively on land. In stark contrast to their natural lives, millions of these animals are intensively raised on fur farms crowded with other mink, confined to small wire cages.

It can take 35 farmed mink to create just one coat, which contributes to the farming of these small animals in such large numbers — but data shows that this is a market on the decline. In Europe, production of 45 million mink pelts in 2014 fell to 12 million in 2021. ACTAsia reported in 2019 that mink production in China and globally had fallen from a peak in 2014, but also cautioned that some Chinese fur farms appeared to be expanding and stabilizing, finding a continuing steady market for

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their products worldwide.

Denmark was once the world’s largest mink fur producer, contributing 40 percent of the global mink supply, but the industry is reemerging at a fraction of its previous size after all of Denmark’s 15 million farmed mink were culled due to outbreaks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many farmers have now chosen to walk away.

In response to COVID-19 outbreaks in animals and workers on mink farms, the Netherlands — formerly among top producers as well — voted on June 23, 2020 to close all of its mink farms ahead of the 2024 deadline set by the nation’s fur farming ban.

Chinchilla

According to most estimates, around 80,000 chinchillas are farmed for fur annually in Europe alone, and the production of one coat requires 150-300 of these small rodents, who are also popular pets in many parts of the world.

Life on a fur farm is unsuitable for chinchillas, who are highly social animals. They also sleep during the day, require exercise and enrichment and, as prey animals, seek out places to hide — natural behaviors unlikely to be accommodated on a fur farm. Living 8-10 years naturally, they will be killed for fur at about 8 months old.

Investigative footage filmed in 2021 on Romanian farms showed chinchillas in small wire cages stacked on top of one another, standing above their own waste. Some were filmed repeatedly chewing on their cages, a behavior considered to be a sign of stress or lack of enrichment. Humane Society International alleged its investigators were told that cervical dislocation was used to kill some chinchillas, which is prohibited by EU law, and Romania has since considered a ban on chinchilla and mink farming.

Fox

After minks, foxes are the second most widely farmed species in the fur industry, with an estimated 4 million killed for their pelts each year.

Many species of fox, including the commonly known red fox, live 3-4 years naturally. On fur farms, they are killed at around 4 months old. Like minks, they are kept in small wire cages. A recent investigation in Finland revealed farmed foxes suffering from eye infections, tail injuries and deformities, as well as baby foxes cannibalizing deceased cagemates.

Finland is the top EU producer of fox fur and globally is second only to China. Canada produced over 58,600 fox pelts between 2010 and 2018, and the U.S. has what is believed to be a very small industry, although the number of farms is unclear.

Dog and Cat

An estimated 2 million dogs and cats are killed for their fur annually. Some of these animals are bred and raised on farms, while others are reportedly captured strays or stolen pets. Furs may be directly produced for the fur industry or come about as a byproduct of dog and cat meat production.

One fur coat requires the killing of 10-12 dogs or as many as 24 cats. The latter are sometimes killed by strangulation, while dogs have been known to be hung by their necks with metal wires and cut across their groins.

While the Dog and Cat Protection Act prohibits the importation or sale of furs made from these animals, the products may still end up coming into the United States. Some nations, including Canada, continue to allow the trade of dog and cat fur.

Rabbit

Rabbits are a prime example of the contradictions in the ways we treat animals. They are at once thought of as beloved pets, wildlife to be hunted for sport, pests who destroy gardens and crops — and animals to be farmed en masse for their meat or fur.

On fur farms, rabbits are kept in crowded metal cages until they are killed at around 6-7 months of age, a fraction of their natural lifespans of up to 10 years. Rabbit fur is used for less expensive clothing and accessories than pelts from minks and foxes. Yet it is a misconception that their fur is a byproduct of the rabbit meat industry rather than being farmed.

Angora rabbits are one breed farmed for their fur — often known as angora wool. In 2013, an investigation revealed these rabbits screaming as their fur was ripped from their bodies on farms in China, which at the time produced 90 percent of the world’s angora supply. This prompted the Guardian to explore the question: “Can angora production ever be ethical?”

Is Fur Farming Cruel?

Fur farming is considered cruel by animal

protection organizations, many veterinarians and, increasingly, as a matter of public opinion.

In addition to the severely cramped and unhygienic conditions in which animals farmed for their fur are often kept, these animals die long before they naturally would and suffer deaths animal experts consider slow and inhumane.

How Are Animals on Fur Farms Killed?

There are no federal laws governing the killing of animals on fur farms in the U.S. Instead, the methods used here and around the world are largely chosen based on what will result in the least possible damage to the animals’ valuable pelts.

Thus, unlike animals farmed for their meat, those on fur farms are not cut and exsanguinated (with the possible exception of rabbits). Instead, they are most commonly killed by gassing, cervical dislocation or electrocution.

Gassing

Fur-farmed animals are often killed en masse inside gas chambers flooded with carbon dioxide. This method is intended to render animals unconscious as their blood oxygen level diminishes, eliminating brain function and causing death.

However, some animals remain alive and conscious after a gassing attempt, which would prolong suffering. Unprecedented investigative footage filmed inside a gas chamber revealed minks on a Polish fur farm thrown and then gassed ineffectively. They were later bludgeoned with a metal rod or slammed against wooden joists.

Cervical dislocation

In cervical dislocation an animal’s spinal cord is severed by quickly pulling their neck away from the rest of the body, preventing blood from flowing to the brain.

The American Veterinary Medical Association, which reports that electrical brain activity has been found to continue for 13 seconds after cervical dislocation in rats, warns that the process must be done correctly and by trained individuals in order to avoid animal suffering. It is typically not recommended for chinchillas and other small rodents, for whom gassing is considered a more effective and humane method.

Electrocution

Some animals will be killed with a high-voltage electrical current administered through water or via metal instruments inserted into both their mouth and anus. Investigations have found that this is not always performed effectively.

In 2008, this method was banned by the state of New York and made punishable by up to one year of jail time.

These are the most common methods, but some animals are beaten to death and others may be injected with poisonous substances that may only paralyze prior to skinning.

Do Fur Farms Skin Animals Alive?

Investigative footage filmed on fur farms in Asia has revealed that some animals are still alive and showing signs of consciousness after being bludgeoned and skinned for their pelts.

Fur Farming Facts and Statistics

A poll conducted in 2021 among 400 high-income Chinese consumers found that 24 percent opposed the use of fur in clothing. 62 percent of those respondents said that their opinion had changed within the previous year.

Animal-free fur alternatives are now being made from a variety of materials including vegetable oils, repurposed denim and recycled plastic. While demand for animal fur shrinks, the faux fur market is projected to grow, primarily driven by increasing awareness of treatment of animals on fur farms.

What You Can Do

Declining public demand for fur products and the fashion world’s response are widely cited as the main reason for the decline of the fur industry. The single most effective way to help animals farmed for their pelts is to choose animal-free alternatives. However, analysis has shown that some clothing marketed as “faux fur” actually contains fur obtained from animals — mostly raccoon dogs. While there are ways one may be able to tell the difference, opting for items that do not have fur-like materials is a more certain way to ensure that you do not support the fur industry.

If you already have fur clothing that you wish to eliminate from your wardrobe, animal advocates suggest donating such items to participating wildlife rehabilitation facilities and sanctuaries, as fur garments can be a source of warmth and comfort for orphaned animals.

Wolves Remain at Risk as Hunters and Their State-Level Allies Call the Shots

Kevin Bixby | Rewilding Earth | July 17, 2024



A wolf pup from the Pinnacle Peak pack peeks its head out of the grass at the National Elk Refuge, Wyoming. Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Digital Library

In case you missed it, in February [2021], hunters killed more than 200 wolves in Wisconsin in three days. When the smoke cleared, at least 20 percent of the state’s wolves were dead.

It started when the Trump Administration removed federal protections for wolves in January, triggering a Wisconsin law which requires that a wolf hunt be held beginning in November and running through February, or until the quota of killed wolves is reached. Wildlife managers dutifully began planning a hunt for the fall, but a hunting group sued and a judge said that the killing needed to get started immediately.

More than 27,000 people jumped at the chance to get one of roughly 2,400 available permits. The hunt was supposed to last a week but the wolves didn’t stand a chance. A reported 216 wolves were killed, blowing past the quota by 82 percent. Most of the wolves were killed by hunters patrolling roads looking for wolf tracks in the snow, and then releasing radio-collared dogs to run them down. It was wolf mating season, so it’s a safe assumption that many of the wolves killed were pregnant or

caring for pups already born.

Let’s call this “hunt” what it was — a slaughter. Ethical hunters eat what they kill. Nobody eats wolves. Maybe some pelts were kept as trophies or rugs. The fact is, most of these smart animals were killed simply because a lot of people want to put a bullet in a wolf, and states like Wisconsin are happy to accommodate them.

Of course, the usual justifications for the hunt were put forth. Wolves, it was said, needed to be killed to reduce attacks on livestock, or to increase deer populations, or simply to keep them from running amok. None of these reasons is supported by modern science.

The number of wolf attacks on livestock and pets in 2020 in Wisconsin was miniscule — less than 100. Even if that number were higher, studies show that killing wolves randomly wherever hunters can find them is not an effective way to reduce conflicts with livestock. As for Wisconsin’s 1 million plus deer, predation by wolves is insignificant compared to the more than 300,000 deer taken by hunters each year. The idea that wolves need to be killed by humans

to keep their numbers from growing out of control is one of the big lies in wildlife management today. Research shows that top carnivores like wolves regulate their own numbers through actions, such as defending territories and restricting breeding to the alpha pair.

There are plenty of reasons not to kill wolves. They keep game populations healthy by preying on the sick and infirm. They can reduce the prevalence of Lyme disease and other diseases. They shape ecosystems in ways that benefit a host of species, from songbirds to beavers. They are intelligent, family-oriented creatures.

The idea that wolves need to be killed by humans to keep their numbers from growing out of control is one of the big lies in wildlife management today.

But even if none of these things were true, there is another reason: it is wrong. Wolves have a right to live and don’t deserve to die because some people, whether out of fear, hatred, sadism, or misplaced anger at urban elites, want to kill them.

The Wisconsin wolf debacle reveals the ugly nature of wildlife management in the U.S. today. It was an act of extreme injustice sanctioned by a system in which such acts have long been the norm. The system is controlled by the tiny minority (4 percent) of Americans who hunt, a group that tends to be older white men with conservative values that skew toward a view of wild animals as resources to be dominated and exploited rather than sentient beings with intrinsic rights to exist. Not all hunters hold these views, of course, but certainly many wolf shooters do.

Hunters have long had a stranglehold on wildlife governance. In every state, wildlife policy is shaped by appointed commissions populated mostly by hunters. Wildlife agency staff are often hunters themselves who have been steeped in the “hook and bullet” dogma that wild animals cannot be left to their own devices, but must instead be “managed” (i.e., controlled), usually through the violence of hunting and trapping.

Meanwhile, the vast majority of Americans who do not hunt, and the values they tend to hold of

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coexistence and respect for animals, are excluded when it comes to making decisions about how wild animals ought to be treated.

Wolves will never be safe as long as hunters and their allies at the state level call the shots.

One would think that bringing more compassion and democracy to our dealings with wild animals would be higher on the progressive agenda, but that is not the case. For whatever reason, perhaps out of fear of rural voters, or the NRA, or the ordinary speciesism that is so rampant in our society, Democrats have ceded control of wildlife issues to conservatives.

This is evident in the membership of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus (CSC), a pro-hunting, pro-gun group whose positions on a wide range of issues are difficult to square with a broader justice agenda. CSC supports a slew of controversial practices that the public finds objectionable, such as trapping, using dogs to hunt bears, and wildlife killing contests, which the CSC describes as “time-honored traditions.”

CSC is unabashedly anti-democratic. It labels anyone who questions the status quo in wildlife management as “anti-hunting” and opposes the appointment of nonhunters to wildlife commissions. It promotes “right to hunt” laws that enshrine hunting as the preferred way to manage wildlife. It applauded the Wisconsin wolf hunt as “successful,” and reaffirmed its support for state control of wildlife management.

One would not expect progressives to be part of such a group, yet they comprise a fifth of the CSC’s membership, including such prominent leaders as Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont), Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon), and Bennie Thompson (D-Mississippi).

Grassroots activists in a growing number of states are agitating for reforms that would give nonhunters a greater voice in wildlife decisions.



It’s time for progressives to embrace the fight for wildlife and recognize the systemic inequities in wildlife management in the U.S. In what other social justice arenas would they stand with the group that seeks to retain its privilege through policies intended to marginalize and brutalize? It is wolves that need our protection, not the people who shoot them. Justice for all means justice for all.

There is hope that the Biden Administration will reinstate federal protection for wolves under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) before more wolves die in Wisconsin and other states like Michigan, where (mostly) Republicans are pushing for hunts. Wolf delisting is one of many Trump environmental rollbacks currently under review. Meanwhile, wildlife advocates are challenging the delisting in court.

But the on-again, off-again protection of the ESA is not a long-term solution. Wolves will never be safe as long as hunters and their allies at the state level call the shots.

Grassroots activists in a growing number of states are agitating for reforms that would give nonhunters a greater voice in wildlife decisions. Federal action could give these efforts a tremendous boost. One possibility is using federal funds to incentivize change through vehicles like the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act which, if passed, would flood states with new money for wildlife conservation. That money should come with strings tied to reforms, such as guaranteeing nonhunters greater representation on state wildlife commissions and expanding the legal authority of state wildlife agencies to manage all species, not just game animals. Another possibility is for the Biden Administration to break tradition and assert jurisdiction over wildlife on federal public lands to end controversial practices like wolf hunting on those properties.

The first step, however, is for progressives to understand that wildlife issues are part of the larger struggle for justice, and to figure out which side of the fight they are on.

44,000-year-old wolf with intact fur, organs, stomach found in world’s first

In 2021, thawing permafrost in the Abyisky District exposed a 44,000-year-old wolf carcass, buried 131 feet deep on the Tirekhtyakh River.

Maria Mocerino | Interesting Engineering | June 30, 2024

Russian scientists have begun an autopsy of a wolf from the Ice Age to study its health and lifestyle and investigate if it houses microorganisms that could benefit science.

In the Yakutia region of Northeastern Russia, a wilderness that features several rivers and lakes, the temperatures can drop to a world-record low of – 83 degrees Fahrenheit (- 64 degrees Celsius). Due to this extreme cold, scientists in the region have previously unearthed millennia-old animal carcasses preserved in the permafrost, according to Reuters. However, this wolf is the first discovery of its kind.



Researchers performing autopsy on wolf. (Photo: North-Eastern Federal University)

The rise in global temperatures has initiated the thawing of the permafrost, which likely aided local residents in spotting the carcass embedded in the permafrost at a depth of approximately 131 feet (40 meters) on the Tirekhtyakh River in the Abyisky District back in 2021.

The remains of the 44,000-year-old wolf were transferred to the Academy of Science of the Republic of Sakha for scientific research in 2021. However, the autopsy has only recently begun.

An ancient wolf: a door to the Ice Age

Albert Protopopov, head of the Mammoth Fauna Study Department of the Academy of Sciences of Yakutia, told Reuters that typically, herbivorous animals die, become trapped in swamps, freeze, and are discovered intact.

However, he emphasized that this is the first instance of finding an adult predator from the late Pleistocene era.

“Its stomach has been preserved separately,” he stated, along with its internal organs, providing a rare glimpse into

the Ice Age in the Yakutia region. As an active and large predator, this presents a unique opportunity to determine the diet of the wolf and its prey.

Additionally, the researchers collected one premolar – a tooth – to establish the biological age of the find. Judging by the wear on the teeth and the development of the sagittal ridge, it was already confirmed that this was an adult male, added Maxim Cheprasov, head of the NEFU Mammoth Museum laboratory where the autopsy is currently underway.

The wolf might contain ancient microorganisms still living

Research on ancient fossils conducted by the Mammoth Museum, particularly on Yakut and Lena horses, hares, and the Holocene bear, enables scientists to map genome sequences, which they intend to determine for the wolf by analyzing soft tissue samples.

The scientific director of the Paleogenomics Laboratory of the European University in St. Petersburg stated that genome research could offer new insights into the planet’s history and the factors contributing to mass extinction and provide a better understanding of the future.

Therefore, this interdisciplinary research, which also involves the Department of Epidemiology, Parasitology, and Disinfection at the North-West State Medical University, will greatly benefit from the study of this single wolf.

The 44,000-year-old wolf might also house ancient microorganisms, as bacteria can survive in fossils for thousands of years. Researchers hope to learn about the ancient microbial communities present during the Ice Age, including pathogens and their functions.



Wolf carcass. (Photo: North-Eastern Federal University)

As the BLM plans another wild horse roundup, Colorado officials wonder about the point of new mustang task force

Gov. Jared Polis and lawmakers who created the Colorado Wild Horse Working Group are irritated that federal regulators moved ahead with plans for another helicopter roundup

Jennifer Brown | The Colorado Sun | July 8, 2024



Wild horses graze in the high desert of the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area, Wednesday, June 21, 2023, near Meeker. Photo: Hugh Carey, The Colorado Sun

Four years into an aggressive federal campaign to thin wild horse herds across the West, Colorado officials fed up with helicopter roundups tried something unique — a state-federal working group to collaborate on mustang population control.

Then the U.S. Bureau of Land Management went ahead and proposed its next helicopter roundup.

The announcement in May that the federal agency based in Washington, D.C., plans to remove 85-110 mustangs from Little Book Cliffs near Palisade has set off a fresh round of indignant comments from Colorado officials and run the state-federal collaboration into a wall.

The main question: What is the point of the state working group if the federal government isn’t even listening?

State lawmakers and Gov. Jared Polis created the Colorado Wild Horse Working Group last year because they were upset with the BLM’s annual low-flying helicopter roundups that corralled mustangs

and shipped them to holding pens. The 23-member task force invented through Senate Bill 275 has \$1.5 million in state funds and a mandate to recommend “humane, non-lethal alternatives” for wild horse population control.

Its members — which include a BLM representative — have been meeting for nine months, getting closer to offering solutions that are likely to include a state wild horse sanctuary and a paid team to shoot fertility darts at mares.

The group is a “recommending body only,” according to its charter, but “its recommendations are expected to be highly influential in on- and off-range wild horse management in Colorado.”

So when the BLM announced plans for its next Colorado roundup without consulting the group, it didn’t sit well with state leaders, who are calling the move “disrespectful.”

Now, the governor is requesting that federal land managers delay the roundup, pending “further analysis and discussion.” The BLM says that while the state task force “provides an excellent forum for discussions,” the federal agency did not ask the state group’s opinion about the helicopter roundup because that is “outside the scope of their work.”

“The state working group was not envisioned to be a policy or decision-making group for management of federally protected wild horses. The BLM is responsible for the management of wild horses in Colorado,” the BLM told The Colorado Sun.

The federal government anticipates a long-term collaboration with Colorado regarding wild horses — once it thins the mustang population to an appropriate level. The Little Book Cliffs roundup is

likely to happen in the fall.

“I am confident that we can succeed together in implementing the most robust fertility control darting program in the nation, and wild horse populations must first be at sustainable levels to allow that plan to work,” the BLM’s Colorado state director, Doug Vilsack, told The Sun via email.

Polis wants a “bait and trap,” not a helicopter

Polis asked the federal agency to instead allow Colorado’s Department of Agriculture to fund fertility control in Little Book Cliffs, saying the BLM’s roundup plan was excessive. For years, the federal government has paid for fertility vaccines, but relies on volunteers to do the painstaking work of tracking down horses in the wild and shooting darts.

The federally determined “appropriate management level” of the Little Book Cliffs herd is 90-150 horses, and the current population is 203, including 22 foals. That means there are only about 50 animals more than the upper end of the appropriate level, the governor wrote, yet the BLM wants to remove about 100.

“This will be the largest roundup ever in Little Book Cliffs,” Polis wrote. “This is an escalation of roundups for this area rather than my strongly preferred approach of more measured population management, which prioritizes the well-being of these animals.”



A livestock helicopter pilot rounds up wild horses from the Lake Herd Management Area on July 13, 2008, in Washoe County, Nev., near the town on Empire, Nevada. Photo: AP Photo/Brad Horn

The governor also requested that “if” the BLM proceeds with a roundup, the federal agency use a slow-paced “bait and trap” approach, which involves enticing horses into remote corrals with water and hay, instead of using a helicopter. He also asked that

wranglers on horseback do not rope any mustangs, saying that has “high potential for extreme stress, injury and death.”

Polis also wants the state veterinarian involved in the roundup and public viewing of the roundup, calling it “vital for the peace of mind of Coloradans.” And he wants “special attention” to keep foals with their mothers.

“As I have shared with you previously, I am concerned about the separation of foals and mares, the long distances that foals and other horses may be required to run in adverse weather conditions, and the length of time that foals may be separated from mares,” Polis wrote.

The main sponsors of the bipartisan legislation that created the state working group also weighed in on the BLM plan, calling it “contrary to the good faith we envisioned” when they passed the law.

The “clear intent” of the new law, which is unique among states across the West with wild horses, was to boost the fertility control program and “avoid the very roundup contemplated in Little Book Cliffs for this fall,” the lawmakers’ letter states. It’s signed by House Majority Leader Monica Duran, a Wheat Ridge Democrat, as well as Sen. Joann Ginal, a Fort Collins Democrat, Sen. Perry Will, a New Castle Republican, and Rep. Mike Lynch, a Wellington Republican.

The rangeland east of Grand Junction provides a “model opportunity to demonstrate the real potential for state-federal partnerships within our state,” they said. “We are eager to hear back that Colorado BLM will reconsider their plans in Little Book Cliffs to align with our requests.”

In an interview with The Colorado Sun, Duran called the proposed roundup “frustrating” and “disrespectful,” and said she believes the plan is coming from the D.C. office of the federal agency, not local leaders in Colorado.

“Even though I understand that it’s the national BLM that is kind of dictating to the Colorado BLM, it still feels somewhat disrespectful,” she said. “This has kind of put a hold on where things are going because now we are having to deal with this.”

Duran said Colorado needs to “push back” against the federal proposal and show other states that “we lead the way here.”

“We need to respect and honor the systems that are in place. The other way isn’t working and it’s not in any way humane.”

The BLM’s state director testified at the state legislature to help create the working group, and the federal agency said that “management of public land and wild horses in Colorado will always be better with cooperation between the state and federal government.”



Kathy Degonia, right, president of Piceance Mustangs, and Cindy Day tour the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area in their jeep in search of female wild horses, Wednesday, June 21, 2023, near Meeker. Photo: Hugh Carey, The Colorado Sun

So far, the group has discussed “ways to support local wild horse organizations, ramping up fertility control darting efforts, and opportunities for finding off-range homes for horses. Some of these ideas

have led to funding proposals and projects to benefit BLM’s management of wild horses,” federal officials said.

50,000 horses removed in four years

The BLM’s public comment period on the roundup ended June 14. The federal agency is expected to announce its decision later this summer.

American Wild Horse Conservation, a national advocacy group, said more than 10,000 of its supporters wrote letters to the BLM protesting a Little Book Cliffs helicopter roundup. The group prefers a fertility control program and says the Little Book Cliffs is the ideal place for a test case of a state-federal partnership. “There’s a better approach,” said Scott Wilson, the group’s spokesperson.

Water is often scarce on the 36,000 sagebrush-filled acres of rangeland at Little Book Cliffs, one of four mustang herd management areas on about 400,000 acres in Colorado.

Federal land managers removed about 50,000 wild horses and burros across the West from 2020 to 2023, about twice as many as in the prior four years. Colorado should have no more than 827 animals, the BLM says. The current count is 1,322.

Recent helicopter roundups in Colorado included the West Douglas rangeland in 2023, East Douglas in 2022 and Sand Wash Basin in 2021.

GROUP TURNS IN SIGNATURES ON MOUNTAIN LION BAN

124,238 signatures must be verified as registered Colorado voters for Initiative 91 to be placed on the ballot

Elliott Wenzler | AP News | July 3, 2024

Volunteers from a group seeking to ban trophy hunting of mountain lions, bobcats and lynx submitted 180,000 signatures on Wednesday in an effort to place the question of a ban on the November ballot.

Under state law, 124,238 signatures must be verified as registered Colorado voters for Initiative 91 to be placed on the ballot. The secretary of state will have 30 days to review them.

“Today we submit signatures to give Colorado voters an opportunity to stop the inhumane, unsporting killing of mountain lions and bobcats for their heads and their beautiful coats,” said Samantha Miller, the campaign manager for Cats Aren’t Trophies, in a news release.



A mountain lion walks on a cliff in Montana. Photo: Dennis Fast/VWPics via AP

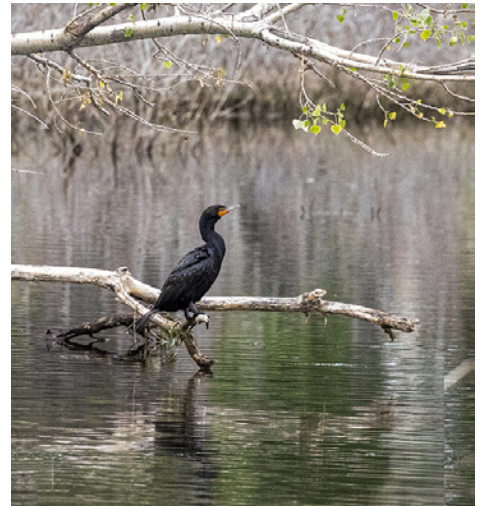


Our Beautiful Gardens & New Fox Enclosure Coming Soon!



— COLORADO WILDLIFE —

from Chatfield State Park & Roxborough State Park



Photos by Carol Vogel



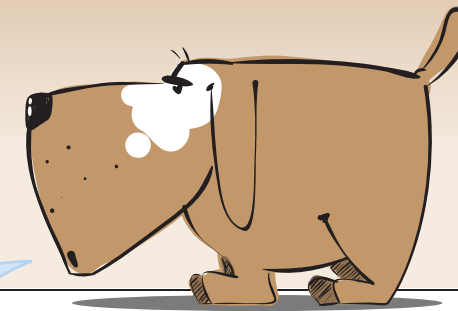
Adoption corner

TCRAS

Teller County Regional Animal Shelter
tcrascolorado.org · 719.686.7707

SLVAWS

San Luis Valley Animal Welfare Society
slvaws.org · 719.587.woof (9663)



[NOTE - Our shelter is still open for adoptions, but we are asking that you call ahead and make an appointment before coming in to the shelter - 719-686-7707.]

CATIER »

Hello. No my name is not a typo, I'm my own designer kitty! Sounds like "Cartier" but I made it my own! I'm a shy girl, very sweet but need my own time to open up. I'd love a quiet home that is all my own where I can be spoiled with all designer kitty accessories!



« LINA

I may be an older gal, but don't let that fool you!! I love to go on adventures with my human out on hiking trails or staying in and playing! I like to please my human and know a few basic obedience, but I can always learn new things too! I would love to have a fenced in yard to play in and keep me safe! I can be a little picky with my canine friends as I like to be top dog and I'm not too keen on feline friends

ROXIE »

Nuzzle into Roxie's fluffy fur. 3 1/2 month old chow mix. She loves to play with other puppies. Spayed, all vacc's, chipped.



**SLVAWS
ADOPTION FAIR**
Every Saturday at Petsmart
7680 N. Academy Blvd.
11:00am - 3:00pm



« BIRDIE

Lovable Birdie, a 3 1/2 month old Great Pyrenees mix already weighing about 25 lbs, will be a large dog. She is with her 4 littermates and mom. Spayed, all vacc's, chipped.