



Nevada Wildlife Watcher Newsletter

Greetings!

I hope this first edition newsletter finds you healthy and active in the face of the situations both our country and planet have encountered this year. Despite local, national, and international events, we continue to have meaningful discourse on Nevada's wildlife; pointing out the issues surrounding the wondrous creatures who live with us in the areas we all call home. This newsletter is meant to be informative, and the beginning of a community education process. For the purposes of this newsletter the term wildlife will also include those creatures who are not mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. For example, I highly recommend observing the antics of the cat-faced spider!

Definition of a Wildlife Watcher

For many of us the term "wildlife watcher" was encountered when the widely read 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation report was released. This report came from the work of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and US



Census. Comparing the financial contributions of the hunting and non hunting communities was revolutionary for many us non hunters who have been told for decades that we did not contribute to wildlife like the hunters; and therefore did not have a say in wildlife issues (despite many States' official documents and laws pointing out that wildlife belongs to all residents). Of course the term "wildlife watcher" was used before this 2016 report but the term was given a new meaning after the 2016 report showed how many billions the non hunting community contributes to the economy and to conservation. I would also venture to say that the term "wildlife watcher" can include support, advocacy, conservation, and appreciation. "Love" is term that is bantered around a lot and applies here too!

The pandemic this year has separated wildlife watchers from each other and has prevented some from fully participating in the normal daily activities that wildlife watchers participate in such as bird watching, advocacy, etc. However, some of us have found ways to forge on despite the restraints. Many wildlife watchers are working behind the scenes for new regulations and laws; some are working on habitat restoration - even if it is in their own yards; and some are working on lawsuits. The list of activities could go on. The next sections are devoted to a few updates on the activities of wildlife watchers.

Wildlife Watcher Profile: Update with Don Molde

Most of you know Don, who has a 40 year history of wildlife advocacy both in Nevada and nationally. He has prevailed through contentious Wildlife

Commission meetings where he was the only wildlife watcher in attendance for several decades; prevailed through threats and attacks on his character; and he has been on several boards of local and national groups. His commitment to wildlife has been extraordinary and inspirational. Currently he is involved in 2 lawsuits in Nevada that are being watched by people all over the country. Per Don here are the updates:

"Our original lawsuit, filed in August, 2014, claimed that the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners and the Nevada Department of Wildlife had failed to protect non-target trap victims from fur trappers in Nevada. We asked the judge for an injunction to stop trapping until such time as the department and

commission came up with a trapping management plan to address these abuses.

After four years of ups and downs, the case was scheduled for trial in August, 2018. The last business day before trial was to begin, the judge decided against us on grounds that we thought were not correct. We appealed her decision to the Nevada Supreme Court. A three judge panel of the Nevada Supreme Court considered our appeal and rejected it. We have now asked the full 7-member Nevada Supreme Court to hear our appeal. The court's decision on our request is pending.

Our second lawsuit, filed in June, 2019, is also against the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners and the Nevada Department of Wildlife. Our claim is that the predator killing program funded by a \$3 "predator fee" which all tag applicants must pay and which goes to a predator management program is an illegal tax under the Nevada State Constitution and that it discriminates against the majority of citizens by favoring a much smaller number of deer hunters.

Since 2000, the Nevada Department of Wildlife has spent over \$5 million contracting with Wildlife Services (the quasi-federal/state predator killing agency) to kill about 10,000 coyotes and about 200 mountain lions to increase deer herds in Nevada. Since 2000, deer herds have declined from about 135,000 to about 90,000 due to mostly climatic and habitat conditions. Killing mountain lions and coyotes to increase deer numbers does not work and has a number of deleterious side effects.

This lawsuit is now in discovery phase which ends at the end of September. We just filed a Motion for Summary Judgment on the equal protection/rational basis aspect of the case and are awaiting the state's reply. (The state can discriminate against members of the same legal class if it has a compelling reason and a rational basis for the discrimination. We see no such compelling reason/rational basis.)

A trial date is set for January, 2021 if the case is not resolved before that. We'll be asking the judge to get rid of the 80% mandate and perhaps the \$3 fee as well."

Don wants to thank all of you who have so generously supported the efforts of the lawsuits over the past few years.

data in a format that shows the numbers of bobcats are decreasing at devastating rates. The goal of wildlife watchers was to decrease the number of days of the trapping season and therefore decrease the numbers of bobcats trapped. The YouTube video is difficult to follow (the meeting was held outdoors in a windy area) but it looks like the Commission voted to follow the Department's recommendations which included a decrease in the number of trapping days from the previous years but certainly not what we all had hoped to save the bobcat from further decline. Hunter opportunity is shown once again to be the antithesis of conservation.

How to help wildlife

Thank you to all who sent in letters and contacted the Commissioners. If anyone has more information on this topic let me know and I will include a follow up in the next newsletter.

For those of you who are seasoned wildlife watchers - thank you for all that you do.

People who are new to wildlife watching always ask what they can do for wildlife. A few simple tips for newbies:

- 1) Keep your bird feeders very clean.
- 2) Keep your cats indoors.
- 3) Keep your dogs leashed in sensitive habitats - especially ground bird nesting areas and in the spring when babies of all species are at risk.
- 4) Donate to wildlife charities that are reputable.
- 5) That selfie is not worth the life of an animal - be very careful not to stress out animals just to get a great photo shot.
- 6) Create habitat in your yard with native plants and flowers.
- 7) Do not be afraid to speak up!

Next month we will feature another wildlife watcher, another animal, and the importance of democracy and the public trust in wildlife. Send comments and inquiries to Caron at eniarr61@gmail.com.

Check out NDOW's Webinars on YouTube. The one on coyotes is very good!