



Reducing Wildlife Mismanagement in the U.S.

Analysis of the Wildlife (Mis)-management practices in the USA that is devoid of ethics and its ecological implications on ecosystems

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Wild animals are also categorized as invasive species, obnoxious animals, pests, trophies and treated as nuisance and problem animals



History of Wildlife Management

Public hunting

- ▶ In the USA, before regulated hunting laws were passed, several wildlife species like the Bison and migratory bird species were nearly driven towards extinction.
- ▶ Respective state laws combined with the Federal Lacey Act of 1900, led to the end of market hunters mass hunting practice.
- ▶ State wildlife laws and public land laws were passed for protecting game animals and birds by issuing compulsory hunting licenses, imposing 'harvest' limits etc.
- ❖ **Wildlife management** started with regulated hunting in game establishments where wild animals were restocked as game animals.

Linguistic sanitizing used in killing wildlife

❖ Use of Euphemisms

- ▶ Hunting is considered as a “cost effective wildlife management tool” by hunting communities.
- ❖ **Harvesting wildlife by terming them as “Wild game populations”**
 - ▶ The value of an animal’s fur and meat determines whether it is a nuisance animal - meant to be immediately killed, or if it is worthy of “harvesting”.

History of “Wildlife Management”

- ❖ Creating Wildlife Refuges for systematic harvesting of wildlife (for killing wild animals)
- ❖ Breeding and restocking game populations for wildlife farming (for killing wild animals)
- ❖ **This resulted in wild animals being unnaturally bred and insincerely conserved through controlled public hunting of wildlife where certain game species are abundantly maintained for recreational sports hunting purposes.**

History of killing Apex Predators

- ▶ In the 1920s it was believed that to maintain and increase game populations, predators must be reduced, and other problem animals must be held in check.
- ▶ Game wardens and managers of the state refuges were requested to destroy predatory wildlife while on patrol.
- ▶ Additionally, the Conservation Commission (forerunner of the Division of Natural Resources) employed a “Vermin” exterminator in early 1920’s, who was assigned to trap and hunt “Vermin” on a full-time basis.
- ▶ In the 1930s, “Vermin” killing contests were conducted in many counties and it resulted in the elimination of thousands of wild animals.
- ▶ During the 1934-35 fiscal year alone, 40 counties sponsored and conducted such contests, believed at that time to be “beneficial.”

The Trophic Downgrading's Cascading effects

- ▶ When predatory species are removed from an ecosystem by local extirpation or extinction it leads to an increase in their prey base who end up being targeted as “Vermin” and culled.
- ▶ The White-tailed deer is an example of dramatic prey population growth in the United States (estimated population - 30 to 35 million).
- ▶ Earlier the sub-species, Columbian white tailed deer species were listed in the first group of wild animals to receive federal protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1978.
- ▶ But with their exponential population growth in areas absent of predator controls, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) down listed the Columbian white-tailed deer, from being listed as endangered to as threatened species under the ESA in 2016.
- ▶ Reclassification & declassification of once protected species promotes and incentivises aggressive hunting and illegal poaching.

The Trophic Downgrading's Cascading effects

- ▶ Earlier to such human interventions, deer population density was naturally regulated by free-roaming, chief deer predators such as wolves, bears, and mountain lions whose populations and habitats have shrunk significantly.
- ▶ Legalized hunting has mainly provided an additional meat source to Americans as seen in Texas and Vermont, where the annual deer harvest averages 450,000 animals, delivering up to 14 million pounds of 'boneless venison'.
- ▶ Whereas, Ecologists have pointed out that the non-excess deer population's foraging activities promote the health of the forest reserves by promoting plant biodiversity.

Targeted & Mislabeled species: Wild animal predators

Wolves:

- ▶ Wolves and its predatory siblings have been the most commonly persecuted wildlife species in the United States as they are perceived as a threat to humans' livestock and livelihood.
- ▶ Wolves are mostly a direct target and sometimes are a collateral damage to its closely relates species, the Coyotes.
- ▶ Especially in the U.S, wolves have frequently been listed, delisted and relisted as a highly endangered species. The constant wear and tear of such selective protection renders them highly susceptible to extinction.

Targeted & Mislabeled Wildlife

Coyotes:

- ▶ Coyotes are gruesomely killed by guns and cyanide bombs and hunted in wildlife hunting contests all throughout the U.S.A.
- ▶ Culling wolves and coyotes' mostly backfires and is ineffective in curbing livestock losses.
- ▶ When Coyotes population is regulated by wolves, bears and mountain lions, they play an important role in keeping the ecosystem healthy by keeping at bay rodent population and restoring the food chain.
- ▶ Moreover, research has established that White-tailed deer population decreases when coyote population increases.

▶ The Wildlife Services “wildlife management” in the past few years alone included,

**Killing 2.3 million animals in 2017,
Killing 2.7 million animals in 2016,
Killing 3.2 million in 2015.**

▶ **21,184 beavers, 997 bobcats, 415 gray wolves, 407 black bears, 334 mountain lions and 535 river otters also died in 2016 at the hands of the governmental agency.**

▶ **In 2016 alone, 2790 animals were unintentionally killed.**

The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services & its collateral damage

- ▶ Although the USDA’s APHIS Wildlife Services (**WS**) exists to effectively manage wildlife and facilitate coexistence of people and wildlife, at best their objectives are misaligned in nature, as their “wildlife management” work involves killing millions of wild animals on a yearly basis.
- ▶ The Wildlife Services despite being an entity imposed with the responsibility of protecting animals and ensuring animal welfare, has established where its priorities lie, i.e., protecting the interests of livestock producers and property owners.
- ▶ Despite of the mounting evidence of the atrocious practices undertaken by this department and its ineffectiveness, the WS continues using all forms of inhumane leg traps, lethal poisons and weapons in “managing wildlife.”

Methods used for “wildlife management”



Analysis of the ecological implications of “Wildlife Harvest” on natural ecosystems

- ▶ Ecologists emphasize that manmade alterations have the potential to adversely reshape the ecology of harvested systems.
- ▶ A scientific study - *“Selective harvest focused on sexual signal traits can lead to extinction under directional environmental change”*
- ▶ Ecologists highlight that Harvest has the potential to cause three types of genetic change: alteration of population subdivision, loss of genetic variation, and selective genetic changes.
- ▶ A research finding by Ecologists also shows how the recovery of carnivores across North America & Europe, following their extirpations in their 19th & the early 20th Century did not automatically regenerate apex predator demography's, life history's or re-establish their feeding, breeding & territorial patterns.

CONCLUSION

Biological controls - A humane alternative in controlling wildlife populations

- ▶ Supporting predatory wildlife comeback should become a core element of wildlife conservation; Reintroduction of predators to reduce the excess prey base in mismatched areas would be a humane and sensible alternative to the indiscreet culling of wildlife.

Hence, advocating the introduction of biological control predators, like the wolves to restore the balance in the eco system is required.

Nonlethal, humane methods to keep wild animals away from human encroached landscapes

- ▶ There are umpteen number of cost effective, humane alternatives such as using contraceptives, sterilization, translocation and humane deterrents such as fencing, use of sonar alarms and spraying dingo urine, all of which are promising, humane and sustainable options.

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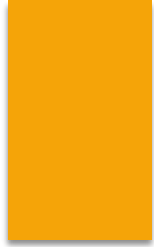
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Ghost Dogs, The long-persecuted coyote is not vermin, after all. Researchers are now discovering that it's a resilient, adaptable predator that's not just surviving in U.S. cities but playing a valuable role in restoring the food chain

COYOTE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ANIMAL SPECIES

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