

Measure to End Trophy Hunting of Mountain Lions, Fur-Trapping of Bobcats has 'Sufficient' Signatures for 2024 Ballot

Initiative to stop using dog packs and traps to catch and kill unoffending mountain lions, bobcats, lynx for their heads and fur will face voters in November

GRAND LAKE, COLORADO, USA, August 1, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Secretary of State has confirmed today, with an official statement of sufficiency, that the Cats Aren't Trophies campaign has enough signatures to be placed on the November ballot.

CATs "is sufficient and will be certified to the 2024 General Election Ballot," writes Jeffrey Mustin, Ballot Access Manager for the Elections Division at the Colorado Department of State in an email to the campaign.



Media may access [the letter here](#): CATs_2023-2024-91-Statement-of-Sufficiency.pdf (catsarenttrophies.org)

"Colorado voters will have an opportunity to halt the inhumane and needless killing of mountain lions and bobcats for their heads and beautiful fur coats," said Samantha Miller, Cats Aren't Trophies campaign manager, a member of Backcountry Horsemen, and a resident of Grand County. "While the measure stops the recreational trophy hunting and commercial fur trapping of wild cats, it allows lethal removal of any problem animal for the safety of people, pets or farm and ranch animals."

Trophy hunters, including hundreds who hire professional guides using packs of dogs to offer a guaranteed kill, shoot between 500 – 600 mountain lions during a four-month season. Of the 501 mountain lions killed for trophies and recreation last season alone, nearly half (47%) were female and not one was reportedly in conflict with humans.

"Trophy hunters go into the wilderness and shoot lions for fun yet want to claim that they are



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*Samantha Miller, Campaign
Manager for Cats Aren't
Trophies*

targeting 'problem' lions. That is fiction," said Pat Craig, native Coloradan and founder of The Wild Animal Sanctuary in Keenesburg, the state's premier wildlife sanctuary and a top destination for Coloradans and people throughout the nation. "That's the equivalent of a crime control plan that involves shooting into a crowd."

CATs Carves Out Cruel, Unjustifiable Killing of Top Predators, Maintains Integrity of Science-Backed Professional Management

The CATs measure makes clear the difference between

unsporting and cruel fringe hunting for fur and heads, maintaining best practices for professional management of wildlife. The measure is precise, addressing sport hunting alone, while maintaining full authority to Colorado Parks and Wildlife to manage infrequent individual mountain lions posing a verified threat to public safety, or to domestic animals including livestock and pets.

"As a wildlife ecologist, I can tell you that the science is clear that sport hunting of mountain lions is an ineffective means of mitigating human-lion conflict. If anything, sport hunting only makes conflict worse by disproportionately removing older males and creating a vacuum that is filled by younger, inexperienced males who are more prone to conflict with humans and domesticated animals," said Mickey Pardo, a wildlife biologist specializing in animal behavior and applied wildlife ecology who lives in Fort Collins.

There's no dispute that mountain lion trophy hunts leave orphans behind, as lions breed any time throughout the year, and offspring depend on their mothers for as long as 18 months. Lion kittens are most vulnerable when trophy hunters kill mother lions outside the den searching for food.

The measure also addresses the needless and inhumane killing of bobcats, with trophy hunters and commercial trappers killing about 1,000 – 2,000 bobcats a year. Canada lynx are protected under state and federal law, but if those restrictions are lifted in the future, the CATS measure would retain protections for them, granting them the same protected status as mountain lions or bobcats. Lynx are also at risk of incidental trapping looking to kill bobcats.

Veterinarian Christine Capaldo of Southwestern Colorado says bobcat fur trapping goes against her professional oath to end needless animal suffering. "When I learned that a bobcat in my community had been trapped and strangled to death, I vowed that this would be the catalyst for change for the humane treatment of bobcats."

Ethical Subsistence Hunters and Colorado Ranchers Support this Measure

Dave Ruane is an avid naturalist, outdoorsman, and lifelong big game hunter in Colorado. He supports the CATs measure.

“We don’t allow chasing elk and deer with packs of dogs for good reason, so why would we ever want to allow chasing a lion or bobcat with dogs into a tree where it is an easy target? This isn’t sport hunting with fair chase, it’s unsporting, so you might as well call off the dogs and go home.” Ruane said.

Brett Ochs has been hunting elk and deer the majority of his life and believes that mountain lions belong on the natural landscape and should not be shot for sport.

“Using dogs to chase a mountain lion to exhaustion and then shooting the cornered animal as it cowers in a tree is a serious violation of fair chase principles. Trapping is likewise a dirty and underhanded method that involves bludgeoning the bobcat to death and selling its fur — to foreign markets, which is a violation of fair chase and anti-commerce principles under the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.”

Deanna Meyer of Bell Meadow Farm has learned to live in lion country and be a successful rancher.

“I’ve owned and worked my family organic farm with goats and chickens for nearly two decades on hundreds of acres surrounded by National Forest,” said Meyer. “I can protect my animals well with guard dogs and secure nighttime enclosures, and I also value true wildlife conservation and the role of the territorial lion I have been fortunate to see while out on my ATV. I also have elk in my freezer, and allow an elk hunter each year to hunt on my property. But I strongly believe Cats Aren’t Trophies.”

No Surprise, Safari Club Funds Opposition

Safari Club International chapters including in Colorado remain top funders of the opposition campaign. Safari Club has long been known to exist purely to promote trophy hunting in Africa and North America. Its members travel just to slay the world’s most beautiful and rare animals for their heads.

Safari Club has more than 30 “hunting achievement awards” that incentivize killing animals to adorn their dens and private museums with trophies. To receive the “Cats of the World” award, a member is required to slay a mountain lion or puma, African lion, African cheetah, African leopard, and a Canada or Eurasian lynx.

Ban Trophy Hunting and Colorado Can and Will Conserve Cats for Their Ecological Services, for All of Colorado

California hasn't allowed trophy hunting of lions for more than 50 years; its wildlife agency reports the statewide lion population as stable. The state kills an average of fewer than 10 mountain lions a year because of social conflicts.

Trophy hunting lions disrupts social relationships between lions and creates a young class of lions less skilled at killing traditional prey,' said Delia Malone, an ecologist with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program and vice-chair of Roaring Fork Audubon Society who lives in Redstone, Colorado. "This scrambling of the territorial relationships between lions and the reducing of the average age of lions [increases risk](#) for conflict. Without human trophy hunting pressure, lions live longer, and science shows us that older, mature lions are [less likely to engage](#) in conflict with humans.

"There's no doubt that mountain lion hunting is not needed for broad-scale population control," said Jim Keen, DVM., Ph.D., a former U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist and former faculty member at the University of Nebraska, in a newly published report that surveys on-point scientific literature on the management of mountain lions. "Selective control of depredating lions provides social and psychological benefits to ranchers and others who come into conflict with lions," he adds, "but even then, most conflicts can be managed by non-lethal means."

His study, "A Scientific Review of Mountain Lion Hunting and Its Effects," examines peer-reviewed research that gives insight into the beneficial role of lions in ecosystems and the groundless claim that trophy hunting does anything but provide a recreational killing opportunity for the participants, who almost exclusively rely on packs of dogs to facilitate the hunt for trophy mounts. Dr. Keen is both a veterinarian and an infectious disease specialist and serves as the director of veterinary sciences for Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy.

Lions also play a role in cleansing populations of deer and elk infected with Chronic Wasting Disease.

"Colorado has long known that mountain lions are key to reducing the incidence of Chronic Wasting Disease, an always fatal brain-wasting disease that is infecting half of Colorado's deer herds and a third of its elk herds," said Dr. Keen, who is an infectious disease expert. "The North American lion targets neurologically compromised deer and elk, cleansing the population of disease and protecting these cervid populations for hunters and wildlife watchers alike. In this way, lions are protectors of long-term deer and elk hunting in Colorado."

Julie Marshall
Cats Aren't Trophies
+1 720-255-9831
[email us here](#)

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