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Killing wildlife isn't conservation

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Balance is crucial for top-performing athletes, professional dancers, human health and equitable public policy.

However, when it comes to the well-being of Nevada's wildlife, which legally belongs to all state residents, no such balance exists. Unelected public bodies with scant visibility — the Nevada Wildlife Commission and its subordinate county wildlife advisory boards — regularly exploit wildlife species. Both bodies maintain an unyielding focus on their ultimate objective: maximizing the killing of wildlife. These bodies are overwhelmingly composed of killers pursuing "conservation" by propagating target wildlife to a level where a hunt can be declared. The cycle repeats annually. The Legislature has structured the composition of both groups to promote only wildlife killers' interests.

Hunters want dead wildlife for wall decorations, bragging rights and a testosterone surge, not for survival meat. More than 1,000 known trappers statewide aspire to sell a limitless number of dead animal pelts for at least \$600 each.

The collateral damage to other wildlife species caught by hunters and trappers exceeds tens of thousands of animals each year, per a recently compiled report, from just 20 percent of trappers and no hunters. Unwanted, seriously injured wildlife receive no medical attention from hunters or trappers and endure a slow, agonizing death or are blithely killed.

Just 4 percent of Nevadans hold hunting and trapping registrations, yet their interests unfailingly trump the nonkilling public's desire that wildlife live a natural existence. Ranchers and farmers largely ignore nonlethal methods of co-existing with wildlife. Nevada even pays federal agencies to kill targeted species, which abjectly fails to produce desirable results while disrupting the natural interspecies food chain.

Did you know that most supposed federal and state wildlife sanctuaries allow hunting and trapping? And although more than 2 million people visit the Spring Mountains/Mount Charleston/Red Rock Canyon recreation areas annually, extensive hunting and trapping regularly occur despite the ongoing threat to public safety of hidden traps and armed people killing unarmed wildlife and companion animals.

Nevada's archaic trapping laws require trap inspection only once every 96 hours, the longest of the 50 states, with no tracking of individual traps. Would we leave a compromised human being in a trap for four days without food, water or the ability to defend itself against the elements or predators? Why is such brutality appropriate for wildlife when man believes he is evolved and civilized? Don't we have enough human-on-human violence without adding to the carnage by wantonly destroying wildlife?

Where is the bona fide sport in such skewed matchups? Couldn't weekend wildlife killers find something to repair, build or otherwise nurture for constructive fun?

If wildlife could speak, vote or contribute to political campaigns, they would protest the callous human exploitation. Instead, they depend on man for some minimal level of benevolence. To date, officialdoms' absent

benevolence pointlessly harms bears, elk, deer, sage grouse, bobcats, wild horses and other species coveted by wildlife killers.

Wildlife killers defiantly assert they have imaginary entitlements to kill whatever wildlife they target. Yet wildlife species occupied Nevada long before humans encroached on their habitat.

In reality, wildlife killers contribute precious little to state wildlife agency funding — just 23 percent of the budget from registration fees paid. Most of the federal taxpayer money funding wildlife programs comes from non-wildlife-killing gun owners, not hunters and trappers. Even ecotourists seeking wildlife observation (not killing) far eclipse the hunters' and trappers' economic contributions, per budget documents submitted to the 2013 Legislature.

Gov. Brian Sandoval delivered a September address proclaiming his leadership in merging and eliminating state agencies. Here's an action item requiring leadership: Abolish the Nevada Wildlife Commission and its 17 county advisory boards during the next Legislature, thereby eliminating useless, costly and biased bodies focused only on wildlife killing, not protection. The state's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources already operates under this organizational model. The wildlife department employs professional staff potentially capable of rebalancing wildlife's best interests against the current, shameless slaughter.

A final factor warrants disclosure: Hunters, trappers and their trade groups with intentionally deceptive names pay no severance compensation when permanently destroying the public's wildlife, a valuable natural resource akin to gold, silver, oil or natural gas. Such compensation is overdue and appropriate given the extent of damage inflicted.

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