

What Everyone Who Enjoys Wildlife Should Know



Wildlife is in trouble today. Big game, game birds and even song birds are becoming more and more scarce. There is a **CRISIS!**

It's not loss of habitat. Most wild animals adjust well to man and his surroundings. In fact, many changes in the environment by man have helped wildlife. For example, when man settled the west, the land was often semiarid. Irrigation and reservoirs allow wildlife to flourish where few could previously survive.

Hunting is not the problem either. Songbirds which are not hunted are scarce. Many areas with no hunting have few animals to see and enjoy.

On the other hand, due to ability to control numbers of licenses, length of season and sex of animal taken, hunting has proven to be the best method for the control of game animals and birds. It keeps them abundant and yet controls them from excessive crop damage or habitat destruction.

Did you know hunting has been reduced in almost every area of North America? Yet wild game and birds are not to be seen or found in many areas. So what's the problem?

The problem is **PREDATION**. In recent years, predators have increased unchecked due to several reasons and the result is destruction of multitudes of wild game and birds.

Why have predators increased?

Popularity given the predator by groups who have promoted them extensively is one reason. For example, enormous parts of Washington and Oregon are being set aside as habitat for the Spotted Owl. This bird is a predator on small animals and birds.

Protection given the predator has increased its numbers. Northern Minnesota has always had wolves. The wolves were kept under control by trapping and hunting. The deer population was abundant and northern Minnesota was known for good hunting and viewing of wildlife. In 1973, wolves were federally protected. Now the deer population is only a small percentage



14 pt. buck dragged down by 1 timberwolf. Six men on a logging crew witnessed the attack. The deer was attacked 3 times and was literally eaten alive (15-20 lbs. flesh torn from hams). The buck was examined internally and found to be healthy. Photo-Carl Brown.

of what it used to be.

Price of furs have plummeted. Thus few people can afford to trap with so little return. This is due to negative publicity and activities of animal rights groups. People, who used to regard fur as a status symbol, are now being persuaded that the taking of a predator for its fur is wrong.

Trapping is now under fire by many groups. It is the intent of these groups to completely outlaw trapping. If this happens, predators will increase at an even greater rate. Wildlife will simply disappear in many areas.



8 of 21 deer killed by two wolves in two days in Minnesota. Photo courtesy Wm. Callies, Conservation Officer (Retired), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Predation is very hard on wildlife. Dr. Lester McCann, Ph.D. has studied predation and wildlife for many years. He has found many interesting facts about predation.

1. Predators are the main carriers of deadly diseases of wildlife. Wolves and coyotes are well known to carry rabies which kills every animal infected with this disease. [Note: Rabid animals have often attacked humans. A rabid wolf was particularly dangerous due to its size and strength.] Raccoons carry a deadly fowl cholera which have devastated ducks in many areas.
2. Predation is non-specific - meaning the predator takes what it finds. Fox, skunk and raccoon are extremely hard on ducks,

pheasants and other birds due to their nest destruction. Many studies have shown no young reproduced from nests due to predation.

3. There have been no significant increases in wildlife populations without some kind of predator control program.

Common Man Institute has researched wolves extensively for several years. Here are some findings about predators from this research:

1. Surplus killing is common. This is especially true in the case of harsh weather. Animals, which are unable to get enough forage or have to endure cold temperatures for long periods of time, become weakened. This makes them very susceptible to predation and mass killing occurs.
2. Wolves and coyotes are extremely hard on the young, the replacement segment of a wildlife population. Wolves destroyed 95% of the deer population on Vancouver Island in British Columbia in recent years. Studies revealed that wolves kept the deer at their low numbers by killing off most of the young.



Deer fawn killed by wolves on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Photo Courtesy D. Janz, Biologist.

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WOLF PREDATION ON SHEEP IN ALASKA



Several of the kills were accomplished by severing the wind pipes and jugular veins without other damage



These pictures were taken by an Alaska Fish and Game Department biologist following a kill by 5 wolves of 20 healthy rams on November 9, 1988.

LOCATION: Wrangell St. Elias National Park/Preserve in Game Management Unit 11 between the Dadina and Chestasline Rivers.

NUMBER OF DEAD RAMS: 20

12 rams - little or no use by wolves

6 rams - 40 to 90% consumed by wolves

2 rams - No estimate of consumption. Checked too late-damaged by ravens.

BONE MARROW: All samples checked showed high fat levels. Animals not nutritionally stressed. All animals checked appeared in good physical condition with no defects making them susceptible to predation.

SHEEP AGES: 2-9 years old

SNOW DEPTH: 14"-29"