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On Behalf Of:
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Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB769

As a wildlife professional with over 30 years of experience, I have seen the benefits and the ramifications of legal, controlled, hound hunting verses no hound hunting of cougars.

Twenty eight years working as as Conservation Officer in Boise Idaho, where hound hunting is allowed, I am aware of only two mountain lion attacks on humans. Both were hunters who were calling wildlife and a lion came into the hunters calls. Each incident was a quick attack followed by the cat running away.

Mountain lions retained a healthy fear of humans, and dogs, mainly due to hound hunters. The Boise foothills are very similar to foothills around Colorado and California's urban / rural interface. Yet in these states, where hunting is not allowed with hounds, lion encounters are frequent due to the large predators loss of fear of humans.

Add to this the fact that lion populations have increased to levels where the cats are forced to find food on the outskirts of urban neighborhoods. Mountain lion are territorial in nature. Large mature toms do not allow other males in their territory. The younger males are displaced into fringe areas as populations increase, causing additional wildlife /human conflicts. When pets start disappearing in foothill neighborhoods, especially house cats, young lions are often involved.

These lions do not have the skill to take down elk or wary deer and they find urban deer and pets easier prey.

Why use our states conservation agency resources to remove these problem animals when we have hunters who can assist these agencies by hound hunting in a win / win solution.

Mountain lions have evolved to kill deer. Their canine teeth are perfectly spaced to seperate the vertebrae in a deers neck. This predator / prey relationship has in inverse relationship. When lion populations are high, deer populations tend to decrease. Especially when lion populations are abnormally high due to the lack of hound hunting. Yes lions are harvested incidentally by hunters in Oregon, but at such low numbers that deer herds populations are decreasing due to high predation rates.

Hound hunting is an effective tool in helping to reduce predators and increase deer populations. It is an easily regulated (permits and female quotas) harvest that not only helps increase deer numbers, but also frees up money for other wildlife management activities and helps reestablish a natural fear of humans in mountain lions, decreasing human conflicts and attacks.

One only has to look to California and Colorado to see the effects of high lion populations with no lion hunting. Decreasing deer herds, and increased human attacks are often the result.

Let's allow the sportsmen of Oregon to assist the wildlife professionals in their management efforts.

It's a win / win solution.

Thank you.

Rob Brazie