

Speeches for Aug. 9 CATs Press Conference

Pat Craig

More than four decades ago, Pat Craig had an audacious idea to rescue exotic animals living in inhumane conditions in the United States. Today, you can visit more than 750 rescued lions, tigers, bears, and mustangs at The Wild Animal

Sanctuary's four facilities located in Colorado and Texas. The [Wild Animal Sanctuary](#) totals over 33,000 acres of safe haven for more than 750 large carnivores — think lions, tigers, and grizzly bears, along with mountain lions, wolves, jaguars, cheetahs, and many other species — rescued from abusive or illegal conditions. He is a trusted messenger on wild cats of Colorado and CATs is grateful for his leadership and vision.

“Ladies and gentlemen, the time has come for us to put an end to the cruel and senseless slaughter of Colorado’s magnificent mountain lions and bobcats.

I am here today to announce that all Colorado voters have a new and incredible opportunity to save thousands of innocent lives — while at the same time — bringing an end to one of the cruelest and most cowardly practices that I have ever witnessed.

I have been rescuing big cats for decades, and from the most horrific cruelty at the hands of humans for no good reason, and make no mistake, chasing lions with dogs to shoot them in trees, and trapping and skinning bobcats to sell their fur is excessive cruelty.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the Cats Aren’t Trophies ballot measure will enable us to take a major step in the right direction.

This new initiative, when passed in November by the voters of Colorado, will bring an end to the trophy hunting of Mountain Lions, while still allowing for the necessary control of problem animals that threaten human safety or livestock.

Let’s be clear: mountain lions and bobcats are not a food source as many callous individuals like to suggest. Instead, they are hunted for their heads and beautiful coats.

This practice is extremely outdated, completely wasteful, and simply barbaric.

Trophy hunters, who are often wealthy outsiders, come to Colorado in order to hire guides and unleash packs of dogs to chase and harass these innocent animals to their demise.

It’s a cowardly and inhumane practice that guarantees a kill, regardless of the animal’s age or sex.

This is not hunting; it's exploitation!

Contrary to popular belief, mountain lions are essential to our ecosystem. They play a vital role in regulating deer and elk populations and helping to prevent the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease.

Tragically, trophy hunters disproportionately target female lions, which causes vulnerable kittens to be orphaned and left to fend for themselves - often leading to starvation or death.

It's time for us to put an end to this senseless killing!

Let's protect our wildlife and ensure a healthy ecosystem for generations to come.

Vote yes on this measure.”

J Dallas Gudgell

J Dallas Gudgell is Wildlife and Tribal Policy Director for the International Wildlife Coexistence Network, which is among the 100 wildlife conservation organizations endorsing CATs. Gudgell is an experienced environmental scientist and member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes. He is originally from the Fort Peck Reservation.

“My name is Dallas Gudgell. I am the International Wildlife Coexistence Network, Wildlife and Tribal Policy Director.

I'm Yankton Dakota member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux tribes of Northeastern Montana.

I'm happy to see a citizen initiative to allow the voters of Colorado to choose protections for a wildlife species that should be held in trust for all citizens. Mountain lions and wild cats have intrinsic value in and of themselves. Mountain lions and wild cats are an important part of the natural world and key to the balance of nature and our non-human relatives.

Lions and wild cats should exist and thrive in their natural habitat and their self-regulating populations without human persecution. As 2-leggeds we must recognize that we are a part of the natural world too and not separate from it. It is our responsibility as humans to recognize, honor and maintain our balance in the natural world and to coexist with our non-human relatives. And allow them to play their natural role in this balance.

In the pursuit of wildlife and human coexistence it is our job to change human behavior when excessive use is at play. As an indigenous person concerned with and raised in a framework of right relationship with the natural world, I find trophy hunting and egocentric activity upends nature's natural balance.

I support the people's right to participate in the Democratic process to protect wild cats from senseless use.

I prefer that in the public trust of these wild animals we allow them to roam free for the enjoyment of all. “

Erik Molvar

Erik Molvar is an avid elk, deer, pronghorn, caribou hunter, who supports the CATs measure, because as he says, mountain lion and bobcat hunting using dogs and traps is cheating and doesn't deserve respect from hunters or the general public. Molvar is a wildlife biologist and Executive Director of Western Watersheds. He has published science on wildlife conservation planning, ecology and population dynamics and was managing editor for the official interagency commemorative book for the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

My name is Erik Molvar. I am a hunter, having hunted elk, deer, pronghorn, caribou, and other species, to put food on the table.

It seems like the hunters and organizations who appear most frequently in the media come from one extreme of the hunting spectrum, those who want to defend all types of hunting and trapping, at all costs.

But many hunters are like me, they subscribe to hunting ethics, like the fair-chase principle. Running mountain lions for miles with multiple dogs until they retreat into a tree, and then shooting them, that's not fair chase. The prey animal doesn't have a fair chance to escape, and hunters aren't taking the quarry using their own skill and knowledge. Catching lynx or bobcats in traps isn't sporting either, because baiting an animal into a hidden trap using scents or meat as bait is unfair and underhanded. We don't allow the baiting of elk and deer with salt blocks, because it's cheating. We shouldn't allow cats to be baited for the same reasons.

Hunting for big cats is trophy hunting, pure and simple. It's to bring home a trophy, maybe have a scary taxidermy mount to put on your wall or on your mantelpiece, to brag about and impress your friends. That doesn't respect the quarry, which is one of the fundamental principles of hunting ethics, so it doesn't deserve any particular respect by the general public, either.

Most hunters who take cats don't eat the meat. This is called "wanton waste," and treated as a crime for other game species in many states. I was taught that you should never kill an animal that you don't intend to eat, and that there is an ethical responsibility to make sure that no meat is wasted.

It's difficult to justify hunting and trapping for mountain lions, for bobcats, or for lynx, and there are plenty of other species to hunt that aren't so problematic under hunting ethics.

It's time to end practices like cat hunting and trapping, which are an embarrassment to legitimate hunters."

Dr. Valerie Johnson, DVM, PhD

Dr. Johnson, PhD, is a critical care veterinarian with a PhD from Colorado State University who has a long history of working at The Wild Animal Sanctuary.

"As a veterinarian I have pledged to help society through the prevention and relief of animal suffering.

When I hear the term hunting, I do not think of someone who wants to cut the head off an animal and skin it for the pleasure of having that trophy on the wall, or selling its fur.

I think of mountain lion and bobcat trophy hunters in the same vein as the people who pay money to go to Africa and cut the tusks off elephants; the same as people who pay large amounts of money to go to Africa to kill exotic animals just for the sake of killing.

We all know that humans have disturbed the ecosystem and thrown the balance off, because we have killed the predators of deer and elk, causing increased spread of disease, starvation and increased traffic accidents.

Hunting helps to curb the elk and deer populations and provides resources to humans. But mountain lions and bobcats are not hunted for meat but merely killed for pleasure and show.

On a trip to Africa, I was amazed at how few African lions we saw on safari and was told that the lions had been hunted to very few numbers.

While working at the Wild Animal Sanctuary I have seen many people who wanted big cats as living trophies and shut them in small cages in horrible conditions.

This is no different than killing wild cats for trophies.

In this enlightened age, I find it appalling that as a society we would condone killing animals for the pleasure of killing. The suffering that it causes is not as immediately visible as other forms of suffering such as leghold traps which were outlawed almost 30 years ago.

Suffering of kittens born to mothers killed for pleasure ensuring that the kittens die of starvation and dehydration is still suffering. Suffering of a human family whose loved one was killed by a deer in the road due to loss of predators is still suffering.

Trophy hunting is causing suffering for no other reason than the desire to kill. It is not good for the ecosystem including the humans that live in it and it should not be condoned by the state of Colorado.”

Rep. Tammy Story

Rep. Tammy Story serves as a member of the Colorado House of Representatives, representing District 25. She serves on the House Education Committee and Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources Committee.

“I’m thrilled to share in the excitement of this historic ballot initiative with Cat’s Aren’t Trophies and all of you today. I have seen mountain lions and bobcats in the wild, on my property, multiple times over nearly 40 years in Colorado. Throughout my adult life, I have continually voiced my opposition to the trophy hunting of wildlife, including Mountain Lions and Bobcats. The cruel killing of these animals for their fur coats and heads is just plain wrong. Currently, this isn’t illegal in Colorado and this ballot initiative is the next vitally important step towards needed change.

Mountain lions and bobcats play a crucial role in our natural world. Science reveals that they are essential for maintaining a balanced deer and elk population. This balance not only helps reduce hazardous car accidents but also allows these beautiful cats to target prey affected by Chronic Wasting Disease, a condition that is debilitating for deer and elk.

We must stop wealthy trophy hunters who target and kill these cats, many of them mothers, leaving their kittens orphaned and alone. And the biggest consequence these trophy hunters receive? An all too easily paid \$8,000 fee. Trapping and killing bobcats and mountain lions should not be a commercial enterprise. I am sickened that these hunters are able to sell these

beautiful animals' pelts for profit. We have banned unethical hunting before and must do it again.

By passing this ballot initiative we can finally put an end to these cruel, unnecessary killings. Join me in supporting this initiative, and I can't wait to see this pass in November!"

Mickey Pardo

Mickey Pardo is a Colorado ecologist and conservation biologist, and conducts research on wildlife behavior and applied wildlife ecology. He has authored nine peer-reviewed publications and worked closely with both government agencies and NGOs to facilitate wildlife conservation. Dr. Pardo's scientific work has been widely featured in major media outlets such as the New York Times, NPR, National Geographic, Scientific American, and the BBC.

"As a biologist who has been studying wildlife for over 15 years, I support the CATs ballot measure to ban trophy hunting and trapping of wild cats in Colorado. The scientific evidence is clear that hunting these animals is completely unnecessary and the methods used to hunt them are exceptionally cruel.

Mountain lions are an apex predator, so their populations are self-regulating. Predators like mountain lions play an important role in keeping elk and deer populations healthy by reducing the spread of infectious diseases like Chronic Wasting Disease.

As a wildlife ecologist, I have personally spent years living and working in mountain lion country. I have seen mountain lions walk by camera traps mere yards from my house, and some of my colleagues have come face to face with them in the woods at night. Never once has any of us been attacked. In fact, in the last 50 years in Colorado, only 1 person has been killed by a mountain lion, compared to 100 people who died in hunting accidents over the same period.

Studies show hunting mountain lions is completely ineffective at reducing attacks on people, pets, and livestock, and it may even lead to an increase in such attacks. This makes sense when you consider that hunters target large male mountain lions, who make the most desirable trophies. When one of these mature, territorial individuals is killed, several immature males from surrounding areas move in to take his place, and immature mountain lions are much more likely to cause problems for people because they are less experienced at hunting wild prey.

Finally, the methods used to hunt cats like mountain lions and bobcats are extremely cruel. Wealthy trophy hunters pay thousands of dollars to hire commercial guides and use packs of dogs to chase mountain lions up a tree where the hunter can shoot them with ease. Nearly 50% of the mountain lions shot in Colorado are females, which often leaves orphaned kittens to starve to death.

Bobcats are typically caught in traps, where they suffer for hours or even days before being shot, bludgeoned, or strangled to death by the trapper. Bobcat trappers sell bobcat furs to luxury fashion companies. This flies in the face of the North American Model of wildlife management, which recognizes that commercialized hunting places wildlife populations at risk.

The ballot measure to ban these outdated and unnecessary practices is a common-sense, scientifically sound, and long-overdue change to our wildlife laws in Colorado. As a wildlife ecologist I plan to vote YES, and I encourage everyone else who cares about wildlife to do the same.”

Dr. Christine Capaldo, DVM

Dr. Capaldo is a veterinarian in Southwestern Colorado with experience working with big cats and training at various sanctuaries regarding carnivore behavior and medical care. She has a special interest in feline medicine.

“My name is Dr. Christine Capaldo and I am a veterinarian in Southwest Colorado. Today we celebrate that there may finally be an end to the inhumane and vile acts of cruelty committed towards bobcats and mountain lions in Colorado.

It’s been over seven years since I learned that a bobcat in my community was trapped and strangled to death by a trapper for its fur. A witness to the killing said it was “gruesome.”

Strangulation, bludgeoning to death, and other cheap, inhumane methods that are used to kill bobcats are condemned by veterinary professionals and constitute cruelty to animals.

In addition, thousands of traps are set by bobcat trappers on public and private lands every year, unattended, posing a serious threat to the safety of children, pets and other wildlife.

There’s no scientific basis to kill bobcats because they self-regulate their populations, are slow reproducers, and will not overpopulate if not hunted. Bobcats are essential to healthy ecosystems by naturally controlling rodent populations without the need for harmful rodenticides.

Allowing unlimited numbers of bobcats to be killed every year in Colorado isn’t about any type of wildlife biology management, it’s about greed, trophies, the despicable fur trade to China, and a complete disregard for the welfare of wildlife. It’s a recipe for extinction of the species.

Colorado’s native wild cats are not for sale and we will not tolerate this cruelty. Let’s get out of the 1800’s and join the other states and nations that don’t allow bobcat or mountain lion hunting. In November, join me and my community in voting yes to protect Colorado cats.”

Deanna Meyer

Deanna was born and raised in Colorado and runs her organic farm raising goats and chickens. Deanna's family cares deeply about Colorado and they live on land that encompasses an elk calving ground that they have placed in a conservation easement. Protecting wildlife and land is her passion and she knows that cats aren't trophies.

“My name is Deanna Meyer and I was born and raised in Colorado. My family lives on land we have put into a conservation easement that encompasses an elk calving ground and is surrounded by the Pike National Forest. I have depended on this land for my food source for 17 years with elk meat that fills my freezer. I also raise goats and chickens, and I sell goat milk shares. Providing my own food from the land is a central part of my life. I work hard to

ensure the safety of my animals by using non-lethal methods to make it less likely that predators will be enticed to find an easy meal. I have had the privilege of seeing several mountain lions and bobcats on our property and I understand the essential role they play in biodiversity.

Several years ago, when I first learned that hundreds of mountain lions and bobcats were being killed each and every year in Colorado, I knew I had an ethical responsibility to try protect these animals from this needless and cruel form of thrill-killing. With this new awareness, I started seeing posts on my neighborhood group of dogs with GPS collars reported as lost, and then hunting guides saying their dogs were not lost but just learning to track down lions and bobcats. I started putting up trail cameras throughout my land during these hunting seasons and caught several images of these dogs roaming on our private property that we have worked tirelessly to protect. Then, one Christmas Day 2 years ago, multiple dogs were barking and I followed the sounds, finding 6 dogs who treed a terrified bobcat on my land. I was infuriated when I found out that there was nothing I could do. If this initiative passes, it will end this harassment and protect lions and bobcats who aren't causing conflicts with humans.

Mountain lions and bobcats are apex predators and their services are necessary to keep the biotic community healthy. Their presence improves the health of the elk and deer herds. Killing these animals for their heads and beautiful coats is immoral and damaging to the wildlife our family works so hard to protect. Passing this initiative will give CPW the legal tools to focus on protecting, not killing, these species. Thank you!"

Delia Malone

Delia Malone works as an ecologist with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. She serves as Wildlife Chair for the Colorado State Chapter of the Sierra Club, which endorses CATs and Executive Committee member of the Roaring Fork Group and vice chair of Roaring Fork Audubon, which is one of six Audubon Societies of Colorado that endorses CATs.

"Good morning, I am Delia Malone, I'm an ecologist and live in Redstone on Colorado's West Slope where I've worked conducting ecological and biological surveys for several decades. These surveys primarily consist of a lot of walking on our public wildlands – typically several hundred miles each field season – to seek out rare plants, animals and natural communities for the purpose of conservation.

Over all these years I've been lucky enough to catch a fleeting glimpse of a cougar only half-a-dozen times or so ... although I know, from finding their fresh tracks, scat and kills, that they've watched me many, many times. At my home in Redstone which borders roadless area, we're lucky enough to have a cougar family that has lived in the forest above us for generations — although we occasionally catch a glimpse of mom and cubs — we've never had a negative encounter with the cougar family.

Conservation of Colorado's wildlife and wildlands depends on using science to provide the facts that properly guide sustainable, ethical decisions about our natural world.

What I've witnessed and what science supports is that cougars are a vital component of Colorado's ecosystems. Cougars help keep mule deer populations healthy by selectively

removing weak and diseased animals. — as of April 2024, CWD has been detected in 42 of Colorado's 51 deer Colorado's deer herds. Cougar science informs that they, unlike ungulates such as mule deer, regulate their own populations and are important in moderating deer populations. By moderating deer populations cougars prevent overbrowsing, keeping vegetation healthy — vegetation which provides habitat for birds, and stabilizes streambanks which maintains healthy stream habitat for amphibians, fish and waterfowl.

Cougar trophy hunting is often justified as a tool to reduce cougar human attacks, predation on livestock and big game species. There is no scientific evidence that cougar trophy hunting achieves these objectives (CMGWG 2005).

Trophy killing a native wildlife species that plays a vital role in ecosystem health, such as cougars, is not conservation.

Not only is the trophy killing of mountain lions ecologically unsustainable, contributing to the downward spiral of the health of our wildlands and the loss of biological diversity, but because trophy killing contradicts the science, it is ethically wrong and should be outlawed.”