



Prop 127 draws distinction between

ethical hunting, exploitation | OPINION

- By James Pribyl, Tyler Reed, Dave Ruane, Brett Ochs and Charles Seymour

We are lifelong Colorado outdoorsmen and one of us is a former chair of our Colorado Wildlife Commission, offering a different take from Dan Gates, on Proposition 127, Cats Aren't Trophies.

We will vote YES to protect native wildlife from unethical activities in the great outdoors of Colorado that offer no public benefit but much risk to our future of ethical hunting.

Bobcat trapping is driven by the foreign fur market. These are our native wildlife, bringing intrinsic and ecological value to the landscape, yet we wrongly allow them to be exploited as a commodity. This goes against the grain of the North American Model for Wildlife Conservation, as well as our shared values of respect for wildlife.

There's nothing sporting about setting bait in cages to trap bobcats (about 900 last season), and methods are brutal, prolonging suffering, including choking to death. No one

prolonging suffering, including choking to death. No one should take pleasure in animal suffering.

Prop 127 protects both bobcats and mountain lions from recreational activity devoid of the NAM principle of fair chase.

A pack of dogs, wearing tracking collars, set out to tree these cats. They are shot in trees. It's the opposite of hunting, which takes skill, physical exertion and fair chase. In contrast, outfitters who charge \$8,000 per head drive their clients to the site where they walk up and shoot from close range. High-tech advantage and dogs guarantee 500 mountain lions will be killed, each year. No one should ever guarantee a kill. These are not animals in conflict, but targets executed for no good reason.

Lynx are protected from future trophy hunting/trapping.

The Gazette ran a great opinion by Dan Ashe, former director of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a hunter and scientist. He aptly wrote this kind of killing of predators stems from an archaic time when they were misunderstood, hated and maligned. Modern science shows lions balance nature and deserve respect. Hatred is not hunting.

Lion hunters keep the trophy: the head, hide and for bobcats, the fur to sell. It's trophy hunting, just like in Africa, where they target lions, elephants, rhinos and leopards for show.

We understand it's hard for ethical hunters to speak out, as we are today, but we must, because the stakes are too high. Prop 127 is good for us, because it aligns our values with citizens who do not hunt and have proven in recent independent polls Colorado does not approve of baiting, trapping, selling and exploiting wildlife, as being the most unethical and unsporting methods.

Today less than 5% of 5.9 million Coloradans hunt. Our wildlife agency has been hard at work finding ways to boost the activity for future generations. One good way is to vote YES on Prop 127, because it draws the needed distinction between what is ethical hunting and what is ugly exploitation that is profit-driven for the foreign market.

Ranchers deserve to know what works to protect livestock and science shows us again and again (the hallmark of good science) killing predators who are not in conflict is not effective and increases conflict when you take out territorial trophy lions already coexisting without conflict for the long term.

The public deserves to know what keeps them and their pets safe, and this kind of killing does nothing to prevent or reduce rare conflict, if you follow the science.

Voters need to ask: What are we managing here? The answer is we are managing for the act of trophy hunting and fur trapping as special interests to benefit alone.

It is time for mainstream, ethical hunters to step up and say enough, we need to be responsible stewards, and fur trapping and lion killing for trophies is a stain on the future of ethical hunting in Colorado. If we do not, we are headed down the dark road of allowing the killing of wildlife by any means and for any purpose.

James Pribyl has served as former chair of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission and on the Colorado State Parks Board, Greater Outdoor Colorado Trust Fund and is a former U.S. Air Force Officer. Tyler Reed has been a hunter in Colorado for 27 years, focusing on waterfowl and big game. He holds a bachelor's degree in wildlife ecology and wildlife management. Dave Ruane is a lifelong Colorado deer and elk hunter, an avid naturalist and outdoorsman and has been a past member of

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***Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Anglers and the
Colorado Bowhunters Association. Brett Ochs has been
hunting deer and elk the majority of his life and believes
mountain lions belong on the natural landscape and
should not be shot as trophies. Charles Seymour is a
passionate backcountry fly fisherman who has purchased
fishing licenses and habitat stamps for 25 years in
Colorado.***