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OF THE UNITED STATES**

January 27, 2015

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Sonke Mastrup
Executive Director
California Fish & Game Commission
1416 Ninth Street, Room 1320
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sent via email to fgc@fgc.ca.gov

***RE: Support for proposal to ban bobcat trapping (Meeting Item 29 on February 12, 2015
Fish and Game Commission agenda)***

Dear Mr. Mastrup,

On behalf of the nation's largest animal protection organization and our California supporters, I am writing to offer our strong support of the proposal to implement the Bobcat Protection Act of 2013 (Assembly Bill 1213, Bloom) by prohibiting the trapping of California's bobcats statewide. With fewer than 100 trappers and AB 1213's requirement that any bobcat trapping program fees be set to cover the program's costs, it's prudent fiscally, ethically and legally for the Commission to take this step.

Cousins to the lynx, bobcats' scientific name, *Lynx rufus*, refers to their beautiful coats – which are ultimately their downfall as they are prized by fur buyers on global markets. Unlike their cousin the lynx, bobcats enjoy neither state nor federal protection. Bobcats are trapped for a global fur market—a commercial market that has spawned a recent gold rush on this American treasure. While killing bobcats for their fur allows a few to profit, fur trappers deprive a far larger public that is repelled by their treatment as exploitable commodities. When one kills a bobcat, the rest of us are unable to witness or photograph that cat in the wild.

Because of their shy and elusive nature, many more bobcats are killed through trapping than hunting. Typically trapped using cage-style traps, bobcats can experience extreme stress and injury to their teeth and gums in a desperate attempt to bite their way free. Bobcats caught in cage traps are also vulnerable to suffering from exposure and dehydration. Because trappers are only required to visit the traps once a day, the animal could be stuck languishing in pain for hours.

Bobcats very rarely – if ever – pose any threat to public safety as they generally only weigh between 25 and 40 pounds, and usually prey upon rodents and rabbits which can actually be a plus for agricultural producers. As apex predators, they are critical to biological diversity and ecosystem function. When we deplete predators and throw off that balance, we turn to other – more harmful and insidious - methods to combat rodents like the use of toxic rodenticides that cause widespread suffering and death not just to rodents but to other animals who come into contact with the poisons.

Here is an excerpt from our letter (dated September 27, 2013) to Governor Jerry Brown urging his signature on AB 1213:

Sonke Mastrup
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This legislation is a legitimate and important response to the more than 50 percent increase in just the past year in the number of bobcats killed in California, driven by the high price that fur garment makers are willing to pay for the skins of these animals. The Department of Fish and Wildlife does not monitor the bobcat population, but only publishes the reported “harvests” each year. Thus, we have no sense the damage such high take is having on bobcats – a species not considered by anyone to be a nuisance and rarely posing a predation or public safety threat. AB 1213 does not affect recreational hunting – which is done at far lower levels than trapping – or efforts to deal with specific bobcat/human conflicts, hunters and farmers are not affected.

We already know plenty about the dangers of indiscriminately killing predators – particularly those whose populations are not even being monitored. As I wrote in the attached opinion editorial that appeared in the Sacramento Bee in February of this year, “More than 70 years ago, legendary National Park Service biologist Adolph Murie published research showing predators actually strengthen deer and elk herds by culling out the sick and weak. Numerous peer-reviewed studies followed, also affirming the importance of predation to maintain the delicate balance of our ecosystems. Unfortunately, federal and state policies have yet to true up with these findings, and our laws and regulations continue to allow for the liberal killing of important species like bears, coyotes, foxes and bobcats.”

Bobcats and other predators have a key ecological role to play in maintaining the balance of other species’ populations, such as the many species of rodents who often do constitute real problems for farmers and others. When we deplete predators and throw off that balance, we turn to other – more harmful and insidious - methods to combat rodents like the use of toxic rodenticides that cause widespread suffering and death not just to rodents but to other animals who come into contact with the poisons. This is of such concern that DFW has asked Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to regulate more stringently the use of such rodenticides, and DPR is moving forward with such a regulatory change.

Finally, it is important to recognize that bobcats are an important part of California’s eco-tourism industry, providing wildlife enthusiasts at our state’s National Parks and other wild places with the thrill of bearing witness to the beauty of the animals themselves. California should protect this opportunity for our children. Our Fund for Animals Wildlife Center in San Diego County invests time, resources and love rehabilitating injured and orphaned bobcats – like the one profiled in the attached story. AB 1213 helps assure these protective and conservation-minded charitable efforts are not in vain.

Please share this letter with members of the Commission; we look forward to testifying in support of this matter at your meeting on February 12th.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Fearing
Consultant