



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Secretary
Press Service



GOVERNMENT HUNTERS KILL
80,000 ANIMAL BANDITS

"If you are sent after him, bring him in, regardless of how you have to get him." That square-jawed sentence sounds like parting words of advice to a posse of deputy sheriffs. But in this case it does not apply to man trailers, but to animal hunters. It is the slogan of the Government hunters employed by the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture to protect the herds and flocks of the West against the depredations of stock killers. All through the range country and sometimes farther east these patient and persistent men poison the cunning coyote, trap the wary wolf, and shoot the meat-hungry mountain lion and bobcat. Bears, usually protected, sometimes go on a rampage, and when their appetites make them a nuisance the hunters go out and settle the ranchers' grudge in a legal and effective manner.

Many a jaded city business man travels thousands of miles and spends thousands of dollars for equipment and other expenses to hunt big game. It may seem at first that the Department of Agriculture is missing a bet by not turning the job over to these sportsmen instead of paying out good money to men who do nothing but enjoy the thrills of the chase. But there are good reasons. First, in order to trap, shoot, or poison these killers, a man must possess expertness acquired only after years of pitting his wits against the cunning of the wild. And, also, men are needed who enjoy the society of a horse and their own cooking well enough to stick to the job year in and year out.

But there are men who take the jobs, and at very moderate wages. At the present time there are 150 trained and seasoned Government hunters on the job working for a monthly wage of from \$75 to \$150, the pay depending upon their expertness. But this money isn't clear. Out of his pay the hunter must feed from two to four horses, which he owns, supply his camp outfit, and feed himself. Additional hunters are hired by State governments and associations of stock raisers to help in this work.

Scattered over the West are also 30 inspectors, who oversee the work of the federal and cooperative hunters and plan campaigns where animals are particularly troublesome or where some lone four-footed bandit has long eluded his would-be captors.

That these predatory animals are expensive boarders and a noticeable drain on the Nation's food supply is shown by an estimate of the United States Department of Agriculture that before the active campaign by the Government hunters began, the tooth and fang tax upon stockmen amounted to from \$20,000,000 to \$30,000,000 a year. The rancher has always battled against his animal enemies with guns, traps, poisons, bounties, and inclosures, but better progress is made now that science has taken a hand and men make a business of killing the killers.

However, the Government is not content with hunting the animals that are doing damage to live stock on our ranches and to game in the forests. It does its best to keep out hungry wolves and other marauding beasts coming from Mexico. Hunters watch the passes leading into the border States, and arrangements have been made with Mexican stockmen to keep up a force of men that help our hunters patrol the international boundary. Hunters in the various States cooperate in like manner. A notorious animal bandit is run to earth in much the same way as human bandits are hunted by sheriffs in adjoining counties.

Scalps and skins turned in during the past year furnish positive evidence of the killing of nearly 31,000 predatory animals--687 timber wolves, 27,185 coyotes, 2,827 bobcats and Canada lynxes, 173 mountain lions, and 114 stock-killing bears. It is estimated that about 50,000 additional coyotes were killed by poisoning, which brings the total up to 80,000 stock killers destroyed during the year.

The experience of stockmen and hunters leads to the estimate that the destruction of this large number of predatory animals represented a saving in stock and game during the year of more than \$4,000,000. In addition, the skins of the animals killed bring in a tidy sum, the total so far turned into the treasury from this source amounting to \$283,000.

The spectacular method of hunting wolves and coyotes with large bands of men with guns and dogs has largely given way to quieter but more effective means. The hunter always carries a gun, but he now depends a great

deal more upon traps and poisoned baits. About 1,229,000 of these baits were carefully placed by Government hunters during the last year. Most of them are put out in winter, but they are often used in summer in the desert country, especially around watering places.

Poisoned carcasses are used with great success on the high ranges where the winter weather is very cold and natural food during that season is scarce. Small bits of fat containing the poison are put into deep cuts in the flesh, and these baits are available all through the winter or until the carcasses are consumed. When the herds and flocks are taken back in the spring, following one of these winter poisoning campaigns, calves and lambs find life much easier. But when the stock is taken back the hunters go ahead for the safety of the dogs and destroy the remains of the poison stations.

Reports from various parts of the West show that the hunters are killing coyotes in large numbers by this method. For instance, two hunters placed a 300-mile poison line in about 5 weeks, using 20 horses and burros for bait. When they got back to the beginning of the loop they found 40 dead coyotes at the first two stations. Stockmen all along the line told of finding from 14 to 73 of the pests.

Sometimes the depredations of stock killers are so bad in a locality that the ranchmen send in a hurry call to a Government inspector for hunters to relieve them. In one section of Arizona last year cattle raisers telegraphed that wolves were doing much damage. The inspector and a hunter went to the scene immediately and put out a line of poison which in a few days had killed off three wolves and several coyotes. The hunter stayed on the job and trapped four more wolves, cleaning out the entire pack of seven within a month.

The records of the Biological Survey are well sprinkled with accounts of the killing of predatory animals that had made reputations for cunning and destructiveness. In Montana two bureau hunters got the notorious Prior Creek wolf. He had been a terror to the cattle ranges for 6 years, killing large numbers of calves and ponies, but in spite of his uncanny knowledge of traps these hunters caught him within 6 days of the time they arrived on his range.

An Arizona grizzly bear had been killing cattle every spring for 10 years, and stockmen had offered bounties for his hide ranging from \$100 to \$500, but private hunters and trappers had simply wasted their time in trying to get him. A hunter employed by the Department of Agriculture and the State of Arizona finally got him after a thrilling hunt in which the pack of dogs was whipped and the bear stopped by a bullet when he was only 15 feet away. It is estimated that in 4 years this grizzly killed between \$25,000 and \$30,000 worth of live stock, and that in his lifetime he did no less than \$75,000 worth of damage to ranchers. He was the most destructive animal in the State in recent years. That he was a powerful beast is indicated by his measurements and the size of some of the animals he killed. The bear weighed 1,500 pounds, and when standing erect he could have reached up to a height of 8 feet. In one week he killed 12 head of cattle, among them a pure-bred Hereford bull weighing 1,800 pounds.

One day this fall a Government hunter in Washington trapped the Hanford wolf, an elusive killer that had been making depredations on live stock for more than 2 years, during which time it is thought he destroyed at least \$5,000 worth of stock. He was finally caught in a trap that had been carefully concealed in a trail. He dragged the trap and chain nearly 7 miles before the hunter overtook and killed him.

In bringing in these old trap-wise animals hunters sometimes need the last ounce of patience they possess. One of them had tried for a long time to catch an old female wolf that had lost a foot in a trap and had become so cautious that no trap could get her. She also refused the attraction of poisoned bait. Then the hunter took his bed near a water hole and stayed there every night. Finally he shot the three-footed wolf within 10 feet of his bed.

There are more of the elements of sport in hunting the mountain lion than in hunting most of the other predatory animals. They are particularly destructive of colts and also make heavy inroads on deer and other protected game. Usually the hunters go after them with gun and dogs, and in recent years have stopped their ravages in many localities. Last winter in one of the big deer yards of Montana a hunter killed 5 lions in one afternoon and from November 26 to June 30 he got 23 of them.

Predatory animals are fought largely because of the damage they do to herds and flocks of domestic animals, but it has been found that they kill off large numbers of game birds and animals. Where the killers have been thinned out by the Government hunters and others there has been a noticeable increase in the numbers of quail, grouse, and other ground-nesting birds.

During the year hunters have carried on campaigns in nearly every State west of the Mississippi River and also in Michigan. The Government has also put on demonstrations in Missouri, Iowa, and Indiana, and stockmen in Louisiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, and other States have been given information on how to combat these pests of live stock.

Ever since the first colonists landed on these shores we have been fighting the wilderness and it looks as if we will have to keep it up for some time to come. The more skillful the hunters the more cunning become the hunted.

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