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Posted: 10/27/2013 4:16 pm

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## The War Against Wolves and Wildlife: Time to Stop the Killing

By the time this blog goes live this photo will probably have been pulled from Facebook. The photo, titled “Wyoming is FED up,” is posted on the FB page, Sportsmen Against Wolves.

As of October 26th the photo had 563 likes and 307 shares, after being posted for less than three days. The posted public comments are disturbing:

“Love this!!!! I fully understand the masks, yer not idiots like those daring you to show yer faces!!!!

Keep on killing guys”

“Smoke a pack a day”

“Kill everyone you see boys!”

What is perhaps most disquieting about the photograph is the vigilante feel that echoes a lynch mob – dehumanize, vilify, and murder. Wolves are now reviled and persecuted in a land where they once roamed wild and free prior to European colonization.

While the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposes to remove federal protections for gray wolves through most of their historic range in the lower 48 States, blatant hostility toward wolves, coyotes, bears and other native carnivores has intensified. Like the photo above, the vilification of predators has taken on a new hue: one associated with righteous patriotism. But all true Americans should be concerned about this tenor of violence and hatred toward other living beings. What lessons are we teaching young people when we show such blatant disrespect and denigration of wildlife?... when “we” proudly post photos of men with their bloodied victims on Facebook and Twitter? (see this video posted on Facebook of a reported wolf being shot in Idaho – warning: graphic) and when our own federal government condones this violence and wanton animal abuse in its lethal predator control programs?

Anti-wolf hatred fueled a 2011 Congressional rider that removed federal protections for wolves in the Northern Rockies and Great Lakes thereby turning management over to the states in these regions.

The result: In just seven days of this year’s wolf hunt in Wisconsin, 97 wolves were killed – about twice the pace at which wolves were killed last year, the state’s inaugural and very controversial wolf-hunt season. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources estimates the total state wolf population to be around 800 – and would like trappers and hunters to reduce the population to 350 – a number scientists say is not sustainable.

At least 1,321 wolves have been killed by trophy hunters and commercial and recreational trappers in Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho alone. Montana sold over 6,000 wolf-hunting licenses this season; each license – \$19 for state residents – allows a person to kill up to five wolves. The current wolf population in Montana is estimated at 625. Wolf watching generates approximately \$30 million annually to the towns around Yellowstone; the cost to reintroduce and recover wolves into the Northern Rockies was estimated to be more than \$150 million. What is the value of a wolf alive – over the course of his or her lifetime – compared to one-shot dead for a \$19 wolf-hunting license? Ethics of recreational killing of wolves aside, economics does not justify this insanity. Moreover, trophy hunting of large carnivores can have many negative ecological repercussions as discussed in a new study in Biological Conservation.

Members of Congress, predator friendly ranchers, respected scientists have spoken out publicly against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s proposal to remove federal protections for wolves arguing that delisting is premature and is not scientifically sound. The Service has extended the public comment period regarding their proposal to delist wolves from the ESA and has rescheduled public hearings. If you want to see wolves in the wild please click here, take action, and make your voice heard. Then share this blog post with others. The Service will accept comments through December 17th. Check out Project Coyote’s homepage and Facebook page for more updates.