

MINUTES

FISH AND GAME COMMITTEE

MONTANA STATE SENATE

January 14, 1977

The third meeting of the Fish and Game Committee was called to order by Chairman Frank Dunkle, at 8:00 A.M., in Room 405 of the State Capitol Building.

ROLL CALL: All members were present.

CONSIDERATION OF SB 47: An act to provide for the management of the bobcat as a game animal.

Senator Joe R. Roberts, chief sponsor of the bill, said it was presented two years ago, and all of the reasons for its introduction could be underscored at this time. The bill would give the Fish and Game Commission authority to set seasons and limits for the bobcat. Specifically, it provides that the bobcat can be shot by a livestock owner if it became a problem to him; therefore, the livestock owner is protected. Similar legislation has been previously passed for the mountain lion and it has provided strong protection for him. Senator Roberts hopes to provide the same protection for the bobcat. He said bobcat pelts have become so valuable recently that one pelt reportedly sold for \$500.00. In view of the market value of bobcat pelts, he feels the animal should be protected.

Mr. Bob Johnson, representing the Western Montana Houndsmen's Association, testified, saying SB 47 is a fair and impartial piece of legislation and will give the bobcat the protection it needs and deserves. He said his organization is in favor of SB 47 for the following reasons:

1. With increasing human population, people are coming to our state for recreational activities and a certain percent of them will be interested in using the bobcat in one way or another.
2. The lack of a license causes increased pressure from out-of-state hunters.
3. The alternatives to lack of legislation are pressure from protectionist groups for moratoriums and possible endangered species classification.

Mr. D. Weaver of Hamilton, representing the Montana Houndsmen's Association, spoke in favor of SB 47. He mentioned the following points: At the present time houndsmen in Montana

have four animals which they can pursue with hounds - the raccoon, the lynx, the mountain and the bobcat. The raccoon's habitat is basically limited to east of the mountains and, due to land use patterns and hibernation, its use is limited to the houndsman. The lynx is also limited, due to its habitat being remote and largely inaccessible areas. The mountain lion is primarily limited to western Montana; due to the habitat requirements of this animal, it is never very abundant in any given area. This leaves the bobcat. It has statewide distribution and is readily found on public land. Due to the nature of the bobcat, its habitat will support much higher population densities, in contrast with the mountain lion. The bobcat is not seriously detrimental to domestic animals. Houndsmen are increasing steadily in the state while the bobcat population is decreasing on a statewide basis. Thus, management of this animal is necessary.

Mr. Gary Snavely of Livingston, representing the Western Montana Houndsmen's Association, testified in favor of SB 15. His reasons for supporting this legislation were that due to the exorbitant price for its pelt, a greater amount of people are attempting to take the bobcat.

Mr. Bob Kiesling, representing both the Environmental Information Center of Helena and the Montana Wildlife Federation, testified in support of SB 47. He quoted from an article, The Vanishing Bobcat, by Hank Fischer. In this article, Mr. Norton Miner, State Supervisor of the Fish and Wildlife Service, calls the threat to livestock by bobcats practically nil.

Mr. Wes Woodgerd of the Fish and Game Department, presented a statement in support of SB 47. (Attachment #1) He also presented an article from the Idaho Falls Post Register in which the Idaho Woolgrowers Association supported protection of the bobcat, dated 11-25-76. (Attachment #2) Mr. Woodgerd suggested an amendment to page 17, Section 3, Line 10: following: "Set" insert: "provided further that the commission may permit the use of baits for taking bobcat".

Mr. Rick Pokorny of Helena, Montana, stated he would like to support SB 47. He mentioned dwindling populations of the bobcat. After discussing the subject with many ranchers, he said he has heard no complaints about the bobcat taking stock.

Senator Roberts concurred with the amendment proposed by Mr. Woodgerd. He wondered if the committee might wish to have an immediate effective date on the bill so the Fish and Game Commission could consider setting seasons and limits. He said there is a distinct possibility that if the bobcat continues to be exterminated, there will be controls placed on them by the federal government under the Endangered Species Act.

Chairman Dunkle determined all of the proponents had spoken, and asked if there were any opponents who cared to speak.

Mr. Ralph Holman, Chairman of the Legislative Committee of the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association (McCloud), spoke, saying it was the Association's decision to recommend placing the bobcat on the furbearing animal list. He noted that the value of the bobcat is its fur, not its meat and said if the animal is placed on the game animal list, it will be difficult to remove it from that status. (Mr. Holman's statement is Attachment #3).

In answer to a question from Senator Lensink, Mr. Woodgerd said the bobcot could be brought under management as a game animal or a fur-bearing animal.

Senator Lowe felt a tag system should be used to prevent the animal's being poached and sold. Mr. Woodgerd said recommendations would be presented to the commission to see that what the committee had in mind would be taken care of. He said a tag system could be adopted whether it is classified as a fur-bearing animal or a game animal.

Senator Galt wanted it noted that he is basically against the bill.

Mr. Weaver said his association had met approximately a month ago with the Montana Trappers Association and that the Trappers Association decided to support this bill because they felt it would meet their needs, although initially they were against it.

Chairman Dunkle closed the hearing at 8:40. After a short break, Chairman Dunkle reconvened the meeting at 8:50 A.M.

Senator Galt again expressed his opposition to the bill.

Senator Lensink stated he was wholeheartedly in agreement with it.

Senator Smith made a motion to accept the amendment presented by Mr. Woodgerd. Senator Manley seconded the motion. The motion carried.

DISPOSITION OF SB 47: Senator Warden made a motion that the bill be passed, as amended. This motion was seconded by Senator Lensink. A roll call vote was taken, with Senators Galt, Manley, Smith and Bergren voting no.

Senator Manley moved that the bill be retained in committee for amendment purposes and reconsideration. Senator Smith seconded the motion. The motion carried.

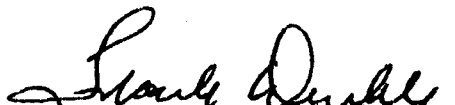
Mr. Woodgerd stated the Fish and Game Department has no preference whether the bobcat is a game animal or a fur-bearing animal. He said the testimony heard indicates people feel it needs management, and that it is immaterial what status it is given as long as it does receive management.

Senator Warden indicated she would propose the bill be amended to place the bobcat in the fur-bearing category so the animal could be hunted and also trapped.

Senator Dunkle suggested that Legislative Researcher Debbie Schmidt work with the bill and present a suitable amendment; he stated he would check with the bill's sponsor to see if this would be agreeable .

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Chairman Dunkle announced that a hearing on SB 52, an act to prohibit the carrying or use of air rifles by minors under the age of 14 years except when accompanied by a parent or guardian or supervised by a firearms safety instructor, will be posted and heard on Monday, January 17, at 8:00 A.M. At that meeting the committee will also take up the Fish and Game Department's proposed legislation. It was also announced that at 8:00 A.M., on Wednesday, January 19, SB 47 will be reconsidered for purposes of amendment.

ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Dunkle adjourned the meeting at 9:25 A.M.


FRANK DUNKLE, CHAIRMAN

ROLL CALL

FISH AND GAME COMMITTEE

45th LEGISLATIVE SESSION - - 1977

Date 1-12-77

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
DUNKLE, Frank, Chairman	X		
WARDEN, Margaret, V. C.	X		
GALT, Jack	X		
LENSINK, Everett	X		
LOWE, Bill	X		
MANLEY, John	X		
SMITH, Richard	X		
BERGREN, Russell	X		

Mary D Anavely - Hoffman Pt. Livingston Mt. 59047 ^{add 1140}

Robert L. Johnson Box 182 Somers Mont. 59832 859

3565

W. Weaver S.E. 220 Skalkaho Road Hamilton, Mont.
59840

Statement in Support of SB 47

by the Department of Fish & Game -- Wes Woodgerd

The proposed legislation to include the bobcat in the list of game animals has the complete support of the Department of Fish and Game. While we can't provide total population numbers for bobcats, we do know that they have been considerably reduced from former years.

The Asiatic spotted cat species are considered to be endangered and have been taken off the market, leaving our bobcat the only legal spotted cat fur in world trade. The resultant increase in the price of bobcat pelts has put such pressure on them that in our opinion they are desperately in need of protection and management.

This bill provides such authority to the Fish and Game Commission.

Idaho Falls

Post Register 11/25/76

Protection of bobcat asked by woolgrowers

KIMBERLY — The Idaho Woolgrowers, who are noted for keeping close tabs on predatory animals, are concerned about sharply declining bobcat populations. The bobcat is currently classified as a predator which means it can be taken any time, in any number, anywhere in the state.

With bobcat pelts worth as much as \$300 each, and coats made of the pelts selling for \$3,000, the Woolgrowers passed a resolution last week at their annual convention calling upon the State Legislature to bring the bobcat under a professional management program, "so long as adequate safeguards remain to protect domestic livestock" from individual marauding felines.

According to John Faulkner, Gooding, newly elected President of the Idaho Woolgrowers, the bobcat, totally unlike the wily coyote, is not a very smart animal. "Bobcats are easily trapped, do not have the high reproductive potential of the coyote, and might be eliminated from some portions of their range with the \$200

to \$300 prices on their heads," said Faulkner.

Faulkner reported the motivation for the resolution was twofold. First, contrary to some expressed opinions, Woolgrowers do care about wildlife, and the bobcat is in some trouble. Because bobcats only occasionally prey upon lambs and they are easily caught when conflicts arise, it is practical to take individual offenders without having to resort to local population control. Secondly, if bobcat numbers become too low, it may be put upon the "threatened list" by the U. S. Department of Interior which could seriously hamper control efforts for the coyote which shares the same territory, and is credited with putting many sheepmen out of business.

The Woolgrowers look forward to working with the State Fish and Game Department, the Idaho Conservation League, and other interested parties to see that workable protective legislation is drafted and passed by the Idaho Legislature, Faulkner said.

January 14, 1977

ATTACHMENT #3

Senate Fish and Game Committee
State Capitol
Helena, Montana

: Bob Cat

This testimony is given on behalf of the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association.

At our December Convention it was the unanimous decision of M.O.G.A to recommend that the Bob Cat be placed on the Fur Bearing animal list. That it be managed and regulated as a fur bearer.

Our reasons are as follows:

Due to the continuing demand for long hair fur, and the fact that the hard sought after Bob Cat fur continues to bring top market price; National attention has been drawn to the Bob Cat.

Due to this attention, and the fact that the Bob Cat is commonly referred to as a predator, to which many object, there is danger that an effort could be made to place the Bob Cat on the endangered species list.

Although he is generally referred to as a predator, and often is, he is traditionally and historically a fur bearing animal.

Trappers for hundreds of years have strung trap lines and harvested the Bob Cat as a fur bearer.

Its value is in its fur, not its meat.

Its pelt is quite often made into a fur rug.

Although in later years it has been treed by dogs and shot, it has always been commonly baited and trapped.

We have seen the value of beaver pelts, long haired fur, and short haired fur fluctuate from extreme high to such a low low that a particular fur became almost valueless, and we know that this will happen again and again. When long hair fur again goes off the market the Bob Cat will increase and again be a problem as a predator. He will be more easily treated as a predator if on the fur bearing list.

Should he be placed on the Game animal list, special provisions will be necessary to segregate him and regulate to permit baiting, trapping, and harvesting in numbers as trappers do. Also to provide for the discarding of the meat.

It would appear that, if on the fur bearing list, regulations could more easily be added to permit the tracking, treeing and harvesting by the use of dogs.

This same testimony also applies to the Lynx and Wolverine and we strongly and unanimously recommend that they also be placed on the fur bearing animal list.

Thank You,

Ralph Holman
Chairman Legislative Committee
Montana Outfitters and Guides Assoc.

SENATE COMMITTEE FISH AND GAME

Date 1-14-77 Senate Bill No. 47 Time 9:10

NAME	YES	NO
DUNKLE, Frank, Chairman	✓	
WARDEN, Margaret, Vice Chairman	✓	
GALT, Jack		✓
LENSINK, Everett	✓	
LOWE, Bill	✓	
MANLEY, John		✓
SMITH, Richard		✓
BERGREN, Russell		✓

Sharon (Riskin) Smith
Secretary

FRANK DUNKLE
Chairman

Motion: _____

(include enough information on motion--put with yellow copy of committee report.)

NAME: Rick Pokorn DATE: 1/14/76

ADDRESS: 701 1st Street Helena, MT

PHONE: _____

REPRESENTING WHOM? myself

APPEARING ON WHICH PROPOSAL: SB 47

DO YOU: SUPPORT? AMEND? _____ OPPOSE? _____

COMMENTS: Bobcat populations are markedly down in the
Missouri River breaks area southeast of my home town of
Big Sandy, MT. I have hunted and taken bobcats
myself. In order to protect the dwindling populations I
believe protective legislation is necessary. Raised on a farm and
ranch near the breaks I have heard no complaints by local stockmen
of bobcats taking young stock.