

# The Sublette County winter blood-bath jamboree

*Posted: Thursday, Feb 18th, 2016*

There is a grand old tradition here in Sublette County, not openly advertised, known as the annual coyote hunt contest. This event, which could more correctly be known as the annual blood bath, is Sublette County's version of the 17th century witch hunts. The local fun-filled modern day witch hunt is sponsored by the Sublette County Predator Damage Management Board and is sanctioned by and funded, in part, by our illustrious county commissioners.

The benevolent commissioners donate, each and every year, \$40,000 to \$50,000 of your money to the local predator board. The predator board has now amassed close to \$100,000 of idle funds in their animal-killing bank account.

The annual "hunt," which in no way resembles any form of ethical hunting, consists almost entirely of troglodytes on snowmobiles who indiscriminately shoot and/or run down and run over living animals. The main victims, of course, are coyotes, which are considered by some heavy thinkers to be the reincarnation of the devil himself. Apparently, these people have no remorse nor give a flicker of thought to the violence they are inflicting upon these intelligent creatures. And this mindlessness occurs at this time of year, mid-winter, when these animals are living on the edge of survival.

Hunting is one thing but to run animals down with a machine that can travel over the snow at 80 mph is sick. This killing contest is a showcase for the most vicious predator on the planet, the two-legged variety, waging war on a competing predator.

Participants in this contest who account for the most dead and mutilated coyotes win a free case of beer or some other fabulous reward that is worth killing for. It is difficult for me to imagine what kind of human could participate in this madness and regard it as fun.

This is all revolting enough for any thinking person, but when this activity occurs on private land where it is not supported nor wanted or when it occurs with impunity on Wyoming Game and Fish property that is theoretically closed to public access or hunting of any kind, then it becomes really, really disgusting.

John Fandek

## ***Setting the record straight***

*Posted: Thursday, Feb 25th, 2016*

As Mark Twain said, “Never let the truth get in the way of a good story.” Last week’s zealous attack on a local coyote hunt penned by John Fandek made for entertaining reading, but not surprisingly, it was factually inaccurate.

Public coyote hunts are not funded by the Sublette County Board of Commissioners (or county taxpayers) - it’s as simple as that.

The Sublette County Board of Commissioners does fund predator control efforts undertaken by the county predator board but only through reimbursing the costs for professional services rendered by USDA Wildlife Services such as controlling ravens at the county landfill and targeting problem coyotes killing livestock on lambing and calving grounds. This federal agency also works under contract with other state and federal agencies, providing control of protected predator species that are involved in conflicts in Sublette County.

The county predator board consists of six elected members of the livestock industry in the county who pay predator fees during brand inspections of their livestock, including three representatives each from the sheep and cattle segments. In addition, the Sublette County Board of Commissioners appoints one sportsman representative to the board. This seven-member board holds its meetings in public and maintains a public file in the county clerk’s office.

Last year, Sublette County Board of Commissioners reimbursed the predator board just over \$32,000 for predator control efforts under the Wildlife Services contract - the highest amount funded by the county as the local board worked to target problem animals preying on livestock, an environmentally responsible method of damage control.

The predator board does contribute money (\$200 per hunt) to local groups hosting coyote hunts, using funds from the predator fees paid by livestock producers during livestock brand inspections - not county tax funding.

That someone may be opposed to the legal hunting of wild animals isn’t surprising, but the use of false and inflammatory information to support their opinion is unfortunate and does little to serve public interest or governance.

Cat Urbigit

Sublette County Predator Board

## ***Setting the record straighter***

*Posted: Thursday, Mar 3rd, 2016*



*John Fandek courtesy image Sandy Jamieson illustration*

Of course I expected to get a rise out of the local predator board administrators. And I am pleased that Cat Urbigkit was entertained by the sordid events relating to the board's latest killing contest. But my previous letter was not meant to be entertaining.

The Sublette County commissioners may not contribute directly to the infamous free-for-all-blood-and-guts coyote "hunt," but the tens of thousands of dollars (taxpayer money) that are funneled through the local predator board and into USDA Wildlife Services for "professional services" provides the same end result - the indiscriminate blanket killing of coyotes, a program that is not very palatable to the general public. With its eternal pigheaded stance, acting as if it is 1890, the livestock industry, at times, becomes its own worst enemy.

The mention of Wildlife Services targeting only "problem coyotes" and their "environmentally responsible methods of damage control" (whatever the hell that means) is almost too outrageous to address. Their so-called professional services, also funded by the much despised federal government (more taxpayer money), consists of WLS agents flying around the region in their nice new plane and randomly aerial gunning - in an environmentally responsible manner, of course - every coyote they happen to encounter. And since these "professionals" have no idea - or care - how property boundaries lie, often enough these activities occur on private property where they have no permission to operate. This viewpoint comes from repeated personal experiences.

And finally, back to my original issue which seems to have been lost somewhere in this pleasant exchange. I have been a hunter since I was old enough to walk outdoors by myself; I engage in that recreation and meat-gathering event quite seriously. But it takes a sick and

twisted mind to run down animals with a snowmobile (as encouraged and accepted by the killing contest sponsors) and regard that activity as legitimate hunting. This serves as great fodder for the extreme anti-hunting public who view all hunters, good and bad, as nothing more than barbarians. This coyote-killing-contest crap provides no real benefit to anybody, including nothing but bad publicity for the ranching community.

John Fandek

Cora

*For the complete article see the 03-04-2016 issue.*

## ***Coyotes aren't the problem***

*Posted: Thursday, Mar 10th, 2016*

Last week, upon reading John Fandek's letter, I was stunned.

A while back, we saw a low-flying red and white plane repeatedly going up and down and circling over our willow pastures on Middle Piney Creek. At the time, we had a herd of horses in these willows.

I did some research and discovered that the plane belonged to the USDA Wildlife Services. They were either shooting coyotes or driving them out of our willows onto the BLM to shoot them. This Wildlife Services is out of control with their random aerial shooting of coyotes. No one had our permission and we would not have given it. Not only because of the horses but this ranch does not approve of coyote slaughtering. We also do not appreciate renegades in planes flying over our property at a close enough proximity to affect what is happening on the ground. Isn't this serious trespassing or worse?

We do not have a coyote problem on our ranch. Never have we felt that we have lost our animals to coyotes. We hear all kind of stories but we have not experienced depredation from coyotes, and if we do, we will take care of it ourselves. So far, the cycles of nature take care of the coyote and its prey's equilibrium.

Aerial shooting is funded by taxpayers and it is very expensive and not well supervised. The Predator Control Board engaged these "professionals" through the USDA Wildlife Services. How professional are people that do not know or care if they are targeting private land. Where is the landowners' or public's say in this procedure?

I agree with John about the coyote hunting contests - basically that they are appalling. I am under the understanding that the Predator Control Board does not put this yearly contest on but does help fund it (with tax money attained from the county commissioners). It is apparently a private deal known only by word of mouth and in the bars. It is not generated by ranchers, but by "sportsmen." Killing as a contest is appalling, especially with no rules or regulations -participants have even been seen running down coyotes with snow machines.

Coyotes are only doing what God created them to do. How can it be sport to torment them? Coyotes do more good than harm to our ecosystem and we need to get along with them until one can honestly, in their hearts, feel something has to be done. At that point, it should be handled at a rational scale and not by contests, nor by hired "professionals" haphazardly flying around taking it upon themselves to think that everyone appreciates the mass killing of animals.

Tara Miller, rancher

Big Piney

*Posted: Thursday, Mar 11th, 2016*

Dear Editor,

The Pinedale Roundup printed a letter by Tara Miller, rancher who along with John Fandek wrote thoughtful and considerate letters bringing awareness to the callous slaughtering of coyotes funded by the Predator Control Board. This isn't about Bambi and bleeding hearts either.

A previous letter defended this inferior excuse of "hunting" and apparently finds it to be a beneficial and a treasured practice that benefits ranchers and the community for some nonsensical reason. Coyotes are simply not as prolific as they used to be, ask yourself the last time you saw one - if you did it was probably alone in a field hunting mice.

This is simply an excuse for unethical "hunters" to go on a slaughter defended by self-righteous extremists. However, to address the question about air space, according to the Wall Street Journal "Who owns your airspace" 85 feet above lands are subject to a 1946 ruling that "landowners have exclusive control of the immediate reaches above their land," and airplanes are restricted to 500 feet and up. This doesn't protect landowners significantly but it's what there is. 17 states have recently adopted new laws on airspace use - mostly directed to drones.

Maike Tan

Concerned citizen