

US Department of Agriculture Killed 1.3 Million Native Animals in 2017

Ignoring Calls for Reform, Wildlife Services Slaughtered Coyotes, Bears, Wolves

By [Center For Biological Diversity](#)

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The arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture known as [Wildlife Services](#) killed more than 1.3 million native animals during 2017, according to [new data](#) released by the agency last week.

The multimillion-dollar federal wildlife-killing program targets wolves, coyotes, cougars, birds and other wild animals for destruction — primarily to benefit the agriculture industry. Of the 2.3 million animals killed in total last year, more than 1.3 million were native wildlife species.

“The Department of Agriculture needs to get out of the wildlife-slaughter business,” said **Collette Adkins**, a biologist and attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. “There’s just no scientific basis for continuing to shoot, poison and strangle more than a million animals every year. Even pets and endangered species are being killed by mistake, as collateral damage.”

According to the latest report, the federal program last year killed 357 gray wolves; 69,041 adult coyotes, plus an unknown number of coyote pups in 393 destroyed dens; 624,845 red-winged blackbirds; 552 black bears; 319 mountain lions; 1,001 bobcats; 675 river otters, including 587 killed “unintentionally”; 3,827 foxes, plus an unknown number of fox pups in 128 dens; and 23,646 beavers.

The program also killed 15,933 prairie dogs outright, as well as an unknown number killed in more than 38,452 burrows that were destroyed or fumigated. These figures almost certainly underestimate the actual number of animals killed, as program insiders have revealed that Wildlife Services kills many more animals than it reports.

According to the new data, the wildlife-killing program unintentionally killed nearly 3,000 animals last year, including wolves, badgers, bears, bobcats, foxes, muskrats, otters, porcupines, raccoons and turtles. Its killing of nontarget birds included chickadees, bluebirds, cardinals, ducks, eagles, grouse, hawks, herons, swans and owls. Dozens of domestic animals, including pets and livestock, were also killed. Such data reveals the indiscriminate nature of painful leghold traps, strangulation snares, poisons and other methods used by federal agents.

“The barbaric, outdated tactics Wildlife Services uses to destroy America’s animals need to end,” Adkins added. “Wolves, bears and other carnivores help balance the web of life where they live. Our government needs to end its pointless cycle of violence.”

The wildlife-killing program contributed to the decline of [gray wolves](#), [Mexican wolves](#), [black-footed ferrets](#), [black-tailed prairie dogs](#) and other imperiled species during the first half of the 1900s and continues to impede their recovery today.

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