

TESTIMONY ON WRONGFUL KILLING OF BOBCAT KITTEN

By Brooks Fahy, Executive Director of Predator Defense

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House Interim Committee on Natural Resources

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"I am here today to tell you why the bobcat kitten that entered the Oak Hill School in Eugene on October 16, 2019 should not have been killed.

The reason is simple. While this kitten wasn't exhibiting stereotypical behavior, it was not acting "abnormally" for an animal that was almost certainly orphaned.

The claim by the Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife and the Oregon State Police that the kitten was somehow "off" is simply how they are continuing to avoid acknowledging the truth of the situation. They grossly over-reacted to an animal that posed absolutely no threat to anyone.

I say this from over 40 years of experience working hands-on with wildlife. I am formally trained in handling wild animals—wolves, cougars, bears, bobcats, coyotes, foxes, and more. I've also been trained and certified in humane euthanasia.

For the past 30 years I've been director of Predator Defense, a national wildlife advocacy nonprofit based in Eugene. I started Predator Defense as a wildlife hospital, dedicated to the care and rehabilitation of predator mammals. At the time we were the only facility in Oregon that specialized in predator rehabilitation. We received animals from ODFW, OSP, ODOT, humane societies, animal control agencies, veterinary clinics, and the general public. We also ran a 24-hour hotline for people to call if they had a wildlife emergency or questions.

During those years we received a large number of animals that were orphaned due to their mothers being shot, trapped, or hit by vehicles...or taken out of the wild by well-intentioned people trying to help. I've lost count of how many times I've seen wild orphans desperate for food do what this little bobcat kitten in Eugene did.

But in my entire lifetime working with wildlife I've never seen a more brutal, callous example of an agency's indifference to an animal in need of a little help than what ODFW and OSP did with this bobcat kitten.

Instead of the kitten receiving a helping hand and a little compassion—like being let out the window, relocated, or sent to a wildlife rehabilitation center—it was treated with extreme brutality. ODFW and OSP never came close to exhibiting compassion or using common-sense. It was a situation that would have been very easy to handle.

One of many things that stuns me about this incident is that no staff from the ODFW office in Springfield bothered to drive just five miles to the school to assess the situation. They simply let OSP kill the bobcat.

So what could have been a great teaching moment for the kids in proper handling of wildlife instead instilled them with fear and taught them that senseless killing is OK.

Unfortunately, my long experience dealing with ODFW has shown me that this is not an isolated incident. Most cases go unnoticed because ODFW says they “euthanized” the animal “humanely.” But bashing an animal on the head is NOT humane. And killing an animal that wasn’t badly injured, sick or diseased does NOT qualify as euthanasia.

The killing of the bobcat kitten demonstrates how disconnected ODFW is from the sentiments of the general public. It is a symptom of a much bigger problem within this agency that sees animals almost strictly as things you control and kill. Sadly, the kitten killing is no surprise to those of us who have been working to reform ODFW for decades.

If this tragic case hadn’t been caught on video, no one would have ever known about it. Thankfully, it was. My organization has never received as many phone calls and emails of outrage from the public in a one-month period than we have on this incident. It struck a chord statewide.

Part of our response was to rally veterinarians around the state to demand change. Together we have petitioned the governor for a full investigation, to hold the individuals involved responsible for any policy violations, and to make sure all staff who respond to wildlife incidents be trained in humane methods.

Let me know afterwards if you’d like a copy of the petition.

The vast majority of us want to make sure this kind of senseless killing never happens again. We want our wildlife officials to listen to the will of the people and BECOME HUMANE.”

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Learn More

- Read our petition to Governor Kate Brown, signed by 62 veterinarians from around the state of Oregon, at http://www.predatordefense.org/docs/bobcat_petition_from_62_vets_to_Oregon_Gov_11-13-19.pdf
- Read media coverage and learn more about the killing of the bobcat kitten on our website at www.predatordefense.org.
- Contact: Brooks Fahy, Executive Director, Predator Defense, (541) 937-4261, brooks@predatordefense.org.