

## WHY OPPOSE THE NEST PREDATOR BOUNTY PROGRAM (NPBP) - TALKING POINTS

January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

This killing of predators is not scientifically justified.

- It is uncertain if nest predator control works, however if effective, the nest predator control may require hundreds of dollars & man-hours per year & per section of land. It needs to be extremely intense and carried out annually. The Governor's budget might be enough to cover a smaller subset of the state, but certainly not enough for the entire state, which makes the impacts too diffuse.
- Even intense predator control has limitations. Those animals that escape capture or death often reproduce at a higher rate. This means more effort must be expended and more money must be appropriated each year.
- Nature does not exist in a vacuum. When one animal is removed, others move in, including other species that may be more effective predators.
- Some nest predators are protected by state and federal laws and the NPBP will not kill them. This would include ALL raptors. (Hawks, owls and eagles are examples.)
- This is a statewide program, but areas with pheasant and duck populations are much more limited West River. Why pay bounties for West River predator tails?
- Despite requests from the public, GFP ended the annual pheasant brood count in 2019 (in the year when NPBP was adopted). Without consistent long-term time series of brood count data, as is done in neighboring states (Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska), GFP cannot provide any scientific evidence of NPBP effectiveness.
- The nest predator program is fiscally irresponsible. The money is desperately needed on habitat programs that actually do provide a return on the investment.
- Habitat improvements can be cost shared at a rate of 50% to over 75% through a variety of programs. GF&P receives 75% cost share on habitat purchases and improvements through Pittman Robertson funds.
- Predation is much lower when sufficient habitat for nesting birds is provided.
- Successful nesting will not occur where there is not sufficient habitat, regardless if most predators are removed or not.
- Good habitat also provides high-protein food sources, clean water and protection from the elements, all in a suitable arrangement. Habitat for pheasants/ducks also benefits various other wildlife & bird species.
- Nest predators also feed on rodents. Opossums also eat ticks. If these nest predators are successfully controlled, an explosion in rodents can be expected, with a huge and potentially devastating impact on farmers and ranchers. Rodents eat grain in the field, & infest grain bins, outbuildings and farmhouses. In SD rodents carry Hantavirus or fleas/ticks that can have bubonic plague, or Lyme disease. These costs must also be considered.
- Pheasants are an exotic species that competes with a native species - the greater prairie chicken, whose range and population were declining -- it was losing half its' population every decade as per IUNC 2016 report. More recent 2020 IUNC report shows a recent increasing trend of the greater prairie chicken population. <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>
- The nest predator bounty may encourage illegal activity, from trespassing and unlawful night hunting to submitting tails collected out-of-state. NO funds have been allocated for the extra law enforcement.
- Much of SDGFP budget derives from sale of licenses and most hunters do not want GFP's limited budget spent on this program. See sportsmen's letter to Commission: [https://phas-wsd.org/wp-content/uploads/GFPCCommission\\_LTR\\_-NPBP.Sportsmen.pdf](https://phas-wsd.org/wp-content/uploads/GFPCCommission_LTR_-NPBP.Sportsmen.pdf)

- Accidental take of threatened and endangered or rare species may occur. The swift fox is state listed. The black-footed ferret is listed federally. There were petitions before the USFWS to list the plains spotted skunk and the prairie grey fox under the Endangered Species Act. The plains spotted skunk petition was denied, the prairie grey fox petition 12-month finding is due in 2027.
- This program will result in animal cruelty. Some trappers will be trapping with leg-hold traps or snares, or body crushing traps. Some will use live traps. People should realize that in SD the law allows for animals to be left in traps West River for three and a partial day and East River for two and a partial day. Trapping can be cruel. In high heat or bitter cold, an animal in a box can die in half a day. Animals in boxes or leg-hold traps can freak out and damage their bodies and/or teeth & thus not survive even if released. Dead animals or animals in boxes or traps can't feed their dependent young. Even via a "live trap" non-target species adults and their dependent young will die, in addition to target species.
  
- Part of the rationale/spin for the program is to introduce children to nature & trapping. Why not introduce children to nature via non-lethal interactions with wildlife such as wildlife watching and spend money on nature guidebooks, binoculars, cameras & not via bounties & traps?
- Empathetic children may encounter moral dilemmas such as how to kill the 12 or 13 babies in an Opossum's pouch, and later learn that they did this killing of babies, based on lies told them by SD GFP about effects of a bounty program on nesting success. How does this engage children with nature or give them trust in government?
- 290,841 animals have been killed since 2019 via the NPBP. Assuming that half of them were female, and the average litter is 4 kits/pups/joeyes (usually litters are bigger), >580,000 cubs were condemned to a long and painful death from dehydration, hunger and cold or predation, without their mother's care.
- A growing body of scientific research indicates a strong correlation (co-called 'Link') between cruelty to animals and subsequent cruelty to humans, suggesting that acts of animal abuse is an indicator of future violent behavior towards people. Nowadays, we are seeing an increase in cruelty around the world (multiple conflicts, including armed clashes), and NPBP contributes to the cruelty among South Dakotans.