

# What's Happening

## IN CALIFORNIA ?

BY LAWRENCE GABLE

VOL 13, NO 8 APRIL 2012

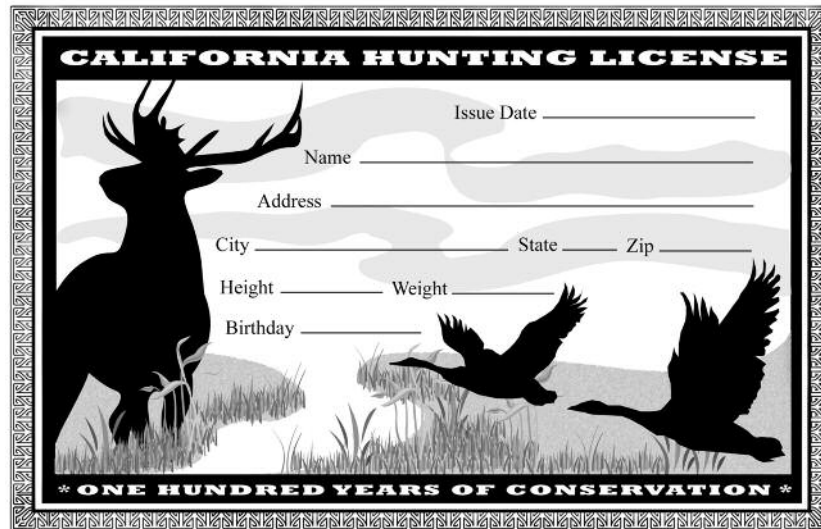
**H**unting is not very popular in California. Less than 1 percent of Californians buy hunting licenses. However, one man's hunting trip in January became big news. Since then Californians have been talking about hunting a lot.

In January the president of the Fish and Wildlife Commission took a hunting trip to Idaho. There he shot a mountain lion. Although it is illegal to shoot mountain lions in California, it is legal in Idaho. An outcry arose when he sent photos of himself holding the dead animal to an Internet site.

California first banned hunting mountain lions in 1972. In 1990 Californians voted to protect them permanently. Environmentalists argued then that killing lions was unnecessary. They said that hunters do not eat lions, as they do deer and wild turkeys. They also argued that killing lions would upset the balance of predators and prey.

Interest in hunting has fallen in recent years. In 1970 Californians bought 762,000 hunting licenses. In 2011 they bought only 268,000 licenses, even though the population almost has doubled to 38 million. A larger population is hard on wildlife. Californians have become more interested in protecting it than hunting it.

A government agency manages wildlife for Californians. It is the Department of Fish and Game (DFG). It monitors the health of fish and



## Hunting Becomes a Hot Topic

wildlife, and it protects their habitats. DFG's wardens arrest poachers and polluters. DFG also sells licenses for hunting and fishing. It identifies which animals hunters

may shoot or trap, and limits how many they may take. The department also pays special attention to protected and endangered species.

DFG also reaches out to people. It conducts training for new hunters all around the state. Every year about 30,000 students complete its safety course. Another concern is the contact between wildlife and people in residential areas. Its "Keep Me Wild" program teaches people how not to attract animals like black bears, coyotes and mountain lions.

The outcry over the dead mountain lion has strong voices on both sides. Some defend the commissioner. Others say that he showed a lack of respect for Californians' feelings about mountain lions. Some lawmakers even called for him to resign his position.

The results of this hunting trip are not clear. The Legislature could remove the commissioner from his position. One lawmaker also recommends changing DFG's name to the "Department of Fish and Wildlife." One thing is clear though. Californians have strong feelings about protecting nature, and they look to DFG and the Commission for leadership.

# What's Happening

IN CALIFORNIA ?

BY LAWRENCE GABLE

VOL 13, NO 8 APRIL 2012

## BIOGRAPHY

### SARA HOLM

ASSOCIATE WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Not everyone is lucky enough to have a dream job. Sara Holm is one of the lucky ones though. She gets to work outdoors and take care of wildlife. She is a wildlife biologist for the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

Sara grew up in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. When indoors, she spent a lot of time reading. When outdoors, she explored the natural surroundings. She built houses for ladybugs, fed ducks at the pond and went fishing. In the summers her family took camping vacations. At national parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite they saw large mammals like bears, bison and elk.

In community college Sara learned something important about herself. It came when she took a forestry class. She realized that her interest was really in animals, not trees. When she transferred to Humboldt State University, she got her degree in Wildlife.

While in college, Sara gained valuable experience. For a while she worked at a marsh. She went there for a few hours each day and on weekends. There she and fellow students caught geese, counted birds and studied their feeding habits. She also volunteered for the Department of Fish and Game at a wildlife investigations lab. It took in injured and sick animals, large mammals like mountain lions, deer and bears. There she fed them and cleaned their pens.

That volunteer work proved to be important. Just before she finished college, a position opened at DFG. The people who interviewed her already knew that she did good work. Sara graduated on

Saturday and started her new job on the following Monday.

That first job with DFG also allowed Ms. Holm to return home to the foothills. She helped scientists study the effects of poisons on the environment. After a short time Ms. Holm got to return to working with wildlife. In 2004 she became DFG's manager for Placer and Nevada counties.

Her job is interesting because it is always changing. In the spring and summer Sara Holm does most of her work outdoors.

She and her partner make sure that herds of animals are doing well. Sometimes they find sick animals. They give them shots, test their blood and check for things like ticks. Now they have a project to put collars on deer so that they can monitor their movement.

Ms. Holm is a single mom, so working from a home office is nice. It gives her more time to be around her two boys. From the office she organizes educational programs for young people. She also advises hunters who call her. Whether at home or outdoors, with animals or people, Sara Holm works for wildlife. It is her dream come true.



*"Even if I won the lottery, I wouldn't quit my job."*

# Background Information

California is the only Western state to ban mountain lion hunting.

The mountain lion is known by different names in different places. It is also called a catamount, cougar, mountain cat, panther and puma.

Hunting groups attempted to overturn the ban in 1996, but Californians again voted to keep it.

California requires first time hunters to complete hunter education training, or pass a similar test, before purchasing a hunting license.

A variety of reasons contribute to hunting's loss of popularity in California. Among them are the growth of urban areas, the large number of immigrants who have come from countries without hunting traditions, and the fact that children spend less time outdoors now than they used to.

The Fish and Game Commission consists of five people. According to its Web site, its decisions "... must reflect not only the biological needs of our fish and wildlife, but also the wishes, needs and desires of all those who enjoy these resources."

The president of the commission is Dan Richards, who was appointed to the commission by Governor Schwarzenegger in 2008. His term ends in January 2013.

Mr. Richards' fellow commissioners have voted to change how the commission chooses its president. The change means that they could vote to remove him as president at their meeting in Monterey on May 23.

The Humane Society of the United States and Audubon Society of California were among those groups that called for his resignation.

The State Legislature could remove Mr. Richards by a simple majority vote.

In 2007 state lawmakers called for, and received, the resignation of a commissioner because he supported a ban on lead bullets in condor habitat.

Mr. Richards' photos appeared on the Internet in *Western Outdoor News*. He could not have brought the mountain lion, or any part of it, back to California because state law prohibits it.

## Topics for Discussion and Writing

### Pre-reading:

- Name a few ways in which California's growing population affects wildlife.

### Comprehension:

- Identify a few things that the Department of Fish and Game does.

### Beyond the Text:

- Why do states require that hunters and fishermen have licenses?
- Explain how someone can be a hunter and environmentalist at the same time.
- What difference would it make to change "Game" to "Wildlife" in DFG's name?

## Vocabulary

*Article-specific:* outcry; to ban; predator; prey; agency; habitat; warden; poacher; to resign

*High-use:* license; commission; legal; permanently; environmentalist; to monitor; polluter; species; to conduct

## Sources

*New York Times* March 18, 2012

*Los Angeles Times* March 8, 2012

*Daily News* (Los Angeles) March 6, 2012

*San Jose Mercury News* March 14, 9, 6, 4, February 28, 2012

*Wall Street Journal* March 2, 2012

California Department of Fish and Game  
[www.dfg.ca.gov](http://www.dfg.ca.gov)

## CA Curricular Standards (4–12)

### English - Language Arts

*Reading* 1.0 Vocabulary Development

2.0 Comprehension (Informational Materials)

*Writing* 1.0 Writing Strategies

2.0 Writing Applications

### ELD—Intermediate and Advanced

Reading Vocabulary Development / Comprehension

Writing Strategies and Applications

### Science

4.2; 4.3; 6.6

Ecology