



SIERRA CLUB

Connecticut Chapter
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In the 2022 CT Legislative Session: Prohibit the Use of Leghold and Body-Crushing Traps

Overview: The Sierra Club CT Wildlife Committee respectfully urges your advocacy and support to prohibit the use of leghold and body-crushing traps (steel-jaw leghold traps and Conibear) in the upcoming 2022 legislative session. The use of these types of traps are indiscriminate to age, sex and species, and typically result in injury, pain, suffering, and/or death not only to target animals, but also to a wide range of unintended victims, including endangered and threatened native Connecticut wildlife, pets and even people.

Steel-jaw leghold traps have been condemned as inhumane by the World Veterinary Association, the National Animal Care and Control Association, and the American Animal Hospital Association. They operate by slamming shut with bone-crushing force on the limb of any animal who trips the device. Left in agony, victims may chew off their limb in order to escape. Conibear traps are intended to break or crush an animal's spinal column but, as with other body-gripping traps, their efficacy and accuracy are unreliable. These devices may not quickly kill the animal, but cause extensive injuries and prolonged suffering.

Numerous Non-Trapping Alternatives Exist: In addition to one-way doors that allow an animal to leave a building and not re-enter the same way, many issues may be addressed using non-trapping methods such as preventative maintenance of buildings, electric fencing and insertion of pipes/baffles through beaver dams to let water flow through (not recommended in winter).

States with Leghold and/or Body-Crushing Trapping Bans: Arizona, Colorado, California, Florida, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Washington and New Mexico. In April 2021, New Mexico became the most recent state, by signing into law the Wildlife Conservation & Public Safety Act, banning the use of traps including leghold, body-gripping and cage traps, on public lands in New Mexico.

Trap bans are also gaining momentum on a national level. On October 18, 2021, The Public Safety and Wildlife Protection Act was reintroduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC). This bill would prohibit the import and export of, as well as interstate commerce in, two of the most notorious types of body-gripping traps – steel-jaw leghold traps and Conibear (also known as kill-type) traps. Introduction of this legislation was spurred in part by a horrific incident that occurred just outside Adams' district: In 2015, a 12-year-old boy was injured by a Conibear trap when he was playing near a neighborhood pond.

2022 – The Year to Ban the Use of Leghold and Body Crushing Traps in CT: At long last, the above changes reflect the growing movement move away from trapping. As recently as 2019, this bill has been heard in Environment Committee public hearing(s). Now is the time to pass this legislation in Connecticut to make it illegal to kill animals in ways that cause incalculable pain, fear and destruction, to both the target and non-target wildlife, household pets and threaten public safety..

Please let us know whether or not we can count on your support in advancing legislation to get this bill over the finish line this year. Should you have any questions or need further information, feel free to contact Kathleen Magner (itsallgood_919@frontier.com), Wildlife Chairperson and/or Ann Gadwah, Advocacy/Outreach Organizer (ann.gadwah@sierraclub.org). Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.



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In the 2022 CT Legislative Session: Prohibit the Use of Exotic or Wild Animals in Traveling Animal Acts

Overview: The Sierra Club CT Wildlife Committee respectfully urges your advocacy and support to prohibit the use of exotic or wild animals in traveling animal acts in the upcoming 2022 legislative session. This abuse of animals is not only inhumane, but also poses threats to human safety, creates additional burdens for law enforcement agencies, jeopardizes conservation efforts and sends the message to our children that it is acceptable to mistreat and exploit animals for personal enjoyment.

Trainers often use violent and inhumane methods to force animals to perform confusing and physically grueling tricks. Countless videos, whistleblowers and eyewitness accounts confirm that beatings and other forms of corporal punishment are used to make animals submissive and coerce them into performing. During transport, these animals are often subjected to prolonged confinement and denied basic necessities, such as adequate exercise and access to clean cages, food, water and veterinary care.

Public safety risks: Rampaging elephants have bolted out of circuses. Big cats and primates have injured people. Since 1990, more than 300 dangerous incidents involving big cats have occurred in 44 states, including 10 people that have been killed and more than 200 – including scores of children – have been injured since 1990 in the U.S.

Examples of Inhumane and Unsafe Practices: This past September 2021, a fall fair in Hebron, CT featured a tiger act, with tigers walking on a tightrope after being confined to small spaces. These tigers were from Florida-based Bruno's Tigers, whose history includes a tiger attacking his trainer, Bruno Blaszk, in front of 400 people, knocking him down and mauling him.

In 2019, a 54-year old elephant, Beulah, of the Connecticut-based Commerford & Sons Traveling Petting Zoo, collapsed and died at a Big E show in Massachusetts. According to CBS news, in 2017, USDA inspectors issues a violation to Commerford for failing to get her proper foot care, an ailment that can quickly turn into a serious disorder, become infected and spread. Animal advocacy groups noted Beulah's final hours, documented in photos, of her lying on her side near a parking lot.

Another elephant, Karen, also owned by Commerford, died of kidney disease. The welfare of a sole surviving elephant is now in jeopardy. Animal advocacy organizations cite numerous concerns, including lack of official oversight, violation of care standards, as well as her isolation from other elephants.

2022 – The Year to Prohibit the Use of Exotic or Wild Animals in Traveling Animal Acts: Now is the time to take action to end this exploitation and cruel treatment of wild and exotic animals. Six states (California, Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Colorado) already ban or restrict the use of wild animals in traveling exhibitions and circuses. There are many animal-free shows that provide humane alternatives, while also providing jobs for talented performers.

Please let us know whether or not we can count on your support in advancing legislation to get this bill over the finish line this year. Should you have any questions or need further information, feel free to contact Kathleen Magner, (itsallgood_919@frontier.com), Wildlife Chairperson and/or Ann Gadwah, Advocacy/Outreach Organizer (ann.gadwah@sierraclub.org). Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Sierra Club CT Wildlife Committee