Human-Wildlife Conflict

January 27, 2026

BACKGROUND

"Let there be no doubt as to whom responsibility for wildlife rests. Wildlife is the property of the people, the sovereignty of which they have vested with the State to be conserved and managed for the benefit of all people."

- *Howard R. Leach, Special Wildlife Coordinator, California Department of Fish and Game, 1971.*

Introduction

Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) is a growing concern and is most prevalent in regions where human activities have significantly altered the natural landscape. Globally, it's estimated that nearly 60% of terrestrial ecosystems have been impacted by human actions, such as urbanization and land-use changes, leading to biodiversity loss and habitat fragmentation. Between 2000 and 2013 alone, around 425,000 mi^2 (around 272 million acres) were lost. In California, one of the most ecologically diverse states in the U.S., this issue is amplified by a substantial human population, which has more than doubled since 1972. Human encroachment on wildlife habitats for purposes such as resource extraction, energy development, housing development, and recreation ultimately reduce habitat quality, increase sensory pollution, and create competition. It is likely not coincidental that human animals come into the most conflict with other large predators, such as wolves, mountain lions, bears, and coyotes, due to competition over similar resources (e.g., land, water). As humans continue to expand their own range, the competition over finite resources will escalate. The conflict between humans and predators is a state- and species-wide phenomenon, with incidents ranging from black bears breaking into cabins in Lake Tahoe to mountain lions wandering into suburban backyards in Los Angeles. Now that grey wolves have returned to the state, ranchers are facing decades-old battles to protect cattle from the powerful pack hunters.

The methods for preventing and responding to HWC are simple to write but are more contentious to implement. As with most issues, proposed solutions range in cost, effectiveness, and controversy. With a collection of tools (e.g., conflict tracking, locking trash cans, hazing, constructing wildlife crossings), reducing and controlling HWC is possible. Yet, research consistently indicates that human tolerance is often the key factor influencing the persistence of HWC. Whether increasing acceptance for animals' presence or decreasing tolerance of conflict actions, human behavior will likely be more difficult to change than animal behavior. Indeed, changing human attitudes can take decades, if they change at all. For example, beavers were eliminated from much of their range by the late 1800s due to unregulated trapping and habitat loss. The loss of beavers had serious repercussions on wetland and riparian ecosystem health, and efforts to return North America's largest rodent to California was not without controversy because of potential damage the beavers could cause. Yet, in recent years, beaver restoration has been promoted across the state eventually leading to the establishment of a Beaver Restoration

Program in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and beavers have been further protected from lethal repercussions of nuisance behavior. Additionally, CDFW awarded grant funding to the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center to design and launch the first-ever California Beaver Coexistence Training and Support Program, featuring the California Beaver Help Desk. Ideally, California can find a route to human-wildlife coexistence before realizing the environmental tragedy of destroying the state's native wildlife.

Although many species can be engaged in HWC, this background and hearing will focus primarily on the carnivores that result in the most reports of HWC. Still, it is worth mentioning some of the less common forms of HWC to clarify the prevalence of HWC in modern California. These conflicts can include rattle snakes on hiking trails, bunnies eating sugar snap peas, fights between wildlife and pets, sea otters nipping at surfers, squirrels living in attics, planes striking birds, and building dams or roadways that obstruct fish movement. It is likely that a majority of the 250 California species listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Acts (ESA) and California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (e.g., San Joaquin kit fox, leatherback sea turtles, salt-marsh harvest mouse), or the species that have gone extinct (e.g., the California grizzly bear, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse), have found themselves in that position because they were on the losing-end of HWC.

Reasons for conflict

HWC is generally understood to be the negative result of the tension between the needs and behavior of wildlife and the goals of humans. These conflicts can range in damage, danger, and likelihood from negligible to economically devastating, or even life threatening. Some of the more notorious categories of HWC include crop/garden raiding, property damage, pet and livestock predation, and vehicle collisions. More specific examples of HWC are elaborated below by species.

Habitat conversion is a primary driver of HWC. California has some of the most productive lands in the nation. According to PPIC, roughly 40% of California's lands (40 million acres) are used for agriculture, most of which (32%) is used for livestock grazing. It's estimated that more than 80% of the old-growth mixed conifer forests in the Sierra Nevada have vanished and that only 5% of Californias historic wetlands remain. This catastrophic loss of habitat has occurred in the last 150 years—rapidly shifting territories and behaviors of species that have lived in the region for millennia of years. With less space and lower quality habitat, animals pass through or make their home in the ever-encroaching human development.

With such a significant loss of habitat, some species struggle to find natural sources of food and water or, as is increasingly common, animals can also find an *easier* meal in developed areas. With opportunities to consume commercial or personal agriculture, available and unlocked trash, or livestock that are less keen than their wild counterparts—wildlife can be eager to come to developed areas for fast food. These attempts can result in property damage to homes and storage sheds and monetary losses due to livestock losses.

Wildlife also must navigate the web of roads, highways, and railroads that penetrate so much of the state, putting both themselves and humans at risk. In fact, wildlife-vehicle collisions are estimated to cost Californians over $200 million annually. Further, vehicular traffic often deters

wildlife from crossing roads, impeding their ability to find food, water, mates and respond to extreme weather events. Such habitat fragmentation not only impacts the health of individual animals but also can result in population-level health issues. With restricted mating opportunities, the genetic diversity of species can suffer. This is one of several reasons that caused certain populations of mountain lions be listed as threatened under CESA in December 2025.

None of these encounters are likely to abate as climate change exacerbates resource scarcity through droughts, temperature extremes, fires, flooding, and storms. It is crucial to monitor the impact of these changes, particularly on large carnivores, as their roles are vital for maintaining healthy ecosystems. Climate change has been shown to alter wildlife distribution, which can increase opportunity for conflict. Recent research indicates that reductions in precipitation correlate with significant increases in wildlife conflict. For every 1-inch decrease in annual precipitation, there was over a 2–3% increase in reported incidences, which are concentrated in areas with greater human population and occur in the drier months (May to October). Research has also shown that after wildfires, mountain lions avoided burned areas and increase risky behaviors, including more frequent road and freeway crossings and greater activity during the daytime. As the historical and natural resources that wildlife depend on become more under threat, it is likely that wildlife will seek resources in the built environment where humans have stockpiled resources and can better weather climate impacts.

Proposed solutions to HWC

Once an animal begins to exhibit conflict behaviors, management approaches can be designed to re-condition animals to avoid certain areas or behaviors. Solutions encompass aversive techniques such as using electric matts to discourage bears, motion-activated lights, noise, hazing, or the use of non-lethal projectiles (e.g., bean bags, paintballs). Hazing, the use of aversive stimuli to scare animals away, has shown mixed results and is often individual-specific. For hazing to succeed, it must be directly associated with the conflict and applied early and consistently—before animals develop reliance on human-provided resources. Similarly, trapping and transporting "problem animals" away from conflict areas is controversial and has limited success. Reducing species population by increasing hunting is also a proposed method for reducing HWC. Research into population management for HWC reduction generally indicates that increases in hunting can reduce HWC, but only for limited term. Since hunting allows for the take of animals in open spaces, it is unlikely that increases in hunting would mitigate HWC in more urban areas. Further, given that each species has a different social and family structure, great decreases in population could increase HWC.

However, the above proposed solutions will likely fail unless the initial reason for conflict is identified and cured. The maxim "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" applies to HWC as well: HWC can be reduced most effectively by focusing first on preventing conflicts before they occur, rather than reacting after wildlife become habituated to human resources.

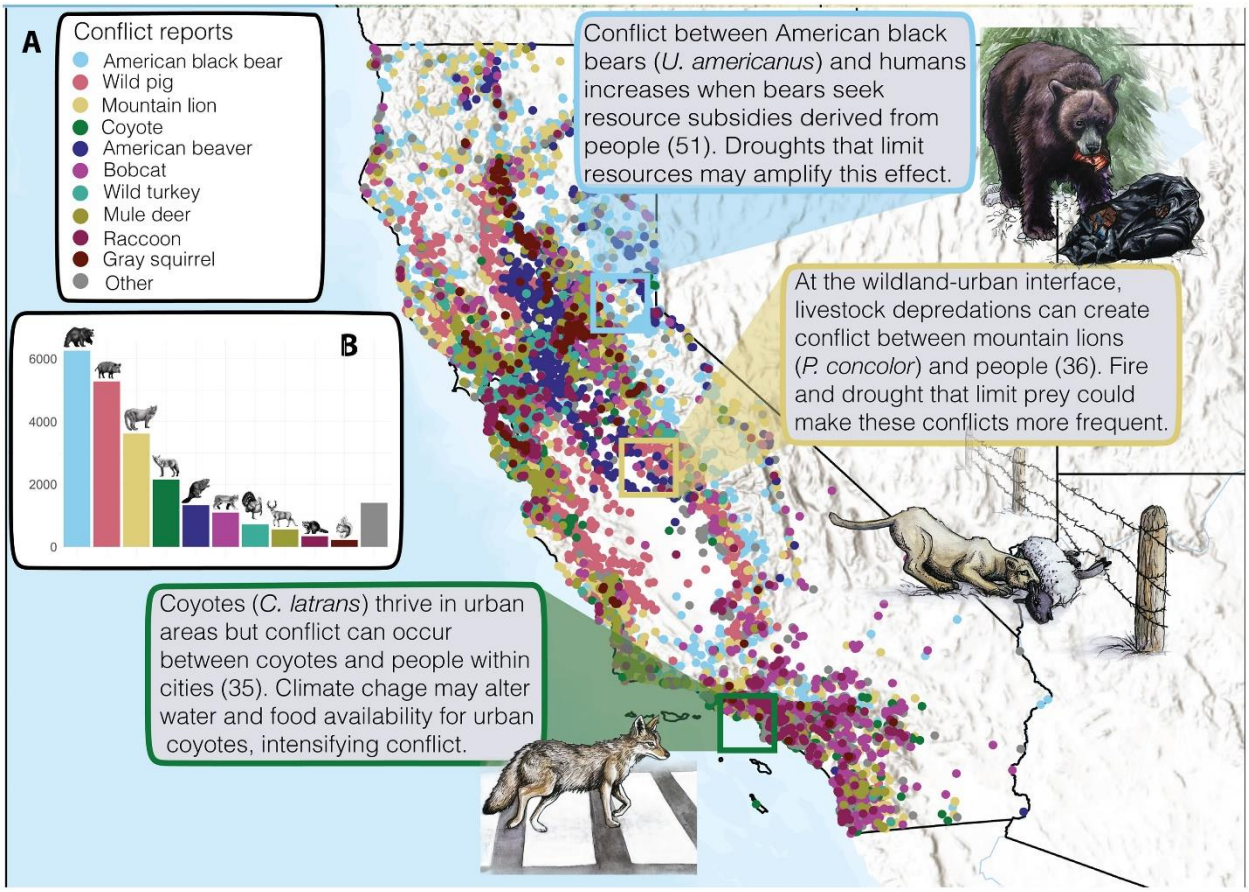
The most successful strategy in preventing HWC is reducing availability of attractants (e.g., food and habitat). Securing trash and other human food sources, including discouraging intentional wildlife feeding, prevents wildlife from becoming conditioned to human environments. In agricultural and livestock settings, modifying husbandry practices has proven especially important for reducing HWC. Strategies such as housing animals at night, keeping livestock

away from terrain commonly used by predators for hunting, and using livestock protection animals, such as dogs, llamas, and donkeys, can significantly reduce predation risk. These approaches address the root causes of conflict by limiting opportunities for wildlife to associate people or farms with food.

Landscape-level planning and policy frameworks are critical for long-term coexistence. And can take into account a species' movement, resource needs, and behaviors to appropriately develop multi-use areas, zoning decisions, and connectivity options. Wildlife crossings, such as the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing over U.S. 101, reduce vehicle collisions and habitat fragmentation, by addressing conflict at a structural scale. Community-based solutions and social support systems are increasingly recognized as essential in reducing HWC. Conflict mitigation funds, technical assistance, and shared resources help landowners adopt nonlethal tools. According to the USDA, sheep and goat operations increased their use of nonlethal conflict mitigation measures from 32% in 2004 to 59% in 2014, demonstrating growing acceptance when resources are available. Social trust plays a critical role in HWC risk perception as some communities are more vulnerable to wildlife conflict due to limited financial or institutional support. Establishing response teams to be achieve timely, effective response to HWC have been found to be successful in effectively ameliorating conflict situations on the ground. Ensuring people have the tools they need to keep themselves and their animals safe has proven more effective than attempting to manage individual wild animals.

HWC: State engagement

CDFW is responsible for alleviating economic losses or public health or safety problems caused by wildlife by bringing those conflicts into tolerable limits while maintaining wildlife resources for the public trust (Fish and Game Code § 1801). To this end, CDFW manages several initiatives to inform HWC prevention and mitigation, including maintaining a Wildlife Incident Reporting (WIR) database as a tool for reporting HWC. WIR allows the public to submit a report that is assigned for review by a CDFW staff member. The public can use WIR for any wildlife species in California. The reports that require a response (sick/injured wildlife or animal causing property damage) are assigned to a CDFW wildlife biologist or wildlife officer for investigation. As shown in Figure 1, HWC occurs across the state with over 63 animal species represented. These reports can range from a simple observation to verifiable conflict behavior.



The distribution of human-wildlife conflict in California differs regionally by species as species respond individualistically to climate and land-use change. (**A**) Map of the study region (California, USA 36°46′41.7324″N and 119°25′4.5516′W) and georeferenced conflict incident reports (2017 to 2023) from the CDFW's WIR system. The top 10 most frequently reported species in the study are displayed. (**B**) In descending order of report frequency, those species are as follows: American black bear (*U. americanus*), wild pig (*Sus scrofa*), mountain lion (*P. concolor*), coyote (*C. latrans*), American beaver (*Castor canadensis*), bobcat (*L. rufus*), wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and gray squirrel (*Sciurus griseus*). Additional species in the incident reporting database are lumped together as "other" (Artist credit: Terra Dawson, Terra Dawson Art). Human-wildlife conflict is amplified during periods of drought (Science Advances, 2025).

CDFW maintains the Wildlife Health Laboratory to investigate, monitor, and manage wildlife population health issues in California. This includes issues like disease surveillance, genetics research, wildlife rehabilitation, and HWC. The Wildlife Health Laboratory staff help coordinate helicopter captures to mark, radio-collar, and disease test key species. Animal health, distribution, and abundance are critical factors in understanding HWC and identify potential conflict zones. Most recently, CDFW has deployed helicopters to capture deer, elk, and wolves. CDFW also maintains a Wildlife Forensic Laboratory, which is responsible for performing genetic analyses on wildlife samples collected from public safety wildlife incidences to help identify the specific animal involved.

State HWC efforts are governed by law, regulation, and California's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). SWAP is intended to be a blueprint for preserving the state's wildlife by examining the health of wildlife and prescribing actions for conservation while addressing the needs of a growing human population. Every ten years CDFW, with input from subject matter experts and stakeholders, updates SWAP; the most recent iteration was finalized in 2025.

Until recently, CDFW maintained a HWC program. The program was staffed using one-time funds ($5 million) from a 2022-23 Drought Resilience and Response Budget Change Proposal to respond to increases in HWC due to the drought. The program functioned as "first responder" for helping communities develop tools and providing state-wide support for HWC management. Most of the positions for the HWC program were limited term and, under budget constraints, were lost in 2024—further straining CDFW. The previous year, CDFW received $7 million for HWC response equipment such as fence flagging to protect livestock from wolves and wildlife traps.

When conflict goes too far: depredation permits

California's wildlife depredation permit system is designed to address conflicts between people and wildlife. A property owner or tenant may apply to CDFW for a permit to take an elk, bear, bobcat, beaver, wild pigs, deer, wild turkeys, or gray squirrels that are damaging or destroying, or immediately threatening to damage or destroy, land or property. Upon satisfactory evidence of the damage or destruction, actual or immediately threatened, CDFW issues a time-sensitive, revocable permit for the taking of that animal. Depredation permits are generated and issued through the WIR system after agency staff determine that the legal and biological criteria have been met. Not all wildlife conflicts result in a depredation permit, and even when a permit is issued, it does not always result in the taking of an animal. The state prioritizes nonlethal conflict-prevention tools and permits to lethally remove an animal are generally considered only after multiple attempts at nonlethal management have failed.

Mountain lions are specially protected mammals under law (i.e., Proposition 117, 1990) and depredation permits are only authorized due to risk of public safety or to a threat to threatened, endangered, candidate, or fully protected sheep species (FGC § 4801). Due to their protected status, mountain lion depredation permits have different qualifications than for other species: the permit expires after ten days, the pursuit is limited to a ten mile radius of the depredation site, and in certain regions of the state must follow "3 strikes policy" where lethal depredation is only permitted on the third occurrence of conflict (favoring non-lethal responses and education first). Mountain lions that threaten public safety can be immediately killed. Depredation permits for the public are not available for gray wolves due to their listing under both ESA and CESA.

When an animal is taken under a depredation permit, it can provide immediate, but typically temporary relief from a specific conflict. If the underlying attractant, such as unsecured livestock, pets, or other human-related food sources, is not corrected, new animals are likely to move into the area and recreate the conflict. A substantial body of research indicates that lethal management removal does not reduce long-term depredation rates and may, in some cases, make conflicts worse. Research in California has found that for every mountain lion removed through a depredation permit, reported mountain lion depredation rates increase by 9% the following year, underscoring the importance of focusing on prevention, attractant management, and coexistence strategies rather than relying on lethal removal as a long-term solution.

By species

Gray wolves were once widespread across California, but by the mid-20th century they had been nearly eliminated in the contiguous United States. The last known gray wolf in California was

killed in 1924. Wolf recovery began decades later, following federal reintroduction efforts in Yellowstone National Park in the 1980s. Since then, wolves have naturally dispersed from Oregon into California, steadily expanding their range. As wolf territories grow, encounters with people, livestock, and communities have become more frequent, increasing both visibility and conflict.

Today, California is home to an estimated 50–70 gray wolves organized into roughly 10 packs, most of them concentrated in northeastern California. Three new packs were confirmed earlier this year, reflecting continued population growth—although pack numbers can fluctuate as territories shift and packs dissolve or reform. Wolves in California are protected under both ESA and CESA, which generally prohibit lethal take, except under very limited and specific circumstances authorized by the state or federal government. Wolf recovery in California is guided by the state's Wolf Conservation Plan, which outlines three phases of recovery based on the number of breeding pairs. A breeding pair is defined as at least one adult male and one adult female that successfully raise at least two pups through their first year. California is currently in Phase 2 of the plan, which provides the state with increased management flexibility as wolf numbers grow. Entering Phase 2 also triggers a formal review of the wolf's endangered status in California. The next phase begins when eight breeding pairs are documented in a recovery region for two consecutive years and allows for changes to legal protections or, in some cases, authorization for lethal removal in response to chronic conflicts.

Livestock depredation has been a central source of conflict as wolves recolonize rural areas. Over the past decade, California has investigated 274 reported wolf-livestock incidents, of which 128 were confirmed as wolf depredation. One of the most high-profile cases involved the Beyem Seyo pack, which was responsible for killing at least 64 calves between July and October 2025 and more than 90 livestock animals since late May. Despite deploying the first ever "Strike Team" to deploy nonlethal strategies, including 24/7 human presence, diversionary feeding, and hazing, the wolves would not be deterred. In response, CDFW ultimately euthanized three adult wolves and one juvenile, the latter mistakenly taken after being identified as an adult. The few remaining members of the pack have not yet been located. Following the removal of that pack, a new group known as the Grizzly pack has since moved into the former Beyem Seyo territory, illustrating how removing wolves can quickly create ecological vacancies that other wolves fill. UC Davis researchers estimate that that the Beyem Seyo pack cost ranchers $235,000 on livestock losses and cost the state over $2 million in intervention costs, which does not include the cost of removing the wolves.

To address rancher concerns, the state has implemented a variety of conflict-mitigation and compensation efforts. In 2021, CDFW launched a three-pronged pilot program that reimbursed ranchers for livestock killed by wolves, compensated them for indirect losses such as reduced pregnancy rates and weight loss in herds, and paid for nonlethal deterrents like fencing, range riders, and alarm systems. CDFW currently compensates only for confirmed direct livestock losses due to the high demand for compensation. The wolf compensation program has been funded as follows: $3 million in FY2021–22, $0.6 million in FY2024–25, and $2 million in 2025–26. In May 2025, Shasta County joined several other Northern California counties in declaring local states of emergency related to wolf impacts on ranching communities. More recently, in June 2025, CDFW launched a new pilot program focused on reducing wolf-livestock conflict in Siskiyou County and the Sierra Valley—areas with relatively high depredation rates.

As part of this effort, CDFW has fitted wolves in several packs with GPS collars, allowing staff to track their movements in near real time. With this information, wildlife officers can proactively haze wolves away from ranches or communities using nonlethal tools such as rubber bullets or beanbag rounds—methods that only CDFW personnel are authorized to deploy. The department has also released an online public map showing the approximate locations of GPS-collared wolves, primarily to help ranchers anticipate wolf presence and take preventative measures.

Despite concerns about safety, research consistently shows that wolves pose an extremely low risk to humans. A report by the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research found that only two fatal wolf attacks occurred in North America between 2002 and 2020. The authors concluded that, given tens of thousands of wolves living alongside hundreds of millions of people, the risk of a wolf attack is "above zero, but far too low to calculate." By comparison, domestic dogs kill more than 40 people annually in the United States, and cattle kill an estimated 20–22 people each year. Ecologically, wolves provide important benefits, including reducing deer vehicle collisions and slowing the spread of diseases such as chronic wasting disease by preferentially preying on sick and weakened animals.

As California's wolf population continues to grow, the state is balancing conservation goals with the realities of living alongside a large carnivore. Wildlife officials are completing a status review of gray wolves and exploring additional management tools, including expanded hazing options, to reduce conflict. At the same time, broader federal policy remains uncertain, as recent signals from the Trump administration suggested it would not prepare an updated national gray wolf recovery plan, raising the possibility of reduced or removed federal protections in the future.

Mountain lion conflict in California is shaped by a long history of human interaction with the species, as well as by the lion's broad ecological footprint across the state. From 1907 to 1963, California operated an intensive bounty program intended to protect domestic animals and promote wild ungulate populations, and during that period, at least 12,580 mountain lions were deliberately killed. Concerns about population declines led to a temporary moratorium on mountain lion hunting in 1972. This policy shift was later solidified in 1990, when California voters passed Proposition 117, the Wildlife Protection Act of 1990. Proposition 117 permanently banned sport hunting of mountain lions, designated the species as "specially protected," and made it illegal to take, injure, possess, transport, import, or sell mountain lions or their parts, except under narrowly defined circumstances such as an imminent threat to public health and safety. Although local declines and pressures exist, statewide population estimates—currently about 3,200 to 4,500 individuals—are thought to be stable.

The largest sources of human-caused, or anthropogenic, mountain lion mortality in California is vehicle strikes and legal lethal take under depredation permits, which are most often issued in response to livestock losses. Between 1972 and 2019, goats and sheep accounted for roughly 72% of depredation permits in which the affected livestock species was identified. CDFW reports that from 2010 to 2020, CDFW recorded 3,637 reported mountain lion incidents statewide, which include depredations, public safety concerns, as well as sightings and nuisance reports. Of those reports, 2,202 were depredation incidents where mountain lions were reported

to have attacked pets and/or livestock. CDFW also reports that on average, 92 mountain lions are lethally removed each year pursuant to a depredation permit.

Most of California is mountain lion habitat, and the species occupies a wide range of landscapes, including foothills, mountain ranges, coastal chaparral, and forested lands. As human development expands into mountain lion habitat, conflict has become more common. Road networks fragment landscapes, restrict movement, and increase the risk of vehicle collisions. Research shows that mountain lion mortality is highest in areas with intermediate levels of human presence—places where habitat remains suitable but is heavily intersected by roads, ranching, and residential development. Studies indicate that mountain lion depredation rates increase by approximately 20% for every 700 square miles of suitable mountain lion habitat within a county, reflecting increased overlap among lions, livestock, and people. Depredation by mountain lions is rising across all Western states, suggesting a regional trend driven by land-use change rather than isolated local conditions. Genetic diversity is of particular concern in the Central Coast and Southern California, where extensive development has limited wildlife corridors and isolated populations. These genetic constraints raise long-term conservation concerns and may also exacerbate conflict by concentrating animals in smaller, more human-dominated areas.

Public perception of mountain lions is strongly influenced by sightings and rare but serious encounters with people. CDFW receives hundreds of mountain lion sighting reports each year, and the department notes that increased reporting is likely due in part to the widespread use of home security cameras, trail cameras, and social media rather than a dramatic increase in lion abundance. Mountain lion attacks on humans remain rare, but they do occur. Tragically, last year two brothers were attacked by a mountain lion, resulting in one fatality—the first mountain lion–caused human death in California in 20 years. Since 1986, there have been 26 verified mountain lion attacks in California, four of which were fatal, according to data from CDFW. The department also reports that since 1890 there have been fewer than 50 verified attacks statewide, with six resulting in death. These incidents have occurred across a wide geographic range, from San Diego County to Trinity County. In more recent news, residents in Corral de Tierra (Monterey County), have been urged by CDFW to bring pets in at night and secure livestock after a series of mountain lion attacks. CDFW also advised deer-proofing properties to avoid further attracting mountain lions, removing dense vegetation to reducing hiding spots, and installing outdoor lighting to make predation more difficult, before turning to more extreme measures.

Looking forward, management of mountain lion conflict in California is increasingly focused on vulnerable subpopulations rather than statewide numbers alone. CDFW has recommended that certain mountain lion subpopulations—particularly along the central coast and in Southern California—be considered for listing under CESA due to genetic isolation and heightened mortality risks. A vote by the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) on this recommendation is expected in February 2026, potentially marking a significant shift in how the state balances mountain lion conservation with ongoing human–wildlife conflict.

*Black Bear*s are the only species of bear in California after the extinction of the native California grizzly bear. Black bears are native to North America and are more numerous than every other species of bear combined. Black bears are widespread and common throughout most forested

habitats of California; they are one of the most commonly occurring large mammal species in California forests. Roughly half of the statewide black bear population resides in the North Coast and Cascade regions. The highest reported recent black bear densities from California are on the west side of the Hoopa Valley Reservation and in the Lake Tahoe basin. CDFW estimates a total statewide black bear population of 59,851. Black bears are highly opportunistic and will eat nearly anything edible and this opportunistic foraging behavior of black bears often brings them into conflict with people, as black bears will damage property such as homes and storage sheds while seeking out human food and garbage, damage agricultural crops, and occasionally kill livestock, primarily chickens per CDFW.

With a population of almost 40 million people, conflicts between people and black bears are common, and management of these conflicts is a significant priority for CDFW. Bear conflict appears to have been increasing for decades due to increasing spatial overlap between people and black bears (i.e., increased human development and recreation in black bear habitat, expansion of black bear distribution). The vast majority of human-bear conflict involves the intersection of black bears and attractants, such as food, garbage, and livestock. Key predictors of bear conflict include the availability of both natural foods and anthropogenic foods, proximity of black bear habitat to humans, and black bear abundance and density.

CDFW has a Departmental Bulletin that describes the response, methods, and decision-making process for managing human-bear conflicts. Since the launch of CDFW's Trap-Tag-Haze Program in 2020, CDFW has documented more than 360 individual bears. During this process, bears receive a health evaluation and DNA samples are collected. With this data, CDFW hopes to more accurately identify individual bears, avoid misidentification, and track if conflict behaviors are passed down through family lines.

In recent years, interactions between black bears and people have been increasing across California, particularly in foothill suburbs and recreational areas where human development overlaps with bear habitat. Southern California communities, such as those around Altadena, have seen unusual incidents of bears entering residential structures. In one high-profile case, a 550-pound black bear took up residence under a home for more than a month, causing significant property damage before wildlife specialists from a nonprofit used deterrence methods to evict it. During certain times of year, bears are seeking denning opportunities and, without suitable security, a crawl space be a welcomed opportunity. That bear was eventually chased out of the home with paintball pellets and an electrified bear mat was placed to discourage re-entry—which worked well. Sierra Madre (Los Angeles County), is also reporting increased black bear intrusions, with 41 intrusions in June 2025, which is over triple the 13 intrusions in June 2024. Sierra Madre City Council and Los Angeles County Supervisors have both called upon CDFW to develop a regional approach to address human-bear interactions and to higher more HWC specialists. With the recent Eaton Fire, wildlife are seeking food, water, and shelter in unaffected areas, including urban spaces.

Los Angeles County is not the only region managing human-bear conflict. Black Bears have found their way into campsites, cars, and homes, all in the search of unsecured food. The first round of response to these instances is to protect public safety and haze the bear away. If those measures are ineffective, then the bear is lethally removed. One bear, with ear tag 717, had been captured, tagged, and relocated to wild habitat in 2021 following a series of home and vehicle

break-ins. Bear 717 quickly returned to the Lake Tahoe Basin and resumed conflict behaviors, despite multiple occasions of hazing over the years. Due to escalating conflict and inability to trap the bear, the bear was lethally removed in July 2025. Like many Tahoe bears, 717 had severely rotted teeth, from subsisting on human food and trash, and was extremely large, nearly 400 pounds. Ideally, this circumstance could have been avoided by preventing bear habituation to human food (i.e., securing trash and food). Preventing human-bear conflict is top of mind for many in Tahoe and has led to the development of the Tahoe Interagency Bear Team (TIBT). TIBT is a collective of bear experts across federal, state and local agencies who study and understand bears and have devoted much of their professional lives to ensure the health and well-being of the Lake Tahoe Basin's black bears. TIBT provides proven and scientifically backed information about the real issues and solutions for living and recreating in bear country, helping Tahoe become "Bearwise" on its website, tahoebears.org.

Coyotes can be found throughout California and have an estimated population of 250,000 to 750,000. As adaptable, opportunistic predators, they have adjusted rapidly to changes in their environment. For most Californians, coyotes are more prevalent than the other predators addressed in this background. With a diverse diet, coyotes eat primarily mice, rate, squirrels, rabbits, etc., but have been known to eat insects, reptiles, fruits, and birds. Because of this opportunism, coyotes also take advantage of smaller livestock, pets, or intentional human feeding. Due to their comfort in urban living, vehicle strikes are the leading cause of death for city coyotes.

Currently, coyotes are listed in regulations as a one of several species that can be "taken at any time of the year and in any number." With concerns on indiscriminate killing of coyotes, the Commission had considered limiting that regulation for coyotes. However, after hearing concerns for public safety and ranchers who need to protect newborn calves from coyotes in addition to wolves. The Commission decided to take more time to consider the issue before proposing the matter for any future meeting. Indeed, most recently, CDFW euthanized a coyote several days after it bit two children in two different encounters near The University City Mall in La Jolla.

Finding coexistence

HWC in California is not a series of isolated, local challenges but a statewide issue shaped by the scale of human influence on the landscape. Research on HWC has historically focused on local or site-specific case studies, which can limit the effectiveness and transferability of solutions. As wildlife ranges span jurisdictions and ecosystems, there is a growing need for coordinated, statewide planning that aligns conservation, public safety, land-use policy, and climate adaptation. At the same time, communities on the ground still need flexible, locally tailored tools to respond quickly and effectively when conflicts arise.

Reducing conflict requires proactive, landscape-scale solutions alongside rapid-response management. Developing resources away from human infrastructure—such as artificial water catchments designed for wildlife, not just fish—can help reduce competition at human-dominated sites. Habitat management tools, including prescribed burning, can lower wildfire risk while improving ecosystem resilience. Maintaining and restoring habitat connectivity through wildlife corridors, road-crossing solutions, and broader conservation initiatives like California's

30×30 goals are also critical to reducing conflict by allowing animals to move safely through the landscape without being funneled into human communities.

At the community level, preventing conflict is often more effective than responding after it occurs. Local governments can play a key role by adopting and enforcing animal husbandry ordinances that reduce depredation risk, such as requirements for secure enclosures, electric fencing, or carcass management. Depredation permits and other management responses could be tied to compliance with these measures, reinforcing prevention as the first line of defense. Once a large carnivore becomes habituated to livestock or human-associated food, it becomes far more difficult to haze the animal, protect livestock, or encourage a return to natural prey. For this reason, rapid response, holistic evaluation of husbandry practices, and early deployment of mitigation tools are essential.

Finally, HWC is as much a social issue as an ecological one. Emotions run high when communities fear for safety, when ranchers lose livestock, or when wildlife advocates oppose management actions—even to the point of interfering with wildlife agency staff. At the same time, some communities report that predators such as mountain lions appear less wary of people, with increases in reported attacks on domestic animals that may reflect both real behavioral changes and heightened public awareness and reporting. Addressing HWC in California will require not only science-based management, but also trust, communication, and shared responsibility. Long-term coexistence depends on acknowledging the realities faced by people living alongside wildlife while ensuring that management decisions sustain healthy ecosystems in an increasingly human-dominated and climate-stressed state.