

Calif. law banning dogs in bear hunting has impact

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

Hunters killed fewer bears in California in 2013 than during any other year in the last two decades, a trend that many agree is a direct consequence of a new law that bans hunters from using dogs to track bears.

California has a sometimes-complicated relationship with its roughly 33,000 bears. They are a beloved symbol of the state's rugged history; they are a nuisance to some residents who live where development meets the forest; they are a source of excitement and sport to those who hunt. And they can be a cause for worry to state officials trying to minimize bear attacks on humans.

Supporters of the ban said it prohibited an unsportsmanlike, cruel practice. Opponents pointed to the long history of hounding and said it was a reasonable way to control the bear population and reduce attacks on people.

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