

Mountain lions killed in Calif. despite hunting ban

By Ryan Sabalow and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

Victoria Vaughn doesn't have a killer's heart.

The 59-year-old artist and former substitute teacher, whose eyes well with tears when she gets upset, loves animals. It's why she started raising alpacas for wool for her weaving projects in the first place.

She certainly never thought she'd want to kill one of California's most charismatic mammals.

That changed last year when a mountain lion started coming around at night, savaging her alpacas. Vaughn and her neighbors in the rugged mountains behind Malibu's beaches blame this single lion for wiping out more than 100 goats, alpacas, sheep and other animals, sometimes dozens at a time. He rarely ate anything from their corpses, instead leaving them to rot in their pens.

Vaughn had had enough. She obtained a permit from the state of California allowing her to kill the lion. Hers was one of about 218 such "depredation permits" issued in California every year, though typically less than half result in a kill.

Last year, livestock owners and professional trappers, houndsmen and sharpshooters killed 120 mountain lions, including five each in El Dorado and Placer counties.

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