

Snowmobiles Aren't Weapons (SAW) Act

What it does: Prohibits the use of snowmobiles and other motor vehicles to intentionally run down and run over wolves, coyotes, and other wildlife on federal lands.

- The running down and crushing of an adolescent female wolf triggered worldwide condemnation by hunters and non-hunters alike on the use of snowmobiles to maim and kill wildlife for pleasure, turning snowmobiles into weapons. Cody Roberts, of Daniel, Wyo., **chased down a female yearling wolf** on a snowmobile, running her over and grievously injuring her before taping her mouth shut, outfitting her with a shock collar, and tormenting and torturing her at a local bar before finally shooting her in the back alley.
- Cody Roberts is part of a subculture of individuals who engage in depraved acts of “whacking.” There are **multiple accounts** of these practices, including this **deeply disturbing video** of a man, apparently in Wyoming, filming himself repeatedly running over coyotes on his snowmobile, in one case trapping the victim under his snowmobile and driving it forward at high rates of speed. He then peeled the flattened animal from the base of his vehicle. In 2018, Wyoming hunter, ranch manager and Sublette County resident John Fandek noted it’s “very common for people to take their entire families out on snowmobiles and train their kids to run down coyotes.” He added that “there’s no question they do it with wolves too.... If they can’t run them down, they’ll chase them until they fall in the snow from exhaustion and then shoot them.”
- Many states do not address running down and running over wildlife in their fish and wildlife regulations and laws, perhaps



Before tormenting and killing an adolescent wolf, Cody Roberts ran her over with his snowmobile.

because lawmakers or state fish and wildlife agencies were not aware of this form of abuse. But some states do address it squarely, and ranchers, sportsmen, and other key stakeholders support these comprehensive prohibitions on cruelty. In Colorado, “it is unlawful for a person to hunt, take, or harass wildlife from or with a motor vehicle.” Minnesota has a similarly



strong prohibition in place since 1986, and it's worth noting that Minnesota has more than three times as many wolves as any other state and it is a snowmobiling mecca, so the application of the law is an important practical example of its universal social acceptance. Washington and Oregon — two other northern latitude states — also have similar prohibitions. Wyoming lawmakers, however, **rejected a bill** to ban “whacking” in 2019 to address the practice and it does not appear lawmakers are poised to act, even though the governor of Wyoming has condemned this cruelty and said it should be illegal.

- While several states have enacted laws prohibiting hunting of wildlife “from motor vehicles,” it is unclear and untested whether such laws would apply to cases of “whacking,” where hunters actually use the motor vehicle itself as a weapon to injure, incapacitate and kill animals. Given the recent occurrences in Wyoming and the use of **snowmobiles to chase, hunt and kill predators in neighboring Montana and Idaho**, the SAW Act will make it clear that these actions will not be tolerated in a civilized society.
- Responsible sportsmen have accepted — and many have supported — other prohibitions on grossly unethical forms of killing wildlife, such as chasing and hunting them from aircraft and the baiting of waterfowl. In 1969, NBC showed a documentary entitled *The Wolf Men*, in which several scenes depicted the slaughtering of wolves and other animals from aircraft. This resulted in a public outcry for government intervention, and in 1971, Congress enacted the **Airborne Hunting Act**. That effort was shepherded to passage by the late Congressman John Dingell, a lifelong hunter and former board member of the National Rifle Association.
- These practices are an affront to any notion of ethical or “fair chase” hunting, the concept of which Teddy Roosevelt introduced in 1893 and which has become the norm in the sport. The notion is further embedded in social contracts such as the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, which includes the tenet that “wildlife may only be killed for a legitimate, non-frivolous purpose.”