



MONTANA FUR HARVESTERS

Oct-Dec 2020

President's Message

Lucky Contest Winner

Letter to a Commissioner

Fisher Update

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Politics Affecting Trappers

Montana Fur Harvesters

2020 Fall Newsletter

Directors:

Tom Fieber - Polson 250-3386
Rick Hawk – Kalispell 253-4439
Scott Smith – Bigfork 837-2659
Mort Hill – C Falls 212-3699
Ken Cordoza – Whitefish 250-6038
Larry Keyes – Whitefish 250-6038
Tressa Schutter – Kal. 871-5638

General Contact: Tom Fieber
250-3386 or tfieber@bresnan.net

Scott Smith 837-2659 or
Smith1wa@yahoo.com

Houndsmen: Mort Hill 212-3699
roddyhill@gmail.com

Montana Fur Harvesters
PO Box 3481
Kalispell Mt 59903

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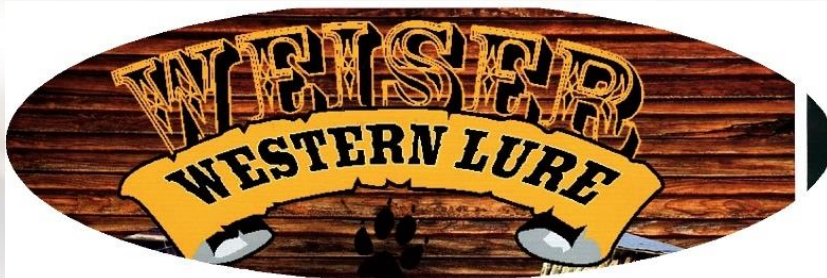
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Cover Photo; Look Closely. A few years ago, Hannah Potter, photographed these trappers and their dog. Proof that trapping has been around for a while. Below, This young cat was really happy to be released from a coyote set, he stayed to say thanks.



Notes from the president.

As I get older, I find that time goes faster and faster. Seems that I just finished our last magazine and now it's time to get out the fall edition. I just read a great article in a hunting magazine about educating others on hunting issues. It dawned on me that we, as trappers, are in the same boat. We can spend all our time preaching to each other but the ones we need to reach are the people that don't trap but are not anti's either. We won't change the minds of the anti's but we can project a good image of trappers and the wildlife management job that we do to others. A lot of this group in the middle does not know that we as trappers are actually working with wildlife agencies across the nations managing wildlife. Not only that but we are the ones who keep an eye on the species and work to conserve them. This is the group that will vote for or against trappers and will have the final say.

I feel that the best way to reach out is to attend all kinds of public events. By displaying and explaining what we do has be very beneficial. If we can educate more of the nontrapping community the better. Some of these events have put up to four thousand people at our booths. It was a very busy August for us. We did get the booth through the five days of the Northwest County Fair in Kalispell in August. It was a scaled down event compared to past years. The carnival was not there and it sure did affect the attendance. The total number of people attending was lower as was visitors to our booth. Ironically, our funds raised was above last years total. The weather was great and the volunteers were awesome. Fewer people were there but happy to be out and willing to support us.



Recently we attended the Kalispell Gun Show and had about 750 visitors to the booth. This was the first year we attended the Gun Show. It was a great crowd, smaller than the fair but raised even more money than the fair did. We have one more show scheduled for September 19th. Even though most

of our spring and summer shows were canceled we are now a little ahead of last year's fund raising. Seems that people are eager to get out and have been very supportive. This is our last scheduled show for this fall. If and when schools reopen, we hope to share this with them. If any of you know of a teacher that would like to have us do the school show let me know. We are proud to represent both Montana Trappers Association and Montana Fur Harvesters in these shows.

I have been so busy this summer that I still can't believe that trapping will be starting just around the corner. I still have so many chores to do before I can start setting traps. Hunting seasons have already started and I have only been out a couple of times. Hopefully after the last outdoor show things will settle down a bit.

Ongoing battle with anti's

What a trying time we are in. Trying to take part in these virtual meetings is very frustrating. So much of the time we lose sound and can only guess what is being said. Going back after the fact and listening to sound tracts on the FWP website is too late to respond. Not having in person meetings needs to end soon. We will be social distancing with FWP regional personnel starting soon about possible road and area trapping closures. They concern requests from FWP Commissioners that will be completed in June. If you are seeing or not seeing cross country skiers out in your traplines or lion hunting areas let FWP or me know as soon as possible. I believe this is being done region by region.

Our fur show at the Kalispell gun show was a big hit. Victor Perez Wyatt Smith and Scott Smith did a great job.



Wyatt Smith, Addy and Mathew were wonderful ambassadors. They impressed kids and adults with their knowledge. Having these young kids involved was a blessing.

It was brought up at a regional meeting with FWP Wildlife Managers lately and it was stated that because of chances of catching dogs and kids, they wanted to change the 150' because of high use of other recreationists and being hard to open a wolf trap.

I looked up the number of areas where there are additional restrictions back in the November 2017 trapping regulations. I looked at the 2019 regs and I am afraid that more have been added since then.

Restricted Areas listed in the wolf trapping regulations. There are **30** with hunting or trapping restrictions throughout the state.

Special Regulations there are **4** Wildlife Management Areas with additional stipulations.

Expanded Setbacks along High Recreational use Trails and Roads

TD 1 has **5** listed.

TD 2 has **4** listed closures plus the Lake Como Ski Area.

TD 3 has **21** listed in that district.

This summer, the anti's requested around an additional 40 more roads and areas that they want closed or more restrictive. A lot of the restrictions have from 500 to 1000' that have already eliminated trapping for some areas. See more on page 16.

Please Remember

Whatever you do don't forget to vote in the November Election. We desperately need to get a republican governor elected so he can appoint new commissioners. Contrary to what the anti political ads say, **Greg Gianforte (R-MT)** will be a great supporter of Montana sportsmen. His past support has shown us this. Ever notice that democrats don't always tell the truth. According to them these summer protests have not been violent, what we see on TV is a myth. Please vote!!!

Tom Fieber 🐾

Larry Rattray's luck

I was on the Facebook Squarehead Trappers site and saw a post by Mel Belding with a contest to guess the number of ground anchors in a picture. I get a kick on challenges and it was free, so why not? I sent in my guess and was amazed that I hit it right on the money. Mel sent me a dozen Wolf Fang ground anchors with chains attached.

Mel makes various trapping supplies and is quite innovative and always looking for things that he can improve on. If you have an idea but need some help to make it work, this could be good for both of you. He is working on a You Tube video to prove or disprove old wives tales. That should be fun. His web site is still in the development phase but will showcase his creations. A few of his items that really caught my eye:

He makes a drag that will slow your catch down. He calls it the Warthog. They dig in quick, even in the smooth lawn that he shows in a video on Facebook. He has different versions depending on what you are trapping. Add a little brush and a little downfall and they will be right there. He sells these completed but also in a kit if you can do a little welding or have friend that will help you out at an even better price.



He has a link to join chain onto ground anchors like the wolf fang which allows more room for welding.



He hand-bends these from 3/16" cold drawn steel. At \$25 per hundred, they are reasonably priced for a big improvement to the S hooks they replace.

He has a tool to install what he calls a pipe dream set. If you use a pipe as a scent post this can make your life easier. Just drive it in, give it a twist then pull it out. It removes a plug of earth to install your pipe in. He



says it will compact the rocks and still make a hole you can use.

Other things that he currently makes include a earth anchor pullers and drivers, skinning racks vertical and horizontal, UTV recovery drags (just a big Warthog) he does trap mods (even on a Bridgeport Milling Machine) rebar stakes both 1/2" and 5/8", has a great supply of tie wire drowning clips. He makes just about anything for trapping. He is putting together different things as ideas come to him.

If you have a minute, check out Mel Belding's Facebook page and drop him a text. Really interesting man making things that might help the size of your fur check this winter. Contact Mel at 1-775-4511 or guzlr@sbcglobal.net

Respectfully submitted by Larry Rattray 🐾

To Commissioner Tim Aldrich,

This letter was submitted to us for publication.

The concern of trapping on closed roads has been extremely overstated and the concerns of those driving for the further restrictions is not based on sound judgement, the current regulations or the actual risk to people.

Looking at the real issue of possible risk to humans being caught in a trap and injury to that person. The realization that traps are regulated in there spread or how wide the jaws can be set open for trapping is already in place. This is made to addresses the “catching of people” concern. If you look at your own shoes you have on you, you will realize that people’s feet are much to large to be caught in traps used for the species trappers target in Montana. The chances that anyone could place their foot inside a trap and have it close up on them is almost nonexistent. There has never been a confirmed case of a trap closing up around a person’s shoe. Skiers have an even a lessor chance of being caught because of the length of their ski’s.

The issue of someone’s dog being caught in a trap is greatly increased when the dog owner violates the law and allows the dog to run off leash, at large. In fact, there are much more complaints about dog owners allowing their dogs to run off leash chasing, killing and injuring wildlife in one year then the total number of dogs ever caught in traps since there has been records. The majority of those dogs caught in traps were due to the fact the dog owners allowed their dogs to run at large. In almost all cases the dogs are released and only temporarily sore just as the research animals are caught using similar leg hold traps by the FWP biologist.

There are more children and adults injured each year due to dog attacks and bites in Montana. Most dog owners are more fearful of other dogs running and attacking their dog then by traps. Dogs are a much greater risk to humans and wildlife then traps in the woods.

As a trapper I take pride in my skills and the craft of trapping. Much the same way as hunters do in their skills of hunting. If the commission takes the stance that the licensed and regulated trappers shouldn’t be allowed to trap on closed roads because it might be a risk to others then they are also going to be inferring that hunters poses a risk to others on the closed roads. Using setbacks along closed roads will set in place the same argument to set boundaries of how far off the closed roads hunters will be allowed to hunt.

Montana has over a million miles of open roads where set backs are already in place and there are regulations in place to address trapping there. In reality, there are almost

unlimited city, county and state parks along with two major National Parks with thousands of miles of hiking, walking trails, and recreational areas where trapping is not allowed. With the millions of miles of open roads where setbacks regulations are already in place. There already exist almost unlimited closed off trapping areas of cities, towns, parks and National Park Land within Montana. There is no argument that dog owners additionally need these limited, abandoned and closed roads system used by hunters and trappers to be trap free by going around the people of Montana’s vote. Instead they are pushing to use the FWP commission to further carry their agenda.

Trappers are great people, your neighbors, outdoorsman and women who enjoy their skills and follow the regulations already in place. They are not the ones the animal rights people make them out to be with the setup photo’s and billboards. Placing photos of wrecked cars and people injured all around on billboards doesn’t mean all drivers are evil people. Yet that is what they portray trappers as, if you were to follow their beliefs.

I am asking you to look beyond what they are having you believe and use sound judgement and the science behind the skill of trapping. It’s emotions and fear of not knowing about traps and trapping that they using to close trapping down. Think of it this way, if you didn’t know how to drive you would be scared of drivers if all you saw were billboards of wrecked cars and injured people. You would want to outlaw all drivers and cars from public roads and lands too. That is what their intent is.

Feel free to meet with myself or any fellow trapper and we will be glad to show the skill and love of trapping that helped to settle Montana as the state it is. Don’t take that away from us.

Trapper John MT 🏠

A beautiful fall day on Flathead’s Wildhorse Island.
The bighorn rams and mule deer bucks are awesome.



IDAHO TRAPPERS ASSOCIATION

Membership & Subscription Form

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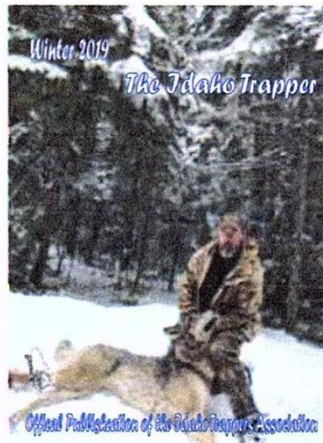
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We just finished our 2020 fund raising raffle events and have drawn the winning tickets. Our lucky winner of the AR this year was Kieren Harris of Kalispell. Kieren said that he bought a couple of tickets at the Kalispell Gun Show. He was thrilled to take the rifle over the alternate cash offer of \$1200.00. We came close to last years ticket sales even without nearly as many events. Thanks to everyone who bought tickets that supports our mission.

Our second-place winner of the Cartridge Board donated by Member, Rick Hawk, was won by Scot Ramsay from Valley WA. Scott attended the Squarehead Trapping Paloosa Event this past summer. Scott returned my call from his wolf trapline in northern Idaho. He had caught

one wolf so far. These raffles provide about 80% of funding that we use to put on Fur Shows, cover costs with the Fisher



Enhancement Project with FWP, fight anti's to keep our trapping rights, publish our quarterly magazine and offer fur shows at schools. Our thanks to all that buy these

tickets for a chance to win. Also, thanks to Westland Seed of Ronan for assisting in purchasing these firearms.

Members, Scott Smith, Rick Hawk, Victor Perez, Wyatt Smith, Tressa Schutter, Dan Thingelstad, Larry Rattray, Mort Hill and myself worked hard all year to make this possible.

Tom Fieber 🐾

Politics that effect trappers.

Larry

I have always said that I had to have all the parties to pick someone good to vote for. With the radical socialistic agenda of the Democrats, it will be impossible for me to check the box next to a D. Please do your research on the other races as well, there are people who will help our agenda and people who will hurt us. I urge you to sign up for an absentee ballot. Absentee ballots are not what the Republicans are concerned about in this election. Mailing ballots to anyone who ever signed up to vote makes lots of ballots

available for potential fraud. There are 2 quick benefits to the absentee ballot. One, you do not have to make yourself available to go to the polls and possibly infect yourself with some virus. Two, and more importantly, you have time to research the people and initiatives on the ballot to make a good choice.

Well, I got up to go walk my bow and the wind and the rain convinced me that I should try to write an article about this election. For your consideration,

Well, the Election is fast approaching and I am sure we all have had our fill of the political ads. But I can't think of an election that we have more at risk than this one.

The Presidential election is a no brainer in my opinion. If you look at Trump has accomplished in the past 3 ½ year, it is amazing. If you consider that the Democrats have spent the last 3 ½ years opposing everything he has tried to do, it is absolutely mind blowing. If that isn't enough, listen to Biden try to make sense when asked a question, one that he was probably given the question and the response he was supposed to reply with.

Another of our National races that is important is the Senate Race. When Bullock made his run for the Presidential candidate, he showed us his true colors. He didn't get an "F" rating from the NRA for no reason. He will tell you what you want to hear now but I haven't forgotten that he was following right along with Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer. This race is big in the National scene because the control of the Senate is very slim right now and Daines is one that the Democrats feel they can turn.

The House race is very similar. With Gianforte making his run for the Governor, there is no incumbent. Congressional candidate, Kathleen Williams is from California and schooled in their biased way of thinking. She is trained in saying what you want to hear but again, she is going to follow along with the party policies and do what she is told. Once again, the House could be returned to the Republicans if we all do our part. That would remove Nancy Pelosi from the Speaker position. Another race that really concerns me is the Governor's ticket. Much of the Governor's ability is controlled by the House and Senate and that is good. One thing that affects us as sportsmen and women is the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department. If you didn't know, the Governor is the one who picks the Director of FW&P. He also replaces 3 of the Commissioners at the beginning of his term and the other 2 at the start of his 3rd year. They are the ones who make most of the decisions on our regulations for Hunting, Fishing and Trapping. Currently, 2 of our Commissioners have been following along with everything that the anti-trapping fanatics have been asking for. We were very fortunate that Bob Inman was on his game at the last Commission meeting when they were set to restrict trapping setbacks along roadways, and areas of land. That has been postponed until the June meeting which

allows us a chance to have new Commissioners installed. But that only happens if Gianforte is elected.

The Democrats have access to a lot of dark money that is filling the television and radio stations with lots of negative ads but take a few minutes and look up the Democratic Platform. See who and what they are backing. It is not reviving the economy for the citizens from the shutdown they pushed from the China Virus, they are backing the illegal aliens and working to unsure their own voter base is expanded by allowing illegals and convicted criminals are allowed to vote.

I have always said that I had to have all the parties to pick someone good to vote for. With the radical socialistic agenda of the Democrats, it will be impossible for me to check the box next to a D. Please do your research on the other races as well, there are people who will help our agenda and people who will hurt us. I urge you to sign up for an absentee ballot. Absentee ballots are not what the Republicans are concerned about in this election. Mailing ballots to anyone who ever signed up to vote makes lots of ballots available for potential fraud. There are 2 quick benefits to the absentee ballot. One, you do not have to make yourself available to go to the polls and possibly infect yourself with some virus. Two, and more importantly, you have time to research the people and initiatives on the ballot to make a good choice.

Respectfully submitted by Larry Rattray 🐾



Photos by Larry Rattray, One busy bull from Southwest Montana.

Larry with a western Montana wolf. This is the third one taken over the years at the same mound set.





This is an interesting story, noticed tracks around this stump so set up a trail camera and set some bait. Within about a two-week period we had a coyote, wolf, fox and a skunk visit. Since I put out bait, I couldn't place a trap. Each one visited many times. They avoided our trap sets outside of the 30' rule except for the fox. I am always thinking, and realized that I should have pulled the bait and set traps right there. Trouble was I just thought of it now. Lesson learned.



Larry Rattray with another Wolf. This was one of a pack of five. After we took three from the pack the rest avoided us for the rest of the trapping season.

Rick Hawk and Tom offering encouragement to Megan at a Fur Handling Clinic.



Fisher Update

Here we are again climbing trees. Here is an update on the second year of the fisher project that we have partnered with FWP. This year, the Fur Harvesters have around \$300 in fuel, fasteners and motel cost. It took two of us three days to place 14 boxes or ninety-six hours this summer.

Working with Jessy is always an adventure. Sites are selected on a map, not in the field. Often, when we get to the GPS location, we may have a vertical canyon or hill. Access may be almost impossible to get the boxes to them. We can spend more time just finding the correct road to the site than the time it takes to hang the boxes. Seems that we have been on most all roads in the study area. It's a challenge and hard work but we are happy to do it. Below is what Jessy had sent me back in late June. **Tom** 🐾

Hey Folks,

Hope everyone is enjoying summer and staying safe. Just wanted to give you an update. We have retrieved all but one of the cameras. Road closures near Troy has made the last retrieval difficult. I just finished reviewing the last 2, and I'm sorry to report no fisher activity at any location. However, all of the cameras functioned perfectly, so that was a relief. I think it would have been surprising if they had started using the boxes immediately. It took several years for them to use them in BC and they put out way more than us. Hopefully we will see some use as we increase box numbers and as they remain on the landscape longer.

Dan is a total machine and has already completed the construction of 20 more boxes for deployment. I have been working on potential locations for these boxes. I am hoping to get into the field at the end of next week and mark some tree locations. Tom Radandt has also offered to help find some good locations, as he knows the area way better than I do. It would be great to get the boxes out early this year, and I plan on luring them up several times this summer attracting some mustelids.

Thanks again for all your help!

Jessy Coltrane 🐾

2020 Region 1 Furbearer Summary

Jessy Coltrane, PhD

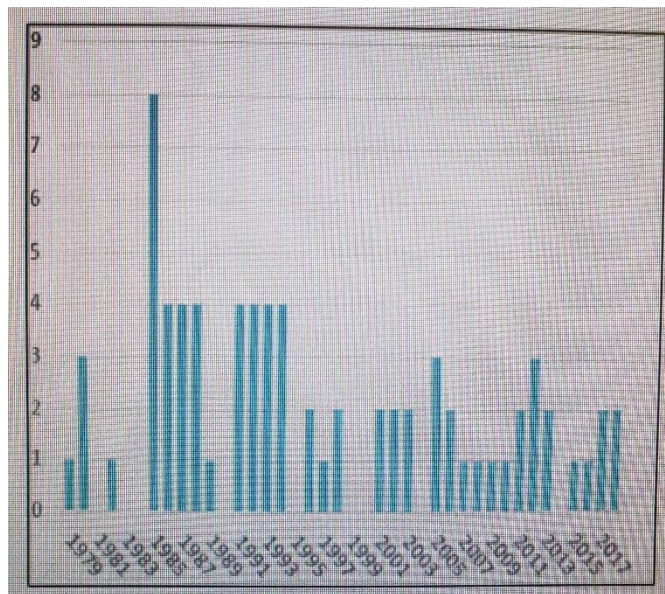
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Fishers

Background.— Fishers in the Northern Rocky Mountains (NRM) of Montana, including northwest and west central Montana, and Idaho are considered a distinct population segment (DPS). While unverified, it is believed that



unregulated fur trade in the late 1800s and early 1900s nearly eradicated Montana's fisher populations (Powell 1993). By the 1920s, fishers were presumed extirpated, and the statewide trapping season was closed in 1930 (Weckworth and Wright 1968). To restore fishers to what was perceived to be their historical range, provide trapping opportunity, and to control porcupines, animals were translocated to various mountain ranges across the western part of the state (Weckworth and Wright 1968; Roy 1991). In 1959-1960, the first translocations of fisher were initiated with animals from British Columbia. Nine fishers were released in the northwest corner of Montana, 15 fishers were released in the Swan Valley, and 12 fishers were released into south-western Montana (Weckworth and Wright 1968). Additional translocations occurred between 1989 and 1991, when 110 fishers (32 from Minnesota and 78 from Wisconsin) were released into the Cabinet Mountains (Roy 1991; Heinemeyer 1993). A third release of 61 fishers occurred in 1996 and 1998, just north of Montana's border in British Columbia. Some of these animals appeared to have moved into northwestern Montana, as one marked individual was captured by a Montana trapper in 1996 (Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, unpublished data). Following the 1958-1961 transplants,



fishers appeared to have established populations in the eastern portion of northwest Montana, and a trapping season with a quota of 10 fishers was reopened in 1983 in northwest Montana (Trapping District 1); however, by 1990, fishers were again nearly absent from the 1959-1960 reintroduction areas, and fishers appeared to only persist in the Cabinet Mountains, where they were released in 1989-1991. In response to a perceived decline in fisher numbers throughout the region, the annual trapping quota was reduced to five in 1995 and then to two in 1997. The annual quota of 2 was maintained until 2016, when the quota was decreased to 1 fisher per year, and trapping was only permitted in the Cabinet Mountains. Between 1979 and 2018, 81 fishers (37 females, 41 males, 3 unclassified individuals) were harvested in northwest Montana, and in 2019, the trapping season quota was reduced to zero.

Fisher Occupancy 2017-2018.— In winter 2017-2018, we completed a pilot project to estimate occupancy and detection probability of fishers in the Cabinet Mountains. This monitoring effort was designed to provide initial estimates and to advise a larger multi-state monitoring effort for fisher to be completed in the following winter. In addition, this was the first comprehensive monitoring of fishers in the Cabinet Mountains of Montana using baited camera/DNA stations.

We deployed a total of forty-two monitoring stations in 21 randomly selected grid cells from 11 December 2017 to 31 March 2018 for a total of 3,993 trap nights. We detected fishers at 7 out of 21 cells, which resulted in a 0.43 ($SE = 0.15$, 95% $CI = 0.19 - 0.71$) probability that fishers occupied a grid cell. Detection probability was low (0.25 ± 0.08) but increased slightly throughout the sampling periods. Genetic analysis revealed a minimum population count of 4-6 individual fishers in the study area, but all individuals successfully identified were males and of midwestern genetic origin. Our results support anecdotal evidence from the West Cabinet Mountains of Idaho that suggested fishers may be present within the study area but at low abundance (Lucid et al. 2019).

Fisher Occupancy 2018-2019.— During winter 2018-2019, in partnership with Idaho Department of Fish and Game, we conducted a large-scale, multi-state baited remote camera and hair snare study to assess the current distribution of fishers across their Northern Rocky Mountain range. A master's level graduate student analyzed the data for her thesis research. The objective was to determine the current distribution of NRM fishers and to provide a baseline occupancy estimate for repeated monitoring that will allow biologists to monitor any changes in fisher distribution.

We deployed 175 baited camera and hair snare stations across MFWP regions 1 and 2. Preliminary results indicate that the wet habitat in the Cabinet Mountains estimated fisher occupancy was 0.196 ($CI = 0.089-0.405$). In comparison, predicted dry forest habitat occupancy was

0.062 ($CI = 0.020-0.106$). While predicted occupancy for habitat, such as in the Cabinet Mountains, was lower than predicted by the 2017-2018 study, it was within the range of the confidence intervals for the initial estimate. It is likely that actual occupancy is somewhere between the two estimates.

Fisher Den Box Initiative.— In the summer of 2019, in conjunction with Montana Fur Harvesters, Montana Trapper's Association, and US Forest Service, we began a project to attempt to increase fisher denning habitat in the Cabinet Mountains. Habitat availability for fishers in Montana, and specifically the Cabinet Mountains, is not well understood, but Idaho models suggest the Cabinet Mountains provide the most suitable habitat in Montana. Fisher home ranges in Idaho commonly occur in mesic areas and contain large diameter trees (up to 6 feet in dbh)



conducive to cavities that provide secure denning and resting sites (e.g., western red cedar) (Sauder 2014, Sauder and Rachlow 2015). These trees are often most numerous in drainage bottoms but are also found upslope on hillsides as soil and moisture conditions allow. It appears that cavities can be a limiting factor for fisher populations, since fishers are obligate cavity users. Historic timber management and large-scale fires may have reduced available denning trees, which may limit fisher distribution and population viability. In British Columbia, where hydro-electric development, insect infestations, timber harvest, and large-scale fires had decreased the availability of den trees, artificial den boxes were found to be used by fishers (Davis 2016). Using a den box design from British Columbia, FWP provided materials and Dan Thingelstad constructed 31 den boxes for deployment. With approval from the Forest Service, individuals from Montana Fur Harvesters, Montana Trapper's Association, and USFS placed den boxes at previously selected locations within modeled fisher habitat in the Cabinet Mountains. Corrugated collars fixed with gun brushes were placed beneath the boxes to collect genetic material. In December, MFWP staff placed remote cameras at the den box location to monitor mesocarnivore activity. We will remove the cameras and download the image data in mid-May, when sites are accessible.

This summer, Montana trappers will construct another 30 den boxes for deployment and monitoring. Den boxes will be monitored for 4 consecutive winters, after which time occupancy monitoring will be repeated to evaluate population status of fishers in the Cabinet Mountains. We would like to especially thank Dan Thingelstad, Tom Fieber, Larry Rattray, Rick Hawk, Tom Radandt, Tom Gilmore, Ben Jones, Nate Beveridge, and Ray Vinkey for their help and continued support on this project. The den boxes weigh approximately 75 lbs, and these guys installed them 15 ft. up trees!

Marten

Harvest summary.— American martens (*Martes Americana*) are an important furbearer species in Northwest Montana; however, since the late 1980’s, marten harvest and then number of martens harvested per trapper have declined throughout the region. Anecdotal evidence suggests fewer marten on the landscape, especially in certain parts of the region. In 2019, the decline in harvest and concern for the status of marten in Northwest Montana prompted the adoption of a personal quota of 10 marten/trapper. The purpose of this quota was to help stabilize overall harvest to a 10-year average and reduce the potential for overharvest in any one drainage. During the 2019 trapping season, 121 martens (31 females and 90 males) were harvested in Region 1. The majority of these marten were trapped in Flathead County (80), followed by Lincoln (36) and Lake (4) counties. Thirty trappers harvested marten in Region 1, with an average of 4.03 marten/trapper. Only 2 trappers reported a harvest of 10 marten. There is no anticipated change in marten quota for the upcoming trapping season.

Wolves

Harvest.— Total wolf mortality for the 2019 season was 138 wolves, including 56 wolves taken by hunters, 67 wolves taken by trappers, and 11 wildlife service depredation removals. This is the highest annual mortality rate for Region 1 since 2011 when wolves were removed from the endangered species list and legal harvest in Montana was approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Total wolf mortality and causes in Region 1 (2011-2019)

Year	Hunter	Illegal	Trapper	Wildlife Services	Total Mortalit
2011	62	6		18	99
2012	42	7	41	14	111
2013	56	2	45	18	130
2014	39		29		76
2015	34	1	36		74
2016	45	1	33	7	92
2017	44	1	40		88
2018	54	8	52	9	127
2019	56		67	11	138




In 2018, there were an estimated 600-1100 wolves in Montana. This estimate has essentially been stable since 2016, after a peak in 2013. Current regional estimates are not available due to potential variation in pack and territory sizes across the state. Currently, a PhD student at the University of Montana is working to provide an improved methodology to estimate Regional wolf numbers by accounting for some of this variation.

In February 2020, FWP Region 1 proposed changes to the wolf season in Northwestern Montana. The proposal would have extended the season, both for harvest and trapping and increased the per-person limit on wolf harvest. The Fish and Wildlife Commission did not approve the proposal, citing a need for more information on Regional wolf numbers that may be forthcoming.

Bobcats

Closure of the 2019 bobcat season was initiated on December 30, 2019, at which time 229 bobcats out of the 275 quota had been taken. The timing of this closure was consistent with previous closures, which occasionally resulted in harvests exceeding the targeted maximum allowable take. For example, in 2018, harvest closure was initiated when 225 bobcats had been taken, and the resulting total harvest was 293 bobcats. In 2019, the final harvest was 244 bobcats (114 males, 129 females, and 1 bobcat of unknow sex). The majority of bobcats were trapped (168), and only 38 (26%) were taken by hound hunters. Lincoln county saw the highest harvest of bobcats

(102), followed by Flathead (62), Sanders (61), Lake (15), and Missoula (4) counties. Juvenile/adult ratio for harvested bobcats was 0.18. There is no anticipated change in harvest quota for the upcoming bobcat season.

Jessy Coltrane, PhD 
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

A message from Montana’s Speaker of the House

Montana’s Constitution re-states our individual right to the opportunity to harvest wild fish and wild game animals. That right shall forever be preserved to the individual citizens of our great state. Even with this strong Constitutional language there are still members of the public, many who are from out of state, that want to infringe upon Montana citizens ability to continue our life long heritage of harvesting wild fish and game.

Many opposing hunting, fishing and trapping do not understand the importance of wild life management and how outdoors men and women are a vital part of working with Montana Fish and Game and private land owners in the successful management of our resources.


Those same individuals who are attacking our rights to harvest wild game are also going after our second amendment right to bear arms. In addition, they want to infringe upon our private property rights along with locking up and limiting access to our public lands.

Large out of state organizations and many of their members have spent little time in Montana and do not understand the proper management of our wild fish and game or our lands. These organizations will continue their attack on Montana and we must continue to remain vigilant.

You can always count on the Republican party in Montana to protect your rights to harvest, keep public land in public hands, improve access to public lands and to make sure public lands are maintained for multiple use.

I would encourage you to support Republicans in the coming elections. We will always have your back.

Greg Hertz, HD 12 
Speaker of the Montana House of Representatives
Polson, MT

Greg has always returned emails and calls for me. His past support has been all in favor of sportsman. We are lucky to have him protecting our rights in the legislature. Tom 

The winner of this year’s rifle was more than happy to drive to Westland Seed in Ronan to pickup his new firearm.

Thanks to Westland Seed for supporting us.



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Montana Fur Harvesters works closely with local FWP personnel. Game warden, Jon Obst, is one of the first to work with trappers and is a valued asset to the trapping community. He knows trapping, regulations, how traps function, what trappers are dealing with.

Wildlife biologist, Jessie Coltrane, has been heading up the fisher denning box project in the Cabinet Mountains. She has been great to work with and is a hard worker herself. Wildlife manager for region one, Not pictured is Neil Anderson , he has been another one that attends public meetings and sportsman events. He has been working to address road and trail issues as well as other issues that affect sportsman. Neil really listens to peoples concerns and acts on them. These are just a few of the many local personnel that work with and appreciate.

Thanks to each and every one of them!



Montana Fur Harvesters
PO Box 3481
Kalispell, MT 59903
mtfurs@gmail.com



One of the bright spots in the fur markets has been coyotes. With prices averaging in the eighties and up to one fifty lately we can only hope that continues. I read where Canada Goose will be using more recycled materials. Let's see how that turns out.

How many times has this happened to archery hunters? The bull comes in at ten yards and stops broadside only to have something in the way. This one made a fatal step that allowed the shot. Taxidermist, fellow member, Scott Smith preserved the moment. Hopefully by trappers controlling the wolf population others may have this opportunity long into the future herein in Northwest Montana.





The flying squirrel is very nocturnal and is seldom seen in daylight but is very abundant.

The weasel/ermine is another aggressive squirrel hunter.

The bobcat is an excellent hunter. I have followed tracks in snow and found squirrel tails that are left behind.



The Columbia Ground Squirrel and the Red or Pine Squirrel below.

Squirrels provide a food source for many creatures. Here in the Northwest we have our native Red or Pine, Columbia or ground and flying squirrels. The Bobcat, pine martin and the fisher all depend on these in their diets.



Pine Martin above and the Fisher below. We often find tails from the flying squirrel, that's the only part that they don't eat.



WE PROMOTE AND PRESERVE FUR HARVESTING AND ITS HERITAGE IN MONTANA AS BOTH A SPORT AND AN INDUSTRY THROUGH EDUCATION AND REGULATORY ACTIVISM. WE SUPPORT FUR HARVESTING AS A SUSTAINABLE USE TOOL FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT, AND FIGHT TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE WILDLIFE AND HABITAT. WE WORK WITH MT FWP TO SUPPORT THEIR MANAGEMENT GOALS.

Activities*****

Active with FWP shaping regulations that shape our trapping.

Trapper Education

Booths at Family Forestry Expo

School Shows

Northwest Montana Expo

Newsletters

Local County Fairs

Fur Handling Clinics

Public events

✕ Montana Fur Harvesters represents Trapper, Houndsmen and Predator Hunters

✕ Consider becoming a member of The Montana Trappers Association and The National Trappers Association. Every dollar raised will help to fight for trappers across the nation. Go online to their websites to join.

Memberships run from January 1 to December 31

Please Complete this form and send to: MFH, PO Box 3482, Kalispell MT 59903

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Wolf trapping in Idaho is underway and I am hearing good reports from trappers. Scott Ramsey took his first one right away and is hard at work on more. He told me that their group took 35 wolves last year. His post on Facebook was "Charlie Fite's Gotcha Wolf Trap are automatic and never let go". Two wolves were captured in some traps that Charlie Fite is making. They are well built with a solid bottom to prevent freezing, a good offset and strong. Charlie has photos of two wolves in his traps. Both of these wolves were relaxed and very happy to be turned loose with no foot damage. A good well-built trap with offset jaws, swivels and shock springs very seldom causes permanent injury.

Idaho has a definite advantage starting wolf trapping in October. I had six different wolves work six coyote sets a couple years ago in November. It sure is easier to trap them on open ground.

This is the first time we released a lion that was treed. The trap chain was only long enough for the lion to get this high. We gently placed a catch pole around his neck and hind foot then gingerly released the foot hold trap. He stayed in the tree until after he thanked us and we left.

In Closing

More updated information on conflicts between other recreationists. This meeting was requested by FWP.

The purpose of the meeting is to get some trappers and houndsmen/women together to discuss where they often run into other recreationalists. The goal of the meeting would be to identify areas on the map where potential user conflicts might exist if trapping setbacks were relaxed, areas where it is unlikely for conflicts to arise if trapping setbacks were eased, and areas where perhaps trapping is not advisable due to the high likelihood of user conflicts.

My response after the meeting. A few trappers and Houndsmen met with FWP Region One on September 29th to discuss road closures. The topic was what roads are we seeing used by cross country skiers and other recreational users on public lands. We had six people attending and are the ones that are out there almost daily during the trapping season. It was noted that some roads were being used by skiers and some were not. Our question is what constitutes high use. Does an occasional skier take away the rights of trappers. Some roads were noted as seeing higher use and were identified. This is the second meeting in region one, we covered the northern Flathead back in March. Some areas where no skiers are using, we may work to ease trap setbacks. In others with light usage, perhaps maintain current setbacks. I am expecting other regions to hold similar meetings.

The future prices of fur is anyone's guess, a big drop last year on bobcats was hard to take. Coyotes were still strong but not sure for this year. If trappers were trying to get rich, it wouldn't be from selling fur. In my case, my main goal is to reduce the wolf population to allow the ungulates a chance to rebound here in Northwest Montana. Witnessing the decline here has been tragic. There are a few left on public lands and high elevations but mostly they have retreated to private lands in the valleys. Wolves are following the herds to survive. Not a good scenario. Good luck on your lines and stay safe.

Tom Fieber 🦌

Montana Power Products not only sells great products but they have a full-service shop to repair and maintain your equipment. They are also great supporters of the sportsman community. Like ours and also Montana Sportsman for Fish & Wildlife with a ATV each year. Thanks from all of us.



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