

MONTANA FUR HARVESTERS

September 2021

Fall issue 2021

Wolf Snaring

Clinics and Video

Available

President's Message

Lucky Contest Winners

Thanks to our Commissioners

Fisher Update

Feral-y Lucky

Montana Fur Harvesters

2021 Fall Magazine

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Cover Photo; First time trapper Blaine Krause from Columbia Falls with the help of his mother, Oliva Krause. They had a good catch at the youth muskrat trapping class. Below not only did they have a good day trapping, but Oliva won the raffle for the Black wolf.



Notes from the president.

Enthusiasm is high in Northwest Montana

Fall is in the air and it is here already. Boy time flies. What a busy summer this has been. After our Spring Fur Shows, the Kalispell Sportsmen Show, the Kalispell Gun Show and Fur Handling Clinic we jumped right into the Missoula Gun Show in August. Then it was the grueling five day show at the Flathead Fair. All of the events were well attended and we finished out our raffle sales early. We did decide to cancel the Fall Kalispell Gun Show because we had sold out of firearms and furs a week before and didn't have time to reorder.

It was a very successful year for fund raising and getting out in front of the public. While the covid scare was down in the summer, people were out more. The fair attendance was a little down from a few years ago but we still recorded over three thousand visitors to our booth. Best of all, we gained some awesome new members that really stepped up at the booth. I was hoping for a little down time but that hasn't happened yet.

In June we started meetings with the **Foundation For Wildlife Management** from Idaho. That is the organization that pays reimbursement costs for legally harvested wolves. Now that Montana has passed legislation legalizing reimbursement for expenses for wolf harvesting, we got together and formed two Montana Chapters. It was a long road with a few bumps along the way getting setup, but we got it done. Justin Webb, from the Foundation walked us through the process. His experience and direction got us going in the right direction.

First, Sanders County F4WM.org scheduled a banquet at the fairgrounds in Plains on July 24th. They put together a great event and sold out 215 seats prior to the event. Justin guided our group to a very well ran event and had raised a lot of money to fund wolf harvests.

Then we also formed the Flathead Chapter of F4WM.org. Our banquet was scheduled for the 28th of August in Kalispell. Meeting weekly prior to the event, goals were set and assignments were made. We had a great group of volunteers and families that made it happen. With help from Justin, our leaders did an outstanding job of putting it all together. Donations were collected, some prizes were bought and a great bunch of volunteers showed up at 8:00am that day to setup for 220 sold out seats. By 3:00pm when the guests showed up everything was ready. By 10:30pm we were cleaned up and

out the door an hour and a half ahead of schedule. What a good group to work with and met many new friends.

Between the two events we raised over a hundred thousand dollars that will go to reimbursement payments this season. The Montana Fur Harvesters and the Montana Trappers Association both put in many hours of time and money into this program. I would not be able to name all of those that helped make these events happen, but I will say that Montana sportsmen are awesome and thanks to all. (See page 14 for more)

The election of 2020 has brought a change to wolf management here in Montana. The people of Montana elected a republican governor, along with a strong house and senate. A special thanks to representee, Paul Fielder of Thompson Falls and Senator, Bob Brown from Sanders County who did wonders in Helena. With support from a **majority of voters**, bills were passed that would help to reduce wolf populations in regions that have suffered huge depredation problems on ungulates. Remember, It was the Montana voters who were represented by these politicians that allowed these changes to become law. Next time the anti's say that we are a small percent of the population we can remind them.

As most of you know, the legislature was very kind to us this year. Many new rules and regulations are taking effect for this season. Be sure to carefully review the new regulations to take advantage of the changes. We all need to give a big thanks to FWP for standing their ground with the antis. For those of you who did not follow the Commissioners meetings and the public comments that they were assaulted with, take notice. We did not get everything possible but please be thankful for all they did do. We will work with them for more in the future.

It is glaringly evident that elk numbers are over objective in parts of Montana and under in others. The obvious common denominator is the number of wolves. Regions 1, 2 and 3 of Western Montana host 90% of the wolves in the state. A more aggressive approach is needed to bring down the numbers in these regions. Our Fish Wildlife and Parks Department did not make these laws but were tasked to implement them. Sportsmen from here sent in a lot of comments as we worked closely with FWP throughout the process. Thanks to all that took part in it.

Lawsuits have been filed in opposition to FWP's changes even though they are not responsible. The antis were threatening and crying during the

meeting. Now our biggest concern is the democrats at the federal level. Remember that in future elections, be careful who you vote for.

One of the changes was, after years of asking, **snaring was signed into law** with the signing of HB 224. This could be a valuable tool in the wolf trapping tool box. We will be following Idaho's 10-year lead in snaring. Snaring in Montana has always been legal for furbearers and predators except wolves, lions and bears. Over the years snaring caused very little controversy. However, with the spotlight on wolves, all eyes are upon us. To be ethical and responsible is of most importance.

We as trappers expressed concern about snaring wolves this season here in Montana at our spring FWP/Trapper meetings in Regions One and Two. It was voted to delay starting until 2022 at both meetings. Trappers present from the Montana Fur Harvesters and the Montana Trappers Association were in agreement. Our main concern is that we don't have people setting snares indiscriminately and unknowingly catching bi-catches. This has the potential to create some negative problems in the future.

We have been asked to put on some wolf snaring clinics for the public around Western Montana. I have been frantically putting one together. Montana Fur Harvesters agreed to fund production of a training video and Paul Antczak has videoed a session with Scott Ramsey. Ramsey, who has snared in Idaho over the years successfully did an outstanding job of demonstrating his methods. The focus of the video is to avoid bi-catches yet still harvest wolves.

Another concern is interpreting the new regulations. I am working on questions that have come up in the new 2021 Wolf Regulation book. Hope to have some answers on that in time for public classes coming up. We encourage all trappers planning to set snares out to attend one of these. They are not required but are strongly advised. We plan on having a DVD ready to go out soon that you can purchase that covers concerns about snaring.

We need to emphasize to trappers that not all private landowners want to have snares on their lands.

Some block Management lands do not allow snaring. We stress to all trappers to make sure the landowners do allow snares before placing them.

FWP will be offering **Wolf certification classes** starting on September 25th in Bozeman, October 2nd in Kalispell, October 20th Helena (Virtual), If you do harvest a wolf, you can be eligible for reimbursement up to \$500 if you belong to F4WM.org. Be sure to preregister.

Another note, starting next year, **Mandatory Trappers Education** will be required. If you are not certified to trap wolves you should take the online class, October 20th as this is the last certification class to be offered. Next year it will be part of the Trapper classes that everyone would need to take to get certified to trap wolves.

Next on the list of **events coming** up in October, will be a fur handling clinic at Columbia Falls. The date October 16th has been selected. We have a bunch of frozen beaver pelts that need to be fleshed and stretched plus a bobcat and beaver to be processed. If you have any that need pelted let me know and you would be welcome to bring them.

Trapping season has already started for some of us. We have been out scouting and setting up scent posts and bait sites. A few more wolf traps to prep but all the waxed dirt is in the buckets. Now checking in with landowners for this season. Whatever you do, the most important is to be ethical and responsible. Don't do something that will cost us the opportunities we have gained this year. Best of luck to all. (See page 16)

Tom Fieber 🐾



This beautiful wolf mount was donated to F4WM.org by Mel Siefke of Wildlife Recapture in Libby. It sold for enough to pay reimbursement for ten wolves. Thanks Mel, for all you did.

Montana Foundation for Wildlife Management Chapters

are planning on hosting banquets for next year. We have already started, Kalispell's Chapter banquet date is March 12th. It will be held at the Flathead County Fairgrounds. It will give us more room to host a larger crowd. Our past volunteers did a great job putting all of this together.



This beautiful display at the Flathead banquet was provided by Mel Siefke of Wildlife Recapture in Libby.

Justin Webb is a dedicated leader that guided us to very successful banquets. I am glad that we decided to join Idaho's group and take advantage of their experience.

A special thanks to Secretary, Mort Hill who kept up with almost all the donations and paperwork. Josh and Tristan Jurek came all the way from Plains to publish event books and donation displays. There is no way to mention all who worked so hard on making this come together. I made many new friends in the process.

We do need to elect new board members and officers for 2022, watch for upcoming meetings. These events take months to get ready for so hope to get them started no later than early January.

Another bonus about working at these banquets was getting to meet Robert Roman, Robert is from Idaho and attended both of our banquets. Can't think of many as nice and knowledgeable as Robert on wolf trapping. **Tom Fieber** 🐺

"3rd times a charm" A wolf story by F4WM President Robert Roman

During the winter of 2013/14, while making a set on the valley floor, I looked up and noticed a raven coasting out from the ridge a half-mile away. A little later, I saw another one sail out from the ridge. I was thinking to myself, there is good chance the wolves have made a kill on that ridge. After finishing up my



set I decided to go check it out.

With a half dozen snares in the back of my coat, I snowshoed over the three feet of snow and up the steep mountain

slope. Long before I laid eyes on it, I knew there was a kill. Multiple ravens and an eagle decorated the stubs and trees near the ridge line. The hillside was crisscrossed with fresh wolf tracks and upon topping out on the ridge, I found a freshly killed cow moose. I didn't go directly up to the kill, but rather circled away from the kill approximately one hundred yards out. I started intersecting wolf trails and made sets at each trail. Stopping short of a trail, I would reach out and set a snare on the trail. Moving off to the side, I carefully stepped across the trail and repeated the process at the next wolf trail until I had all my snares set. I snowshoed out the bottom and resumed running my trap line.

A few days later, I hiked the ridge only to find that the wolves had returned by another route and were very skittish of my snowshoe tracks. They would approach

to within ten feet of my tracks and then turn away. I left my snares set and went away wondering what I could do differently, so as to catch the wolves.

By the time I returned for my next trap check, mother nature had remedied the problem by gently dropping several inches of fresh snow over my tracks. I found a large, grey, collared, male wolf weighing 120 lbs in my first snare. A smaller wolf had gotten caught in another snare. A smile of satisfaction was on my face, as I struggled to pull the heavy animals up and over the ridge in the deep snow. Even on the downhill side, moving the dead weight was a struggle.

Later on, looking at the collar and ear tags, I discovered the larger wolf had been handled by humans before. First ear tagged by Idaho Fish and Game Department and associates with an IDFG and an MBI tag. It was subsequently caught and collared by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. This large wolf sported an Idaho ear tag, an MBI ear tag, and a Montana collar. (If you Google IDFG MBI, you will find the following; The Multi-Species Baseline Initiative (MBI) is a collaborative of organizations that monitor wildlife and microclimate across the Idaho Panhandle and adjoining mountain ranges. From 2010-2014 MBI partners....) In this wolf's life, he had been handled three times. The third time he ended up on a fur stretcher.

If you are a wolf trapper or hunter, there are a few things to garner from this short story. Do not go right up to a wolf kill if you can avoid it. Human sign and scent near a kill can make the wolves nervous and more wary. Also, while setting snares, stay back a hundred yards or more. By doing this you will better keep the wolves from associating the snares with the kill, and you may be able to catch multiple wolves. Another point to remember is, keep an eye open for scavenger birds. They can tell you a lot about the wolves in your area. And yet another thing, if you catch a collared wolf, turn the collar into the Wildlife department. The returned collar will actually help them compile data and may be reusable. Generally they send you \$10.00 for returning a collar. In this case they didn't send me the money. That may have been an oversight... or perhaps the Idaho Fish and Game just doesn't like Montana Fish Wildlife & Park's

collars!

I was lucky enough to catch the majority of this wolf pack, including this alpha male. The alpha female was hit and killed by an automobile on I-90 in Montana. You need not worry about them going extinct. The very next year, a new pack had taken up residence in the old packs area. In my opinion, wolves are here to stay and there will always need to be some form of wolf management. There is no end to doing good! 🐾

Robert Roman

Your F4WM President

The winner of our 2021 rifle raffle

was Cindy Fulks of Hamilton. Cindy bought a single ticket at the Kalispell Spring Gun Show. She had recently bought a new pistol from Westland Seed in Ronan so she and her husband had no trouble finding the place to pick up the newly won rifle. They were both excited to do so. Thanks to **Westland Seed** for helping us with these firearm sales and FFL paperwork.

The raffle for the chainsaw donated by Libby Ace Hardware was won by Joe Jackman of Kalispell. Tom Gilmore from Ace always contributes great items to help raise funds for trappers to protect trapping rights.



Jim Nesladek of Polson donated one of his hand carved and painted fish that brought a lot of attention. Jim generously donates these fish to support outdoor organizations here in Montana. The lucky winner of the fish was Jonny Wicker of the Kalispell area. All three of these winners were more than happy to collect these prizes. **Tom Fieber** 🐾



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A good point! From Justin Webb, Foundation For Wildlife Management

There are vastly more folks out and about, enjoying the back-country, then what I am used to seeing this time of year. And the more wolf gear I put out, the more it has me wondering what it must be like for a non-trapper to stumble upon a trapped wolf... ?

Picture this: Maybe your out archery elk hunting... or enjoying one last dirt bike ride of the year... or maybe your out grouse hunting with your kiddos... Your driving down a mountain road, or hiking out a trail, when suddenly you see movement ahead of you... Movement like you've never seen in the woods before... quick and turmoil in nature, but not really appearing to go anywhere... Completely foreign from anything you've seen on the mountain before... As you move closer to investigate your heart begins to

race as you notice the long legs, then the long hair, then right in front of you the shape of a wolfs face as it glances from you, to the direction it is obviously attempting to flee but cannot... Typically at this point your brain recognizes an un-mistakeable sound of metal clanking together, which does not seem natural in the woods... All this has happened in mere fractions of a second as your brain fights to make sense of what seems completely un-natural to cross paths within the woods, before it finally confirms that what's in front of you is in fact a wolf caught in a trap! Being so close to an animal that most will only see the tracks of, is an exhilarating experience! Your heart races as you move in to get a closer look. "Dang I have always wanted a wolf of my own! and here one is just a few yards away." You begin to tell yourself that if you shoot this wolf, you'll be ensuring it will not get away... you tell yourself that if you shoot it, you will in fact be "helping" the trapper... Your not a thief so you'd never take something that is not yours... But this is a WOLF!

Before you can stop yourself, you act, and as you pull the trigger, the bullet penetrates the animal and exits just as fast, spraying bits and pieces of blood, bone, and meat onto the surrounding vegetation... As the wolf falls to the ground you have not only broken the law, wronged a fellow sportsman, and jeopardize your hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges for multiple years, You have single handedly "saved" the rest of that wolf pack and destroyed an entire summer of hard work done by the trapper who caught and owns that wolf...

You see... successful wolf trapping takes months of scouting and monitoring in order to locate a perfect location within millions of acres, where one can force a wolf to place his foot on an area the size of a dollar bill that's been cut in half... Thousands of dollars in fuel driving roadways recording wolf track locations, and hours upon hours scouring Google Earth trying to understand the travel patterns of the wolves we have logged track locations from. Days of prep work, researching and ordering the most efficient gear, then welding up the perfect trap set up, boiling, cleaning, de-scenting, and prepping each trap in attempt to hide from one of the keenest noses on the planet...

The wolves instincts and natural "Pack mentality" are one of their greatest strengths... Yet also one of the packs weaknesses when those instincts are used against them. When a wolf is caught, the pack often remains in the immediate vicinity of the caught wolf, where their curiosity gets the best of them, and more are often caught as they investigate the area around the caught wolf... OR they will leave and return in the dark to collect the wolf back into the pack. At which time more are caught as they investigate the area...

When you dispatch or remove a wolf improperly, leaving blood or human scent in the area, the pack still returns to investigate, but they stop far from the catch location and shy away. Often refusing to return to the trap site for months afterward, and when they do return, they are on highest alert...

In short... Please remember it is not only illegal to tamper with, or remove traps of another, but it is also ILLEGAL to dispatch, or remove an animal from any trap that is not

your own without permission of the owner of said trap. Each year someone works their tail off to catch a wolf only to have a passerby whom, has done zero work, shoot or steal the trapper's wolf. Please leave trappers to do their work. Hindering or stealing from them is only hurting yourself in the long run, as these hard-working individuals are throwing in the towel and refusing to set traps where they know they can catch wolves, all for fear of having their catch shot or stolen... Please, help our trappers help you, and our wildlife. If you see a wolf in a trap, back away and leave it be. Perhaps, make an effort to contact the trapper in your area. Many of us have signs posted with our contact information and would be excited to get a call from you saying we have successfully caught a wolf! 🐺

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Justin has spent many days traveling to Montana this year helping us with wolf management. He he's demoing wolf snaring at a Kalispell MFH wolf trapping class. Passing on his knowledge.



Foundation For Wildlife Management Banquets are very well run and have been successfully raising funds for wolf management in Idaho and now Montana.



Feral-y Lucky

By Rachel Doble

The Fall months of our first season learning how to trap as a family brought very busy, productive but exciting days. It was a focal point of our homeschool curriculum and activities. Our kids were eager to get out of the house in the early mornings in order to check our trapline.



We were learning as we went along, turning to magazines and trapping pages on social media as resources. Some of our YouTube favorites to watch were Scott Mackner the “330 Maniac,” “Trapping Inc.” with Rich and Sandy Mellon and many others. We were getting to know people in the local trapping community as well. And as we did, they wanted to see us succeed so they shared their knowledge with us. Then we'd go afield and implement these new techniques and strategies. What better way to learn than trial and error, right?

Once we began having some success harvesting beavers we were asked if we would be willing to help a man who was having an issue with the beaver destroying his property. It was a different terrain than what we were used to, but it was also more similar to the types of terrain our online trapping mentors were teaching us on. The owner's 20 acre cow pasture was under water & a muddy mess. He had tried many approaches to fix the problem himself but was losing the battle.

We happily agreed to go see if we could help him reduce the beaver population.

That morning the kids helped us load our water-trapping gear into the pickup. They grabbed waders, boots and lunches for all of us as Josh and I made breakfast and discussed how we would approach this nuisance trapping assignment.

This was our first time trapping in a flooded, swampy area so we knew we had to tailor our techniques to this particular ground. We had a variety of gear that we planned on bringing in order for us to adapt as needed.

When we got to the property, we met the landowner and introduced him to the kids. He was more than happy to show us around to discuss his frustration and efforts. We humbly told him we would do what we could to help. After that we put on our gear, packed up our equipment and tools, and headed down to the water.

The groups of willows camouflaged the largest beaver lodge we had ever seen at this point in our amateur trapping endeavors. This thing was impressive and so was the damage these rodents were causing!

The kids ran along with excitement, searching for sign and spots to put our traps. The long, over hanging branches provided an entertaining playground for them. My husband had to piggyback each kid across the swampy creek. Large willow trees and fallen branches were intermixed in the water, creating channels, backwater and dams throughout. We had never seen anything like it.

The first few sets we made were “textbook” techniques and, in close proximity to, the giant lodge. We utilized the abundant sticks and branches around us to place 330s in runs, then added some castor lure to handcrafted beaver mounds for our foothold and drowning cable sets. After that we followed the stream upriver, taking our time and allowing our kids to work through the thick mud we were trekking through. As they explored and made interesting discoveries, Josh and I talked about our options and how to trap the new area. There wasn't much sign that was evident to us but it looked prime for beaver travel so we dropped our gear and the kids assisted in gathering sticks as we prepared to set it.

As a team, we quickly put out two more conibears. Then we prepared to do another foothold with a Bridger #5, cable and a weighted bag made from an old pair of camo pants. It was primarily my job to set and place our traps, my

husband would assist by cutting wire or giving me tools and lure and sometimes anchoring off. He'd make suggestions and we'd discuss what and why we were doing it while the kids observed and asked questions & playfully discussed how many beavers we might catch.

I was beginning to hone in on the accuracy with my catches. I planned what foot I was targeting and how I could make a perfect "suitcase" happen. I assessed the area and decided to try something I hadn't seen done before, but it made sense to me though. I could see how a beaver would step right on my trap! There was this giant tree that had water flowing all the way around it. Some of its roots stood above the water in a "V" like fashion. It looked to me like a trap would fit perfectly inside. I explained to Josh how I pictured a beaver would approach it. Next, I would put a light, attention-grabbing twig with our lure on it in the bark of the tree about 20 inches up. Then I would offset the trap slightly to the left between the roots in the shallow water that provided natural guiding and wouldn't alert an "educated" beaver. He encouraged me to "go for it!"

After I got it set up, our oldest daughter Sage wanted to try throwing the heavy bag at the other end of the drowning cable out into the water. With all her might (and she is a very strong girl) she hurled it out as far as she could. It wasn't quite far enough however, so after another attempt of it landing next to me and drenching me in smelly, muddy water (all part of trapping I thought to myself) I took it out in my waders & gave it a final toss then let it sink.

We had just one Bridger #3 with a drowning cable left so we continued upstream another 70 yards or so and found a spot that looked like it had potential. We discovered, however, that our drowning cable wasn't quite long enough to reach the deep water, so Josh rigged up the cable to a long, narrow teepee-like log that was on the bank and was able to secure the end in the thick mud of the creek bottom. As I finished up with a handmade castor mound. The next morning, we piled into the pickup with anticipation. During the drive the kids guessed which sets we had beaver in and explained why they thought so. They had been learning so much about the species we were targeting and loved sharing their new knowledge.

It was a cold, overcast morning so we quickly gathered our gear and began our walk down to check our sets. The kids hastily ran

ahead of us, wanting to be the first to declare a victory. They followed the order in which we placed them and bolted to one then on to the next. At the third set, they began to lose enthusiasm and get discouraged but upon further inspection they realized the 330 wasn't quite right and then they saw a small muskrat! We packed up that conibear and the muskrat in the trapper bag and continued on with our check. (This is where it gets exciting.)

The next location had me full of anticipation. I approached the water's edge and scanned for metal between the roots that formed the "V". My eyes widened with delight as I announced to my tribe on the muddy bank behind me that we had a missing trap! The water was too muddy to see a beaver silhouette below the surface. With my bright yellow gauntlet covered arms I reached below the water and began tugging on the cable. I felt some serious tension and knew we had one.

The kids began cheering excitedly as I started yanking up on the cable, trying to drag it closer to me. I was so focused and in-the-moment that it didn't sink in what the kids were actually screaming about... it wasn't until I realized that the cable in my hand was pulling against me that it clicked.

They were screaming "IT'S ALIVE! It's still alive!" But at this point I am already fully committed to the muddy water clear up to my waist and nearly over my gauntlet gloves when I look over my shoulder and see a very angry, beady-eyed beaver staring at me on the opposite side of the tree! That's when I too began to scream, "IT'S ALIVE!" In that same instant, I dropped the cable and spun around, scrambling my way back up the slippery bank to where my husband and kids stood looking on. I was caught off guard and surprised that I had a live beaver on a drowning setup. So was Josh. I took a moment and watched this beaver and as it dove under the water, I saw its mass. That's when I realized it was a very big beaver!

We weren't quite prepared for this scenario, Josh said he'd go back up to the pickup and get the .22 if I'd take the kids down to check our last set. The kids were seriously excited now and couldn't contain themselves. Luckily outdoors, you don't really have to be contained so they raced-off to the end of our line full of adrenaline and joy.

As soon as they saw the trap was gone there too, they began celebrating. I smiled as I

took my time walking and carrying our gear. It really is something special to see your kids have that much joy in an



The best part of the story is that after battling covid, Josh is out packing a 70.5lb beaver with his family. God bless this family!

accomplishment that they worked hard towards. We are learning as a family. The memories, skills, and life lessons they are gaining from these experiences make it all worth the effort. We are closer because of it.

So I finally reach them and go retrieve our trap and beaver from the water. It was a large male, 56 pounds in a Bridger #3 hind foot, suitcase catch. And only our 13th beaver caught on our amateur homeschool trapline! I quickly remade the set and then we returned to the live beaver location about the same time Josh was coming back with the gun.

He asked if I wanted to shoot it or if I wanted him to. I wanted to do it. It was mine to finish. So I took my Savage B.22 Magnum and placed my sights over the beaver's head that stood out above the water, then squeezed the trigger.

I put on my yellow gauntlet gloves once again and drug the beaver, the trap and the drowning bag up out of the water. Josh and the kids gathered round. Immediately it was clear that this was by far the biggest beaver we had ever caught! It was a massive female. The kids examined it as Josh & I untangled the mess and removed it from the trap. Luckily, we had a pack frame for our gear with us so we got to work securing her to it. Josh hauled her while I packed the big male and muskrat in the trapper bag. The kids energetically followed us back up to the pickup where we were greeted by the property

owner. He was very impressed with our first check.

Once we got back to town, we went and got them weighed. The smaller of the two was the male weighing in at 56 pounds. The huge female was 70.5 pounds and that was after being shot in the head and losing a lot of blood. When I shared our photos I couldn't believe how few trappers catch beaver that size, especially in our area. I realize now that we were "feral-y lucky" to have caught a beaver of that magnitude. It's an incredible memory our whole family will share and I love hearing them talk about it fondly too.

Rachel Doble 🐾



Fisher Update

Fishers have remained very elusive in the Cabinet Mountains in Northwestern Montana. This is the second season that the denning boxes have been out but the good news is that a fisher did visit one of the boxes. Unfortunately, it did not utilize the box or return. Even with the lure used at the sites they attract little attention.

The density of fisher in the Cabinets must be very low compared to those in Region Two along the Idaho border. Last trapping season in Region Two, I caught a large male fisher at the start of trapping season. It was an incidental catch in a bobcat cubby that was injured so it was dispatched. Later in the season we had two more visits from fishers at other trap sites.

I am hoping that more fishers start showing up in the Cabinets but for now we agree with FWP that the quota should remain at Zero. 🐾

FWP Commissioners Criticized by past members.

I was not surprised to read in the Missoulian in a letter to the editor concerning bashing our current FWP Commissioners. Seems that the all the past members appointed by Democrat Governors are a lot smarter than the new ones. Past commission members have opposed what our new commissioners have done. After years of neglecting what has happened here in Western Montana to our deer, elk and moose populations we finally have some that acknowledge the problems.

The loss of ungulates living up on public lands and moving to private lands in the fields and pastures has been caused by predation by wolves and other predators. We who spend the winter months trapping have seen the dramatic decrease of ungulates from their traditional south facing wintering grounds. We have seen complete herds of elk disappear. Idaho has lost the last remaining herds of Woodland Reindeer that were native to the Selkirk Mountains in Northern Idaho. Of the last five documented reindeer in Montana, three were killed by wolves. Deer herds have also declined in the forests. Most all of the deer now stay on private land in the valley floors as well.

The majority of Montanans voted in republican politicians that do support stronger management of wolves. You, the democratic commissioners caused this problem by curtailing sound management over the years. Now we are almost ten times the established goals set by US Fish and Wildlife Service here in Montana. Ninety percent of wolves are located here. Your protection measures for the wolves have been responsible for starting shoulder seasons for elk. With all the elk being pressured into private lands that is how elk objective is set. Doesn't matter that the elk numbers are low in the forest, if they are eating crops and hay there, numbers are being decreased to meet objectives.

These new commission members are trying to correct years of mismanagement of wolves and should be applauded for their actions. We as a majority of sportsmen do support more management and what the new commission has done and will do in the future.

The goal is to reduce the wolf population to around 450 statewide which is still about three times about the

objective. Statewide elk numbers are at a new high, so it is easy to see where wolf numbers are high elk number are low and vise versa. The photo shows a one-night wolf kill in Wyoming.

Tom Fieber 🐾



Charter Members

\$100 or more for 2020/2021

The following members have gone the extra mile to support MFH. Without this commitment, it would be hard to publish this and host the fur shows.

Tom Gilmore, Tom has donated more time and merchandise to trapping organizations than most. His Fur Handling Clinics in Libby are top notch.

Bill Boehme, Bill has been supporting us as a charter member for years. He is a great seminar instructor and a real member of the trapping community.

Linda Tutvedt, Linda not only joined as a charter member but offered muskrat trapping on her property this fall. Her generosity was really appreciated by the kids and instructors as well.

Josh Jurek, Josh raised \$400 at the Palooza that he donated back to MFH. Josh is a dedicated trapper and a great artist.

Dan Thingelstad, Dan has donated several wolf pelts that he donated back the proceeds and helps run booths. His work on the Fisher denning Box project was above and beyond.

Raven Van Den Bosch

Raven came for the Squarehead Palooza last summer from Virginia. She is a true friend of the trapping community nation-wide and a joy to be with.

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, Jessy 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, 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 people's concerns and acts on them. These are just a few of the many local personnel that I work with and appreciate.

Thanks to each and every one of them!



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MONTANA FISH WILDLIFE & PARKS

new Director, **Hank Worsech and staff** stopped in Region One Office in Kalispell this summer to meet and greet guests. This event was the day after meeting in Region Two in Missoula. From the word going around, the anti's were there to wish them their best. I was not in Missoula but attended Kalispell's and the closest thing to an anti was a comment that maybe we could offer more restrictive drawings for more trophy areas. It was good to meet new members of the staff and talk to past ones.

The commissioners meeting in August was an example of what we have faced over the years from the antis. 30,000 comments from around the world copied and pasted, most of them emotional. Thinking that nature will make everything balance in today's world no longer works as humans have taken over so much of the habitat. We owe our wildlife populations and variety to sound management and reintroductions.

After all the years of working with past members whose main goal was to appease public emotions from around the world, I saw a glimmer of hope. As we have seen with the change of the Governor, we are looking at protecting our wildlife based on science and data. Support

from the state's voters certainly cast the will of the majority of Montanans. We need to support trying different management practices that have caused some of the problems from past leaders. I am looking forward working with this new administration. **Tom Fieber** 🐾

Montana Fur Harvesters are proud to offer **scholarships** to area youth who participate with us. This year Victor Perez from Polson was chosen to receive a \$300 one. Many of you have met Victor over the past few years at our many Fur Shows. His countless days and hours working our booths has earned respect from fellow members and the public.

Victor has just gotten his American Citizenship this summer. He has been a great ambassador to represent the Fur Harvesters and our entire trapping community. Victor is now enrolled at the University of Montana and is also in the ROTC. We all wish Victor the best and into the future. **Thanks Victor from all of us.**

Wolf snaring Regulations 2021

These new regulations are still being interrupted by game wardens as questions arise. Be sure to consult your local wardens for their interpretations. As you will learn in classes some minimums are over what we feel are needed and can be lessened. However, page 14 of regulations state, locks to release at 350 pounds, it is not in step with the 1000 pound minimum requirement.

Note that page # are from the Wolf Regulations book.

Page 2 Trapping • **Snares are now legal for trapping wolves, except in federally designated grizzly bear recovery zones.** Additional snare regulations are listed on page 6. • The trapping season in grizzly bear recovery zones starts on December 15, but could be adjusted to as early as November 29 based on conditions. Check FWP website for any adjustments. • WMU 313 is closed to wolf trapping in the Deckard Flats to Trail Creek Wolf Trapping Closure Area. • Wolf trap pan tension must be at least 10 pounds in Regions 1,2,3,4, and 5. • Trappers must immediately dispatch a trapped wolf by gunshot – unless otherwise authorized not to do so by FWP prior to wolf-trapping efforts. Regulations Adopted by F

Page 2&3 **Relaxing Snare** –Wolf Hunting & Trapping Regulations Visit fwp.mt.gov 3 snare loop to release constriction pressure on the captured animal when the cable is not taut (e.g., when the animal stops pulling, it will loosen). **This means that the locking device on the snare**

cable operates both ways allowing the snare cable to move back and forth to some degree. Locks that only close or that use springs or other powering devices to hold them closed are not considered relaxing snares. See page 15 for examples of relaxing snares. Trap (MCA 87-6-101) – to take or harvest or participate in the taking or harvesting of any wildlife protected by the laws of the state by setting or placing any mechanical device, snare, deadfall, pit, or device intended to take wildlife or to remove wildlife from any of these devices.

Page 4 Exposed Carcass or Baiting (CR) – Baiting is allowed for the hunting of wolves. **No trap or snare may be set within 30 feet of an exposed carcass or bait that is visible from above.**

Page 6 Occupied Dwellings (CR) – **Killing ground sets, including all snares, set for animals larger than ground squirrels are unlawful within 1,000 feet of an occupied dwelling without written notification to the inhabitant.** Snares (CR) - Snaring is permitted on public and private lands consistent with trapping season dates, with the exception of those areas federally designated as Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones. Trap Identification (MCA-87-6-601(1)(a)) - A person may not use a trap or snare for the purpose of trapping or snaring a fur-bearing animal, a predatory animal, or a nongame species unless: the trap or snare is tagged with a numbered metal device identifying tag bearing **an individual identifying number issued by the department** or the owner's name, and address, and telephone number unless the person is trapping or snaring on the person's land or an irrigation ditch right-of-way contiguous to the person's land.

Snares must be equipped with a loop stop that will close to a loop no smaller than 2.5 inches in diameter (stop placed at no less than 8 inches from end of loop). Snares must have a breakaway device rated at 1,000 lbs. or less installed on the loop end. Snares must be placed such that the bottom of the snare loop is at least 18 inches above the surface. Power-assisted (e.g., spring-loaded) snare locks are prohibited on wolf snares on public lands. A relaxing snare lock is required on snares in lynx protection zones (LPZs). Snares may not be used in federally designated Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones.

Page 14 **Breakaway Snares** Following are examples of commercially manufactured breakaway lock designs that meet **regulation requirements to release at 350 pounds of force or less:** • Amberg Lock with release ferrule • Gregerson Lock Snares • Snare Shop - N. D. Lock and Stop • Breakaway J-Hooks • Breakaway S-Hooks • Thompson Snares - (continued on page 15)

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.

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✕ Montana Fur Harvesters represents Trapper, Houndsmen and Predator Hunters

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Thompson Release Lock For information on dealers of breakaway lock devices and snares, contact the FWP State Furbearer Coordinator at 406-444-0042.

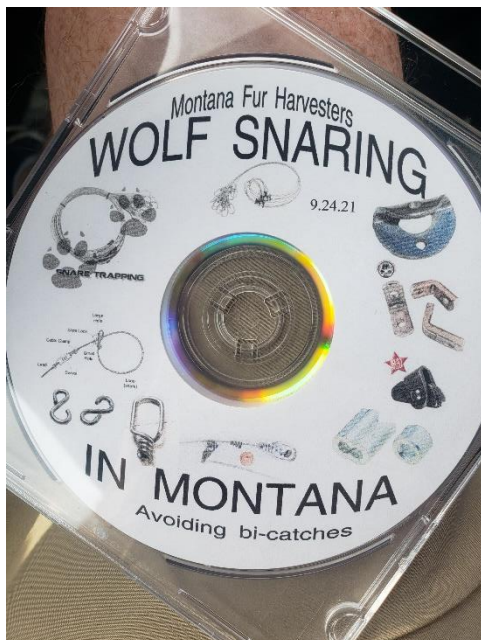
Relaxing Snares A relaxing snare has a lock that allows the snare loop to loosen when an animal stops pulling against it. Below is a partial list of locks that are commercially available through snare and trap dealers and are considered relaxing locks, if they are not modified and are assembled with the appropriate snare cable diameter. Any alteration of a lock from its manufactured condition may affect performance ,and again, the cable size must match the lock to avoid the cable from becoming bound up at the lock. • Relax-A-Lock • Dakota Line's Low Pro • Relaxing Washer Lock • Quarter Washer Lock • Berkshire Washer Lock. As noted earlier, **some of these will need to be addressed.** At no time do we agree that "manufactured breakaway lock designs that meet regulation requirements to release at 350 pounds of force or less:" That requirement is for furbearers, not wolves.

This very popular video is a must see for anyone thinking of snaring in Montana. I have sent them out to Alaska, Idaho and Montana. If you can't make one of your local classes, at least take time to view this before you start buying or making snares. It could save you money from buying wrong supplies or worse making a bad set. **To purchase a video:**

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WOLF SNARING CLASSES Please attend one

Brought to you by the Montana Fur Harvesters and Montana Trappers Association and FWP

By the time you see this we will have put on some of the wolf snaring classes. More are coming so keep your eyes open. The demand for the Wolf Snaring Video and class has been strong. This video is directed to all wolf trappers who plan on snaring this season. It is very informative, each trapper should either attend the class or buy the video. The whole theme is to let trappers learn how to avoid negative incidents that had happened in Idaho when they first started. We want to make sure that do all we can to avoid giving the anti's something to use in their campaign against us. We don't want to lose this valuable new tool given to us.

Oct. 7 ---- 6 p.m., Victor, C&S Sales, 164 Victor Crossing W.

Oct. 12 --- 6 p.m., Kalispell, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks office, 490 N. Meridian

Oct. 13 --- 6 p.m., Superior, Superior Resort, 1186 Mullan Road W.

Oct. 14 -- 6 p.m., Drummond, Senior Citizens Center, 54 Broad Street

Oct. 16 --- 9 a.m., Columbia Falls, Fur handling clinic & snaring education, 287 Midnight Lane.

Oct.,18 -- 6 p.m., Butte, East Side Athletic Club, 3075 Dexter Street, Butte MT

Oct. 19 -- 6 p.m., Missoula, , Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks office, 3201 Spurgin Rd

Oct. 20 -- 6 p.m., Thompson Falls, West end of town

Oct. 21 -- 6 p.m., Polson, Johnco Storage, 801 5th Street East

To be scheduled is Libby, Eureka, Butte

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, Montana Sportsman for Fish & Wildlife with an ATV each year and the Foundation For Wildlife Management. Thanks, from all of us.

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