

Spring issue 2022

April 2022

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President's Notes
News from Idaho
Up Coming Events
Wildlife Management

Montana's
Richard
Hawk

Seven Sleepers
The Feral
Academy

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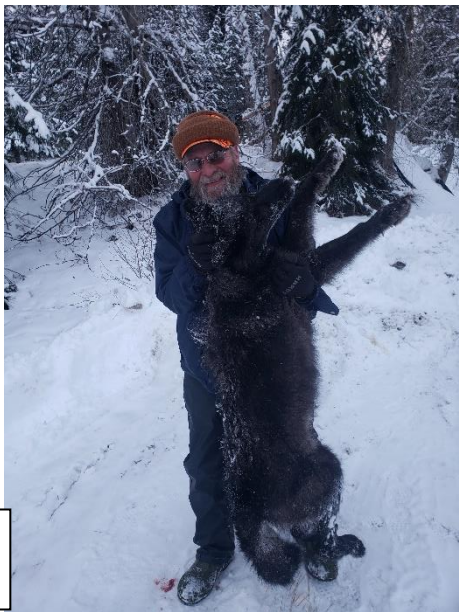
Cover Photo; In Memory of Rick Hawk.
Below: Larry Rattray with another wolf
from Region 2.



It was going after our chickens, so I set a trap and got him! Wyatt Hewitt



We are working hard to bring back opportunities like this to western Montana



Notes from the president.

Wow, so many things happening now. I have a hard time keeping up with it. Thanks to some of the other members and friends, we'll try. Some days start out with a good plan, and lots get done. Then a phone call, a text message or email comes and then it's off in another direction.

I have just finished putting together our **accounting program for the Fur Harvesters**. As you know, we lost Rick Hawk to a snowmobile accident this season. Rick had taken over the treasurers position last July and had been changing it over to QuickBooks from our old Excel one. We were working on combining the two programs for tax purposes when the accident happened. It has taken the last couple of weeks, but I have just completed the transition and filed our federal tax reports. That is a big relief for me. For now, I will continue to fill in as treasurer, but we are looking to elect someone near Kalispell that would like to take that position. Since we have a PO Box in Kalispell, a weekly trip to pick up mail and enter what's needed into the program then make deposits is needed. If you know of anyone who would like to volunteer to fill that position let me know.

Just wrapped up another trapping season for most of us, although some are still working water trapping. It was a rough season for most of us. Low pelt prices, late starting dates, early deep snows freeze thaw cycles, uncertain regulations, and other obligations. We have seen lower catches for most species this year. Our harvest for wolves was down 18% from 2020 but was only 9% from previous years. Bobcats did reach quota in Region One but very late in the season. None of the other regions met quotas and ran until the end of the season. Otters did fill quota in Region One but to date the rest of the state is still open. Fishers in Region reported two harvested out the quota of five.

It will be interesting to see how our biologists interpret this data. You can learn this and more by attending our **FWP/ Trapper meetings** this Spring. Bring your thoughts on observations you had this season and share them with us at these meetings. Trappers are the ones out there every day and that is vital information that is needed to assist in wildlife management. Population levels, weather, pelt prices, new regulations, access to trap sites can all have an impact on harvest rates. Let's make sure that we don't lose opportunities due to the wrong reasons. Region 2 is on April 16th, Region 1 on May 1st. Meetings are held at FWP offices starting at 9am.

Wolf trappers were dancing around all kinds of new and old **regulations** that caught many off guard. With the use of snares allowed this season, it was tough to keep track of all the regulations. The last time I looked it up in February, only seven snaring harvests statewide had been recorded. I did hear of some bi-catches but very few. I also did not hear of many trappers that set many of them.

It seemed that trappers were being checked for compliance more and citations were happening. Be careful out there on your lines. Meet with your local game wardens throughout the season and find out how they interpret regulations in your area. Even they are having trouble keeping up with regulations. Violations seem to find a way on anti's social media sites, and they make the worst of it. This affects all trappers not just wolfers.

Violations are getting more common, and we need to meet with FWP enforcement personnel in the next month to voice our concerns. Please take a few minutes and write down anything that we need to address on regulations. If you would send them to me, I will comply a list that we can bring to the meetings. *Some of them are, having your wolf certification card in possession, pan tensions, use of bait, littering, use of roadkill, signage, measuring setbacks, giving to much information on harvest reports, reporting incidental catches.* Once we have yours, we will set a date and send out emails to all.

Looking back on **wolf harvest stats** I see several factors that are interesting. First, the anti's are at a quandary. All the advertising and ads claiming that Montana and Idaho have tried to kill all the wolves are far from the truth. We are trying to manage all the wildlife, not just wolves. We are working for a balanced mixture of predators and prey. We do not want to see any specie risk extinction. The harvest data shows that we harvested about our average numbers this season. We are down 17% from last year, a far cry from exterminating the wolves as they screamed. From the biological data I have seen, it would take around a 40 to 50% harvest to reduce the population. With an estimated minimum count of 1100 plus wolves our harvest would need to be over 550 wolves per year to start reducing their numbers. The highest harvest was last year at 329, far below the amount needed to start reducing the population. Remember the targeted number of wolves in 1995 was 15 breeding pairs and 150 wolves.

At current population levels, 11,000, we are at almost 10 times over the targeted number in Montana.

By the end of 2002, the northern Rockies wolf population met the biological recovery criteria of at least

30 breeding pairs in the northern Rockies for three years in a row. By the end of 2004, there was an estimated 835 wolves and 66 breeding pairs in the tri-state area. In Montana, there were about 153 wolves in 15 breeding pairs at that time. To say that we are exterminating wolves is very far from the truth. Truth is something anti's have a hard time using.

Some interesting **facts on wolf harvests**. The largest number of wolves harvested in Montana, the last three years has been on private lands running between 45 to 49%. Federal lands at under 40% and state lands, the most restrictive, under 9%. In my case, we have harvested 33 wolves and only one has been on public land. Not that we don't try, we have trapped at least four different drainages in the last ten years. Trying to pull a wolf a 150' off a road in steep terrain has proven fruitless for me. Hunter success for wolves is very low, only 24 hunters have taken more than one wolf in 2020-21. Only one took 5. Trappers have better odds but not much. 54 trappers took 1, 25 took 2, 5 took 3, 5 took 4 and only 4 took 5. This is about average.

Looking back, I see a need to get the word out to more sportsmen about signing up for Wolf Harvest Reimbursement. Our harvests had been running around 290 for a few years. Last year it jumped to 329, this year it dropped down to 273. I see a lot of weather related to varying numbers.

Landowner Relationships. The importance of access to private land is very important. All of us need to take this very seriously. One of our state legislators asked if we could work with sportsmen groups and hunter education classes. Stressing the need to teach building better landowner relationships. I had given a speech at a Livestock Banquet earlier and stressed that we are working with the trapping community and got a strong ovation. I will cover that later in another article.

Mandatory Trapper Education. Our committee had been meeting every two weeks for seven hours. These are open to the public but very few attend. Marc Cook from Wolves of the Rockies did show up for a morning session. He left at noon with some positive comments on our mission. The others were trappers or wildlife biologists that made positive constructive comments. This endeavor is way more intensive than past attempts. Now that the (government is here to help) we find our group has many more routes that need to be followed. All kinds of procedural and legal avenues are propping up, some that can take months to clear. Our hope is to have this

ready to go by September, but we lose control once it goes to the state and legal department.

The plan is to have an online class, followed by a mandatory field day. Each student will receive a Montana Trapper Association Trapper Manual and a Wolf Trapper Education Handbook. Wolf Trapping Certification would be included. Nonresidents and residents who would be exempt with three previous licenses would be able to take an online wolf certification class. At this time, it is up in the air as how The Youth Trapper Classes will be handled. The minimum age to get certified is at twelve.

It has been a pleasure working with the entire committee. Trappers, Bob Sheppard, John Nolan and myself along with FWP employees, Jim Williams, Jon Obst and Kevin Heinle with FWP Wayde Cooperider as facilitator. I feel as a group, the biggest goal is to produce a top-quality product. Our biggest obstacle is the time frame. This was set in motion by the legislature back in March and we were pushing to get started then. Several phone calls, texts and conversations throughout the summer and fall were delayed. My main request was, don't wait until trapping season to start. We finally got the go ahead about December third, just after I started setting Wolf traps. We knew at the time that we would be hard pressed to finalize it in time.

Another concern is getting enough instructors qualified to offer these classes. At present we have around 50 statewide who have sent in applications. Currently one of the requirements is that instructors need to have experience in trapping. If we fail to meet needs perhaps, we will need to look at associates in training. Anyone interested please contact me or if you want go to [fwp.mt.gov](https://fwp.mt.gov/hunt/education/volunteer-instructors) following this link then select apply. <https://fwp.mt.gov/hunt/education/volunteer-instructors>

Tom Fieber 🐾



Protecting, Preserving and Promoting Trapping

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(18 years and under)

Life Membership Call (208)-870-3217

Learn More and
Become a Member at
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**This is
the second
black wolf
in a row.
Both were
very prime
pelts. Last
one was a
grey but in
bad shape.
Only seven
more to go.**

Tom Fieber 🐾

Idaho Trappers Association

Greetings from Idaho,

February for me is usually cat trapping, high school basketball and banquet season. This year we pulled up our bobcat traps early so I haven't been trapping lately. My water job is not real busy right now either. That means high school basketball and banquets, and both have kept me busy! I have been watching my son play basketball for 8 years so to say I was happy for him to win district championship is an understatement. Dawson has worked so hard for so many years, lifting, shooting, summer camps. Three more games and he will be the first basketball state champ in 48 years at our tiny school!

Back to trapping, banquet season is a great time for us to promote the Idaho Trappers Association. In the last three weekends Missy and I drove over 2,500 miles to banquets. Feb 12th was F4WM banquet in Sandpoint, the next weekend was the North Idaho Whitetail banquet in Orofino and last weekend was

F4WM banquet in Salmon. These banquets are critical to getting ITA exposure into all different parts of the state. It is also critical to developing relationships with these other groups. I was lucky enough to speak at all three of these banquets and developed new relationships at all three.

By the time you read this the fur sale and banquet will have come and gone. My phone has been ringing nonstop lately about people coming to the sale. I can't tell you how much I appreciate the support and volunteer help we've received from everyone that helps with the sales and banquets. The 2nd ever United Trappers of Idaho Convention will be June 10-12th at Eastern Idaho State Fairgrounds in Blackfoot. We will have an amazing lineup of vendors and demos at the convention. If you are interested in tailgating, doing a demo, or buying a vendor spot please contact me.

Our fur sale commissions are down drastically with the low coyote prices. We defiantly need all your support for the banquet and the convention. I ask all of you to dig into your pockets and join up as a sustaining member or sign up a friend as an ITA member. We need all the members we can get. As always please contact me with questions or concerns. The ITA is here to work for you to protect and promote about trapping in Idaho

Thank you
Rusty Kramer 208-870-3217
Idaho Trappers Association President



Idaho Trappers Association Fur Auction				
	Offered	Avg	High	Sold
Badger	74	\$16.89	\$58.75	100%
Beaver	387	\$14.55	\$42.53	100%
Bobcat	918	\$216.70	\$1,266.00	80%
Coyote	1,788	\$14.66	\$156.95	91%
Ermine	79	\$.42	\$1.01	100%
Fisher	18	\$27.81	\$53.00	72%
Fox - Cross	4	\$45.56	\$51.00	100%
Fox - Grey	161	\$16.45	\$30.10	99%
Fox - Red	210	\$17.38	\$64.38	100%
Kit Fox	4	\$22.82	\$64.13	100%
Marten	246	\$33.09	\$43.00	100%
Mink	55	\$7.27	\$12.00	100%
Muskrat	3,410	\$3.00	\$4.25	71%
Otter	46	\$42.41	\$80.00	100%
Raccoon	390	\$7.00	\$16.94	100%
Skunk	129	\$15.14	\$25.67	100%
Castor	135.4lb	\$57.76	\$133.32	64%
Porky Hair	22.35oz	\$35.31	\$83.35	100%

2022 March Results

Montana trappers have lost a great member!

To all members of the trapping community.

It is a sad time for us, Rick Hawk of Kalispell has passed on. As for now, all I know for sure is that he was involved in a snowmobile accident. It is something that we as trappers face each day when we go out to check lines when using them. This year has been exceptionally difficult with the snow conditions. With all the deep snow and the freeze thaw cycles it is very dangerous. Role overs are a constant occurrence for all of us this year. Rick has years of experience on snowmobiles as most of have, yet this still happened.

Rick was a good man, a great friend and a devoted husband. He was also a pillar in the Montana Fur Harvesters. Rick was one of the original founders of the MFH. He, Larry Keyes and Ken Cordoza were the remaining founders. Ken is still active as a director and very well respected. Ricks dedication to trapper rights and willingness to speak up will be sorely missed. May he rest in peace.

Ricks wife, Sandie is hoping to sell Ricks Trapping Supply Business. She would like to have someone local carry it on. All the inventory, his trapping equipment and the cargo trailer as a package would be preferred. Ricks snowmobiles and enclosed trailer are also available. A Ski Doo Scandic WT and Sandies smaller one is there. All are well cared for. Contact Drew at 406-407-1318.

Tom Fieber 🐾

Upcoming events:

This is the busiest season of the year for us at the MFH. We did put on the MTH Fur Show at the end of February. We had good help from members and ended very successfully. Just as we were ending our wolf trapping line it was time for the Foundation for Wildlife Management Banquet on March 12th. Another good event that raised funds for reimbursement of wolves.

Our next event was the Fur Show at the Gun Show at the Majestic Arena running the 25th through the 27th of March. It has been a good venue for us in the past so looking forward to it.

April will be another crazy month, On Sunday **April 3rd**, we will be hosting a fur clinic near Columbia Falls at Shawn and Ambers place. These a aways good to attend, large crowd, lots of animals to process, free to all including lunch and drinks.

April 16th FWP will be hosting our annual trappers meeting. Starts at 9am at the Region 2 office in Missoula. This is a really important meeting if you want to shape future trapping regulations. This where you can complain and maybe get somewhere instead of complaining later when it is too late.

April 23rd is the MT Sportsmen For Fish and Wildlife Banquet in Plains. Supporting this organization is very much encouraged. They have supported sportsmen and livestock producers and fought for rights in Helena.



May 1st will be the FWP/Trappers Meeting in Region 1 at the FWP office in Kalispell. Again please attend to voice your concerns and vote for any changes brought forward.

May 7th Montana Trappers Association MTA/FBU Banquet will be held in Dillon. Starts @5P

May 7th We will be at the Forestry Expo at Columbia Falls with our Fur Show. This has been an annual event that the Fur Harvesters for years. It is an outdoor show that attracts lots of families.

May 14th will find us at the Montana Houndsmen Association Trials up out of Lolo. This will be the first time for us and I am looking forward to it.

June 3&4th NTA Western Regional Convention in Forsyth. At the Rosebud County Fairgrounds starts at 9A Daily

August 17th to the 21st Flathead County Fairgrounds. This is a very big event for the entire trapping community. We normally have up to four thousand people attend the both over the week. This is one where we really need all the help we can get.

COLUMBIA FALLS FUR HANDLING CLINIC

April 3rd, 2022

Starting at 9:00 am



The clinic is free to all. A fur handling clinic is planned for Saturday in Columbia Falls. Located at 287 Midnight Ln, from 9am-3pm.

The clinic, offered by the Montana Trappers Association (MTA), and the Montana Fur Harvesters (MFH) is open to anyone looking for a hands-on opportunity to learn about fur handling techniques, ethics and safety. Participants should bring a chair and dress warmly. A free lunch will be provided.

This clinic is not a general trapper education or wolf trapper class. For more information on those opportunities, contact Tom Fieber 250-3386 or tfieber@bresnan.net. This is a great opportunity to learn how to handle furs from skinning, fleshing, cleaning, stretching and marketing. Some of the best Montana instructors will be working throughout the day. It's a great way to see how others do it.

This clinic is open to everyone interested in trapping and fur handling. Bring the family, no age limits. Memberships to MTA or MFH will be available to those interested. We'll have a couple of games for the kids to win goodies. We will have a few prizes to be raffled at the end of the day so buy your tickets at the door. RSVP would be appreciated to better plan for lunches.

For more information contact host:
Tom Fieber 406-250-3386



Montana Fur Harvesters Memberships are due for 2022

It has been a good year for the Fur Harvesters. Our membership has grown, our budget has increased, and we have reached out to thousands of new people through our fur shows. Some of these new members have taken on tasks and excelled. Looking forward to a new year working with all concerned. We sent out renewal forms

last month and got back around half. If you haven't got yours renewed yet let me know and I will send out another one.

Tom Fieber 🐾

Montana trappers needed

Trappers, we need your help and expertise...

As you know, during the 67th legislative session, the passage of Montana Senate Bill 60 requires trappers to complete a trapper education course unless the trapper can provide proof of the purchase of three prior trapping licenses - not necessarily in consecutive years. We are seeking volunteers to serve as trapper education instructors. Ideally, we would have several instructors for each region but instructors can teach in any region they wish.

Currently, the instruction will include in-person instruction in the basics of trapping, ethics, best practices, equipment, regulations, and the avoidance of non-target species.

To qualify to be an instructor, you must complete an application, pass a background check and be deemed qualified by the department to give instructions in ethical and humane trapping methods. Because the courses are at the basic level, extensive trapping experience, while preferred, may not be necessary.

Courses will be offered on Saturdays and will last approximately 8 to 9 hours. Instructors will be reimbursed per diem and travel at a rate of .58 cents per mile driven and \$7.50/\$8.50/\$14.50 for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, respectively.

Together, we will teach future generations of trappers and ensure the longevity of trapping in Montana.

We are potentially to start training as early as June so respond soon. Those desiring to become an instructor, please contact Wayne Cooperider at wacooperider@mt.gov or at (406)444-9947 during working hours.

If you'd like to ask questions prior to applying, contact John Nolan (Montana Trapper's Association Member) at (406)210-3176. Or Tom Fieber 250-3386

If you want, download the application, follow this link then select apply.

<https://fwp.mt.gov/hunt/education/volunteer-instructors>

Print out the application, fill it out then sign then Send completed application to: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Hunter Education PO Box 200701 Helena, MT 59620



Join us as Certified Trapping Instructors. Share your knowledge with students of all ages. We get to meet some great people. It can be real rewarding.

Charter Members

\$100 or more for 2021/2022

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.

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.

Ken Cordoza. As a founding member Ken is our last one. Ken's support and dedication paved the way for what we are today.

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.

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.

Tom Gilmore, Tom has donated more time and merchandise to trapping organizations than most. His fur handling clinics in Libby are top notch.

Raven Van Den Bosch, of Virginia, attended a trapping event at Marion. She is a wonderful supporter of the Trapping Community across the nation.

Wildlife Management means Best for All!!

Article on decline of Moose, Elk, Deer Bighorn Sheep, Caribou in Montana.

Managing for one species can have a negative effect on the overall health of the entire ecosystem. It is a known fact that has been proven out many times throughout history. Here in Montana and Idaho we are experiencing this again.

During 8 biological years of monitoring, we have documented 79 mortalities of collared adult moose across all study areas: 23 in the Cabinet-Fisher, 31 in the Big Hole Valley and 25 in the Rocky Mountain Front (Figure 4). While determining the causes of adult female moose mortality was not initially a key objective of this study, the relatively high proportion of health-related (non-predation) mortalities has prompted greater emphasis on prioritizing collar technology and staff time to document cause of death when logistics permit.

Cause-specific mortality, adult females

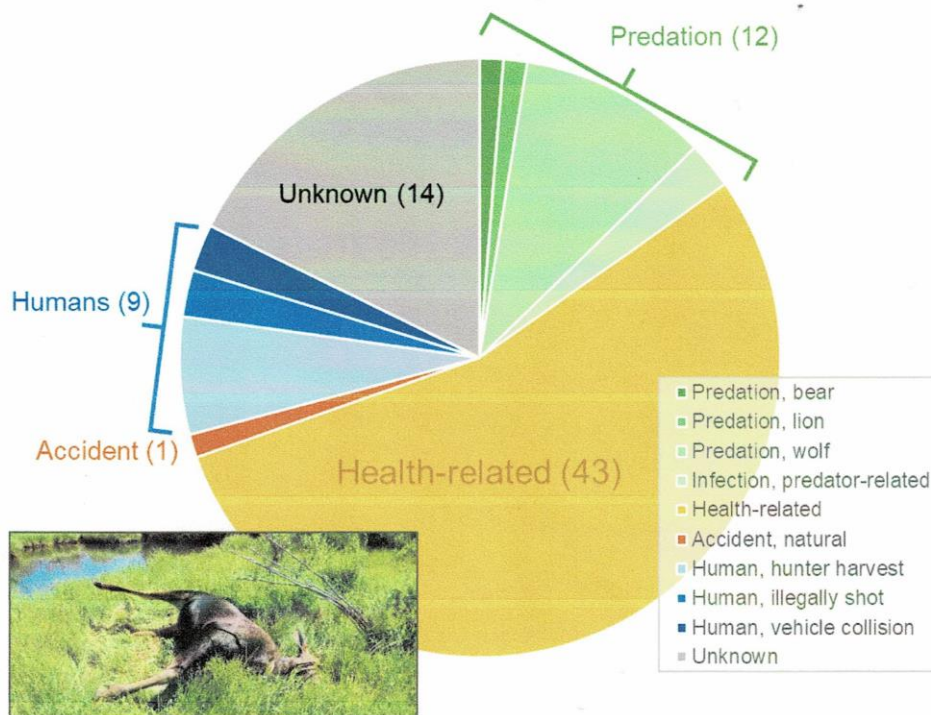


Figure 5. Counts of radio-collared adult female moose by cause-of-mortality across all 3 focal study areas. Note, this summary does not account for variations in sample size and timing that can affect the perceived relative risk to each cause. Such concerns will be accounted for using formal cumulative incidence analyses upon completion of this study.

With the reintroduction and migration of wolves back in the nineties wolf populations have exceeded goals in every area where a solid prey base existed.

This study on **Moose** done by FWP, headed by **Nick DeCesare**, is one that started back in 2013 and listed is the 2021 report on mortality. Nicks studies are well worth the time to

research. Here is a link to access the 2021 research report:

<https://fwp.mt.gov/binaries/content/assets/fwp/conservation/moose/mfw-moose-report-2021.pdf> Previous reports are available at: <https://fwp.mt.gov/conservation/wildlife-management/moose>.

This chart shows a breakdown of mortality causes. Over the life of this study a total of 229 adult female moose were captured and collared. Currently 82 are on-air. This data shows that health was the main cause of mortality. Unknown was next at 14 and predations was noted at 12.

The majority was caused by wolves. Bear and lion impact was minimal, they have always been in our system. It is the wolf that is new and had a detrimental impact and is one thing that we can manage unlike disease.

Due to the limited space our focus was on predation, follow the above links for complete thorough findings.

The **Bighorn Sheep** are also very prone to disease and predation. Pneumonia, a respiratory disease that is the number one killer of them. Predation also takes a heavy toll. Once a pack of wolves or lions move in on a herd, they can virtually wipe them out.

Some examples are the Hog Heaven herd on the Flathead Reservation. Not long ago it numbered 215. I heard it had dropped dramatically. I talked with the Tribal Wildlife Manager, he did confirm that wolves were taking a heavy toll. They planned on taking some actions. That was maybe five years ago. I recently met with one of the game wardens recently, he said that there were maybe two dozen left in the herd.

Another major blow is the Wildhorse Island herd. This herd has been the nucleus for a source of sheep to transplant to other areas. The last I heard, the herd was down to about 30. The word on that is it was lions that were taking them. FWP finally did remove three lions from the island. There is little chance for escape for the sheep on the island and chances are that none would have survived. This is an example of why management is important.

Woodland Caribou are no different, here in Montana our preferred habitat is limited, we are at the extreme southern edge of their critical habitat. In the past some seasonal migration was occurring from Canada.

However, Idaho did have small areas in the northern Selkirk panhandle that met these and has hosted a small native herd for years. **On January 18th, 2019, the last surviving member of the South Selkirk Caribou herd was captured, grey ghosts are no longer in the Lower 48.**

This is not the headlines we want. Allowing an uncontrolled predator population into an ecosystem is not good wildlife management. This is not something new, we see this happening over and over. Managing wildlife means for all species in each ecosystem.

*FVCC student **Taylor Rose** joins us and describes his efforts over two years to develop his great idea into a graduate project at the University of Idaho, working on caribou habitat and status. You can contact Taylor at <Taylor.Rose406@protonmail.ch>*

Taylor has done exhausting research collecting data throughout Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Canada on caribou. I have taken data from his report to share with readers.

Critical habitat is defined as an “area or type of site where an individual or wildlife species naturally occurs or depends on directly, or indirectly, in order to carry out its life processes or formerly occurred and has the potential to be introduced.”²⁶

Specifically, woodland caribou critical habitat are “large ranges of relatively undisturbed, interconnected habitat where they can separate themselves (horizontally and by elevation) from predators;... and access their preferred food sources.”²⁷ This automatically negates any areas of lower elevation, plains or barren ground habitat that is more keeping with their barren ground cousins. It is

estimated there are fewer than 1,400 mountain caribou left in North America.

Due to limited critical habitat in both Idaho and Montana there is little room to escape predation. Once predators locate a herd very few can escape. The last known caribou in Montana was in 2018. Five of them, collared, migrated down out of Canada. Three of the five were killed by wolves, one was found severely weakened by tick infestation. That one was recovered, rehabbed, then returned to Canada. I am not sure what happened to the fifth one. Canada is also dealing with declining numbers. That’s despite multiple efforts over the years to revive the struggling species, including an expensive multiagency and multinational effort to transplant caribou into the Idaho and Washington Selkirk Mountains in the 1990s and in 2012.

Habitat degradation from old-growth logging, climate change and increased predation has decimated the species. Due to



loss of caribou in southern British Columbia downward migration has been lost.

Canadian officials plan to implement a captive breeding project somewhere in British Columbia, with plans to eventually release caribou back into the Selkirk and Purcell ranges, Degroot said. George hopes the project is based in the Selkirks so tribal involvement is easier.

Tom Fieber 🐾

SEVEN SLEEPERS IN THE RASPBERRY PATCH

Columbian Ground Squirrels... {CGS} are members of the rodent family. They are common and found in the North Western US. They are the 2nd largest member of the genus [Urocitellus] The largest member is the Artic Ground Squirrel. The CGS is part of the tribe [Marmontini]. The tribe includes, marmots, chipmunks, prairie dogs and other ground squirrels. The CGS hibernate most of the year in burrows, which they can use over for many years. When the CGS emerge in the spring they are emaciated.

The long periods of torpor is what gives the CGS the moniker "Seven Sleepers". They rest- hibernate around seven months before emerging from their den in the spring. The CGS can be found in the writings of Lewis and Clark 1805.

The conservation status is listed as LEAST CONCERN. The reason for this listing is that they are wide spread and the population is stable, with NO major threats. The male awakes about a week before the females and breed about a week later. The males reach full maturity at age 3 and females at 2 years. That is the age when they start to breed. The average colony size is about 61 animals per hectare, less than 1/2 acre.

Spring has sprung here in the Swan Range of Montana. The snow line is receding and melting more each day. We are still having snow falling above us and glad for it, fire season will be here before we know it. We still have 6" of snow on the garden as I write this. My wife Barb said that the Crocus are breaking ground on the southern exposer and the mountain Robins have made their way back from the south.

We really don't have time to get cabin fever here in the Swan. All the shoveling, plowing, and the constant moving of the firewood from the shed to the fire place keeps us busy. And if lucky enough I am in the shed skinning until I am caught up. Yes, I do enjoy stretching fur. Barb is sure to check on me before she retires for the night to make sure that I'm still breathing. The life cycle of mountain life.

The days are getting longer and soon it will

be time for Barb to return to the garden. She loves that garden and spends many an afternoon and evening working the ground, planting and pruning. The garden supplies us with many months of good harvest. I do enjoy all of the fruits of her labors. She grows it and I eat it.

I have noticed over the last 10 years the CGS have been migrating higher up the mountain. And yes, the population is taking hold. They are in the yard and finding their way into the garden. We do have a 6' fence to keep the deer, black and grizzly bear out. But them little guys come from underneath. So, between them and the chipmunks, the garden is taking a big hit.

Last summer I started to do some thinning of the little critters. We have a pretty big raspberry patch that produces for several months and produces several varieties into the fall. These are what they seem to be hitting when the weather starts to dry up. So raspberry is what I used as bait. I also add some peanut butter to the set. Mouthwatering.....



After we have a good fresh location, I set a live trap in the vicinity and baited with the raspberry and peanut butter. I placed a small dab of peanut butter and placed the berry on top. This holds the berry in place and keeps it from rolling off. I set the bait on the high end of the pan. I also placed a few berries leading into the entrance. The CGS could not resist this two-course delight.

We have a great squirrel and bear dog OHSO, Spanish for little bear. This little guy has no love loss for either. Ohso is 21 pounds and scared of his own shadow. He can smell a bear 50 yards away while sleeping on the sofa. I put

him to work finding some of the CGS dens. He digs until all you see is his tail sticking out of the hole. The ground squirrels run out the exit while he's busy digging.



As for the chipmunks I placed a 5-gallon bucket with about 1/3 water, just enough that they couldn't reach the bottom. If any critter can jump from the bottom of the bucket, it will jump out. I ran a piece of wire threw a can or water bottle and drilled holes in the top of the bucket. The can



must roll freely. I set the bucket near the patch of berries and place a small ramp for them to climb to

the can or bottle. I placed a dab peanut butter on the can, and bingo time for a swim.

I hope this article will be of interest. This is something that the children can help with. I find that this is just another way to keep me outside and trapping all season. I have found several recipes for ground squirrel on line and will be trying them this season. Raspberries on top of squirrel BBQ or stew??

I do love raspberries on my ice cream and cereal, that was the reason for this article. Have a Blessed time outside with the family

Passing of a friend: Rick Hawk

It is with a heavy heart I give you this news. We lost a true friend and trapper this winter, Rick Hawk. Rick passed away in a snowmobile accident this winter while running his line. Rick will truly be missed by his wife and best friend Sandy

and their children. Rick and Sandy were the perfect couple. They both had a very kind heart and always greeted you with a smile.

I met Rick about 10 years ago when I joined the Montana Fur Harvesters. Rick was on the board of directors and very dedicated to the world of trapping. Over the years I was very blessed to spend time with Rick at the trapping classes that the MFH would provide.

Rick was a very seasoned snare man. Rick would put on demos about snaring. He would share the techniques and stop to answer any questions you had, and took the time to explain it. Just because Rick had so much experience snaring, he would never talk down to you or make you feel uncomfortable. Rick loved to teach.

A few years ago, Rick retired, well semi-retired. He bought a trapping business and named it Rick's traps. Rick added to the new business and carried a wide variety of traps and supplies. Rick would load his trapping trailer and attend the local events in the area. You could always get help with all your needs from Rick. If Rick didn't carry what you needed, he would order it and give you a call. He was an honest man to deal with. I know Rick gave some real deals to trappers, class act.

Over the years a few of us would attend the FWP in Helena, and meet with them to discuss issues and new regulation proposals. Rick was always active in the meetings, and well versed. The ride to and from Helena took us a few hours and I really enjoyed it. We would trade hunting and trapping adventures to pass the time.

After a few years of knowing Rick, he asks me if I would like to tag along on some ADC work. Rick was working on beaver damage. Rick had gone out the day before and set some snares. When we arrived the next morning, I'll be darn, Rick had some beaver. Rick set 4-5 snare and he had 3 big beaver. I was glad to help him carry them back to the truck. Anyone that trapped beaver knows this is a job. But fun.

Times like that I will never forget. That adventure still puts a big smile on my face. I was really looking forward to spending more time with Rick when I retire next year. Rick will truly be missed by many. Please be sure to spend time with those special people when you can.

Miss you, my friend.

Scott Smith

Tail Dragger, Scott 🐾



Montana Chapters

“Lace up your Boots, & Pass the Hat, We’ve got a job to do!”

As the past wolf trapping season winds down, we look back to see what transpired. Montana recorded 273 wolf harvests. 81 of those wolves harvested were by Foundation for Wildlife Management members who were all reimbursed \$500 of their expenses for each wolf they harvested. As the F4WM program grows within Montana, and more sportsmen become aware of the program, we expect more participation. F4WM will also be working this year to establish increased reimbursement zones for Montana, in order to boost efforts in the areas where wolf harvest is needed most. We as members of both organizations need to get out and recruit more sportsmen.

Our two Montana F4WM Chapters, (Flathead and Sanders County) each hosted fundraising banquets recently that were well received by their respective communities, well attended, and both were very successful generating funds to cover another year’s reimbursements. These two chapters have already begun planning for next year’s banquets, set for January 28th for our Flathead Valley Chapter in Kalispell, and May 13th for Sanders County in Trout Creek. Our hope is to add another MT chapter this year, so if you know anyone in a new area, possibly Butte... or near Helena... or maybe Lolo/Hamilton area who would like to start a chapter of F4WM please have them reach out.

F4WM has removed over 1500 wolves with just over \$1,200,000 membership, donor, and sponsor dollars, with zero tax funding. That is approximately \$800 per wolf, funded by Sportsmen, Ranchers, concerned citizens, (along with a few Grants). Without the F4WM program, State Game Management Agencies, like the Idaho Wolf Control Board, would likely be charged with removing the same wolves, due to Chronic livestock depredations and Elk management complications. The average expense for those agencies, due to the man hours, equipment, and difficulty involved, is often north of \$9000 per wolf removed.

With this F4WM reimbursement incentive, comes great responsibility... It’s important to remember that as

wolfers, we are under great scrutiny... With all the legislative work being done to increase our abilities to better manage wolf populations, we are being watched closer now than ever before... It is of the utmost importance that we use our best judgement on when and where we are setting wolf traps... If you think someone will likely see a wolf in a trap your about to set... Please don’t set there. If you think someone walking their dog or out for a Sunday stroll with their family will get their dog caught in the trap your about to set, Please do not set there... Although most bycatch are released unharmed, the last thing we need is conflict with other land-users.

We must also work together as a team, and not squabble over trapping territories... Be kind, courteous, and respectful of one another, as well as of land owners and other land user groups. We must police ourselves and follow the highest ethical standards to maintain a positive reputation as sportsmen, as game managers, and as representatives of our F4WM program. If You see a wolf in a trap that is not yours, do not approach it. Back out of the area immediately and make effort to let the trapper know he has a catch. The more we can help each-other and communicate with one another the higher our overall rate of success will be. It is important to note that those who intentionally cause drama or conflict will be suspended from reimbursement eligibility indefinitely, depending on the situation. Theft of gear or wolves will not be tolerated, and will be grounds for immediate permanent termination from reimbursement eligibility.

It is also a Felony to falsify information on your Check in slip with IDFG, including location of harvest... All suspected fraudulent submittals will be handed over to authorities for investigation and possible DNA sampling. Please do not falsify info or attempt to steal from your own F4WM program- it will end poorly for all of us. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly. Just please be patient as I too will be running gear and making every effort to do my part.

Thank you for all you do for Sportsmen and Wildlife... Thank you for all you do for F4WM... Good luck out there, and please remember – F4WM is counting on you... I am counting on you... Idaho sportsmen are counting on you... Idaho wildlife are counting on you...

“Lace up your boots ladies and gentlemen... We’ve got a job to do!”

Sincerely,
Justin Webb
F4WM Executive Director
justin@f4wm.org 208-610-4455

Montana Fur Harvesters works closely with local FWP personnel.

Region One, 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.

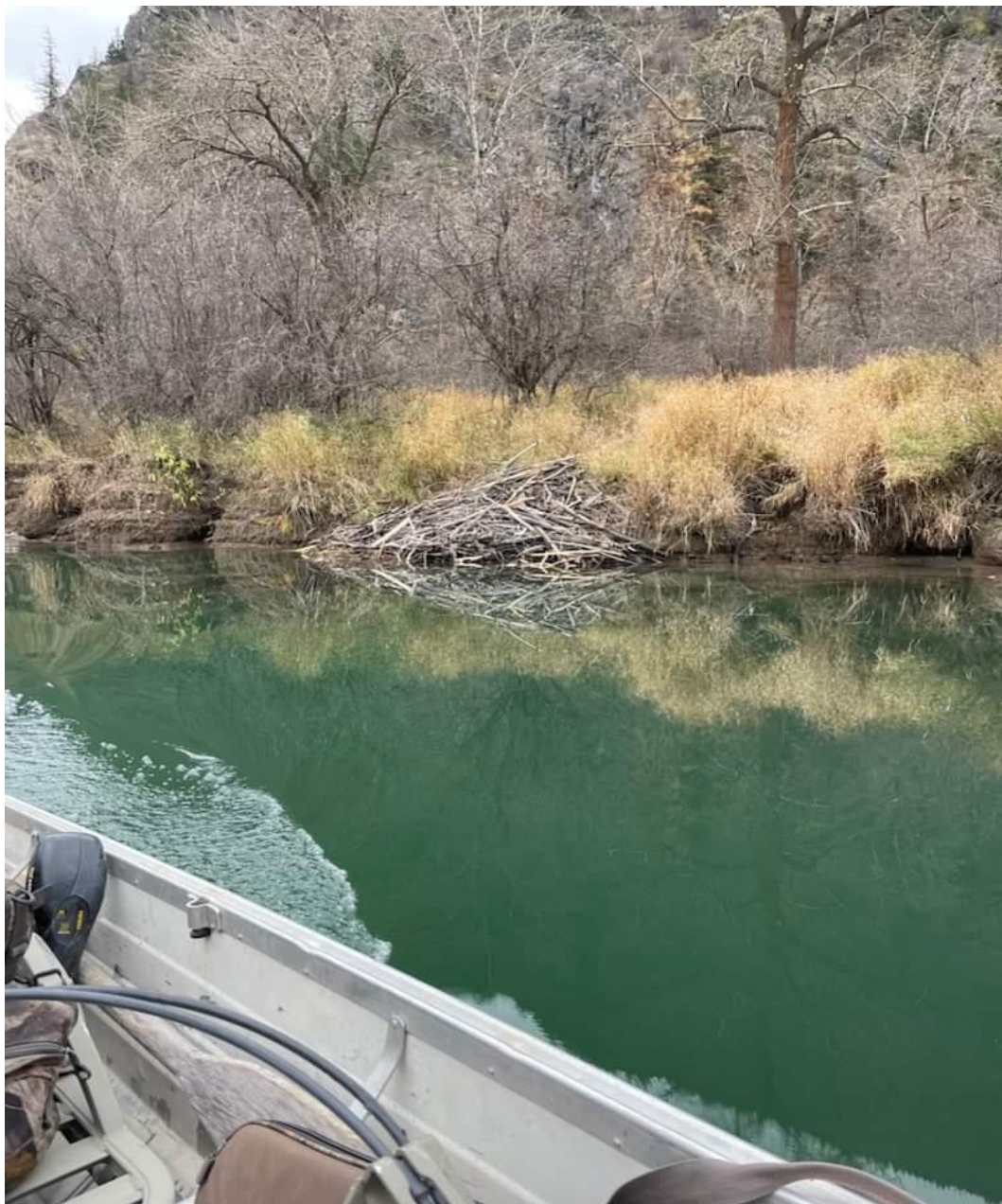
Wildlife manager for region one, **Neil Anderson**, he has been another one that attends public meetings and sportsman events. He has been working to address road and trail issues as well as other issues that affect sportsman. Neil really listens to people's concerns and acts on them.

Out of Region Two office. **Tom Chianelli** is a great guy to work with on regulations.

Liz Bradley, our new wildlife manager that replaced long time manager, Mike Thompson. Liz has been great to work with over the years as a biologist. I look forward to working with Liz.

Tyler Parks, another great wolf biologist that has been the one to get answers from. These are just a few of the many local personnel that I work with and appreciate.

Thanks to each and every one of them!



The Doble family on the lower Clark Fork River. Sage, Sawyer & Dillyn with Josh & Rachel share the day.



Research Paper Semper 1
Rachel Doble
Adventures of Feral Academy
Tricks of the Trade
April 4, 2022

As I reflect back over our third season of trapping, I take note of the handful of mentors that have contributed to our fundamental skills and success.

We began with winter water trapping and immediately encountered the trials and errors associated with freezing or fluctuating water levels. The landscape was dramatically different than the YouTube channels & trapping magazines we followed and were learning from too, so we had to adapt.

Sage, our avid reader of Fur Fish & Game, was taking notes as Josh and I planned how to make our first set with a 330. We found the perfect location but hadn't considered how or where to put some lure. It was her suggestion that led us to a beautifully executed catch.

She explained how one of the beaver trappers she had read about, used an eye-catching stick, placed horizontally across the triggers; topped with a little lure with the

trap mostly submerged in the water. The twig simply looked like it was floating there. We shrugged our shoulders and decided to try it. To our delight, it worked! This was only the beginning of the knowledge she'd retain from the pages of her beloved trapping magazines.



Research Paper Semper 2

The following Spring brought beautiful weather. We were all eager to get outdoors and trap. We explored all over, the kids were in absolute heaven. We found a location covered with beaver sign, so I put out half a dozen sets, anticipating to catch at least 4 beaver. But the next day our enthusiasm was lost when the first 4 sets were empty and sprung. I remade them, then we continued to the last unchecked traps hoping to get at least one. Disappointedly, they were empty as well.

I didn't understand why I was missing beaver or what I was doing wrong! So I reached out to a trapper we had met at our very first fur-handling clinic, Paul Antczak. He lived out of the area, so he suggested I take photos and videos of my sets, then he would make suggestions and explain the "why's and how's." This was a game changer! Once I was able to recognize the key components, I was missing I changed my approach.

By applying the tricks of the trade to my own sets, I began to understand the ergonomics and behaviors of the animal I was targeting.

We took this concept to other areas of trapping as well. We connected with experienced, successful trappers and discussed their knowledge on specific species. Their stories gave us insight as we progressed in our trapping endeavors. We would focus on targeting coyotes, then bobcat, then wolves etc. We were learning and expanding our abilities as a family with the help of fellow trappers. We've shared some very rewarding moments in the process.

I guess what I've concluded about trapping is that without a community of trappers willing to pass along their skill set & stories, trapping would be even more challenging and foreign than it is today. It's imperative to pass down the techniques we are taught to keep it going. Additionally, we, as a society need to accept and appreciate how vital it is in our environment.

Rachel Doble 🦫



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Region One Wildlife Biologist
Jesse Coltrane.

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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