

MONTANA FUR HARVESTERS

January 2023

Winter issue

**Dealing with
Feral Cats**

President's Message

Martin Research Project

Governors Award

**Things to avoid on
the traplines !!!**

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Cover Photo: Mountain Lion, one of the animals a trapper avoids Photo.By Carrie Franklin Below: Dan Thingelstad with another wolf from Region 2.



February 24th to the 26th Kalispell

Spend some quality time at the Expo. It will be a nice break from the trapline. If anyone would like to do a demo, let me know to schedule your time.



Notes from the president.

Winter in Northwest Montana

The holidays are upon us. Made it through Thanksgiving, was lucky to get my wolf traps out on November 29th. Now recovering from Christmas and spending time with family. Picked up a bobcat and a wolf right off the start, missed a few other wolves. Deep snows were in my trapping area but when the temps dropped to minus 26, I took on a new dress code. At those temps running snow mobiles requires no bare skin exposed. A week later we are getting heavy rains, now and the freeze thaw cycles have started. Seems every day on a trapline brings changes so it never gets boring.

Most of the state has now opened for wolf trapping on the 21st. To the best of my knowledge, not a single grizzly bear has been caught in a wolf trap ever. The ones I am aware of were caught in a coyote set in November or bobcat set in early December. Not that it can't happen but for ten years none have been after the 15th of December. Not a single fatality from a trapper, almost all known grizzly fatalities are either euthanized problem bears by government agencies or vehicle incidents.

Make sure you have joined the **Foundation 4 Wildlife Management** to be eligible for the \$500 reimbursement. Now regions, one and two are paying \$750 per wolf due to higher population levels.

I have also been a member of **RockinWK**. Tim Viano has been helping wolf trappers with his organization for a few years. In the past they would pay \$500 for wolf pelts or photos. Now you can go to the website, rockinwk.com and sign up for membership. That allows you to be eligible to collect \$500 if you want to sell them the skull from each legally harvested wolf and you keep the pelt.

Both organizations are working hard raising funds to help cover costs that sportsmen incur managing wolf populations. The membership costs are \$40 to join so hunters and trappers can receive up to \$1250 per wolf. For me, even that doesn't cover all my costs. Get out and attend these banquets to benefit all wildlife.

As of December 28th, wolves harvested in Montana is 99 compared to 156 on January 10th, 2022. No region has reached the commission review numbers. Region 2 has the most harvests at 37 Regions 1 is at 35 and Region 3 is at 19. Remember, parts of Region 2 started on November 29th

and most did not start until December 13th so hope those numbers climb.

January, February and March are coming fast. Sportsmen Expos, gun shows, fur clinics, banquets are all on the agenda. We are always looking for help running these events so please check with us if you want to help. I'd like to thank all our members who step up to help out at all of these events.

Josh Jurek of Plains has stepped up to take over from Dan Helterline as Montana Trappers Association District 1 Director. Dan has been doing a great job in the past and I am sure that Josh will be doing the same. If you need to contact Josh call at 406-449-1826. We are looking forward to working with Josh.

I along with some other wolf trappers are not seeing the **bobcat trappers** out as in the past. My wolf lines are having more bobcats visiting those sets more than in past years. I have just put out a few bobcat sets due to the number of tracks and having them eating my wolf baits. Seems both regions are seeing similar circumstances. If you get a chance pass on your thoughts to FWP on what you are seeing. They seem to be concerned about the lower harvest stats.

I am pleased to see how so many sportsmen conservation groups and organizations are getting together across the nation. Individually, they target all kinds of different wildlife, from mammals, birds, fish to habitat. Each specie benefits from the focused attention. There are so many that it is hard to name them all. Species that benefit from sportsmen are, Elk, Moose, Ducks, Mule Deer, Whitetail Deer, Turkey, Quail, Pheasant, Grouse, Trout, Salmon, etcetera to name a few. Not only are the species benefiting but attention to habitat for them benefits all creatures within the landscape. Many of these groups have become members of larger national organizations that give sportsmen a stronger voice that can target many different governmental agencies.

Don't be fooled by groups that are protection based. Their goal is to stop management of species based on emotions.

Montana Fur Harvesters Memberships are due this month.

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. I will be sending out forms soon or see [page 13](#) to renew or join.

Mandatory Trapper Education Classes

will be coming again this season. Some trappers will be required to take them. Check with FWP Regulations. We are looking for trappers to get certified to teach classes. Contact fwp.

Tom Fieber 🦌

Upcoming Events:

Our Fur Shows will be starting soon, the first one will be the Montana Sportsman's Expo. The Dates are February 24-26, 2023. This is a great show to start the year on. On March 24-26, 2023 the Kalispell Gun Show will be held at the Majestic Arena. This is a show where we have lots of Raffle ticket sales.

Be sure to attend this banquet!



Our Rifle for this year's raffle is ready. We were able to get the ever-popular Smith&Wesson

AR-15 Super Kit MOE. **Westland Seed of Ronan** has assisted in procuring these for us. The last two years they were not available so its nice to have them again. We have sold out of tickets in the past years, we started with 600 then went to 700. I suggest that we go for 800 tickets this year.

Fur clinics are also popular, As of now, the Flathead Clinic is planned for the 2nd of April at Shawn and Amber Meuli's place at 287 Midnight Ln, Columbia Falls, starting at 9:00 am. 🦌

SPRING TRAPPER MEETINGS NEWS!

Important that trappers and sportsmen attend and let us know your thoughts. If you don't show up you can't complain later. As subjects come up, we discuss and comment then a vote is taken. All comments are heard but we can't act on all of them. Some will be 180' from someone else's. Don't be offended if the vote goes the other way, the majority rules. Many issues are covered, quotas and season dates can be affected.

As of now, our Spring Trapper Meetings with FWP are scheduled for; **Region One**, we have had to schedule an evening meeting due to other conflicts. The plan is to start at 6:00 PM at the FWP office on Meridian on April 11th. Jessy Coltrane should have all the data by then to present to us.

Region Two will be hosted at the FWP Office in Missoula on April 8th starting at 9:00 PM. Tyler Parks will be covering furbearers and wolf harvests.

Best of wishes for the new year.

Tom Fieber 🦌



Marten research project underway during trapping season

Dear Trapper,

This winter, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is starting a research project on marten in Montana. With the help of marten trappers, FWP biologists will collect DNA from tissue samples and evaluate the distribution of marten species and potential hybrids within the state. This is entirely **voluntary** on your part, but we appreciate your participation.

How to submit a DNA sample from your marten:

Option 1. Collect and submit your own muscle tissue sample:

1. Contact your local FWP regional office or furbearer specialist to request a vial for sample submission:
 1. **Region 1 (Northwest Montana):** Jessy Coltrane, 406-751-4584, jcoltrane@mt.gov
 2. **Region 2 (West-central Montana):** Tyler Parks, 406-542-5523, tylerparks@mt.gov
 3. **Region 3 (Southwest Montana):** Claire Gower, 406-577-7866, cgower@mt.gov
2. Cut an eraser-sized sample of fresh muscle tissue from the marten carcass and place in the pre-labeled vial filled with desiccant. If fresh tissue cannot be obtained, either scrape an equivalent amount of tissue from a dried hide or take a hole punch-sized sample of hide and place in the vial.
3. Fill out the trapper and harvest information on the vial. We are looking for as specific a location as possible, so latitude and longitude coordinates are preferred; however, township, range and section are better than nothing.
4. Please return all vials when you come in for mandatory check of your marten or ship to FWP in the prepaid envelope you receive with the vial.

Option 2. Submit a tissue sample when you bring your marten to FWP to get tagged:

1. FWP has reinstated mandatory tagging for all marten within 10 days of the calendar close of the season. When you bring your marten to an FWP regional office to get tagged, inform the staff member that you would like to submit a sample from the hide.

Project Background

Roughly a century ago, marten across North America were divided into two species (Pacific marten & American marten), whose ranges met in Montana. However, after evidence of hybridization was observed in Montana pelts in 1953, they were generally lumped into consideration as one species. The idea of two species has reemerged with new genetic approaches to evaluating relatedness among marten range wide. With the help of marten trappers, FWP biologists would like to evaluate the distribution of marten species and potential hybrids within Montana.

Thank you in advance for participating. If you have any questions, please contact your local FWP furbearer specialist. 🐾

An unexpected visitor.

About a week before Christmas this little fellow showed up on one of the traplines. We were worried that the sow might have been caught in one of the wolf traps further up the line. The check found nothing, so we assumed that it was on his own. Poor

little guy was only about 35 pounds as this year's cub. Next trap check day found him in a trap. He was glad to see us and we gently released him. A call to a FWP Biologist suggested that we let him go. He



noted that they were aware of three other orphaned cubs, so it happens. The temperatures dropped to minus 26 degrees a few days later and the birds led us to his frozen carcass.

I am not sure what happened to his mother, but I hear from loggers and landowners that wolves will dig bears out of their dens and kill them. Wolves were in the area, but we haven't found the site. Nature is cruel.

Tom Fieber 🐾

Feral Cats

Written by **Kim Davie**.

When I moved, my cat and I were immediately visited by the neighborhood bully, a tough-as-nails yellow Tomcat. He was battle worn, lean, and mean- promptly beating up my baby boy into bloody submission. That first year, about three times in the middle of the night, I woke up to sounds of cats screaming and fighting in my living room. That ugly Tom had broken in through the screen door just to pick a fight. Looking back, I probably should have made that mean cat disappear, but I didn't want to mess with someone's pet.

Later, one of my neighbors took in several cats. None of them were spayed or neutered. Two litters were born soon after- most of the kittens were yellow. Did you know cats can get pregnant as young as four months old? And they can have five litters per year! In a short period of time, the number of cats next door grew to 25.

During a few chats with my neighbor while watering, I was told they would catch all the kittens, spay/neuter, and find them new homes. Months went by and nothing happened, except for several new batches of kittens showed up. Meanwhile, that old Tom finally disappeared, but his prodigies were thriving and turning out to be just as mean.

I can't imagine the expense of taking care of 25 to 30 cats! In this case they were NOT being taken care of. The majority of them had never been handled by people and they were not getting adequate food to keep them home. I didn't mind that they caught the moles and gophers in my yard, but they were also catching a lot of song birds and helping themselves to the food in my chicken coop. One day, I caught two large cats stalking my chickens and knew it was time to take action. These cats were not someone's pet- they were feral and causing problems.

The irresponsibility of these people put me in a position where I was forced to take matters into my own hands. It was not something that I wanted to do, but felt it would be best for all if some of those cats disappeared. Fewer cats would lessen the competition for resources at home, ease predation of song birds in my area and protect my pets.

Using a "Have a Heart" trap, catching my first cat was easy! My challenge was to get it out of the trap and to decide what to do with it. The local shelter wasn't an option because they told me they don't take cats, but would call me if someone needed a barn cat. A friend suggested "relocating" the cats to another area... or should I kill it- but how? One suggestion- drowning, but the cage is very

large and awkward. What body of water could I put it in without me falling in after it? It seemed like a disaster waiting to happen. Meanwhile, the cat in the cage was howling and banging around loud enough to wake the dead. I fumbled with the latch and the cat disappeared in a flash. I needed a plan.

I began observing the cats a bit more and saw that many of them had neurological disorders from being inbred. They also were harassing my chickens more and more. Since cats are very adept to living in the wild, I didn't want to transplant the problem somewhere else. I decided the best choice was euthanasia.

Plan: trap the cats in the cage and then shoot them BEFORE opening the cage door!

I wanted a quieter option than my regular .22 ammo, so I picked up a few boxes to try. The next cat I caught, I was ready. It was a smaller cat with crossed eyes, snaggly teeth pointing in all directions and walked like it was drunk all the time. I used *CCI Suppressor 22LR subsonic hollow point for small game, 45 grain, 970 FPS*. It was a fairly quiet pop and I walked away not liking the muscles spasms that came next. It did the job very satisfactorily and I don't think the critter felt a thing.

Next, I tried *CCI QUIET-22 segmented hp for small game, 40 grain, 710 FPS*. This one worked well and was very quiet, but didn't have enough oomph to eject the brass. The same was true for *the Aguila round .22 Colibri, no gunpowder, 20 grain bullet*. I also tried *Aquila .22 Super Extra Short, 29 grain, 1095 FPS*. I don't know why the guy at the gun counter thought it would be quiet, since it is still a high velocity round... but I did get the chance to learn about the ammo and it works well in a revolver, but wouldn't load in my rifle.

To date, I've reduced the number of cats in my area substantially. I do wish pet owners would take responsibility especially when it comes to cats/dogs and get them spayed/neutered. A female cat can have up to 100 kittens in her lifetime. I've gotten more proficient at dispatching the cats and it isn't my favorite thing to do, but I am taking the responsibility to help reduce these predators that can cause so much trouble.

Resources: www.flatheadspayneuter.org in Kalispell helps pet owners with a low-cost option as well as <https://spaymontana.org> > [spay-neuter-your-pet](https://spaymontana.org) As they say: they can't add or subtract, but they can sure multiply!
Kim Davie 🐾 MFH Treasurer!



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Greetings from Idaho,

December was super cold here in Fairfield with it dipping below -20 for a stretch and then right after Christmas it was up to 40 degrees and rained an inch. Christmas was amazing with both my grown son's home and my twin grandson's home. With one son living in California and one in lineman school I take advantage of every minute they are home to hang out with them.

Not a lot of activity in December but did have some things to report. Went to IDFG office and had a meeting with the head of enforcement to get some clarification on trap tags and trail/road setback. Wanted to get exact clarification from the head of enforcement and get it in writing so I could get it posted on social media and website for all of you to look at. One of the responsibilities of the ITA (in my opinion) is to get clarification or change on trapping rules in this state. These are two questions that several of our members have contacted me about.

Fur sale dates of Jan 20-22 and March 10-12 at Elmore County Fairgrounds in Glenns Ferry are quickly approaching. Coyote prices are tough but that is not going to squash our enthusiasm! We have an amazing lineup of events set up for the January fur sale and will soon get a demo schedule set up. The short list of events are trapping demos, skinning demos, live auction with donated items (don't miss this), general membership meeting, fish and game meeting, live band on Saturday night, raffles, bon fire, camping, potluck, IDFG trapper ed class and Moyle tannery will be in attendance on Saturday to pick up fur for the tannery. Bobcat, marten, otter and beaver prices all look to be up from last year. I have interest in all other species, skulls and horns and we will have all fur and craft buyers from last year in attendance with one new craft buyer already contacting me. Coyote market looks tough but if you have coyotes put up, they will defiantly get bids, it will just be lower than you are used to.

I am regrettably announcing that the FBU banquet is moving from McCall to Caldwell due to costs. We really wanted to have it in the McCall area to get in front of some new members, but the cost was going to be so much higher we just couldn't make it work. It will now be on April 1st at the Elks Lodge on 1015 N Kimball Ave in Caldwell Idaho. My wife Missy is working on planning the banquet right now and we need volunteers and donations. Missy's number is 775-401-0717 and is trying to head up the planning of it. With fur sale commissions down considerably we need to have a great banquet to keep funding available to get us through the year.

I have a sportsmen show on March 2-5 in Boise and dog release events in Boise in May and June that we are in desperate need of volunteers for. Please get yourself involved in the ITA and volunteer for events. The same handful of folks get stuck behind a booth all the time and it burns a person out quickly.

New sustaining member patches are available and this year's patch is a bobcat that was from a picture from our trapline. Sustaining member program is a way to give a "little extra" back to the ITA. You receive a limited-edition patch and a listing in the magazine, but you do NOT receive the Idaho Trapper Magazine. I don't believe I explained this well before.

Jan 20-22 ITA Fur Sale Elmore County Fairgrounds
Glenns Ferry Id

March 10-12 ITA Fur Sale Elmore County Fairgrounds
Glenns Ferry Id

April 1, 11th annual FBU/ITA Banquet Elks Lodge
Caldwell Id

June 16-18 United Trappers of Idaho Convention St
Maries Id

For questions on any of these events contact Rusty at
208-870-3217

Thank you

Rusty Kramer

Idaho Trappers Association President

208-870-3217

idahotrapguy@hotmail.com 

**This another event that we need to support.
This organization is very active in sportsmen
rights and legislative issues. Montana
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife.**

MTSFW members, mark your calendars!

What:

Annual Meeting of the MTSFW Membership
(Open to all current MTSFW members)

When:

Saturday, **January 14, 2023; 3:00 p.m. to
6:30 p.m.**

Where:

Orchard Homes Community Center
2537 South 3rd Street W | Missoula, MT

Purpose:

The Annual General Membership Meeting for all current MTSFW members. It's a time to meet and greet the MTSFW Officers and Directors while getting to know other MTSFW members. It's also a great time to learn what your MTSFW Board of Directors has been working on and to share your ideas and input with them. This is important, as we will be early in the 2023 Montana Legislative Session.

Itinerary:

3:00 p.m. - Doors Open: Social hour Meet and Greet

4:00 p.m. - Membership Business meeting called to order by

the MTSFW President

5:00 p.m. - Soup, Salad, and dessert supper.

(Donations of soups, salad items, and/or dessert items are appreciated.) There is no charge to attend the meeting or the supper. There will be a donation bucket for those who would like to donate, and there will be raffle tickets available for the MTSFW Three Gun Raffle.

(The Three Gun Raffle drawing will take place at the MTSFW Pig Roast on Saturday, April 22, 2023, at the Sanders County Fairgrounds, in Plains, MT.) Membership renewals and new memberships will be available at the door.

We encourage all members to attend and join the MTSFW Board of Directors at the General Membership Meeting. See you there!

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

Activities*****

Active with FWP shaping regulations that shape our trapping.

Trapper Education

Booths at Family Forestry Expo

School Shows

Northwest Montana Expo

Newsletters

Local County Fairs

Fur Handling Clinics

Public events



Montana Fur Harvesters represents Trapper, Houndsmen and Predator Hunters



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

Memberships run from January 1 to December 31

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

Please Print Clearly

Date ____/____/____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please check one ☐ New Member ☐ Renewal ☐ Pro-rate for 2020 balance.

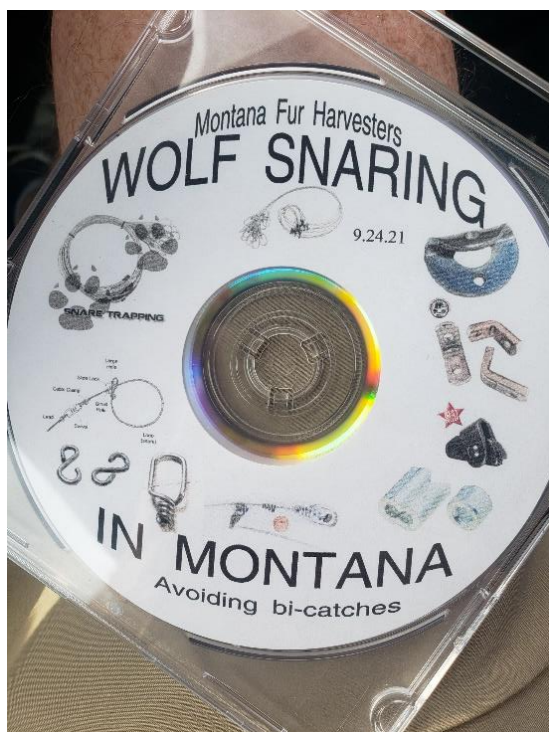
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This very popular video is a must see for anyone thinking of snaring in Montana. I have sent them out to Alaska, Idaho and Montana. If you can't make one of your local classes, at least take time to view this before you start buying or making snares. It could save you money from buying wrong supplies or worse making a bad set. **To purchase a video:** Pick one up at a local class for \$20 and save \$5 postage. Send a **check** for \$25 in the mail to, Tom Fieber, 507 Bayview Dr, Polson Mt 59860. For **Credit Card** sales at \$25. Send me your contact info then call me at 406-250-3386 Our Wolf Snaring Education Video on Avoiding By-catches has been shown to over 400 prospective wolf snaring trappers. The video has been sold in multiple states as well. Evening classes were held in a dozen local communities and in online FWP Wolf Certification Classes. The video is available to all. **Tom Fieber** 🐾

Thanks to The Meuli's of Columbia Falls.

They are always willing to share their facility for our events. Shawn and Amber are great sportsmen!

Charter Members

\$100 or more !

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.

Idaho Trappers Association, This Association is a real asset to the entire US Trapper Community. Thanks to Rusty Kramer for all he does.

Ed Schweitzer. Ed attended our booth at the Kalispell Gun Show and signed up as a charter member. This is deeply appreciated.

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.

Biologist, **Tyler Parks** in Region Two is also very good to work with. Tyler runs the region 2 spring trapper meetings and is a member of the trapping education committee.

Dillon Tabish from Region 1 is always doing what he can to get things organized and get out press releases.

Nathan Kluge is our new Furbearer biologist for FWP in Helena. Nathan has been active at the Trapper Education Class and has been really good to work with and knowledgeable as a trapper.

These are just a few of the many local personnel that I work with and appreciate.

Thanks to each and every one of them!

Permission to Trappers. We have the opportunity to obtain permission to trap on private land in Montana. This is a very valuable tool in the wolf trapping toolbox. Restrictions on private lands are nowhere near as strict as on public lands. Trying to pull wolves 150' from a public road can be very difficult. Even though we trap both public and private lands, our success rates drop dramatically on public.

Over the years we try to foster a very positive relationship with landowners. Approach landowners in a considerate manner and thank them for taking the time to talk to you even if they don't grant permission. If they do grant permission, ask them what species you can target and where and how they prefer you travel. Show the utmost respect for land and ecosystem. Permissions have been lost because someone didn't leave a gate as found, driving across fields leaving ruts, littering, or leaving traps after the season. Make sure that snaring is ok before you set them, some owners are against them.

We always try to keep them up to date on how we are doing. Many of the landowners are very supportive of what we do. Some make sure that they plow parking spots for vehicles, watch for wolf sign, invite us in for a cup of

coffee and keep us informed. Many times, they will refer us to another landowner who wants trapping on their land. Many times, they have convinced a owner who declined permission to later ask us to come in.

Never be rude to a landowner, always be respectful and your chances to harvest a wolf will increase as well as make a new friend.

Tom Fieber 🐾

Paul Antczak is offering a good deal on getting furs to Moyle Mink for tanning. I had to pay \$154 for shipping this summer, this sure beats that. If we all contribute even \$20 that will be good for all of us. Please contact Paul as soon as you can for planning

I hope everyone's trapping season is going as planned and everyone is staying safe out there!

If you have done any shipping lately you know shipping is hard on the wallet.

I want everyone to know I'm headed to the Idaho fur auction January 20th and Moyle mink will be there picking up fur to be tanned.

If you are planning on tanning fur this year this will be a great opportunity to save some money!

I'm offering to deliver your fur into the hands of the receiver at Moyle! You need to have your tanning slip filled out and the Lacey act page signed. I have those if you need them.

All I ask is to donate what you can for gas. I'm going anyway but any little bit will help!

January is a great time to ship. You'll be well ahead of the spring rush of fur from the eastern trappers. And I usually get my fur back by March when I ship in January. I'll have a pickup in Kalispell January 14th or you can bring them to my place in Marion by January 19th.

This is a great way to get your elk hide, bear, or lion hide to get tanned and save on shipping!
Call or text me at 406-890-9098
Paul Antczak

Good luck on your lines and stay safe.

Trapping Season ?

Attending seminars, clinics, trapping demonstrations and picking up tips and new tactics helps to shorten the lines, learning new pack habits as well as avoiding other users are important. Of utmost importance is leaning the regulations and laws. There is probably no other species that is so tightly controlled than wolves. Even reading the printed regulations is no longer enough. Changes are now modified up to opening of the season. Then comes setting traps, baiting, logging locations and checking the lines. It is more than just trapping season, it can go on all year!

Things to Avoid on the Traplines. We as

Montana Trappers have a big responsibility. Before we ever set a trap, there are regulations to be learned. Equipment to buy, vehicles to reach our lines, supplies to have on hand, licenses and tags, classes to attend and many more. We have to learn habits and habitat for our targeted species. Permissions to acquire for private lands and special permits for



some public lands. We need to know all the animals, their tracks, scat and preferred foods. In addition to that we need to learn how to avoid non-targeted wildlife. Every precaution should be taken to avoid incidental catches. Size and types of traps and snares need to be taken into account. Anchoring must be strong enough to hold the largest catch possible. If an animal is in a trap, you don't want it to



leave with the trap. Drags should be used with care and checked regularly; a heavy snow can erase drag marks. Setting traps or snares on game trails should be avoided entirely. The reason there is a game trail is there is because game animals use it. There are many ways to avoid incidental catches so attending trapping seminars, classes or going with mentors is advised. You can also search online for methods on YouTube. Be advised, make sure these address Montana needs.



Some animals are protected, capture can shut down trapping for others. Such as the Lynx and Wolverine, they are listed as endangered and no quotas are provided. The Fisher is protected in Montana except for Region 2 where they currently have a quota of five or one female. Some animals have strict quotas and can close at any time. Predator control is important to trappers and to some, the main reason we trap. As wolf trappers our hope is to reduce wolf numbers so ungulates can recover to objective goals. The last thing we want to happen is to catch them in traps. Not only does it take time and risk to us, but it also takes the trap out of service.

Extra caution needs to be taken to avoid catching domestic dogs. Always avoid setting traps close to possible dog locations. Even if a landowner requests it, politely let them know it would not be advisable. You will have enough trouble with dogs even miles away. Not all dog owners are responsible and let their dogs run wild. Anytime you do catch a dog you will need to report it. Filling out the forms and showing the wardens the trap and site is valuable time you lose. Any dog caught in a trap will generate negative press.



Don't set traps close to bait piles, regulations state that, traps cannot be closer than 30' from any bait over a pound that is visible from the air. This is meant to avoid catching birds. Not only that but if you catch something close to your bait, chances are it will deter future catches. Setting up on trails leading to bait sites, out of view can lead to multiple catches.



Using larger traps for wolves make it more likely that you may catch larger animals. Nothing ruins a day quicker than walking up to a set with a lion, bear, moose or elk in a trap. Safety to you or others is needed. Sometimes a call to a game warden is required. Most all capture can be released without injury to all, but it sure takes a lot of time and resources. **Tom Fieber** 🐾



It is not the concern of catching the large animal as is catching a cub or a calf then dealing with an enraged mother.





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Educational events:

We have hosted 21 school programs so far this season. 450 students, from kindergarten to fourth grade students all got to see and touch the furs. We were also requested to do one for a group of homeschool families. Six adults and 15 students were very attentive and thankful for the show. Our show includes all of Montana's native predators and furbearers and some prey species that feed the predators.

Students learn how important it is that each animal has a place in our landscape. From the tiny mice to the grizzly bear, they all need to be managed and need to be preserved. All species need to be in balance, not just for one. **Brad James** does an outstanding job as an instructor and the kids really get involved. Parents talked Brad into taking some of the students out on his trapline. I plan on resuming more shows after wolf trapping season ends in March.

Let us know if someone would like to schedule a show for a group or school.

Recommendation for Governor's Award

The Fish, Wildlife and Parks Trappers Education Committee represents some of the finest examples of the agencies core values. In addition, it demonstrates efficiency in its progression from scratch to a finished statewide program in under 6 months. The committee continues to provide statewide training on weekends showing the dedication of the members beyond the normal scope of committee work.

The 67th Montana State Legislature passed Senate Bill 60 in 2021. In December 2021 the committee was formed and first met in January of 2022. The committee comprised of 3 trappers at large (Bob Sheppard, John Nolan and Tom Fieber) 3 department employees (Keven Heinle, Tyler Parks and Jon Obst) and an administrator (Wayde Cooperider) who oversaw the committee. The committee members met for the first time and put together the entirely new FWP Trappers Education Program.

The meetings were open to the public and attended by representatives of the Salish Kootenai Confederated Tribes, The Wolves of the Rockies and Foot Loose Montana as well as members from the public. These organizations saw the work being done by the committee as respectful and informative for trappers. Though they might not agree with trapping, they were impressed with the committee as a professional and knowledgably representation of the agencies goals and Embracing the Public Trust.

The committee put together the new Trapper Education Program Honoring the Tradition and Heritage of trapping in Montana by looking back on the importance of trapping in Montana's past and the opportunity for future generations to participate in trapping. The course is structured on the biological need for trapping as a management tool relying on use of the science in the regulations, seasons and methods trappers are taught.



The committee brought to this new program Proven Leadership in developing with expertise and direction complimenting Fish Wildlife and Parks Agencies directive from the States Legislature. It put together the Trapper Education Program showing the value and quality of life that trapping provides Montana and its future trappers. Within the program and field day developed, it strongly demonstrates the need for Stewardship in managing for a healthy and stable wildlife population.

The class developed stresses the need for understanding the role of Landowners in trapping now and in the future. Working with and for landowners is an integral part of trapping as there is an increasing pressure to close areas to trappers and sportsman.

All this work was done by the volunteer committee members and department personnel from across a wide spectrum of backgrounds. Without the Value of the Workforce shown by the committee, the very complex work done in a short amount of time exemplifies the professionalism, objectivity, and accountability of each member.

The Trappers Education Committee is an outstanding example of what this agency represents in its core values and an example to the sportsman and the state of Montana in how Fish, Wildlife and Parks is committed to serving the public and the resources we manage.

After the reviewing the recommendation, The presentation was done on October 17th in Helena. Governor Greg Gianforte presented the awards to the FWP employee's Wayde, Keven and me. Tyler wasn't able to make it. The Award is designated for State employee's. This doesn't detract from the dedication that the trappers at large, Tom, John and Bob put into the program. In fact, it is because of the trappers, the program was as successful as it is.

Jon Obst, FWP

As I, **Tom Fieber**, look back on this endeavor as a member of the trapper community, it was finally accomplished. Trapper organizations started offering classes back several decades on our own. We had requested mandatory state requirements and did at one time get it approved through the FWP Commission and finally the legislature passed it into law back in 2020.

Kevin Heinle, Bob Shepard and myself, worked together for years putting together past programs. This with the addition of trapper, John Nolan created a strong core group. Now that the state required certification, FWP was there to guide our way. Fortunately, we were to work with FWP employee's, Wayde Cooperider as facilitator, Jon Obst, Game Warden Sargent, and Tyler Parks, biologist. Jim Williams, Region One Director briefly worked with us.

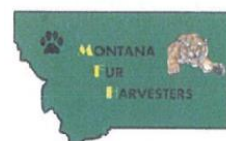
Wayde did a great job of keeping us focused and on task. Jim Williams provided some good PR with the public. Jon's advice on laws and regulations was invaluable. Tyler's knowledge of trapping and animal behavior gave credibility to the project. Keven's background with past workshops and as an FWP employee provided a well-rounded group.

We had a short time to make it all happen, first meeting was in March of 2022 by the end of May we were ready to start offering online classes. By the end of November we had put on classes in Missoula, Kalispell, Great Falls, Billings, and Bozeman. At each one we recruited additional instructors that will be offering future classes on their own.

I can't say enough about the comradery and professionalism working with this group. As always, working with FWP employees has always been very beneficial.

Tom Fieber,

President, Montana Fur Harvesters



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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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