

MONTANA FUR HARVESTERS

JANUARY 2024
WINTER issue

**PINE MARTINS OF
WESTERN MONTANA**



**WORKING WITH LANDOWNERS
SUCCESS ON THE WOLF LINE!!**

President's Message

Educational Events

Meet our members!

Contents:

Page 2

Presidents Message	Tom Fieber	Page 3
Calander of Events	Tom Fieber	Page 4
Grizzly Bear News		Page 5
Support local Banquets	Larry Rattray	Page 6
Success on the Trapline	Dave Windauer	Page 7
Pine Martin in Montana	Tom Fieber	Page 8
Secret Tip on calling Wolves	Mort Hill	Page 10
Interview, Kimberly Meuli	Kim Davies	Page 11
News from Idaho	Rusty Kramer	Page 12
Membership form		Page 14
Tribute to others	Charter Members	Page 15
Wolf Prairie Ranch	Wolfprairieranch.com	Page 16
Working with WPR	Paul Antczak	Page 19

Advertisers:

Idaho Trappers Association
Montana Power Products

Page 12

Page 20

Montana Fur Harvesters

2024 Winter Magazine

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Cover Photo, A Martin
from Montana. Commonly known
as Pine Martin

Carrie Franklin captures
some wonderful wildlife shots.



Mort Hill, Columbia Falls, took this nice wolf with his rifle recently. He was able to get the pack of ten wolves howling and it took a half hour before it showed up. See page 10 to learn the best method on calling wolves. It is a skill set that has taken years to perfect.



Photo by A Moments Reflection by Carrie Franklin

Notes from the president.

December 2023 News.

Here I am, middle of December and no wolf traps in the ground. It is kind of relaxing not having to pack around all the heavy traps and tools and dealing with the deep snow. But just to keep in shape, I have been setting bobcat sets, something I haven't done for a couple of years. Wolf trapping kept me so busy I didn't have time to target cats. What extra time I have, it seems that we are busier than ever, attending meetings defending trapping. Won't be long before banquets and trade shows start up. From the end of January through May we will be hosting events or attending them. Then Trapper Education Classes will be on the agenda. Our Flathead Instructors are an awesome group, their dedication and offers to volunteer are unmatched and great to work with.

We have a new **Education** leader for the state. I would like to introduce Francis Reishus into the trapper education program as Wayde's replacement. Francis has been an educator out of Montana City and is an avid TRAPPER, hunter, and outdoorsman. I am excited to have him on and look forward to seeing how he can facilitate growth in the outdoor education programs including trapper ed. I want to thank Wayde for his years in that position. He worked hard to help us get Trapper Education up and running. Wishing you the best in the future Wayde. The Trapper Education Committee will be meeting in Helena on January 10th to meet with Francis and Nate Kluge to finalize a few things that have come up. If any of you have any comments on Trapper Ed, that you would like addressed, let me know. One of the things we will be looking at is the Advanced Skills Programs that FWP has set up. See more on this later.

FWP is working on rewriting the original 2003 **Montana Wolf Management Plan**. The 2023 Plan is now out in the draft form and public meetings were held in each of the regional areas. The good news is not a lot changed but a few points were controversial. Of course, both sides wanted more. This is something that we were told is not under control of FWP or the Commission. This seems odd but was confirmed by an answer to a direct question. My main concern is that the USFWS original goal was that Montana have at least 150 wolves and 15 breeding pairs, somehow those numbers are being moved to 450 wolves and 15 breeding pairs. Moving these goals to appease solves nothing. Even though it would be great to reduce the population to that number would be great, I

doubt that we will ever achieve those with the current harvest methods we are using.

Attending these public meetings can really open your eyes as to what we are working with. Most of the antis that come to these meetings are good people who care deeply about their feelings. It is likely that very few actually are out on the landscape very often and experience what happens there. Emotions are their main topics, facts are mostly misconstrued or misquoted. Their lack of concern for a balanced wildlife balance is not taken into account. Their only wish is to protect and build up the wolf population with no concern for the ungulates. Sportsmen are working to protect all animals in Montana not just one.

Wolf management on **private lands in Montana** is vitally important. We as sportsmen need to do everything we can to foster good relations with landowners. I try to keep owners up to date on what and how we are doing and make sure of what we are allowed to trap or snare. In the areas where I trap wolves, we have a lot of public land. Unfortunately, most of it has steep mountains and narrow creek bottoms. Following the 150' setbacks eliminate setting traps along roads. Wolves in our areas travel roads mostly and enticing them that distance is very difficult. After trapping for 12 years, I have pretty much given up on public land. Of the near forty wolves harvested, only one was on public land. The advantage is that we can set traps where wolves travel on private land.

Speaking of private lands, unfortunately the Flathead Ridge Ranch in Northwest Montana has eliminated wolf trapping. That takes out around 150,000 acres of land. There was always a large population of wolves in that area, so we are concerned about the ungulates there. On the brighter side, the Southern Pines Plantation lands, (SPP Montana LLC) about 110,000 acres, have agreed to allow wolf trapping on most of their lands. Any trapper can apply for sections of land and have exclusive rights for wolf trapping. It is similar to Montana State and FWP controlled land. As in all cases, the utmost respect to the landowner will keep this program working. Thanks to SPP Montana and Wolf Prairie Ranch for compiling factual information from local trappers including Paul Antczak, from MT FWP Warden Jon Obst, and other concerned outdoorsmen, in creating a wolf trapping program designed to balance wildlife between predators and prey. You can read more on this in this issue, on page 16.

I am seeing some interesting things working with landowners. I have been lucky getting to work in areas

where landowners have passed our efforts on to other neighbors. They have contacted us to trap on their lands. Several prime lands have had to be turned down for various reasons. The first thing we look for is close proximity to other homes. Trying to avoid neighbors' pets is important. It is sad that we have to deny someone who just lost their dog to wolves or had horses run through barbwire fences. The other thing we lose on is too many deer or elk on the properties. Deer and elk tend to enter private land to avoid wolf attacks. Ironical as it is, it's hard to keep deer and elk out of traps. So, we are careful not to set in some locations.

Grizzly bear recovery in Montana has reached a level that needs addressing. We are seeing what people are doing to twist reality around facts to restrict outdoor uses. Taking lawsuits to sympathetic Judges to get rulings in favor of their views, despite science will cost dearly. See more on this on page 5.

Calendar of Events

See the **calendar of events** that we will be facing soon. If you ever start getting bored, I am sure you will find something that you could take part in.

On **January 1st wolf trapping season** will be opened in regions 1-2-3. Due to a Judges ruling, season was delayed until that date to protect grizzly bears. Since wolf trapping was legalized in 2011, only one bear was caught in a wolf trap which was released.

January 13, Montana Trappers Association Fur Handling Clinic. Deer Lodge 9am to 3pm

January 20th is the Rockin WK banquet at the Flathead County Expo Building. Doors open at 3pm, dinner at 5pm.



January 27th is the Foundation 4 Wildlife Management at the same location. Doors open at 3pm, dinner at 5pm.

Both of these events raise funds to reimburse hunters and trappers for expenses to harvest wolves. Some of our members are working hard with both organizations to put on these events. We are always looking for volunteers to collect donations and work at booths during the events.

February 16-17, Montana Trappers Association Western States Fur Auction. Livingston Mt

February 23rd-25th Montana Sportsmen's Expo Flathead Fair Grounds Trade Center.

March 23rd The Foundation for Wildlife Management is excited to invite you to our 1st Annual Bitterroot Chapter Fundraising Banquet Saturday, March 23rd, 2024 at the Ravalli County Fairgrounds (100 Old Corvallis Rd, Hamilton, MT).

Doors open at 3pm, Dinner at 5PM, Auctions, Games, Raffles, Libations and FUN for everyone!

April 12th-14th The Kalispell Gun Show at the Majestic Arena

April 13th

5th Montana



Trappers

Association Annual Banquet in Livingston

April 20th MTSFW Pig Roast Fundraiser, Missoula County Fairgrounds, Commercial Building

May 4th Sanders County F4WM Chapter Banquet, Trout Creek, MT. Doors open at 3pm, dinner 5pm

May 18th Libby Chapter F4WM Banquet Memorial Events Center, Doors open at 3pm- dinner at 5pm

Watch your emails for up-and-coming events that I will be sending out. We will be putting on Trapper Certification Classes, Fur handling clinics and Advanced Skills programs this spring and summer that need to be scheduled.

Grizzly Bear Populations and Mortality.



Based on the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Annual Report-2022

Table 4. Projected annual population size of grizzly bears in the NCDE for the management period 2019–2023 assuming previously observed vital rates (Costello et al. 2016). Year Estimate 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023
Population size 1,068 1,092 1,114 1,138 1,163

Fifty-one known or probable grizzly bear mortalities were documented in or near the NCDE during 2022 (Fig. 2; Table 2). Thirty-nine occurred within the DMA: 17 inside the PCA and 22 within Zone 1. Nine mortalities occurred outside the DMA in Zone 3. Three mortalities occurred outside the NCDE zones recognized in the Conservation Strategy: 1 in the Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zone and 2 in Alberta, Canada. These were recorded because the bears had previously been captured in the NCDE.

Zone 1. Among 38 mortalities of independent bears, causes of death were: agency removal due to human-bear conflict (20); automobile collision (7); train collision (2); management removal due to injury (2); legal harvest in Canada (2); defense of life (1); illegal defense of property (1); accidental poisoning (1); and unknown or under investigation (2).

Zone 3. Thirteen dependent bear mortalities included individuals that died, individuals that were orphaned and then captured and moved to zoos, or cubs that were orphaned and assumed dead (if fate is unknown, cubs were assumed dead).

Causes of death were agency removal due to conflict (4); agency removal due to disease (3); automobile collision (2); train collision (1); orphaning (1); and natural (2). All 3 dependent aged bears removed for disease tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), representing the first known cases of this disease in grizzly bears (FWP, press release, 2022).

As seen in the above statistics, the leading cause of death was from agency dealing with conflict bears. These are the ones that have moved into human-populated areas due to overcrowded conditions within their undeveloped occupied habitat. Now as those areas have filled, bears are forced to expand into human occupied areas. You will also note that the population since 2019 has continued to grow each year in spite of increasing mortality.

“The Montana Sportsmen For Fish & Wildlife, has been working with like-minded organizations to get grizzly bears removed from the Endangered Species List (ESL). As I’m sure you have noticed, there seems to be grizzly bear-human encounters on a regular basis, in 2023. I started tracking these incidents after Amie Adamson was killed by a grizzly, on July 22, 2023, while she was hiking, or trail running, outside of West Yellowstone, Montana. I knew there had been other incidents earlier in 2023, but Amie’s death inspired me to start tracking grizzly bear-human encounters and the results of those encounters. Here are the numbers I have found since July 8, 2023, in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Alberta and British Columbia, Canada. (There may be more I haven’t yet learned about.)

I found Nineteen incidents, resulting in: Three human deaths; four non-fatal human mauling’s; fifteen grizzly bear deaths; and six grizzly bears at large, or no management action will be taken. These numbers do not include grizzly bears killed by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad, near Glacier National Park. The numbers do include the 20-year-old, 582lb, male grizzly, killed by a vehicle on Highway 200, just outside of Bonner, MT.”

As in any overpopulated wildlife situation, overcrowding leads to more and more problems, from disease, lack of food and aggression. This situation will lead to more and more conflicts in the future.

Tom Fieber 🐾



Support our local Chapters by Larry Rattray

Welcome to 2024. One of the first things that happens in the New Year is a lot of organizations start raising funds to accomplish their goals for the year. One of the more popular methods is to host a banquet. While they are almost all worthy organizations, two are more in line with our lifestyles if you want to reduce the overpopulation of wolves. Both of these organizations are helping to keep people in the woods that can harvest wolves. Donations from local businesses and people who are concerned about the reduction of our Elk, Deer and Moose provide the prizes that make the evening entertaining. These are non-profit organizations and rely on volunteers to provide the manpower to make the events a success. If you can provide some help, it would be most appreciated. If you can't help put it on, please try to attend because that is where the majority of the funds come from.

On January 20th Rockin WK will host their Banquet at the Kalispell Fair Grounds. Rockin WK buys wolf skulls from its members for \$500. You must be a member before the wolf season begins for them to buy your skulls, but you can attend the Banquet and help support the people who are out there putting in the labor. The first thing to know about Banquets is that they serve some of the finest meals you will ever have. Then there will be Games, Live and Silent Auction and a Raffle and ? ? ?. I guess you will have to attend to find out about the rest of the evening's events.

The other organization that is helping to reduce wolves to give our ungulates a chance is Foundation for Wildlife Management (F4WM). The F4WM organization was created in Idaho in 2011 and they pay reimbursement to members who legally harvest a wolf. In 2021, the Montana Legislature passed legislation that allowed this and the Flathead valley and Sanders County formed chapters of F4WM and were able to generate enough funds to reimburse for 54% of last year's wolves. This year there is a chapter forming in Lincoln County and another in the Bitterroot. This year, Montana will pay a reimbursement of \$750 for each wolf to members across the state and \$1000 for each wolf in Regions 1 and 2 where they are causing the most damage.

The Kalispell Chapter of F4WM will host their Banquet at the Kalispell Fair Grounds on January 27th. The doors open to the public at 3 for Games and a chance to view the General Raffle Items and decide where to put your raffle tickets. There is a Silent Auction with some choice Prizes to win with the right bid or if you don't want to take a chance of losing out, you can Buy It Now and also be entered into a drawing for a firearm against anyone else

who chooses to Buy It Now. There is a section with games specifically for the kids. While you are waiting for the Prime Rib dinner at 5, there are a number of Games to play with each having a great gun for the lucky winner. The evening is capped off by a Live Auction with an Entertaining Auctioneer on some spectacular prizes.

If you are interested in becoming involved in the F4WM organization, Contact the Chairmen of the Chapter closest to you. It takes a lot of effort to put a banquet on, but more help makes it far easier. We don't want to burn out the crew by overworking them. Plus, it is a great chance to meet new friends and do something positive for our ungulates.

Flathead Valley Chapter January 27th Banquet

Co-Chair Russell Swindall 406-253-1108
russellswindall@icloud.com

Co-Chair Scott Smith 406-249-9951
smithnwha@yahoo.com

Sanders County Chapter May 4th Banquet
Co-Chair Glenn Schenavar 406-531-3655
glennmontana@gmail.com
Co-Chair Nate Kane 406-334-7135
elkoholic234@gmail.com

Bitterroot Chapter March 23 Banquet
Co-Chair Jeff Rennaker 406-360-0304
jirennaker@yahoo.com
Co-Chair Chris Fillingham 406-531-8236
chrisfillinghamfs@gmail.com
Chapter Secretary Kathy Richardson 406-369-1417
rcattleco2014@gmail.com

Lincoln County Chapter May 18th Banquet
Co-Chair Levi Carlberg 406-334-1787
lcarlberg73@gmail.com
Co-Chair James Call 406-293-1033
xo6915@gmail.com

Thanks for your support, hope to see you there!



Success on the Wolf Line!!

By Dave Windauer

Well, you all know our Wolf season got shortened this year unfortunately. I guess that motivated me to get more prepared for when the season opened. Thanks to the help of my three kids, we had traps and gear hauled in and ready to go. We had wolves coming through previously so we marked spots that would make good sets. Everything was there and ready to set on opening day.

My daughter

Josie was still on school break, so she was able to go along for the first check. We parked, grabbed our gear and loaded it in the sled. We had a quarter of a mile to walk through the snow along a big flat bench of open timber to a steep drop looking down to another bench below where we had our sets. She was ahead of me on the trail and was first to peak over. She turned back to me with a big, excited smile on her face and said, "You got one." I caught up to her for a high-five. As we were looking at the black wolf below us, she saw something move behind it and said, "you got another one." another high-five, and we started to head down to them. We got to a spot about halfway down the steep hill where I could see another wolf caught in a set further away. "We got another one" I said. Another high-five. After dispatching the three we checked the rest of the sets further away and found that we had one more high-five, the fourth one was caught.

I thought I would wake up from a dream, but it didn't happen. We made one trip out with the pull sled and since we had a snowcat there with us, we took it in for the second trip. We got everything out, opened a pack of jerky and headed for home. It was late that night when we finally got the last one skinned. 🐺



Larry Rattray with a 2024 Wolf

As members of the reimbursement orgs, F4WM and RockinWK, expenses were covered. Be sure to get your membership.



Our American and Pacific Martin, Native to Montana



Here in Montana, we are lucky to have a good population of what most of call Pine Martin. Montana is home to two marten species: Pacific (*Martes caurina*) and American (*Martes americana*). Both look the same but are genetically different and, reports suggest, have slightly different coloration. FWP chose to capture Pacific martens in the southwestern part of the state after considering which of the two species originally occupied the Little Belts. Martens are plentiful in many western Montana forests. Each year trappers harvest roughly 1,000 of the furbearers and provide each harvest location to FWP.

This house cat-sized animal is distinctly weasel-like in appearance. Has short legs, prominent ears, pointed face, and a well-furred tail constituting one-third of its total length. Stiff glossy guard hairs with dense silky under-fur. The soft, dense, yellowish-brown fur shades to dark brown on its bushy tail and legs. Pale buff to orange patch on throat and breast. Has ability to rotate hind limbs to enable descending trees headfirst. Total length: 21 to 26 inches. Weight: 1.5 to 2.75 pounds (Foresman 2012).

Recent genetic data indicate that there are two species of Marten within Montana with a zone of hybridization that still needs to be mapped to inform conservation status designations and management efforts; Pacific Marten (*Martes caurina*) has more of a southern distribution and American Marten (*Martes americana*) has more of a northern distribution in western Montana (Dawson and Cook 2012, Dawson et al. 2017).

Primarily a boreal animal preferring mature conifer or mixed wood forests. Severe forest disturbance can significantly reduce habitat value. Uses deadfall and snags as den sites. In Glacier National Park, most often located in mesic spruce and subalpine fir types. Stands averaged 35% canopy cover. Martens often traveled along forest cover/open area ecotones. Maternity dens in rock outcrops, tree cavities (O'Neill 1980, Burnett 1981).

Eats a variety of animal and plant materials associated with the mature forest. Is an opportunistic feeder that primarily feeds on a variety of small mammals. Meadow Voles and Red-backed Voles were staples in Glacier National Park. Also used Cricetidae, jumping mice, shrews, and ground squirrels. Use of birds, insects, and fruit variable by season. Will use snowshoe hares (O'Neill 1980).

Mates during summer with young born during April. Exhibits delayed implantation and an eight- to nine-month gestation. Average litter size is two to four.

Breeds in July and August. Implantation occurred February 22 and April 10. Parturition 25 to 28 days after implantation. Delayed implantation period of 8 months. Gestation of 9 months.

Prior to 1953, two extant species of Marten were recognized within North America, the American Marten (*M. americana*) and Pacific Marten (*M. caurina*). However, Wright (1953) analyzed morphometric differences between these species and concluded that these should be considered subspecies of *M. americana*, and a single species of marten was recognized until 2014. In 2014 the "Revised Checklist of North American Mammals North of Mexico, 2014" (Bradley et al. 2014) elevated the status of the Pacific Marten from subspecies of American Marten to species based on recent research on marten genetics (Dawson and Cook 2012). Within Montana hybridization between Pacific and American Martens has been documented (Wright 1953, Dawson and Cook 2012, Dawson et al. 2017), although the geographic region where hybridization occurs, or its impacts on fitness and other population parameters are currently unknown.

Currently only Region 1 has a quota for trapping pine martin. The rest of the state, with the exception of two areas in eastern Montana where relocation efforts are underway, have no quotas. A continuing decline in the number of martin harvests in Region 1 prompted a request from trappers for 10 martin per trapper for a few years. That will be reevaluated in the future.

Trapping martin can be fairly easy if you have access to the right areas. Over the years most of the martin I encountered were at higher elevations during the archery season. During the winter trapping season when the pelts are at their prime, deep snow restricts access. Most winters here in Western Montana require a snowmobile or strong legs and snowshoes. Sets are usually made above the ground to avoid bi-catches and keep traps above the snow levels. Traps are smaller and lighter, footholds or conibears typically cover most situations. Some may use box cubbies, others expose their baits above the traps 4' above the ground. You can still find trap locations at high elevations that are ten to twelve feet above the ground. How did the trappers reach those? That is when the winter snow was six to eight feet deep, so they chopped a shelf into a large tree trunk standing on snowshoes. Some are even higher. Those guys were tough.

Pine martins are fascinating to watch. Many times, while elk hunting, pine martin were scurrying about. Like most in the weasel family they are always on the move. I had them sneak up on us and growl like a bear, enough to get your heart racing. I've seen them chasing hares a few times but never did see one actually catch one. Saw a

video of one going under the snow with the hare running away before the martin came up from under the snow where the hare had stood. After several attempts he finally gave up.

Martin is fairly easy to pelt out. Like all the weasel family, they have very little body fat so the hide will come off mostly clean. The pelt will dry quickly and be ready to market. Actually, the martin is in the same family as the Russian Sable and will be used in the sable fur market.

Even though I don't target martin on my wolf lines I will set a few traps along the way and pick up a few each year even in the lower elevations. I have heard of some trappers starting to take more martin in the North Fork of the Flathead River area. After the severe wildfires in the past, I hope that the population will continue to rebound there.

Tom Fieber 🐾



Photo by A Moments Reflection by Carrie Franklin

DRINK ENOUGH TEA SO YOU HAVE TO GO!!!

By Mort Hill



On the morning of December 13th, 2023 I was driving to one of my favorite whitetail spots during muzzleloader season, there was a skiff of fresh snow and I noticed the road was covered with wolf tracks. About then I noticed I had drunk enough tea, so I pulled off to the side of the road and got out to talk to

nature. Shortly after I got out a wolf howled below me, then another, and another, and wolves started howling completely around me. I quickly finished my business, grabbed my rifle and headed towards the wolf that was howling above me. I snuck within about 100 yards, I was just below the lip of a bench at the top of the clear cut. I hid behind a tree and started howling. The woods came to life with wolf howls. Every couple minutes or so we would start the chorus over again. I would try to mimic everything they howled at me and finally after a half hour or so I noticed the wolf above me started to move closer. And finally, I noticed movement at the top of the ridge. I got ready and as he walked between two trees I let one fly. He dropped in his tracks then got up and lunged towards



Mort's 2023 Wolf. Since Mort was a member of both organizations, he was able to get reimbursed for \$1500

that ended that. Once I got up to him I

looked around and there were three others with him making a total of 10 wolves in that pack now nine. He was a two year old male. Just a note to everyone reading this: carry a wolf tag in your pocket, be a member of F4WM, and The Rockin WK so you can get your reimbursement checks, and don't forget to be sure to drink enough tea so you have to go!!!

Following Regulations ?

I have taken enough calls from folks even within the FWP agency who have a hard time reading the very confusing and unclear trapping regs.

I put together some thoughts to help hunters understand what trappers are going through these days.

It's an attempt to help make a point on the over regulated rules placed on trapping through humor.

Have a laugh at least with it but it makes the point.

Had a hunting friend ask me why the trapping regs are so confusing. I thought awhile and responded with this analogy.

It would be like this to hunters:

Hunters hunting elk in or near grizzly bear habitat zones are required to;

Check the departments web page prior to going in the field to see if collared grizzly bears are in the area and the area is closed to hunting at that time. This will be updated as needed for opening areas back up.

Carry pepper spray at all times and have it carried in such a way as to deploy it in 10 seconds.

They must take and pass the department bear spray class prior to hunting in grizzly bear occupied zones.

All grizzly bear encounters must be reported within 24 hours.

Any action taken by the hunter towards a grizzly bear is considered a "Take" by USFW services standard.

These actions shall prompt a review of the hunting season dates and subject to closure by the commission.

Hunters with bear license must wear bells and or announce their presence to deter grizzly bear interactions.

No cover scent or masking scent is allowed to be used.

All firearms must be equipped with at least 2 safeties.

Camping while hunting is allowed but you must return home every 48 hours.

Hunters who hunt in areas that are deemed habitable by bighorn sheep are subject to the following additional regulations.

No natural camouflage patterns may be used while hunting.

All firearms must not exceed a 30-06.

No deer may be shot that are within 30 feet of another deer.

Scopes with more than 9x power are not to be used.

Camping while hunting is allowed but the hunter must return home every 48 hours.

While these are not true yet it shows the complexity of the trapping regulations that are set up by the department targeting trappers in the state of Montana. It will only be a matter of time that similar regulations are in place with the trend toward more restrictions not found in neighboring states. Trappers need a law degree to navigate the regulations these days. Hunters will soon follow in these

same footsteps. A satire, **By a Frustrated Sportsman** 🐾

Spotlight on MFH Volunteers

Meet Junior Member Kimberly Meuli!

Kimberly has literally been hunting and trapping since before she was born! As a newborn she was in Elk Camp and has grown up learning the trapper trade from her parents, grandparents, and family friend Richard Hawk. At 10 years old, she started learning how to skin and at 12 yrs old she got her wolf/trapping certification, hunting license and completed a bow hunter course. Now, at only 16 Kim Meuli is impressive in her own right!

One of her first memories of trapping was going out for beaver with her grandpa at only 5 years old. There were no hip waders that would fit her, so she wore extra-large muck boots and had to be carried across the river. Showing her tenacity at an early age, you can see in the picture she insisted on helping cart the beavers back and be a part of the entire process.

One of her most proud moments was setting her first trap set on a rock cubby with several cave entrances. She prepped the area with cut limbs and made decoys using craft store items of shiny fabric, glittery feathers, sequins, and google eyes. The attractants were made to cause a curious cat to investigate, but she caught a fox instead which didn't dim her feeling of achievement.

Kimberly is a wealth of knowledge and can give you tips on packing with horses, spotting/stalking, survival gear, scent masking, tree stands, bow hunting and more. Picking up a bow at only 4 years old she learned quickly and moved on to an adult bow after donating her other bow to another child. She practices at home, shooting hundreds of arrows, before hunting season. I have no doubt she can outshoot many adults as well as most boys in her school!

She wants other kids to know that "they can do it too!" Her passion is working with young children and seeing them learn about animals. She enjoys getting kids involved while working at the MFH booth and skinning clinic. She is an advocate for encouraging girls to learn the trades and wants to see women excel in the outdoors. Kimberly is a tester for a line of women specific camo clothing. She wears prototype items while out hunting and gives feedback to the designer for improvements. This will help women feel more confident when out in the elements.

Next year Kimberly will first graduate with a college certificate in Welding and then she will graduate High School. Kim is already a top welder in her class and will be a Teaching Assistant to a Metal class next year. After

graduation she plans to work on the family farm and she may consider part time work as a welder.

For this happy, vivacious teenager, trapping and hunting is not only a lot of fun and a way to make family memories but is a lifestyle that celebrates the outdoors and teaches valuable life skills. She has learned survival skills, confidence in the outdoors, how to pay attention to her surroundings, how to prepare well, the value of hard work staying calm in a dangerous situation, making ethical decisions, and how to provide her favorite food: elk meat. Her room is proudly filled with furs from her adventurous expeditions, as well as creative art projects using antlers, and example metal welds that show off her skill.

Kimberly is a part of a proud legacy of trappers and hunters. The entire Meuli family has been valuable assets to the Montana Fur Harvesters by donating their time and opening their shop to support clinics. Kimberly, we are excited to see what you will do next and we extend a warm "Thank You" for all the ways the entire Meuli family has supported Montana fur Harvesters!

By Kim Davies



Protecting, Preserving and Promoting Trapping

IDAHO TRAPPERS ASSOCIATION



Regular Membership	\$40.00
Family Membership	\$50.00
Junior Membership	\$15.00
(18 years and under)	

Life Membership Call (208)-870-3217

Learn More and
Become a Member at
idahotrappersassociation.com/join-us



Greetings ITA members,

December flew by so fast this year. I was feeling a little better every day and I was optimistic that I could set cat traps on opening day of Dec 14th. We started to make plans to see the kids and grandkids in California for Christmas, so I knew I better not get traps in the ground quite yet. After the holidays I was ready to roll and as I type this, I have two good lines out and extending them farther and farther each check.

I haven't been working on the advanced education program quite yet with everything going on but need to get going on it. We received a \$4,000 grant from Idaho Fish and Game and then NTF (formally FBU) matched that grant money. Angel has been working very hard with the 4H trapper program she is trying to get installed. We have plans for a couple advanced

trapper ed classes as well. We need volunteers for all of this. Educating our youth is key to sustaining trapping moving forward even if these young trappers don't end up continuing to trap.

The sustaining membership program is now in its 4th year. The new 2024 patches kept the same philosophy of using trapped animals for the patch and not just a picture pulled off the internet. This patch was VP Angel Lovan, first snared beaver. Sustaining membership program is a way to give a little extra back to the ITA. For \$25, you get a limited-edition patch and a listing in the Idaho Trapper magazine, but you do NOT get the magazine. This is not a regular membership. We do have some of the previous wolf, cross fox and bobcat patches left if you want to purchase them.

January fur sale is quickly approaching and will be finished by the time you read this. Fur sales are our biggest fundraisers so please consider bringing your pelts, skulls and antlers to the March 8-10 sale. Sale expenses are rising every year so please consider bringing a donation to the sale. Donations can be old traps, raw fur, tanned fur, handmade item or practically anything. I'm getting a lot of calls on new fur buyers coming to the sale and folks interested in the sale. As I always quote from our old director Bruce Bartow "get the fur there and the buyers will come". This is the biggest thing to having a successful sale. The secret though is to get a variety of everything. I know beaver is hot, hot, hot and I encourage folks to chase beaver if they have them in their area. Other items are being requested by fur buyers. Skunk, otter, red fox, gray fox, marten, fisher, squirrel, ringtail cat, lynx, wolves, and heavy coyotes are needed. Bobcats are down some but still a lot of interest. Two buyers are coming just to buy lower grade bobcats. All of the species I listed above you will add at least \$5 - \$15 if you leave the feet on. On pretty backed cats and wolves, leaving the feet on may add \$75 or more. We have 2 new fur buyers flying in and taking advantage of our new reduced price, 3-day nonresident fur buying license. We have two horn buyers coming as well. I just secured our band for the March sale and secured that IDFG will have a wolf trapper ed class. Remember we treat our sales like a mini convention so there are a lot of activities to make it a great event. Two days of trapping and fur handling demos, skinning contests, fish and game classes, trap supply vendors, live auction w/donated items, meetings and a live band. If you are interested in buying at our sale or sending fur please contact me at 208-870-3217.

Banquet season is quickly approaching so mark your calendars. This banquet is set for April 6th at Filer Fairgrounds in Filer, Idaho. My lovely wife, Missy is facilitating the banquet, and we need donations and gun sponsors. Please start looking for those and we need your support. I know I sound like a broken record but if we want to continue to be an aggressive association, we need your support at our fur sales and banquets. Please encourage your fellow sportsmen to

sign up as ITA members and consider signing up as a 2024 sustaining member.

The grizzly lawsuit is moving at a snail's pace, but the bills are defiantly mounting up. If you want to donate to the lawsuit the checks need made out to NTA and mailed to the Indiana office. Donations so far have been made from F4WM \$10,000, Idaho Houndsmen Assoc \$5,000, Idaho Cattlemen Assoc \$5,000, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation \$5,000, Intermountain Fur Harvesters \$3,000, Wyoming Trappers Assoc \$2,000, Washington Trappers Assoc \$2,000, Montana Trappers Assoc \$1,000, Idaho Whitetails Forever \$1,000, Montana Fur Harvesters \$500, Herman Betchart \$500, Iowa Trappers Assoc \$250, John Consolini \$250, Vincint Ranucci \$200. Much thanks for all of the support!

Sign a fellow trapper up for a membership or a sustaining membership. See you all at the fur sales!

Rusty Kramer

Idaho Trappers Association President

208-870-3217

MONTANA FUR HARVESTERS 2024 Raffle Rifle!

This year we thought we would buy two rifles, an AR-15 and a scoped hunting rifle and let the winner choose the one he wants. Both are on order and should be here before the Sportsmen Expo on February 23-24th.

Tom Fieber 🦌



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 3481, 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.

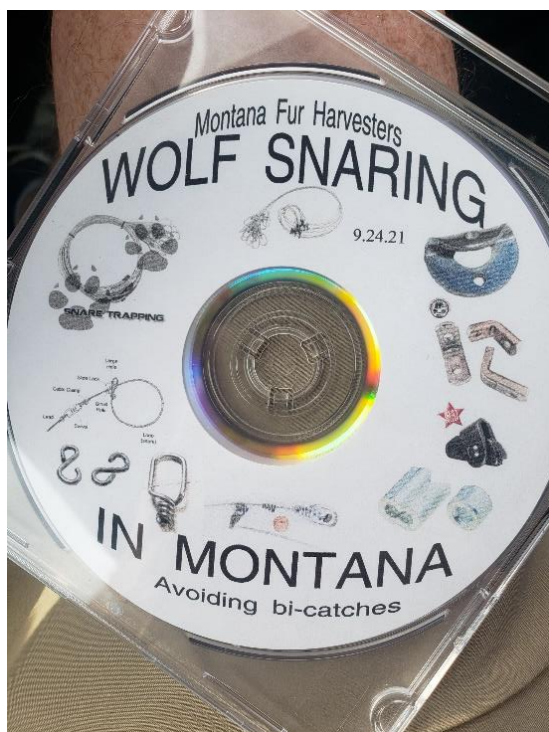
☐ Sustaining Membership \$20.00 annual dues ☐ Junior (under 18) \$10.00 annual dues ☐ Family Membership

\$30.00 annual dues ☐ Charter Member \$100.00 annual dues **Add a magazine to your membership at a**

discounted price ☐ Trapper Post Magazine \$14.00 ☐ The Trapper \$12.00 ☐ Trappers World \$18

Predator Extreme Free. Goto www.grandviewoutdoors.com/order/subscription/option.

Note: ☐ Check here to receive your Newsletter by Email ☐ Check here to have Newsletter mailed.



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, Amber, and Kimberly are great sportsmen! Look for one on March 23rd, more info later.

Charter Members

Donating \$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.

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

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.

Josh Jurek, Josh raised \$400 at the Palooza that he donated back to MFH. Josh is a dedicated trapper and a great artist. Josh is now MTA District 1 Director.

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.

Scott H Smith, Director from Whitefish has been supporting the Fur Harvesters in many ways, manning booths as well.

Kenneth Cordoza, our past President still goes out of his way to support his organization.

Rusty Kramer, Idaho Trappers Association President has been a strong supporter here in Montana.

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 biologist 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.

Ben Chappelow, game warden from the Flathead, has been filling in for Jon Obst in that capacity. Ben has been assisting with the Trapper Ed Classes and doing a great Job.

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

Thanks to each and every one of them!

WELCOME TO WOLF PRAIRIE RANCH

NESTLED AMID THE AWE-INSPIRING LANDSCAPES OF NORTHWEST MONTANA.



Unveiling the Last Frontier: Indeed a Montana Paradise

Explore our site to discover stories that shape our past and inspire our future. The imposing Salish and Purcell ranges form our backdrop, graced by the majestic Cabinets to the West. We're on a mission of ecological restoration and cultural reverence. Our goal: bring back diverse wildlife that calls this region home.

Preserving History, Embracing Progress

The heart of Wolf Prairie resides in its historic log barns, homesteads, and bunkhouses. We're dedicated to reconditioning these marvels and rekindling their spirit. Amidst stewardship of the land and resources, we've also recently added the legendary "Cow Camp" property to our ranch in preserving our history's precious gems.





Embrace the Spirit of Adventure

Wolf Prairie Ranch invites you to explore Montana's wilderness within our website. In every direction a trace of excitement from days gone by lingers and beckons, while the lure and promise of new forays beyond each bend and over every mountain draws one's spirit and vision ever onward. Add the excitement of experienced hunting dogs, riding horseback into the wild, and making continual discoveries of the vast flora, fauna, terrain and wildlife all contribute to never-ending awe and imagination.

OWNER

BENJAMIN GRIFFITH



Benjamin Griffith is a devoted dog man, timberland landowner, businessman, novelist, outdoorsman, and philanthropist from Macon, Georgia, and Montana. He founded Southern Pine Plantations in 1984 and has expanded his land and timber business to include various holdings throughout seven states. In 2019 he purchased tracts of land in Montana from Weyerhaeuser, formed SPP Montana, and now calls Montana home, while continuing to pursue his zest for living and his deep love of the land.



VICKIE LAMB

A lifelong outdoorswoman, Vickie Lamb combines her biology and animal husbandry background with a lifetime of respect for sporting dogs and working horses, hunting, ranch and management experience to implement Wolf Prairie's goals of restoration and growth. Additionally, she has cultivated innovative communication methods using features of Tone & Vibration for dog training. An accomplished journalist, author and photographer, Vickie has written several books and articles published in a variety of publications, is a member of Professional Outdoor Media Association.

A very sincere THANK YOU!!, to private landowners in our nation. By Tom Fieber

Fellow sportsmen and trappers, we have some good last-minute news to share. After years of working to protect

trapping and methods, I see a bright spot. Trappers working with landowners have proven that trapping wolves on private land can be very successful compared to public lands. Limited access and setbacks from roads severely limit success. The landowners control private land so that allows trappers and hunters to be more effective. This is a great opportunity for sportsmen and women to take part in and work with landowners.

Wolf Prairie Ranch and SPP Montana, working with Trappers and others, have developed a **plan** to open 110 thousand acres to trapping. Located in Northwest Montana, these lands will be open to public use with the following rules:

“Basic rules for SPP Montana Trapping new season:

- *Trapper must register with houndsandtrapping@sppland.com to include personal info/contact/ALS/vehicle/license plate, along with species+ to trap, and up to 10 section choices, (first come first serve) with Township, Range and Section. May reapply if Sections already taken
- *Two party trapping allowed for 20 sections
- *SPP Montana expects respect for land and wildlife, no littering, no carcasses, no violations or permission will be removed and trapper banned from SPP Montana property
- *Most areas will allow no setbacks; trapper responsible for posting signs to warn people not to turn dogs or house pets loose in area
- *Some areas will allow wolf snares after Jan 1
- *No large bait stations allowed
- *Snowmobiles allowed on roads, no off road; and no ORVs behind gates or off road on property
- *Full harvest reports of any species at season end
- *Example if a wolf trapper has sections reserved that another trapper wants to access for beaver, the wolf trapper will be contacted and if all agreeable the beaver trapper will also be assigned those sections for that purpose—this an example.
- *We want trappers to be successful, and solid working relationships between all.
- *To Add: This is a management tool. We want to know who is on SPP Montana land base, how to contact them, what species they are trapping, etc., in our efforts to restore balance to wildlife and the streams and lands therein.
- *Our goal is to bring back diverse wildlife that calls this region home.

As president of the Montana Fur Harvesters, I see this as a great step in a direction that can lead to an example of managing for all the wildlife, not just one specie. Working with landowners is such an important part of wildlife management in Montana. As users of the outdoors, hunters, trappers, hikers, skiers, dog walkers, wildlife viewers, etcetera all must respect the land and others as well as the owners. This has been worked on for about a year and has just been completed and open to start registering for trapping areas. Act soon and good luck. **Tom Fieber**

I was asked to write about the changes to trapping on SPP and how it came about. By Paul Antczak

It started in September 2022. I made my trek north to visit Mic who owned wolf prairie ranch. Mics ranch was the farthest north I could go to trap. Upon pulling into Mics ranch I started noticing a few changes from the previous year. New tractor and some construction happening. When I pulled up there was a lady standing in the driveway all dirty from a hard day's work. She asked me if I needed help. I said I was looking for Mic. She told me Mic sold the ranch. I was hoping to continue trapping WPR (wolf prairie ranch) so I explained my business with Mic. She grinned from ear to ear and said YES you can trap coyotes and wolves here! Her Name is Vickie, she is manager of Wolf Prairie Ranch, a hound hunter and big game hunter, so of course she doesn't like an unbalance of coyotes and wolves.

I returned on October 15th, 2022, to start setting WPR for coyotes. Vickie told me the coyotes are thick on the back side of the ranch. I went back there to find the back road littered with coyote droppings. I set a few locations on the ranch and headed back to the truck. I told Vickie how the coyotes are really running the back road and how I'm not able to set it because of some areas being SPP and not WPR. She said the owner of WPR is the owner of SPP. I proceeded to tell her because SPP adopted public land trapping rules I can't set the road. You could tell she was confused a little. I told her there's private land rules and public land rules and if I set that I can get a ticket.

Jump forward 3 months. I had a few extra wolf traps and I contacted Vickie and asked if I could trap WPR for wolves now. Seeing she's the Montana Liaison for SPP and Manager of WPR, she contacted the owner. She told me go-ahead, and the owner said go-ahead and trap anywhere I want on SPP. I said, Vickie I don't mean to be rude, but I don't need his permission to trap SPP. I said this to start more of a conversation. Of course, Vickie wanted to know more about what I was talking about, and I explained the wolf process of trapping on Montana SPP private land.

One thing I learned about the folks at SPP is they are hunters and outdoors people. They want to see trophy deer and elk on ALL SPP lands. I explained to her that the public land regs were set up for wolf trappers to fail. The big rule that needs to be changed for trappers I told her was the 150' setbacks! Then Vickie and SPP began researching how they could make predator control more balanced.

The summer of 2023 Vickie and I had more conversations about trapping on the SPP Montana lands. I mentioned to her about how wolf trappers have taken big hits and how we are so regulated on public land that it's really tough for trappers to harvest wolves. With setbacks, limited access, and no snaring on SPP trappers are really restricted. Also, with the shutdown of trapping on Flat Head Ridge Ranch wolves now have the upper hand. She asked me to put these things in written form, and she had several meetings and conversations with FWP Warden/Trapping Expert Jon Obst, and others gathering information to put a working plan in place to result in successful trapping balance. I listed changes that could help trappers all over Region One. I mentioned how this may offset the negative impact of what Flat Head Ridge Ranch was doing to our wildlife. One thing I learned is SPP considers all the angles before a decision is made. After many phone conversations I finally got the call. My first words to Vickie were, this is a win for trappers, and I hope other big timber companies follow their lead!

So, what are the changes? First and foremost, on most all SPP lands there are no setbacks. No more 150 ft off the road missing wolves. Snaring January 1st, each trapper can get up to 10 sections and that trapper is the only one on that section, Access! Trappers can now go around gates to run the roads to trap wolves off snow machine. There is one negative impact as of now, that's large bait stations. Although it was never legal to bait under public land rules SPP is enforcing it as of now. Thats due to them locating the piles of bones at old bait stations. I will be discussing this with Vickie to try and remedy the problem to help big bait trappers.

I have been told that I don't advocate for trapping, but I advocate for me. I just want trappers in region 1 to know I'm always looking to help trappers here in the NW corner. It took a year to help get these positive changes accomplished along with others that prefer not to be named publicly.

Tight chains Paul Antczak

Montana Fur Harvesters
PO Box 3481
Kalispell MT 59903

Our American and Pacific Martin Native to Montana



POLARIS
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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 and the Foundation For Wildlife Management. Thanks, from all of us.

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