

MONTANA FUR HARVESTERS

JANUARY 2025
WINTER issue

**SNOWSHOE
HARES and
SQUIRRELS
OF WESTERN
MONTANA**



**What do these mammals have
in common?**

**FUR HARVESTERS SPRING
RENDEZVOUS MAY 16-17**

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Montana Fur Harvesters

2025 Winter Magazine

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Cover Photo; The hare, red squirrel and flying squirrel make up a big part of furbearer's diet.

Below; Check out Justin Webbs wolf adventure on page 9.



Not what a Fly Fisherman wants to see in Montana.



Notes from the president.

My apologies for not getting this out sooner.

Not sure where to start, it has been crazy for the last few months. I, with my forgetful mind, took on more than I should have. In the midst of everything else, I added more cell cameras for our traplines. That alone was a major task trying to program and set up networks that actually worked. Then I decided to tackle a major building project for our business. Then FWP decided it was time to make all kinds of changes to wolf trapping regulations. There were many from them and the legislature as well. That meant more trips to Helena and lots of comments. Never sure how it all turns out, but we'll try to keep up.

Now I am busy scheduling Trapper/FWP Spring Meetings for Regions 1&2. Setting up our Spring Trapper Education Field Days and coming events for our organization. Speaking of our events, we have taken on a major one this spring. Check out page 6. See the Calendar of Events for details.

Our **Website**, the "*Montana Fur Harvesters.com*/" is now up and running. With my limited ability to do so it was quite an endeavor. Now people can join our membership, shop for furs, learn more about trapping, keep updated on events, request our furbearer show or download past MFH magazines. The site has been working well, I am hoping that you might have some suggestions on improving it. Here is a link to the [Website](https://montanafurharvesters.com/). <https://montanafurharvesters.com/> Stop in and look around. We are always looking for articles and photos for the site and future magazines. A hardy welcome to our new members that have signed up on the website.

Our Spring **Trapper Ed Field Day Classes** in Kalispell and Missoula went really well last year. We were a little short on instructors in Kalispell but found out that we could still produce a good class for the 55 students. We normally like to have 2 instructors for each of the three stations. Missoula's class was about the same size, and we had a couple of extra instructors that assisted for the first time. We are lucky that we have such a dedicated and experienced group here in Western Montana to offer these classes. We are always looking for new instructors so if interested contact me or FWP, love to have the help.

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. Now we are faced with the wolverine listing. Montana is still working on this.

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.

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 summer that need to be scheduled.

Upcoming events; We are working on getting into the Columbia Falls Community Market this summer. They are held each Thursday from 5pm to 8pm. We did attend the market in 2024 and had good results. Sold lots of raffle tickets and furs. People from around the world and out of state stopped by the booth. We agreed we need to return a couple more times this summer.

March 22nd Columbia Falls Fur Handling Clinic

April 26th Trapper Ed Field Day in Kalispell

May 3rd Trapper Ed Field Day in Missoula

May 10th Forestry Expo near Columbia Falls

May 16th and 17th Our Spring Rendezvous in Ronan

August???? NW Montana Fair & Rodeo in Kalispell

Wolf management on **private lands in Montana** is vitally important. We as sportsmen need to do everything, we can do to foster good relations with landowners. **Tom Fieber** 🦊





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Greetings from Idaho.

Hello from Snowy Idaho,

I am sitting in Boise airport typing this with chaos all around me. I am getting ready to fly out to Phoenix for BMP yearly conference representing NTA. It feels like it has been go, go, go lately, so I will type this up as short as possible.

Two weeks ago, I traveled to Tucson, Arizona for a Wolf Conflict Discussion Documentary. 7,000+ folks were interviewed for this project, and it was whittled down to 25. I was very reluctant to be involved in this process due to the hornets' nest situation that could be there with antis. I overcame that fear because I wanted some trapper representation on this panel. With my wife's encouragement, I hesitantly headed to Tucson. Even though some of the process was a little too "touchy-feely" for me, overall, I feel it went as good as could be expected. It was a diverse group: several biologists, several tribal members, several ranchers, several state wildlife

employees, some federal wildlife employees, a few animal rights folks, and one out-of-place trapper from southern Idaho. I won't spend this whole report on this subject but will tell you a couple of important things I learned.

One is people already have preconditioned judgments towards you, it is just something that we humans inherently have even if we don't want to admit it. But—you can change that narrative. I had several of the folks in this group tell me they were surprised how much I talked about my family and how nice, polite, and respectful I was. Just being polite and respectful at a booth or event can break that stereotype that we are all neanderthal, redneck, sadistic murderers. The second thing I realized is that the "other" side can be talked to and even if you can't agree on things, the conversation can be civil. No, don't worry, they didn't have me singing kumbaya and got me converted to being a vegan. But I did see ways I could improve my communication with folks on the other side of the table. It

is showing down at the Sundance Festival to see what kind of funding they can get. When it airs, I will let you all know.

My plane landed, and I drove straight to the fur sale without even going home. When I walked through the door, the room was half set up and almost all the mail in fur was already sorted and on the tables. Mom, Missy, Bernie, and Michelle are like machines and had the place set up perfectly. We tried some new things at this fur sale and will continue to look at ways to improve the sales. Ron Martell found someone that rents huge party tents and got it set up to put it right beside the building to take some congestion off the fur building. We did the demos and meetings in that tent, and it really was nice to have it. Brent Kinsfather donated the entire cost of the tent! Another new event at the sale was the skunk skinning contest which was won by Bernie Nelson. Rocky Mountain Fur donated \$500 to that event. Rounding out our sponsors, Mac Trapping Supplies sponsored the band. I can't say enough good things about our team of volunteers and my board. Everyone jumped in when needed, and the fur sale ran smoothly throughout the weekend.

Annie and Kim were machines back in the computer room and John was cooking for three days straight for volunteers and fur buyers. Fur sales cannot happen without trappers and buyers. Fur volume was down, but we had a pile of buyers competing for the furs and parts. Our sales have been catering more to the garment and craft buyers, and I take pride in pulling different and unique items in from all over the country. At the March sale we will have everything from coatimundi to iguana pelts and that variety of items pulls more buyers in. I am doing everything in my power to pull buyers in, but we need your fur! ITA depends on the commissions to keep us running throughout the year. Please see the January sale results below.

We are working with IDFG on a fisher relocation project. This project will be explained more in the next president's report, so stay tuned! New sustaining patches are in for the 2025 sustaining membership program. This year's patch is a marten. For those of you that don't know about the sustaining membership program, it is a way of giving a little extra back to ITA. This is not regular membership, and it does NOT get an Idaho Trapper magazine, but you get a listing in the magazine, and you get a limited-edition patch. This patch is from an actual Idaho trapped marten, and the patch is made in the good ole USA by a veteran-owned company. You can mail \$25 to our PO Box or order one online.

Thank you,

Rusty Kramer

Idaho Trappers Association President

Hares and Squirrels in Montana

By Tom Fieber

What in the world is the big thing about these guys? Well for one thing they are a vital link in the food chain in our habitat. As a prey species, they fuel many of our furbearers and predators. From the least weasel to the grizzly bear, they depend on prey species to exist.

Over the years, I have been in areas that have few of these smaller species and notice how it effects the whole chain. The snowshoe hare is vitally important to Lynx. **Snowshoe Hare and Canada Lynx: An Evolving Relationship.**

Lynx relies on snowshoe hare as their main source of prey, with the single species comprising up to 96 percent of their diet. When hare populations are high, lynx can eat up to one hare per day. That's a lot of rabbit!

Because of this relationship, the two critters have evolved together, with hare developing winter adaptations to avoid lynx, and lynx in turn developing winter adaptations to catch them. Snowshoe hare change their coat color to match the season—a fluffy white for camouflage in winter snow, and a mixed brown and grey to match the spring-through-autumn ground. Unlike other rabbits, snowshoe hare don't dig tunnels, instead relying on speed and camouflage to escape predators.

Any crash in the snowshoe hare population has devastating effects on the specialized lynx, when there are lots of hare, lynx are better fed and have greater reproductive success, meaning

kittens adulthood themselves, populations, demands sustain itself.



more lynx survive into and breed driving up lynx which in turn more hare to Every nine to 11

years, however, the number of hare crashes precipitously, leaving the peaked lynx population with little to survive on.

The Red Squirrel that we frequently encounter in the woods and the nocturnal Flying Squirrel we hardly ever see are important to many of the smaller animals. It is a good sign for trappers to see these guys out on our lines. We need to make sure that our management of all the species maintains a good balance. **Tom Fieber** 



Meet cast members of History Channel's **MOUNTAIN MEN**

Montana Fur Harvesters'

SPRING Rendezvous

May 16-17, 2025

**Join us at Lake County Fairgrounds
for a family-friendly event!**

Join us in Ronan at the fairgrounds May 16-17 to learn about trapping, fur handling, hound hunting, and so much more from local outdoorsmen, national vendors, and the cast members of History Channel's popular show, *Mountain Men*! There will be demonstrations for all ages to look forward to, so bring the whole family!

Attend Saturday night for our banquet and live
auction with plenty of raffle items.
Get your banquet tickets before they sell out!

Ticket Prices

General Admission (per day)- \$10

Family Admission (per day) - \$15

Banquet Ticket (per plate)- Price TBD

Corporate Sponsors (please contact Scott
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Scan the QR code
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For more information about
demonstrations, vendors, and
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www.montanafurharvesters.com/



Other questions?
Please email us at
mtfurs@gmail.com
or call
Scott D. Smith:
406-837-2659

This thing
has really
taken off.
We are
looking for
more
volunteers
to help set
up the
event
grounds in
Ronan and
run
different
events
and
booths for
a few
days.



SPRING RENDEZVOUS
MAY 16-17, 2025

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Visit and Learn from these who live the life
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Larry Rattray: rattpak@centurytel.net
406-261-7199 Tom Fieber: tfieber@bresnan.net
406-250-3386



Mountain Man and Mountain Women contests!! Axe throwing. Test your mountain man skills against others.

Houndsmen will have some hounds and give talks and a short trailing demo.

General membership meeting, members only. Awards after the meeting. Wide variety of outdoor conservation organizations present: Trapping, hunting and outdoor supply vendors- also tailgaters- on site food.

Exhibitor's Vendor Booth in horticulture building: Idaho Trappers Association- Rusty Kramer, 208-870-3217. Poorboy Sporting Goods-Jeff Sclink, 406-470-0828. MTSFW -JR Strand, 406-546-9873. ST Outdoors- Tressa Sutter, 406-871-5638. Montana K-9 Safety- Garry Foreman, 406-499-0049. MFH- Tom Fieber, 406-250-3386. Mac's Traps-MTA- Bob Sheppard, 406-793-5885. NTA -Jim Buell. F4WM-Josh, Justin Webb. Night Hawk Pro-Gear, Jason Laury, 404-379-0223. Sheild Arms- Seth Burglee, 406-690-9329. Montana State Houndsmen Association- Stacy Barstech. Racheal Vargas , Montana Health and Safety. K9 Safety Gary Forman. Tight Chains, No BS Traps. A Moments Reflection

More to come! Be sure to plan on attending the Saturday night **Banquet and Live Auction** with lots of raffle items.

Onsite primitive camping is available for \$20 per night. Full-service campgrounds are close by. Motel rooms are close by, but reservations are suggested. Please check our website for updates, we are constantly adding items.



Contact; Scan QR Code to buy
Tickets mtfurs@gmail.com
www.montanafurvesters.com/
Website

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

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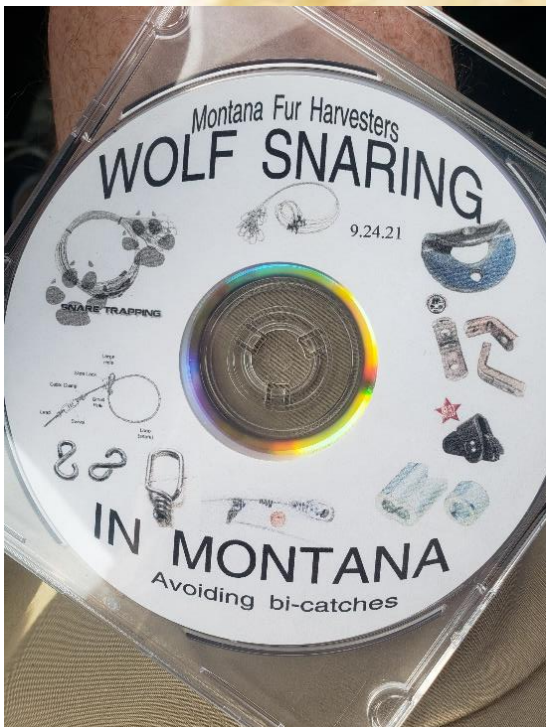
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www.grandviewoutdoors.com/order/subscriptNote: ☐ Check here to receive your Newsletter by Email ☐ Check here to have Newsletter mailed. **This very popular video** is a must see for anyone thinking of snaring in Montana. I have sent them out to Alaska, 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! Great one on March 23rd, more info later.

BETTER LUCKY THAN GOOD...

By Justin Webb

Knowing I had family coming into town for a week of elk hunting, I strategically placed a handful of trail cameras in one of my favorite elk hunting areas to get a better idea of what bull elk were using that ground. One covered an elk wallow that also doubled as their main water source given the unseasonably warm and dry fall, while others covered main travel corridors, but one, I placed overlooking the ribcage and gut pile from the elk I shot and told you the story of last month. I was disappointed to see a wolf showed up around 4pm one afternoon to investigate the gut pile which I had buried in bark and branches. This is one of my only back country elk hunting areas wolves had not pressured the elk out of, and I was counting on being able to hunt that area with my family when they arrived. Unfortunately, the carcass camera stopped working shortly after the wolf showed up...

After looking at the pictures repeatedly from the day before, I couldn't take it anymore and in the early morning of October 19th, I threw on some camo, hastily grabbed a rifle out of my



gun safe, kissed my wife, and ran for my truck. My wife's Browning lever action .243 was the only well sighted in rifle readily available that would not send a 30-caliber gunshot echoing across the mountainside. I didn't want to blow the elk out of there, but also recognized if the wolves had remained, there wouldn't be any elk there now anyhow. I've not made time to mount the suppressor I ordered specifically for

wolf hunting, onto any of my rifles yet, so knowing I'd have to be inside of 70 yards to see a wolf, that .243 just seemed like a good option at the time

Hiking up the mountain, the swirling winds made every bead of sweat feel like 100 lbs, as I thought about how important scent control would be in just a couple more miles. I had strapped my full hunting backpack, a replacement camera for the one that stopped working, and my spy high camera mounting poles onto my meat pack frame that was on my back. Frame packs are great for carrying weight, and I knew I'd want to carry any wolf carcass far from that area, should I be able to pull off a miracle and shoot one. But my pack frame has been overloaded and over worked many times, and now it squeaks constantly, and it makes tinny metal sounds when brush swipes against it. I knew I would need to drop everything I had and go into the basin with just my rifle and side-arm if I wanted any chance to pull this off. Several hundred yards before I approached my elk carcass where the camera was no longer working, I set my pack frame and hiking poles against a tree in the creek bottom. Then like a soldier headed into battle, I took a deep breath, said a little prayer, and hastily sneaked into the basin.

I'd have to hike right through the location of my elk gut pile to get to the wallow and I knew I could bump into wolves at any time. My rifle half shouldered, every leaf flitter in the breeze caught my attention as my eyes darted side to side and I tried desperately not to make a sound while moving my feet. I used the toe of my boots to gently push sticks from where I'd then place each foot. The dry twigs and branches on the forest floor made a silent stalk nearly impossible. As I approached what was left of my elk's rib bones and gut pile, I was reminded what an elk carcass looks like when wolves decide to feed on it. The rib bones bright white and spotless clean. The hide stripped of any leather leaving only hair. The only sign of the gut pile was a greasy area on the forest floor. The stench was no longer of elk punch... but a

unique, almost eerie cross between a wet dog, and a musty smell that reminded me of a bear... My mind raced, thinking about the Grizzly sign I had seen in there a few years prior, adding a little extra "nerve" to the situation.

As I made my way toward the wallow, I felt the wind come up on the back of my neck, and panic set in. I quickly changed direction and ran downhill as fast as I could for about 300 yards, hoping to send my scent below the area I expected the wolves to be. The leaves had fallen from the Huckleberry brush and every dry dead stem scraped across my pantlegs with a loud Vvoooot... When I reached the big timber canopy below the wallow, I stopped to catch my breath and check the wind once again. It was marginal at best, and I knew the wolves would soon smell me if they were near the wallow. I hurried as quietly as I could the next 200 yards, scanning constantly as I moved. Through tiny openings in the branches, I could see the dirt mound above the wallow where the wolves had been spending their time, but I could not see movement nor the tawny color of a wolf I was looking for... I wondered if I should have stayed back and tried to call them into the big timber where visibility was a little better.

Suddenly out of the corner of my left eye I caught movement, and when I turned my head, I could see wolf hair through a tiny window in the branches between me and a small clearing in the tag alders. I was in disbelief... They were still there! I could see at least 3, less than 50 yards away through the tangle of branches, and one had just tackled another. I couldn't tell if they were wrestling or fighting, but either way, they had no idea I was there! As I brought my rifle to my shoulder, I wondered what was wrong with me? I've not had buck nor bull fever in years... Yet here I was about to pull the trigger on my first wolf and my hands were trembling so badly I was having a hard time getting my scope to settle solidly on the wolves in front of me. I squatted to rest my rifle against a blow down, but it was too low and tag alder branches and grass between us obstructed my shot. I only had a small shooting window to

start with, and now I was struggling to keep my composure. It reminded me of the first time I had a Bull elk in my sights, and the excitement made an offhand shot almost impossible. I quickly sidestepped and leaned against a tree trunk to steady my rifle. As soon as my cross hairs settled on the now broadside wolf's vitals, I fired... It seemed like slow motion as I levered another shell into the chamber, and I could hear wolves running in all directions except mine. One came out of the tag alders to my right at about 40 yards, but as I swung on it, I struggled to locate it in the little 4-power scope. I immediately regretted not grabbing my hunting rifle (7Mag with 40mm 3x9). The wolf loped up the hill with amazing agility, despite seemingly very little effort, easily leaping over large blowdowns without making a single sound. Despite being able to see it with my naked eye, I watched it run out of view before I was able to put my crosshairs on it. All went silent, and an eerie calm fell over the forest. I stood there, dumbfounded and in shock... quietly soaking up the moment and replaying the event in my head but trying to re-focus on the task at hand. I didn't want to move too much for fear of spooking any wolves that may have lingered. Through my small shooting window, I could see wolf hair protruding above the grasses and weeds in the small meadowy patch before me. Had that really just happened? Had I really just shot my first wolf!?!? I slowly leaned side to side scanning for movement and looking for any wolves that may have circled back in confusion or trying to remain with the group. I told myself I needed to sit still for at least 30 minutes, but 15 was all I could take! I've always been an aggressive hunter and sitting still while in the heat of the hunt is not my forte. I let out my best imitation of a whimpering pup, low and quietly at first, then a little louder. I thought maybe a wolf would return looking for the one I shot, but nothing came. I howled, to the best of my ability. I always run out of air long before I think my howl should stop, but I gave it a whirl none the less... Still no response. I was surprised... Each time I've jumped wolves in the past, they have howled to regroup after they

blow out, and numerous hunters have told me stories of them howling to regroup after one has been shot. But the woods around me remained eerily quiet...

A LITTLE ADDED EXCITEMENT...

On my way back to my pack frame, I decided to circle downhill and use the travel time to scout some game trails below there, to see if the elk were still using them. Once at my pack, I dug out the replacement camera and spy high camera poles so I could quickly swap the non working trail camera at the elk carcass on my way back through. I tried to keep my rifle at the ready just in case one of those wolves circled back, but with all the “stuff”, (pack frame on my back, rifle in my right hand, and a camera as well as two spy high poles all in my left) I knew getting a shot off would be unlikely. Knowing I had work to do, and wanting to empty my hands, I was moving at a rapid pace as I approached the remnants of the gut pile when I caught black movement just a couple feet in front of me, and I jumped backward as a Raven flew away! I asked myself what on earth I’d have done if that were a bear, and I could not defend myself because of all the items in my hands... Just as fast, I dismissed any thought of danger and giggled to myself thinking “Don’t be such a Wuss- you’re getting jumpier as you age!” ...

Then... Not 3 steps later my eyes were locked on a Giant Grizzly Bear 30 ft away with its face down inside what was left of that elk ribcage!

As the many articles from the “Bear attack” Books I used to read in effort to understand bear behavior raced through my mind, it became instantly clear I just screwed up! Terrified, I back peddled quietly as I could without taking my eyes off the bear. It lifted its head a couple inches and froze in that position, still facing quartered away from me. It could very clearly hear my feet moving and the twigs crunching beneath my feet. I wondered if it charged whether I’d be better off raising that .243 in my right hand and pulling the trigger or if I would have time to drop everything and pull

my 10mm off my chest before it made contact with me. I was expecting it to wheel and charge at any second, but it remained motionless as I continued to create space between it and myself. When I reached the other side of a small creek (still walking backwards at about 70 yards out), I quietly lay everything down and drew my pistol. Then I slung the rifle over my shoulder with the sling, and picked up my items as I continued backing away with my 10mm now in hand. I kept thinking about that odor I had smelled earlier and wondered if that bear had been right there watching me as I passed through there earlier.

Before I went out of sight, I noticed the Bear headed in the opposite direction... which was, unfortunately, directly toward the dead wolf I was trying to get back to.

I back tracked a large half circle beneath where the Grizzly had gone, to get back to where the wolf lay in that small clearing (All the while hoping the Grizzly hadn’t beat me to it and or claimed it for himself). When I got there, I quickly hung a new trail camera in hopes of seeing how long it would take those wolves to return looking for their pack mate. (It took 11 days) I then tied the wolf to my pack frame with the intention of packing it out whole, but it didn’t take me long to decide that being an adult male, and heavier than I anticipated, I needed to skin it there... I dropped it, and struck out in search of a place I could hang and skin it efficiently. I found a big larch tree that was leaning hard into some other tree tops, perfect for a quick photo op and would double as a beam to hang and skin the wolf farther up the trunk... Before skinning I found a nice fir bow to use as a dog brush and cleaned up the carcass for a few tasteful photos I could remember my first hunted wolf by (This wolf was a huge accomplishment for me).

While skinning, things took another surprising turn... As I tubed him out, I kept looking for the bullet hole in the vitals area... I got clear down past the point of the shoulder and had still not found an entry or exit. I stopped to look closer,

rolling the hide back up the body, and that's when I realized the wolf had been struck in the head just in front of the ear... What on earth...? I know I was shaken, but I had a decent rest, a clear shot of the vitals, and had placed that shot just behind the front shoulder... In my excitement, did I hit brush that was between me and it, and the bullet deflected that far before striking the wolf? I took a break from skinning and walked back down to where the wolf had fallen. Looking back to the location I shot from, it was a small window, and there were some branches, but it looked like a clear window... It didn't make sense... I hadn't dropped that rifle or done anything that could have knocked the scope off target... I went back to skinning but played it all out in my head several more times as I finished up. I wondered if by a miracle's chance, it might have been possible that the bullet could have passed through the wolf I shot at, and struck a 2nd wolf behind it? I packed the hide and skull in a plastic bag and strapped it to my frame pack before returning to the shot location a fourth time. I walked all through the clearing looking for a potential blood trail of any kind. I then walked out in each direction I could see any resemblance of a trail leaving the clearing in the direction I heard the wolves run. I went over 100 yards in all directions, just hoping to stumble onto a blood trail. I wasn't really expecting to, but I didn't want to leave until I was positive that I had not hit a 2nd wolf. I was just finishing walking what was going to be my last big circle around the area when I heard something coming down the hill from a couple of hundred yards out...

Excitement for another chance at a wolf quickly turned to nervousness as I locked eyes with that Grizzly as it rounded the wallow uphill of me coming straight in my direction. Knowing if I backed away downhill, I'd be backing into a narrow creek draw and an imminent close quarters encounter if the bear didn't spook when it realized I was a person. I instantly raised my hands high over my head with my pistol drawn and yelled out "HEY BEAR! You get

out of here! Get away from me!" At first it turned and walked straight toward me... fear hit me like a train as it looked intently in my direction... I continued to wave my arms and yell, and I had a last second thought that my best chance may be to charge toward it, making it very clear I meant business... Thankfully my bluff charge worked - it turned and hot footed it out of there up the hill away from me...

I'm hopeful we see a Nationwide Delisting of Grizzly Bears soon. They NEED to be hunted so they obtain a healthy fear of man. It seems every couple weeks someone is mauled by one and their population is such that human safety is becoming more of a concern. With all the people moving here, Grizzly habitat is sure not getting any more abundant! Here are some other trail cam pics I have since caught of that G Bear as it remained in that area for a couple weeks...

Well, that was enough for me – I had made every effort and had satisfied my own curiosity. I must have been so excited that I didn't notice a branch between myself and the wolf so when I shot the branch must have deflected the bullet far enough forward, that it hit that wolf in the head... It still seemed out of place, but I was satisfied with the theory. I packed up the last of my items, threw that pack on my back and a sense of pride came over me as I headed out the creek draw instead of my normal route, to avoid bumping into that Bear again.

I didn't make it 100 yards beyond where I had already hiked looking for blood, when I looked down and noticed a red spot on a bright yellow leaf... Anyone who has tried to blood trail through cottonwood knows they often have red sap on some of the fallen leaves that looks just like blood... I had looked closely at several of those red sap spots on leaves in my earlier search for blood... Well after closer inspection of THIS leaf, I realized this was most definitely blood. Just a few yards later, a drop turned into a heavy blood trail! I was in shock! Now the theory I had settled on in my head about the bullet being deflected, went right out the



window. I stopped and dropped my pack, and intently took up the blood trail. It strait lined another 100 yards downhill in the creek until it was approaching a blowdown that lay across its path. The blood, very directional in nature given the splatter marks, veered off to the left (slightly uphill) for about 40 yards where it came to a very thick patch of brush. It appeared the wolf had turned to its left, obviously not wanting to go into that thicket, but that's where the blood stopped altogether.

I looked to see if it had back tracked itself, but it was obviously one directional spatter... I walked the path of least resistance out to the left for a couple hundred yards but found nothing. I went back and looked to see if it changed its mind and pushed through the blowdown in the creek, but I found the same result – nothing. I knew I was dropping low enough on the mountain that I'd be losing service at any time, (This is the first



year there has ever been service there and its only above a certain elevation) so I called my

wife to let her know that it might be a much later night on the mountain than I had anticipated, and not to worry. Darkness was closing in and I felt panicked about losing the blood trail. I hurried down the creek hoping maybe the wolf pushed through the thicket and dropped back down in to the creek bottom, but after a couple hundred yards I still had not found a single drop of blood, nor scuff mark, nor freshly broken twig or blade of grass mashed by a paw... just nothing. As I began planning how to clear my work schedule and be back up the mountain first thing the following morning, I went to the last blood and stood there staring at that thicket... If I were a wounded canine, maybe a thicket is where I would want to go? I slowly pushed my way through the easiest route that led through the thick reprod & brush. The light had faded enough, it would be much harder to see the blood if there were any. About half way I was kicking myself for likely destroying my best option for the next morning's tracking efforts by mashing a trail through there, but when I came out the other side, as the brush thinned, I looked up to see a wolf piled up at the bottom of a larch tree about 10 yards away! NO WAY – 2 wolves with 1 shot?!?! I couldn't believe it... With the light fading, I tossed it up over a blow down and snapped a couple of fast pics before dawning my headlamp to hang and skin it as quickly as possible...

"Luck" happens, but many who "Earn" their accomplishments through hard work, dedication, and persistence are labeled as "Lucky" by those who refuse to put in the work... Yet some say they'd rather be lucky than good any day. This day I was "Lucky"! I am very grateful for the "Luck" God graced me with that day... And I can no longer say I have never shot a wolf that wasn't in a trap 😊

Get out there ladies and gents... Maybe "luck" is waiting for you to meet up halfway... ?

F4WM Justin Webb 🐺

Editor's note. Justin is the Executive Director for the FOUNDATION 4 WILDLIFE

MANAGEMENT. Their chapters across Idaho and now Montana are doing amazing work. Check them out.

Trapper Education field days scheduled in Kalispell, Missoula



KALISPELL — Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks staff and volunteers will host field days for Trapper Education students in Kalispell and Missoula this spring.

The field day in Kalispell is scheduled for April 26 at 8 a.m. and the Missoula field day is May 3 at 8 a.m. To learn more and sign up, visit <https://fwp.mt.gov/hunt/education/trapping>.

Trapper Education in Montana consists of online coursework and an in-person field day. This is required for residents ages 12 and older wishing to purchase a Montana Class C trapping license if they haven't purchased a trapping license in at least three prior years. This course also satisfies the educational requirement for wolf trapping.

Trapper Education field days are taught by skilled volunteer instructors. This allows students to gain hands-on experience with trapping equipment and guidance from experts. The field day also includes instruction on safety, laws,

regulations, ethics, fur handling and other important topics.

Additional Trapper Education field days will be held across the state this year. To attend a field day, students must complete the [online coursework](#) and then register for the field day.

For more information about Hunter, Bowhunter and Trapper Education in Montana, click [here](#).

Spring season is just around the corner



Charter Members for 2025

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.

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.

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 S 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.

Mark Williams, from Florida has his second term.

Bob and Nickie Clyde of St Regis have supported wolf trapping since 2011.

Brook Lincoln, from Haugan has been a strong supporter of predator management for years.

Hunter Shima, Hunter and his family have been supporting us from Montana Power Products.

Jeff Schlink, from Cut Bank just joined our Charters

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!

Flying Squirrel

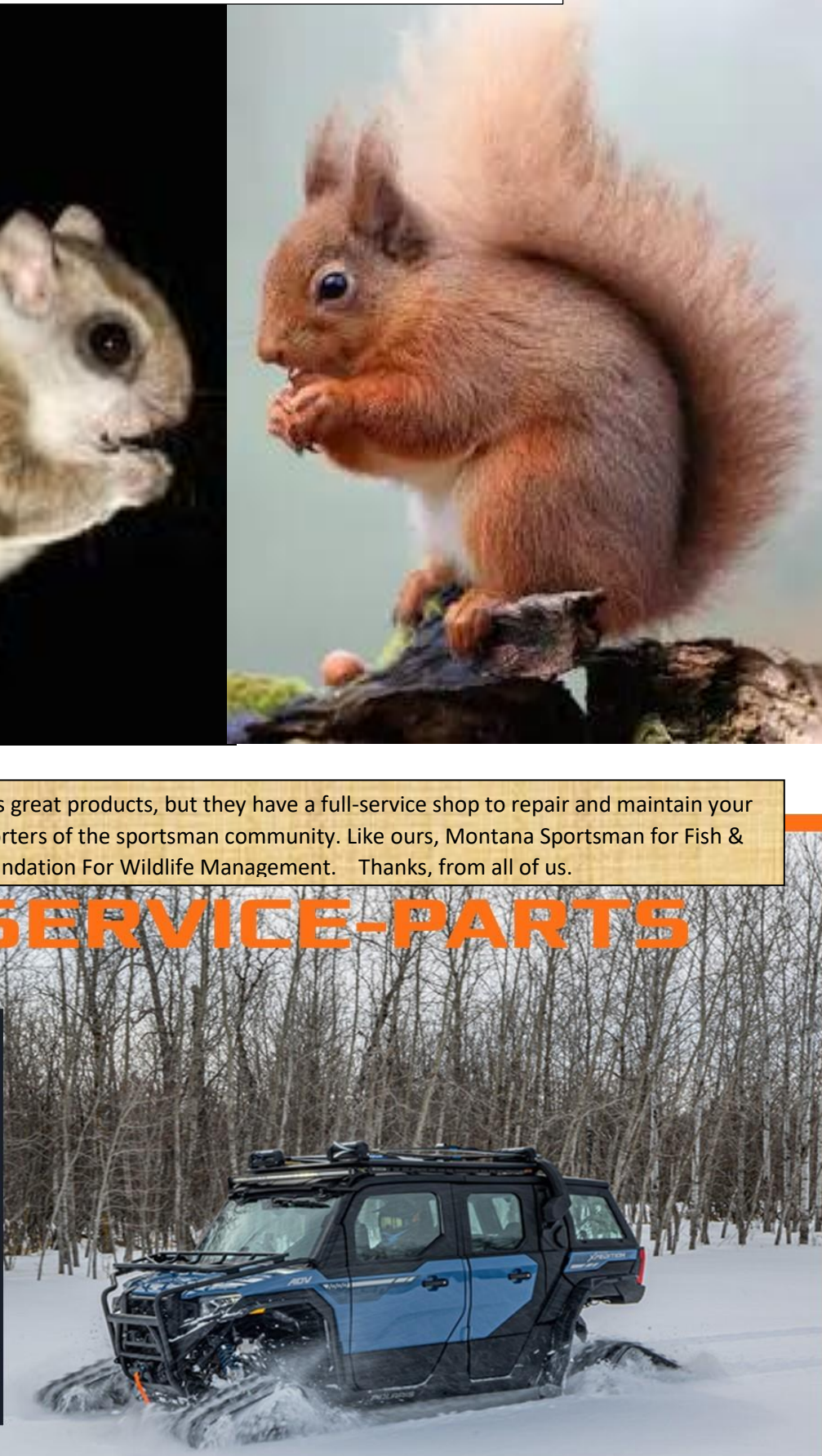
Red or Pine Squirrel

Montana Fur Harvesters
PO Box 3481
Kalispell MT 59903



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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