

FOOTLOOSE MONTANA

Promoting trap-free public lands for people, pets & wildlife

May 2008

www.footloosemontana.org

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UPCOMING: TRAP DEMO AT THE HUMANE SOCIETY'S DOG DAYS AT THE DUNROVIN RANCH ON MAY 31

The Humane Society of Western Montana fundraiser "Dog Days" is happening on Saturday, May 31st, at the Dunrovin Ranch in Lolo. Even better, Footloose Montana is going to be there and we will do a trap demo between 9 a.m. and noon. So swing by, learn about trapping regulations, how you can release companion animals, the truth about commercial and recreational trapping on public lands--and support our local Humane Society--all at the same time! For directions call 273-7745 or check Dunrovin's website:

www.DunrovinRanchMontana.com

UPCOMING: MEETING ON JUNE 2 TO DISCUSS "TRAP-FREE" AREAS IN MISSOULA COUNTY

WHAT: Missoula County Land Managers Meeting

WHEN: **June 2, 2:30-4:00**

WHERE: Missoula Public Library - Large meeting room on ground floor

"FWP is interested in perspectives and reactions from the Missoula Land Managers on an effort to educate dog owners about recreating with pets in the greater Missoula Valley. The product may (or may not) be a widely distributed brochure for dog owners, which would be "sponsored" by the participating city, county, and state agencies. Information contained within the brochure would include a listing of approximately 5-7 administratively designated "trap-free" recreation areas for dog owners who want to be as sure as possible that their pets will not be at risk from conflicts with trapping. Places like the Blue Mountain and Rattlesnake recreation areas leap to mind as examples of places where **FWP and land managers could cooperate in establishing "trap free" areas for dog owners** to choose.

The brochure, targeted specifically for people who recreate with their dogs, would not be limited to trapping conflicts. One idea is a section on keeping pets under control to keep them from chasing wildlife. Perhaps the group would want to expand the focus to include issues of people/dog and dog/dog interactions. Also, the issue of pets straying from public trails onto private property. Surely there are others."

Don't be fooled. **FOOTLOOSE MONTANA** will not settle for limited access to public lands. And leashes are not required, and should never be required, on our public lands. Go and learn, and remember, public lands belong to YOU.

WHAT IT MEANS TO LOSE YOUR DOG TO A TRAP

“Hello, my name is John Ruther and I would like to deliver a message, using the experience of my dog companion Logans' death in a snare trap.

“The first hint of a snare's work is your animal will be jumping, acting as if he is getting into mischief off there in the woods. Then, as your attention wanders, the corner of your eye will catch the jumping turning bizarre, almost as if a buck deer, or bear, or mountain lion, or something, is throwing him backwards, violently, over and over. It will be quiet, all the while there will be only the struggle. As you walk cautiously towards that place there will be stillness. When you see your animal it will be alive, fighting with every ounce of life it has left to get air into its' lungs. Its' legs will be straight out, perpendicular from the body, the tail will be rigid, the eyes will be wide and bright and pleading, the mouth and tongue will be the wrong color, a precursor to death purple. You may think, as I did, that your animal friend has broken his neck. You might speak to your friend to try to comfort him in what suddenly seems to be his final moments, you will search his body for wounds, you will gently roll him to search his other side and to be prepared to give heart compressions. The realization of his life slipping away will compel you to say his name to him what seems to be a thousand times. In the end you will be staring into his eyes, they will be the eyes of your best friend, they will be shining and filled with terror, and then, as sure as we all will die, the brightness fades slowly, and that unique irreplaceable spirit is no longer there. And then, as you stroke your friend's still warm body for the last time, you may find it, as I did, the hidden wire around his neck, the snare embedded in his neck and lying in the tall grass and tied to the bush. Then the absurd but necessary for your sanity attempts at mouth to mouth resuscitation and heart compressions, and finally the acknowledgement that it all is very wrong, but absolutely real. This must be trapping at its' best, the physical killing of a dog and the spiritual killing of a man.”

GRAY WOLF IN DENALI PARK FREED FROM NECK SNARE

In last month's newsletter we wrote about two wolves, trapped this winter on state land outside of Denali National Park, who were observed recently with tight snares fastened around their necks. These devices tighten slowly as the animal struggles to get free and eventually strangle an animal unfortunate enough to step into the trap. This month we can report that at least one of them was freed of the lethal device that had cut about 2 inches deep into the wolf's neck, and apparently has a good chance to survive.

The park wildlife biologist Tom Meier and a veterinarian spotted the wolf's tracks in fresh snow atop a ridge and followed the tracks. Meier immobilized the wolf with a tranquilizer dart and veterinarian Denise Albert removed the snare, cleaned the gaping wound and gave the wolf antibiotics.

The other wolf, a black one belonging to the Toklat Pack, whose members are most sighted by tourists inside the 6-million-acre park in interior Alaska, may not have been so lucky. Since the wolf hasn't been seen for several weeks, it is likely that he died of strangulation by the snare around his neck. Snares are normally made of metal cable in the shape of a loop that cinch tighter as the animal tries to pull free. It is a long, torturous death.

According to the Anchorage Daily News, Denali National Park has about 100 wolves in 18 packs. The black wolf belongs to the Denali's wolves in winter tend to head for an area outside the park's northeast boundary that is the traditional wintering grounds for caribou, moose and sheep. A special no-trapping buffer zone was created to protect wolves but they move outside the zone to follow prey. The trappers know that, too, said independent researcher Gordon Haber, who has studied Denali's wolves for decades. At least three trap lines were set this winter, and as many as 19 wolves were legally trapped, Haber said.

FOOTLOOSE MONTANA STATEWIDE CHAPTERS

It's time to branch out! **Footloose Montana** will be launching chapters in the Bitterroot, Billings/Red Lodge, Great Falls, Bozeman, Butte, Dillon, the Flathead and Helena. Please let us know if you have friends in any of these areas who would be interested in getting involved in our campaign. People actively involved in a Footloose chapter will recruit new members for **Footloose**, reach out to local hunting, environmental and other conservation groups, raise awareness about trapping and build support for our upcoming campaign to ban trapping on public land when it all comes down to organizing, educating and collecting signatures to get our initiative on the ballot. We will help with every aspect along the way, and we are excited to spread the word, and the campaign, so please help us create a statewide network so we can make the barbaric practice of trapping on public lands history. For the animals!

DEAD ANIMAL BODIES FOUND AT SOFT ROCK (BITTERROOT): A FOOTLOOSE MEMBER REPORT

“Last week, I was told a story of someone hiking up Soft Rock (public Lands) , East of Corvallis. They said they had run upon a group of dead animals all lined up, llamas and dogs behind the corral area at **Soft Rock**. On Friday am, I went up there with my camera and began walking all in the sage brush. Bones of many types of animals, hides and partial carcasses were found.

As I walked North a ways and then West, I found 2 complete huge, wild turkey bodies. One had hay string tied around the legs as if it was carried there. These birds had been recently placed there. I was angry enough just seeing what someone had done, killed 2 wild turkeys but not even kept the meat from them. Then as I kept walking I saw a piece of paper, very dirty and balled up. I unrolled it and it was a notice that that said, **snares and traps were all over the area**, etc.

Folks go with their dogs and horses and hike this area all the time... I don't know about the dumping of all the bodies, if that is legal on public lands but I'll bet there are traps around there because you know the coyotes are coming in for that. My neighbor up there said she saw at least 30 of them about 50 feet from her house a week ago. You also know dogs are going to run right for that area to "roll in the good stuff.”

Please let Footloose know if you have any information about this and please be careful when you walk your dogs at Soft Rock!

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION GROUPS THREATEN TO SUE TO PROTECT LYNX IN MAINE

The following is a news release from the Animal Welfare Institute and the Wildlife Alliance of Maine, and it is important for Montana too:

Bangor, ME — The Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) and the Wildlife Alliance of Maine (WAM) sent a letter of intent to sue Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (DIFW) Commissioner Roland D. Martin today to compel the agency to comply with federal law and take immediate action to protect Canada lynx from deadly traps. The letter, which was also sent to Governor Baldacci and Attorney General Steven Rowe, reveals that at least 8 Canada Lynx – a species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act - were caught in traps set for other species in a one month time period between October 15, 2007 and November 13, 2007.

“The state has failed to protect Canada lynx from indiscriminate traps and is therefore in violation of the Endangered Species Act every time a lynx gets caught,” said Camilla Fox, Wildlife Consultant for AWI. “With eight lynx trapped in just 29 days, this means that on average at least one lynx is trapped every four days during the trapping season,” said Fox. “And that’s just the reported number.”

A similar lawsuit filed by the Animal Protection Institute last year led to a consent decree settlement with the state that required DIFW to restrict certain traps in specific regions inhabited by lynx. “Unfortunately those restrictions were woefully inadequate,” said Daryl DeJoy, Founding Executive Director of WAM. “More lynx have been trapped after the settlement was implemented than in previous years so we will be forced to go to court if DIFW fails to take immediate action to better protect lynx from non-selective traps.”

The state has attempted to obtain an incidental take permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) which would remove the legal burden from the state if trappers incidentally trap lynx and would require the state to implement protective measures to minimize and mitigate lynx trapping. However, three drafts have been rejected by the FWS to date and each time the federal agency has told DIFW that it must do better to protect lynx from traps set for other furbearers.

Maine’s resident lynx population is estimated at only 200-500 individuals. However, the FWS has stated that the population may be in decline and snow shoe hare populations- the main source of prey for lynx - are in severe decline. “It is biologically reckless for the DIFW to continue to allow trappers to use traps that pose a danger to lynx at a time when lynx populations and their main source of prey are likely in decline,” said Fox.

The Animal Welfare Institute is a non-profit charitable organization founded in 1951 to reduce the sum total of pain and fear inflicted on animals by humans. More information is available at www.awionline.org.

The Wildlife Alliance of Maine is a non-profit organization dedicating to advocating on behalf of Maine’s wildlife and to promoting a conservation ethic that represents non-consumptive wildlife users. More information is available at www.wildlifealliancemaine.org.

In Montana, the lynx is on the way out too. It’s time to take action. **BAN TRAPPING ON PUBLIC LANDS.** Below is Nancy Winslow’s powerful letter (thank you Nancy!), which addresses the dangers of traps to a threatened species such as the lynx:

“The State of Montana should take notice of a recent ruling by a federal judge who determined trapping and snaring Canada lynx in Minnesota violates the Endangered Species Act. Since the species was listed as a “Threatened” in 2000, there have been 13 reports in Minnesota of these beautiful, secretive predators being caught in traps set for other species--with at least five trapped lynx dying as a consequence.

Biologists have shown that lynx are very vulnerable to trapping and are easily overexploited. “Incidental trapping” of lynx occurs during legal trapping for other species, such as bobcat, wolverine, coyote, fox, and wolf.

Lynx inadvertently trapped are supposed to be reported to the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), and three such captures were reported during each of the past two winters. Trappers also reported to FWP during the last season that they “harvested” 2,400 bobcats, 55 otter, 6 fisher, and 9 wolverine. Of those 2400 bobcats, it seems likely that more than a few lynx were the unfortunate “non-target” animals. Lynx are very similar in appearance and habits to bobcats, and their range overlaps with them.

On “our” public lands, let’s eliminate trapping for private profit that allows the random killing of all types of prey. If my two dogs have been caught in traps while hunting grouse, how many lynx have been caught and not reported?”

For a compassionate and footloose 2008,
Your friends at Footloose Montana