

Independent, Jan. 22, 2009:

Not napping

Regarding the article “Trapping the heartstrings” (see January 15, 2009), I take issue with Don Bothwell’s comments. Bothwell, a well-known Kalispell trapper and emerging spokesperson for Montana trappers, claimed many trapped animals, after struggling briefly, “just take a nap.” Bothwell made this same claim at a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks meeting last year. But from what I’ve seen in the trapping world, more likely the “napping” animals were exhausted from struggling and in shock, giving the appearance of sleeping. Then Bothwell came along, woke them up, and clubbed them to death.

Personally, I’ve seen many traps while hiking. One, set on a cedar tree along the upper Lochsa, had trapped a marten. The unfortunate animal had shredded a large circle of bark extending as far as the trap chain would allow. Two years ago on the Salmon River trail in Idaho, a coyote chewed and tore all the brush within several feet of the trap. A few miles farther downriver, my wife and I found a trap where a river otter had inadvertently been caught. The otter had escaped, but left its chewed-off foot in the trap. Hardly a “nap,” I’d say.

Bothwell can try to sugarcoat trapping, but in reality it’s a violent, incredibly brutal practice. As far as Kerry Foresman’s comment that he respects trappers and “it’s a legal activity,” legal has nothing to do with what’s right or humane.

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