

Wow! Jim Buell's Guest Opinion on trapping (Billings Gazette, 3/4/2009) guarantees that Orwellian doublespeak is alive and well. Buell's "...Montana and the nation turns to its trappers to preserve the wild." surpasses even that Vietnam era classic, "We had to destroy the village to save it."

Buell astonishingly touts the magnanimous role of trappers in the reintroduction of wolves from Canada to the lower United States while neglecting to disclose that trappers played the major role in their disappearance in the first place. In Yellowstone alone, the Roosevelt Wildlife Bulletin (1927) reports that trappers, with the help of poisoning and shooting, killed 3,048 coyotes (1907-1926), Lions 121 (1904-1925) and wolves 132 (1915-1922) in their deluded attempt "preserve the wild." One retired Yellowstone ranger put it this way, "Kill trapping has played no constructive role in managing wildlife populations in national parks and forests unless credit is due for snap trapping mice in commercial kitchens."

Buell also declares, apparently in all seriousness, that trappers "...preserve the health and welfare of humans [and] their pets..." I wish he would explain how the health and welfare of my neighbor and her beloved dog Buddy, dying in her arms with a legally set conibear trap around his neck, was being protected on that heartbreaking day that my wife and I skied up to them in the mountains behind our farm.

Finally, Buell's sanitized and laughable portrayal of trapping's grand benevolence neglects, what is for me its fundamental blindness: the moral and ethical component. All the tapestries of respectability, legality, and tradition that trapping has enjoyed do not muffle the agonizing cries or nullify the suffering of sentient beings dying alone in traps. It may be too late and of little consolation to the countless, tortured and broken bodies that are trapping's legacy, but Buell's failed and contrived hype has all the earmarks of the death knell for a tragic era in our history. It took a period of time to work out Western society's position on torture, just as it will with trapping. But our longing for Love's unfolding horizon, I believe, is more powerful than the static forces of violence in the evolution of consciousness.

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