

A warm summer welcome everyone and I hope you are doing well. As we approach the summer months, there are a couple of association reminders for you. It is the busiest time of the year, and everyone has much to do in the few short months of summer in North Dakota. We have our rendezvous on Saturday, June 20th at the Velva Wildlife Club, and secondly, we'll be distributing our annual raffle tickets. Both projects are special and mean a great deal to the success of our association. I hope that you can participate in both. More information follows in this issue of the Dakota Skinner that Phil has put together. We are very fortunate for his time and dedication to such a worthwhile product.

There is much to celebrate internationally, nationally, and right here at home. Internationally, the fur industry is experiencing some excitement with fur and as a result, improving pelt prices. That is extremely nice to see and to be a part of that as producers. As this is written, Fur Harvesters Auction will be concluding their 2026 sale season, which will no doubt set some records. Look at those clearances in making your decisions for next season. Nationally, our 250th birthday as a nation. What a great opportunity to be here at this time, and I suspect there will be great fanfare throughout the country in July. All well deserved. And here at home - what a great place to work, live, and enjoy our natural resources. Twenty-five years ago, I followed marten tracks in the snow near Lake Metigoshi. After years of hard work, determination, and the right leadership, we will have our "first" marten harvest season this fall. All truly worth a celebration!

The work never really stops though. Our education program calendar reveals most of that all the way through October. We had a great Furbearer Workgroup meeting in April and were able to provide a couple of options to improve the fisher season and river otter harvest. Both need direct attention and with the help of the Governor's signature, will be in this year's proclamation. We also weighed in with some information on what will be another "first" furbearer harvest for black bear. More detailed information is included later in this issue.

We hope to see you in Velva on June 20th and be sure to bring the family and friends. Until next time, take care, be safe and responsible, and enjoy what Mother Nature and North Dakota have to offer. God bless You and God Bless America!

Respectfully, Rick Tischaefter

2026 Annual Raffle

Our annual raffle is ready to roll. Ticket prices remain the same as in previous years - \$5 each or 5 for \$20. The drawing will be held on September 2, 2026, at high noon in the Amvets parking lot in Bismarck. In standing with the wishes of our membership, firearms and cash are the six big ticket items. This year's prizes are: first is a Stoeger M3000 camo semiautomatic 12 ga shotgun (Scheels gift card value \$699.99); second is a Ruger American 6.5 PRC camo rifle (Scheels gift card value \$649.99); third is a Glock G17 Gen5 9mm pistol (Scheels gift card value \$629.99); fourth is a Mossberg 500 Turkey .410 camo pump shotgun (Scheels gift card value \$549.99); fifth is a \$300 Visa gift card; and sixth is a VISA \$250 gift card. Tickets are available now, they will be at the rendezvous, and the general membership mailing will be done shortly after. If you would like tickets right away, contact Rick Tischaefter with a text at (701) 460-1055 or by email at tischrc@srt.com. Thank you in advance for your help with this year's raffle!

2026 Summer Rendezvous

The summer rendezvous is a family and friends' event and will be held on Saturday June 20th at the Velva Wildlife Club. Velva Wildlife Club sits on 52 acres of Mouse River bottomland three miles west of Velva on Hwy. 52. The club is a multi-activity location that includes an education facility, rifle range, 3 house trap shooting range, 3 bag target archery range, 23 target 3D archery range, and a new catch and release pond stocked with catfish. The archery ranges and fishing pond will be open during our rendezvous. The river bottomland provides a variety of habitats which make it a great place for education classes and demonstrations. Primitive camping exists on the grounds, and Ceder Lodge (701-338-3080) in Velva has both motel rooms and hook-ups for campers. Velva also has a city park which has camping.

Lunch – a picnic style lunch is provided for a free will donation. The menu includes bratwurst, beef doggies, potato salad, baked beans, an assortment of chips, dessert, and all the goodies that go with a picnic meal.

Demonstrations – if you have something you'd like to see, do, or help with, please let me know. Current presentations and demonstrations include marten trapping tools and techniques; our vendor showcase (vendors talk about who they are and what they have to offer while at the rendezvous); skull cleaning and preservation with Ryan Mitchell; using foothold traps for wolf research and the Grand Portage moose calf protection project with John Paulson; and how to trap with technology by Travis Leier.

Auction Items – we are always in need of new, slightly used, and used items for our auction. Past auctions have been a blend of stand-up comedy and opportunities for a deal or two. We are looking for an auctioneer this June, so if you have the talent, please let me know. Our auction is an important event that benefits the association and the education program. Items that have already been donated include traps, trapping equipment, drying wires and frames, hard and soft water fishing equipment, and a chair hunting blind. There is always a need for more, so please donate and attend this enjoyable event!

Vendors – are welcome and vendor space is free. It doesn't always have to be about trapping – folks have many interests, and you never know what that may be until you set up as a vendor. Let me know if you'll need space or have any questions or special needs. Volk Furs has already signed up as a vendor.

Annual Meeting - Our annual meeting will be held during our summer rendezvous on Saturday, June 20, 2026. The meeting will begin at 12:30 PM. The location is the Velva Wildlife Club, Velva, North Dakota.

Keep Your Membership Current

Make it a point to renew your membership when you get your first notice. Waiting for an event to renew your membership may result in you missing some critical information. The difference between your last renewal date and the next association event may be several months, causing not only missed issues of Trappers Post, but association notices or newsletter, a survey, or other important information. Take care of it right away and avoid the void. Another option is to consider a Lifetime Membership – which solves all the renewal problems!

Market Conditions – fur sales and state association auctions throughout the northern half of the United States have seen some improvement in the past few months. Fur Harvesters Auction enjoyed a tremendous sale in March, and with most articles at 100% clearance, their June sale should be at

least as good or favoring much better. Ranch mink has been doing well at international sales which will bring our muskrat pelt prices up. Let's hope the water levels remain through fall.

Furbearer Reporting

The North Dakota Game & Fish Department encourages everyone to continue to report furbearer observations, even though some of those species are quite common. Species include marten, black bear, black-footed ferret, bobcat, fisher, mountain lion, opossum, river otter, spotted skunk, swift fox, weasel, and wolf. The observation form is located at <https://gf.nd.gov/hunting/furbearers/furbearer-observation>. Go to the NDG&FD website, click on hunting, click on furbearers, scroll down and click on the furbearer observation report at the bottom of the page.

North Dakota Marten Harvest

It is very rewarding to share that North Dakota will have its first marten harvest this year, beginning November 23rd and ending November 29th. It is truly a monumental celebration! Harvest is by trapping only and the season limit is one per individual. It will be exciting to see the results at the close of the season.

North Dakota is home to American Marten. The males are larger than the females, with weights between 1 and 3.5 pounds. Within the fur trade, American Marten pelts are known and marketed as Sable. The density of their fur depends on latitude and elevation. While we enjoy the upper latitudes of the United States, it is nothing in comparison to the whole of North America. By going northward and factoring in the higher elevations of the Rocky Mountains, marten fur density increases. Depending on age, the pelts are prime in November and December. Using pelt evaluations from the Manitoba side of the Turtle Mountains, our marten will grade as semi-heavy pelts.

Marten are in the *carnivora* order, but are quite omnivorous, eating meat, insects, and fruit. Whatever it takes to stay alive. Fruit diets can include any of the berries within their habitat, apples, wild plums, chokecherries, buffalo berries, and wild grapes. Meat diets would include red backed voles, red squirrels, a variety of young birds, eggs, and any other rodents that may be available.

Marten can be easily lured, are curious, and can be relatively easy to trap. Like bobcat trapping, thorough scouting is imperative to be successful. You must first find the marten so that you can catch the marten. Making sets across the landscape in hopes of catching a marten is a very poor plan. As a member of the weasel family, they too experience high activity periods prior to and immediately after low pressure events like storms.

Trappers should target male marten. One male can breed several females and accordingly, will have a larger home range. Harvesting too many females may have a negative impact on the overall population. Common marten capture devices include cage traps and enclosed cubbies with double spring bodygrip trap sizes with the 4.5" window (120). A preferred bait is fresh beaver meat – but most any type of meat may work. A "call lure" that includes skunk essence is beneficial.

Cage traps are very useful in areas where fisher and marten overlap, or when an individual chooses to be more selective by catching a male and releasing a female in either of these species. Place the cage trap in the appropriate location and brush it in to break up the structure. Use pine needles or other ground duff to coat the bottom of the cage trap so the entering animal is not walking on wire. Wire the bait in the upper corner of the back of the cage trap. Bait should be replaced if it becomes rancid, or when the population of small rodents attracted to it consumes most of it. Marten are prone to recaptures when using cage traps as they seem to view the event as an easy way to get food. It is best to move the cage trap to avoid wasting your time.

Cubbies with the double spring 4.5" window bodygrip traps (120) work well as a lethal device but are not as selective as a cage trap. With the focus on harvesting the male population of marten, the individual using this set would use a running pole or vertical tree trunk location at least shoulder height. Females keep most of their activity to the area within three feet of the ground, males are bolder and will work to greater heights. You are selective in targeting males by placing your set higher than three feet above the ground.

Cubbies can be of several materials – wire, plastic newspaper tube, or wood. Fashion your cubby to the size of the bodygrip trap you intend to use and design it with an open back protected with hardware cloth to see through. The 4.5" bodygrip trap (120) is recommended for marten in the Best Management Practices for Trapping Marten. Using a larger bodygrip trap and cubby lends itself to being unsuccessful and a poor choice. Marten have been documented visiting these larger cubbies (for fisher, raccoon, and bobcat) and easily negotiating the trigger wires to enter and exit the cubby without firing the trap. Bait would be placed in the back of the cubby as is described with the cage trap and a similar call lure in the general vicinity of the set.

Trappers will use a longer cubby (18 – 20 inches) so that the bodygrip trap and trapped marten remain in the cubby. This protects the fur from being damaged by scavengers or the environment. Allowing the trapped marten to hang from an elevated set is an invitation for trouble.

Marten are case skinned and very little pelt fleshing is required. There is usually fat and membrane that needs to be removed at the cheeks, armpits, and the end of the skirt. Pelts are dried leather side out until dry to the touch and then turned and placed back on the drying board fur side out. Fur handlers need to babysit the pelt during the leather out drying period – just slightly dry to the touch and it is ready to turn fur out. If you are a little nervous about being a little wet yet, simply rub the leather side down with fine sawdust and turn. Do not forget your belly wedge with either step. If you do, rehydrate the pelt with a damp towel, remove from the drying board, and place back on the drying board with a wedge. Marten drying boards can be obtained from Top Lot Stretcher Company (Leon and Denise Winschitel, Worthington, MN).

Of special note and attention - trappers should be responsible and use caution as to how many sets are used to target marten. Although the current season is only one week, one good "move night" (where conditions exist for a great deal of animal movement and activity) may be problematic with having too many sets. Watch the weather and anticipate such activity.

Good luck, always be responsible and ethical, and enjoy this wonderful opportunity. If you have questions or need more information, please let me know.

2026 Furbearer Workgroup Meeting

Our annual meeting was held in Bismarck on April 28, 2026. Attendees represented NDG&FD, USFWS, USDA-Wildlife Services, Delta Waterfowl, North Dakota Houndsmen Association, Chapter 3 Furtakers of America, and us. If you would like a copy of the draft meeting notes, contact me directly and I will email them to you.

North Dakota Cooperative Education Program

Our 2026 calendar looks like this:

February

8 Wild Outdoor Women fur handling event at Lake Metigoshe State Park. Participants handled muskrats and raccoons.

March

9-13 Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Choctaw Nation Wild Fur School, Durant, Oklahoma

21 Dog Handling Clinic with Lake Sakakawea Pheasants Forever, Totten Trail

April

25-26 Fur Harvester Education Course with Delta Waterfowl, Cole Harbor

May

4-8 Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Northwest Fur School, Lewiston, Idaho

June

4 4-H Camp with Kids, Washburn

11 4-H Camp with Kids, Washburn

20 NDFHTA Summer Rendezvous, Velva Wildlife Club

July

16 Trapping Booth Set-Up at the State Fair Conservation Park in Minot

17-25 Trapping Booth at State Fair Conservation Park in Minot

25 Youth Outdoor Day at Velva Wildlife Club, Velva

26 Trapping Booth Take Down at the State Fair Conservation Park in Minot

August

4 NDWF Wildlife & Conservation Camp, Washburn

4,6,8 Fur Harvester Education Course, Bismarck

24-28 Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Upper Midwest Fur School, Dubois, Wyoming

September

10-12 Fur Harvester Education Course with UND-Grand Forks, Larimore

TBD Valley City State University Wildlife Lab

October

1-3 Fur Harvester Education Course, Velva Wildlife Club, Velva

10 Using Cables in North Dakota Training Seminar. Velva Wildlife Club, Velva

Donations – we are always looking for carcass animals for our education classes, pelt collections, or handled so that they generate a little revenue for the education program. We also receive requests from schools looking for pelts throughout the year. Let me know if you can help. Education program donations to date include:

Lane Pederson, Cando – 13 carcass raccoon and 4 carcass skunk

Chris Tischafer, Butte – 2 carcass raccoon

Buck Holien, Cando – 6 carcass raccoon and 2 carcass skunk

Renae Selensky, Rugby – 14 carcass raccoon and 4 carcass skunk

Education Program Tanned Pelts For Sale – we currently have some nice pelts available and listed on our website (www.ndfhta.com.) The funds generated from these pelt sales benefit our education program.

Marten Prints For Sale – we also have a selection of artist proof marten prints available and listed on our website (www.ndfhta.com). The funds generated from these print sales benefit the education program.

Fourth Edition Education Manual – Work continues with the fourth edition of our education manual. Our timeline suggests that it will be printed and ready in July 2026. Some chapters were improved as needed with new information. The current appendixes were updated, and new were added that cover (D) Lures, Ingredients, and Lure Making Information; (E) Preserving Furbearer Skulls; (F) Prime Fur Periods in North Dakota; (G) Beaver Pelt Sizing Chart for 7-Ring Oval Beaver Board Pattern; (H) Regulated Fur Harvest and Social Media; and (I) Making Waxed Dirt.

Bob Gangl Memorial Awards – These awards are sponsored (\$250) by us. We were unable to present these two awards in 2025 as no one had applied. Hopefully that will change in 2026.

Dog Release Kits – a new item and program that began in 2025. We assemble two similar kits for purchase by individuals who share their outdoor time with a four-legged partner. Each kit is enclosed in a 5" x 10" ziplock bag and can easily be stored in a coat pocket, hunting vest or cargo pant. Kit #1 is the basic and Kit #2 includes the cable cutter. The kits are sold at cost including postage for \$10 and \$30 respectively.

Delta Waterfowl Training Program – We have been working with Delta Waterfowl in developing a training program for their predator management program trappers. We had our first course on April 25 and 26 near Cole Harbor. Some of you reading this attended and made the course a success. Delta Waterfowl has a Million Duck Program that looks at producing a million ducks a year. Part of it is predator management, and they are looking to recruit more trappers. This is specialized training directed to their program. If you are interested in such a position with Delta Waterfowl, you can contact Mike Buxton at (701) 222-8857.

Still In Need – we're looking for a volunteer or two to help in setting up and shutting down the trapper education booth at the State Fair. Set up occurs on the Thursday before the State Fair begins and shutdown occurs on the Sunday morning after the State Fair is done. It is just a few hours' work

setting things up and an even shorter amount of time putting things away. If you would like to help, please let me know.

State Fair Volunteers – North Dakota Game & Fish has posted their volunteer sign up for the State Fair. Volunteers must sign up through this link –
“ndgameandfish.volunteerlocal.com/volunteer/?id=111850”

On The Waiting List – we are currently on a waiting list for spotted skunk and wolverine pelts to complement our collections of pelts for the Districts and State Fair. The spotted skunks will be coming from Washington and our lifetime member JR Pederson of Fairbanks, Alaska is working on the wolverine pelts. A search continues to obtain black-footed ferret pelts for those collections as well.

Dog Handling Clinic at Fort Totten – we participated in a day-long dog handling clinic with the Lake Sakakawea Chapter of Pheasants Forever on Saturday, March 21, 2026. Coordination for this event was with their Chapter President Lynn Glock. The day was very well received with about 30 individuals participating. Everyone experienced trap identification and handling, discussion on dates and locations for different types of trapping activity, as well as how to remove a dog safely from any one of the capture devices they may encounter while outdoors.

In Closing - Our association and the membership continue to support the North Dakota Cooperative Fur Harvester Education Program financially and as volunteers.