

## **Furbearer Work Group Meeting**

**Wednesday, May 3, 2023 9:00am – 4:00pm**

**ND Game and Fish Dept. Headquarters, Conference Room III**

**Organizer:** Stephanie Tucker, *North Dakota Game and Fish Department*

### **In Attendance:**

Casey Anderson, *North Dakota Game and Fish Department*

Mike Buxton, *Delta Waterfowl*

Scott Evens, *North Dakota Fur Takers Association*

Bill Haase, *North Dakota Game and Fish Department*

Cody Hilliard, *North Dakota Houndsmen Association*

Patrick Isakson, *North Dakota Game and Fish Department*

Travis Leier, *North Dakota Fur Hunters and Trappers Association*

Jeffrey Long, *North Dakota Game and Fish Department*

Scott Peterson, *North Dakota Game and Fish Department*

John Paulson, *U.S. Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services*

Jerry Reinisch, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

Rick Tischaefter, *North Dakota Fur Hunters and Trappers Association*

Lauren Toivonen, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

Jeb Williams, *North Dakota Game and Fish Department*

Bruce Willyard, *North Dakota Fur Takers Association*

Scott Winkelman, *North Dakota Game and Fish Department*

**Compiled by:** Cami Wight, *North Dakota Game and Fish Department*

### **NDFHTA Update: Rick Tischaefter and Travis Leier**

*Print summary provided by Rick. See p. 9-10 or [Jump to](#)*

#### Additional points:

Current membership ~225, dues renewed at one year mark.

Unknown if the winter meet will be brought back.

**Stephanie:** NDGF received complaints about use of cellular-enabled trail cams for mountain lion hunting during hound season.

**Travis – Social Media Update:** *Print summary provided. See p. 10 or [Jump to](#)*

Additional points: Videos are our biggest education tool. Trying to contact onX about getting more furbearer features added. Videos made by NDGF regarding furbearers are shared through NDFHTA social media too. Time spent mediating social media adds up to ~5 hours per week.

### **NDFTA Update - Scott Evens and Bruce Willyard**

NDFTA was mainly formed to monitor legislation. It was a quiet year for legislation. Beaver and cat prices were bright spots for this winter. Yellowstone TV series is to thank for beaver prices. Coyote catch down this winter. Convention was in New Salem, but lodging is a problem. This year it will be in Carrington, last week of August. Beaver trapping may be a focus. No applications for scholarship.

Snaring is more regulated now and is a good tool. The Stockmen's Association was a proponent for reinstating snaring.

There is a scholarship available for FTA Trappers College and one available for general college education. Scholarship is available to members who have been with the association for several years. It is advertised in our newsletter. Discussed advertising scholarships on the website too.

Comments from members who want earlier snaring are common--issues are decomposition and avoiding incidental deer.

**Scott W.:** No snaring incidents reported this year.

### **ND Houndsmen Association Update - Cody Hilliard**

Good turnout for 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Field Trial, which was held near Center with ~60 dogs attending. The purpose is to get people together, recruit members, get organized, etc. There is lion, coon, and bear drags as well as treeing competitions. Just under half were from out of state (MT, MN, SD). Friday events called off due to weather.

Currently have 35-40 members, about a dozen being lifetime members. Main concerns for retaining membership: officer commitment, general growing pains of a new organization.

Advised to file as 501(c)(7) for sporting group.

Invited back to Wild Outdoor Women weekend at Lake Metigoshe.

Main avenue of communication is Facebook, no website currently.

Working with North Dakota Coon Hunters Association to get the two groups together.

### **USDA-Wildlife Services Update - John Paulson**

Depressed fur prices decreased interest in trapping coyotes. Snow made access to regular producer sites challenging.

Aircraft was the best tool for this year:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Month</b>	<b>Hours Flown</b>	<b>Take</b>
2022	March	112	658
2023	March	221	2500

Factors to consider: private sector take was down this year; not setting as much of the regular equipment due to access.

Talk about a bounty at the ND legislature was stifled. Not a viable solution to the problem.

Coyote population reports were up but snow cover makes coyotes more visible, and coyotes may be attracted to other wildlife (deer and pheasants) congregating in farmsteads. Wildlife are more tolerant of each other when resources are scarce.

**Bill H.:** Coyotes counted during winter aerial deer surveys were up.

Less than 5% of landowners in ND have a signed contract for USDA to fly their property for coyotes.

Increase in general fund dollars for routine operations allows to not necessarily expand/do more but continue normal operations as prices of vehicles, fuel, etc. have increased.

Busy spring for field personnel with many complaints coming in.

HPAI is a serious concern for Midwest poultry operations. APHIS pays indemnity, or market value of birds in depopulating situations. Focus from Congress is on pilot project for prevention due to high cost of depopulation payouts. Phase I of prevention is wildlife hazard assessments. Phase II is harassment/removal of wild waterfowl and birds such as pigeons, starlings, etc. cohabitating buildings, which are also a concern. Phase III is surveillance. Biosecurity is a major focus within the prevention plan. Congress hopes to lower costs of depopulation.

**Stephanie:** Several red foxes tested positive for HPAI last year. USDA also helps with urban coyote complaints and black bear damage.

Urban coyote complaints down this year, so far, though always a few complaints from the Bismarck area. Provided some technical assistance for bears.

Mike Halstead, who was with USDA-WS 34 years retired in March and the position was recently filled.

Expanding feral swine surveillance. Planning to house a pilot and aircraft in Bismarck to do thermal surveillance along Canada border. Looking at a hangar location in Mandan. The surveillance crew would also respond to trail camera reports of feral swine.

### **Delta Waterfowl Update- Mike Buxton**

Currently have 10 trappers trapping total of 25 sites, with most sites in Devils Lake region, but some are south of 94. Also 3 in Manitoba, and 3 in Saskatchewan. Continuing to expand into new jurisdictions.

80-90% of catch is raccoon and skunk, mostly adults. 2021 drought lowered recruitment. Last year was better from a water standpoint. We trap March 15 - July 15. Snow was major hindrance for access, but many yard sites are set up. Catch has picked up in last week or two.

In Manitoba, research is continuing on the removal of nest predators and effect on over-water nesters. 8 years in, it has turned into a long-term study. Starting to see signals of effect of trapping. We are looking at new nest searching techniques to find less obvious nests. Metrics are not lining up so far. Using drones for brood surveys in Manitoba. It is the first year back in Saskatchewan since 2014, with three 25 square mile sites to look at nest success on trapped vs. non-trapped.

Researching effect of trapping on nestling/brood survival-using telemetry for duckling survival is expensive, and new techniques use drones. Using nasal saddles (visible in drone footage) and radio telemetry for BWTE.

2018 trap and bait study discontinued – success varies from place to place. Changed trapping protocols to use variety of trap and bait types.

Grad student from 2020-2021 still analyzing results.

### **Drones for nest searching:**

Upland searches- false positives from rocks, other objects that retain heat.

Over water- more effective but water holding heat overnight is a source of false positive. Easier to detect over water nests when hen is on the nest. Technology is continually evolving. Drones are less time consuming and less invasive. Canada requires ground observer for U.S. citizens to fly drones. Nest dragging is expensive and drones can be used as a quality control.

Discussed SD nest predator bounty program and its reception by the public. Our research shows trapping needs to be targeted and intensive to make a measurable difference.

### **Education – Jeff Long and Rick Tischaef**

*Print summary provided by Rick. See p. 11-13 or [Jump to](#)*

#### **Additional notes:**

670 people encountered during all fur harvester education events last year.

Full fur harvester education classes: 44 people certified, 11 active instructors. There is a need in Grand Forks and Fargo areas.

7 attended the Cable Device course, the youngest being 10 years old.

Instructors are not required to cover trapping in Hunted Ed. Some with trapping experience will share their knowledge.

Getting a signup sheet for Trapper Ed into Hunter Ed classrooms might increase signup numbers.

Issue of mistakenly signing up for Trapper Ed instead of Hunter Ed has been resolved.

Roosevelt Park Zoo staff interested in attending Hunter Ed and Trapper Ed.

### **ESA Update – Lauren Toivonen**

Plains spotted skunk: Status assessment complete with draft finding (to be published Fall 2023) under review. Midwest taking lead on this. Would be surprised if the species was listed.

**Stephanie**: 3 confirmed in last 12 years in ND. We are on the fringe of their range. The listing is for the Midwest region. This would be the first time an unprotected species would be federally listed.

Prairie Gray Fox: Petitioned in 2012, status under review so nothing has changed. 2027 is start of review process.

**Stephanie**: Genetic work done since petition would invalidate listing of prairie gray fox as there is no subspecies.

Black-footed ferret: Standing Rock Sioux released 28 ferrets in 2021. As of October 2022, a spotlight survey effort yielded 3 males in three different locations. PIT tags were scanned. Conducted plague management using fipronil grain. It is a “when, not if” approach to plague mitigation. Research has shown that an area may not need to be treated every year. Another spotlight survey is planned for early August. Hoping to document breeding. Fipronil application planned for August/September. Second release of ferrets was in same area in October 2022. Tribe has requested more ferrets for 2023, which is pending. Evaluation planned for Year 3.

For ND: no movement of black-footed ferrets into the state that has been documented. 7500 acres of active prairie dog habitat present on Forest Service land. 1200 acres within management area in McKenzie District. New grasslands supervisor is receptive to ferrets on the landscape. 1000 acres of habitat ideal, not necessarily contiguous. Largest area of active prairie dog town habitat @ Standing Rock ~800 acres. Management plan is to be revised.

Total of 33 reintroduction sites nationwide. New for 2023: Colorado Pueblo Chemical Depot.

Gray Wolves: Feb. 10, 2022 court ordered relisting of gray wolves as Endangered in the Lower 48 and Mexico and Threatened in Minnesota. The Northern Rockies population is an exception to the listing. Status review by Feb 2024. Focus is on data since 2020.

Sporadic incidence of gray wolves in ND. The last two genetic tests submitted by NDGFD from McHenry and Foster County came back as wolves. The data sent to USFWS does not include known hybrids. Whether they are federally listed, they are a protected furbearer in ND with no trapping season.

10(j) rules offers flexibility for listed species.

*Lauren is moving on to another USFWS job in NM for the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program. Best of luck! 😊*

### **SWAP Revision: Patrick Isakson**

ND receives ~\$500,000 annually for research and implementation for managing nongame species. The first State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) was published in 2015. Required to update every 10 years, which is a 2-year process. Planned publishing date is June 1, 2025. Three furbearers (marten, swift fox, river otter) are on the list of species of concern. Species by species work is complicated, so it is a landscape level plan with a habitat focus. A major focus in the plan is conserving grasslands. We are currently evaluating species interiorly. It is a preventative plan to keep species off T/E list. Trying to include more invertebrates (aquatic invertebrates, insects, plants). We are well behind the curve in ND relative to other states as far as invertebrates.

Early river otter and marten surveys were funded by SWAP.

RAWA (Recovering America's Wildlife Act) did not get to a vote on the Senate floor, but we have a budget and are ready to use the money if it comes in. Approved for 4 NDGFD FTEs in habitat positions if it passes.

We get an allocation of money in April annually and a bid for research proposals is put out. Focus is on implementation with some research. 2-3 projects per year, \$100k-200k budget per project.

We are on the fringe of species range for spotted skunk and grey fox, so funds are not often used for those species. They were included in first reviews but have since been removed from species of greatest conservation concern list.

### **Marten Research Update – Stephanie Tucker**

Assessing marten population in the Turtle Mountains with collaborators Dr. Gary Roloff and Dr. Steven Gray with Michigan State University using spatially-explicit mark-recapture. Hair snare sampling via tree-mounted, baited PVC cubby. Individuals are “marked” by their genetics, determined from the hair samples. Trail cams are used to verify marten visits to justify sending samples for DNA testing. The pipe is cut so the marten can climb up the tree into the cubby. Beaver meat is used as bait.

Initially started in May 2022, had some hiccups, started fresh in July and went into October.

In 2022 field season: 351 sampling events, with 79 hair samples suspected to be marten. Once genetic results come back, we will know if we have a sample size big enough to run the analysis.

In communication with Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe about access to tribal sites, but it has not gone past the conversation stage.

Takeaways from first field season:

- Higher marten visitation later in the summer into fall.
- Gusto call lure worked better than salmon oil.
- Common non-target furbearers: gray squirrel, red squirrel, raccoon.
- Less common non-targets: fisher, black bear, weasel.
- Some camera vandalism and theft—affixed yellow NDGF sticker to all equipment deployed in the field.

Plans for 2023 field season:

- Sampling period August to October when kits are active.
- Increase number of adhesives and reduce size of cubby opening by raising adhesives.

**Rick:** 2 ¼” is the cubby diameter for marten sets in Idaho to limit incidental fisher.

## **Open Discussion led by Stephanie Tucker**

### **- Regulations**

Addressed specific request from public to reword pneumatic air gun language: remove “pre-charged” requirement for mink, muskrat, and weasel.

Topics discussed: foot-pounds per second specification, pump/spring type language, “pre-charged” language to ensure omission of Red Rider-type air guns, referenced big game proclamation language for comparison. Noted constantly emerging new options making regulation language changes tricky.

Language from 2023 Deer Hunting Proclamation referenced:

*“Pre-charged pneumatic air guns, charged from an external high compression source such as an air compressor, air tank or an external hand pump are legal for deer but must fire a projectile (excluding air bolts) of at least .35 caliber in diameter and at least 150 grains in weight with a minimum muzzle velocity of 600 feet per second.”*

Scott Evens asked about restricting sets to 100 ft from sight exposed baits – current rule is 25 ft. Variation between states with this regulation. Not many reports of incidentals from enforcement (believe all incidentals in last 10 years were within 25 ft).

### **- Online Reporting**

Online reporting is especially useful for river otter and lions whose seasons have a harvest limit. Tagging instructions are linked in reporting form. 51 furbearers reported electronically last year. Only hiccup is some people not reporting section/township/range. Feature for lat/long was added. We still take reports via phone call and walk-ins at district offices.

Discussed furbearer reporting feature available on NDGF app but no way to register harvest via app. The app is designed to work offline, but furbearer registration needs to be online, otherwise the registration is held in a cache until user reaches service. Adding to the app requires programmers, and NDGF staff are looking into it.

#### - **Sale of Incidental Pelts**

We put up furs from incidentals if they are prime and in good condition. Only licensed fur buyers can bid. Request for bids go out early December. Sold 7 fishers and 10 otters this year. 6 bids received, with top bid @ \$705. Fur buyers prefer we do not keep them for multiple years to prevent freezer burn.

Only 3 incidental otters reported so far this year.

#### - **License Sales**

For combination license sales or fur harvester sales there is a prompt asking about use of cable devices.

Surveying furbearer trappers and hunters separately now.

#### - **Bobcat Season Review**

Slow season.

Zone 1 – 21

Zone 2 – 4 (3 from Pembina Gorge, 1 near river in Walsh Co.).

Specific dates for pursuing bobcats with hounds, after deer gun season closes. Winter weather kept people from pursuing bobcats.

#### - **Fisher Season Review**

Last 3 years harvest consistent in lower 20s. Still no fisher harvested outside eastern 1/3 of the state. Most known mortalities come from the trapping season.

Population trending down with fluctuations over the years. It is a simplistic model based on tooth cementum analysis. It takes a significant change in abundance to change the model. The further back in time you go the more accurate it is, as animals are back-fed into the model based on age data from cementum analysis. Tooth results come back in October, so the graph does not show tooth data from this season.

Reports went up when online reporting was offered. Mink are commonly mistaken for fishers.

#### - **Otter Season Review**

Did not meet 25 harvest limit this year (24). Harvest is allowed statewide but most are taken from Red River Valley. Usually half a dozen incidental otters are taken during spring beaver season. Occasionally caught in fishing nets during fisheries surveys. We do not receive complaints about river otters depredate fish ponds as many other Midwestern states do.

Population model changes drastically when age classes are pooled. Oldest otter documented was >10 years old.

#### - **Mountain Lion Season Review**

Legal harvest up this year.

Zone 1 – 11

Zone 2 – 1

TAT – 1 (possibly 2)

Harvest limit not met until end of season this year.

One illegal take was a lion incidentally caught in foothold trap, shot from several hundred yards away by hunter who was unaware the cat was in a trap. Hunter self-reported.

Genetic population assignments for lions taken outside Zone 1 determine if lions came from ND population or neighboring state(s). Based on genetics, out of state individuals are not included in the population model.

SD mountain lion population peaked at the same time ND's did and has stabilized. SD does not allow use of hounds in the Black Hills.

#### - **Black Bear Reports**

<10 confirmations of black bears in the state last year, down from the year before. In last decade, map of confirmations has not changed much. A person can report a bear without an exact location, but it will not be shown on the confirmations map.

North Dakota is now a member of BearWise. The program is administered by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), originally started by Southeast Furbearer Working Group to provide consistent messaging about how people can responsibly live with black bears. BearWise.org has online resources. BearWise is moving toward including more grizzly information.

No reports of sows with cubs or pairs moving together this year. Some game wardens believe there are black bears overwintering in the state.

Discussion about grizzly bears potentially moving back into ND in the future.

Attended Eastern Black Bear Workshop in Wisconsin – focus on human-bear conflict. 400,000 black bears in heavily populated eastern U.S.

Some states using Tasers to haze wildlife and for temporary immobilization.

Discussion about infrared surveys for black bears similar to those flown for elk in Turtle Mtns. High cost, tree cover interference, winter dormancy all inhibiting factors.

#### - **Coyote Catalog**

11 landowners, 123 hunters. Continuing the program despite decline.

#### - **Swift Fox**

In 2007-2008, SD, MT, and SK did releases of Swift Foxes.



## **North Dakota Fur Hunters and Trappers Association**

### **Calendar**

**24 June 2023 Velva, ND Summer Rendezvous** - The summer rendezvous is a family and friends' event being held on Saturday June 24<sup>th</sup> 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 rainbow trout. 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 (yep, that's the way it is spelled) Lodge (701-338-3080) in Velva has both motel rooms and hook-ups for campers. Velva also has a city park which has camping.

**Annual Meeting** - Our annual meeting will be held during our summer rendezvous on Saturday, June 24, 2023. The meeting will begin at 12:30 PM. The location is the Velva Wildlife Club, Velva, North Dakota.

**Eternal Vigilance** – Relationships are one of the tools that allow us to survive and do what we love. A statement made by a friend one day included “it’s not what you know, but who you know”. Regardless of how you feel about those words, that statement is a fact. A recent example of this reveals the importance of these relationships, and my appreciation extends to Jordan Sillars and Steve Rinella at Meateater ([www.themeateater.com](http://www.themeateater.com)), our members, and the many contacts that when all connected, created a force of reckoning. Jim and Steve put a majority of the story on their website at [www.themeateater.com/conservation/wildlife-management/meateater-obtains-leaked-letter-asking-biden-to-ban-beaver-trapping](http://www.themeateater.com/conservation/wildlife-management/meateater-obtains-leaked-letter-asking-biden-to-ban-beaver-trapping). Check it out. Bottom line is that we were able to responsibly participate in action against a low-life and irresponsible attempt at usurping our profession and wildlife management. Know that much more information traded hands than what was included in the article, and which may be used at the appropriate time in the future. The “Biden Letter” requesting an executive order to ban beaver trapping on federal lands is on our website ([www.ndfhta.com](http://www.ndfhta.com)).

**North Dakota Wildlife Federation (NDWF) Update** - We are an affiliate organization with the NDWF. The NDWF had their annual meeting on January 6 – 8, 2023 in Bismarck. Part of their agenda for the weekend included discussing three resolutions that were submitted by members, with encouragement that they be passed. The NDWF describes their resolution process as “Resolutions are the single most responsive service NDWF can give to the membership. The intent of resolutions is to establish policies on specific issues and set the direction and performance of the NDWF.”

The subjects of two of the three resolutions had been discussed and voted upon in previous NDWF meetings. These same two resolutions concerned our Board of Directors and needed our attention. The communication process began. The first resolution was “Baiting of deer and other wildlife”. The resolution title and text proposed serious consequences to fur hunting and trapping with references to “other wildlife”. Fortunately, the resolutions committee had met the Friday evening before the general meeting and rewrote the resolution specifically to “The North Dakota Wildlife Federation supports the banning of using bait for big game hunting”.

A motion was made to pass, which opened the subject to discussion. During discussion, I thanked the resolutions committee and NDWF board for their rewrite and clarity of this resolution. Upon conclusion, the motion to pass failed.

The remaining resolution was “Use of trail cameras on public land”. The text of the resolution included language that defined the prohibited period as “...two weeks prior to and during the big game hunting seasons”. A motion was made to pass, which opened the subject to discussion. During discussion, I mentioned there was no definition of public land, and should such a restriction exist - using this year’s big game seasons as an example - it would prohibit trail camera use from August 22 (two weeks prior to the big game seasons) through January 1 (current big game - pronghorn, both species of deer, moose, elk, and bighorn sheep - hunting seasons). Trail cameras are one of the tools fur hunters and trappers use to identify the abundance of furbearers in a specific area; test the effectiveness of lures and baits; identify and monitor travel corridors; can be used to identify non-target species in the area; and may be used to prevent or identify individuals interfering with lawful fur hunting or trapping activity. I concluded with the trail camera as a useful tool during that prohibited period and that we encourage use in our fur harvester education classes. Courtney Wilhelm Jenner of Williston (NDWF board member at large) stated that she used trail cameras during her trapping activity much for the same reasons mentioned, but also to check her traps and insure that captured animals were handled as quickly as possible. She also mentioned that monitoring her traps while set made for some very accurate and safe decisions during hazardous weather. Upon conclusion, the motion to pass failed.

Several individuals made personal comments to me later that some of the information provided had never been considered and were thankful for our participation. A very good meeting and some great discussion on two very important subjects. It must be remembered that the resolutions came forward because there is support for such, and that must be respected. It must also be remembered that you have no say in the matter if you choose to sit in the bleachers and not be on the field.

**Advisory Board Meeting in Bismarck**

– Our association sponsored the District 8 Advisory Board meeting in Bismarck on April 25, 2023. As in previous years and locations, we provide a display of our tanned pelts and a table filled with free educational handbooks and literature. The tables full of tanned pelts make a great place for sharing stories, information, and experiences.



**128 FOLLOWERS**  
 LOT OF SPAM PROFILES  
 GET FILTERED OUT

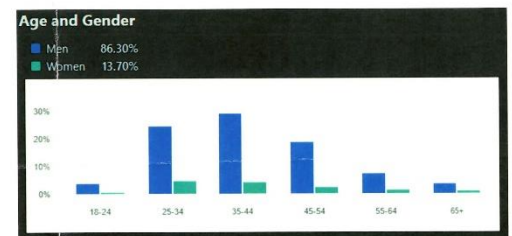


**19 FOLLOWERS**  
 9 VIDEOS  
 MOST VIEWED :  
 2022 RENDEZVOUS— 84 VIEWS  
 BUILDING DOUBLE CUBBY'S FOR  
 220 BODY GRIPPERS— 59 VIEWS  
 MANY VIDEOS TO COME ONCE  
 RICK AND I CAN SYNC OUR  
 SCHEDULES.

**SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH**



**750 FOLLOWERS**  
 MOSTLY TARGETING AGES 25 TO 44  
 14% FEMALE FOLLOWING



Location	Countries
Bismarck, ND	61
Minot, ND	48
Williston, ND	35
Mandan, ND	29
Velva, ND	22
Watford City, ND	21
Fargo, ND	18
Dickinson, ND	14
Lincoln, ND	14
West Fargo, ND	13

### **Advisory Board Meeting in Stanley**

– Our association sponsored the District 2 Advisory Board meeting in Stanley on November 27, 2022. We provided venison chili and all the sides that goes with a chili banquet. The chili was welcomed by all who dined with us on a blustery and snowy cold night.

### **North Dakota Cooperative Fur Harvester Education Program**

#### **Calendar**

#### **June**

- 10 Devils Lake Youth Outdoor Event
- 14 Girl Scouts @ Velva Wildlife Club
- 21 4-H Event at 4-H Camp in Washburn
- 24 NDFHTA Summer Rendezvous @ Velva Wildlife Club

#### **July**

- 12 4-H Event @ 4-H Camp in Washburn
- 21-29 State Fair Conservation Park in Minot

#### **August**

- 1, 3, 5 Fur Harvester Education Class in Bismarck
- 12 Youth Day @ Velva Wildlife Club
- 31 Youth Night Out @ State fair Conservation Park in Minot

#### **September**

- 9 Ladies Day @ Velva Wildlife Club
- TBD Mini-fur school @ Valley State College

## October

5 – 7 Fur Harvester Education Class @ Velva Wildlife Club

14 Using Cables in North Dakota @ Velva Wildlife Club

**Wild Outdoor Women** – North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department hosted a Wild Outdoor Women winter event at Lake Metigoshe State Park near Bottineau on February 10 - 12. We participated and sponsored a fur handling session for 10 ladies. Each had the opportunity to skin, flesh, and board a muskrat and a mink. The class filled up fast and all 10 were wonderful to work with. Both items were "take home and send to the tannery when dry".

The carcass muskrats were donated by Lane Pederson from Cando, but I ended up having to purchase the carcass mink with our education program funds. Mink arrived from Indiana, Iowa, Washington, and Wisconsin. Not at all hard to catch 10 mink in November around here, except when the first of a few blizzards arrived that first week in November. The comments at the end of the day expressed sincere appreciation for the opportunity we provided. The education program has helped with this event for several years, with Stephanie and Chad Tucker teaching muskrat and beaver handling. A special thank you for their years as instructors.

**Tanned Pelts for Sale** – last spring we held our first Great Plains Fur School “You Do It” Fur Handling Day. The folks who attended skinned, fleshed, and boarded many river otters, fishers, and bobcats. Much work was done, but many river otters, fisher, and bobcats remained, which I finished in my shop. Those pelts were tanned and are available for sale. They make great wall hangings, personal displays, and conversation pieces. The proceeds from the sale of the finished pelts are dedicated to our education program. Pelts were tanned by Sleepy Creek Tannery in Iowa; are case skinned; and include feet. Bobcats are \$125, river otter \$100, and fisher \$80. There are a couple of otters without feet that are \$80. Contact me if you’d like to purchase any of these pelts. Remember – it’s for our education program!

**2022 Roll Up** – we had seventeen stand-alone events in 2022. The numbers reveal that our volunteer instructors traveled 4031 miles, donated 390.5 hours, presenting fur harvester education materials and information to 654 individuals. Add to that the estimated 35,000 that passed by our booth at the Conservation Park during the State Fair. I can only describe the time from family and friends to volunteer as priceless. In addition, this was a year of historically high fuel prices. Those 4031 miles cost our volunteers approximately \$1813.95 for fuel. That is a testament to our volunteer’s selfless dedication to our education program and the future of fur hunting and trapping in North Dakota. Those instructors are:

Jeremy Duckwitz	Cody Krause	Travis Leier
Scott Winkelman	Nat Bornsen	Stephanie Tucker
Phil Mastrangelo	Jim Job	Justin Voight
Rick Tischaefter	Chris Tischaefter	Jason Friedt
Lloyd Jones	Brent Ternes	Mason Ryckman
Bernie Kordonowy	Ryan Mitchell	

**State Fair** – We have an education booth in the conservation park on the fairgrounds. We are strategically located adjacent to the fishing pond, so for the public to get through the park, they must walk on water or pass by our booth. Talk about great exposure! It is estimated that 35,000 guests visited the conservation park during the 2022 state fair.

**USDA-Wildlife Services National Training Academy** – USDA-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) has a National Training Academy (NTA) located at Mississippi State University (MSU) in Starkville, Mississippi. The academy is a cooperative effort between USDA-WS and MSU and is designed to train WS employees on a variety of subjects (explosives, precision rifle, UAS, equipment safety, etc). We had the opportunity several years ago to showcase our fur harvester education program to NTA staff in Starkville. Since then, a staff position has been added to design and produce a trapper training program within NTA. Rainer Nichols was hired for the position, attended our fur harvester education class last fall in Velva, and was scheduled to attend fur school in April. Rainer came to North Dakota last month, and instead of fur school, we worked through lesson plans, agendas, equipment requirements, and resourcing what will be a weeklong trapper training program at NTA for USDA-WS new hires. Rainer also directed and produced approximately 35 video segments at Velva Wildlife Club that will be used in the on-line portion of this training program.

**Bob Gangl Memorial Award** – We received three essay entries from the 2022 fur harvester education season. Essays are written to answer the question “Why is Trapping Important to Me”. All three essays were from the “14 and under” age group, and only one can be selected for the \$125.00 award. One essay came from a graduate of the Velva class and two essays came from graduates of the Bismarck class. The Gangl family reviews each essay and selects the best. The 2022 award was written by Matthew Michels of Mohall, North Dakota.

**Great Plains Fur School** – The Great Plains Fur School should have been April 24 - 28 at the Velva Wildlife Club. Invites were sent out on the first of January and the class was ready to go with 19 registered with a couple of “maybes” to boot. We are about maxed out with equipment and space at 24. That course needs to have at least 18 to make it financially supported, so we were good to go. I brought back plenty of carcass animals from Wisconsin for fur handling. The 1st of April turned out to be a very bad day when I received a call from the folks who had registered from South Dakota. There were 7 law enforcement officers, and all had signed up right away when the invite went out in January. Someone in a much higher pay grade thought it a good idea to hold firearms training the week of fur school and they were obligated to cancel their registration. I could not make up the loss and had to postpone fur school until 2024.

**“You Do It” Fur Handling Event** - We tried another "you do it" fur handling day scheduled for April 29th at Velva Wildlife Club. I have a freezer load of carcass animals, primarily river otters, that were intended for fur school. Only 2 registered and that event was postponed as well.

The compressor for my walk-in freezer failed last week, forcing the purchase of two chest freezers to store some of the carcass animals in as we start to get warmer. Those too were purchased with our education program funds. I'll move some of the carcass animals to Idaho for their fur school next week, but some 30 otters will remain here. At some point, they will get put up and sent to our education account at Fur Harvesters Auction in North Bay, Ontario.

**Using Cable Devices in North Dakota** – We held a training day on October 15, 2022, at the Velva Wildlife Club. The event was well attended, and everyone enjoyed the training, the food, and sharing information. This training includes everything from cable device construction to actual field setting of both restraining and lethal devices, checking sets, ethics and responsibility, and detailed information for targeting different furbearers. We plan on conducting another course on October 14, 2023.