

Fall Newsletter

April 2023

Note from the Chair

Dear HTCWG,

I hope everyone is having a good spring, for those of you that are experiencing spring already. I know some of you may have a few weeks to wait for spring, but in southern Indiana where I live spring is here as evidenced by the trees budding and the early spring flowers showing their color. This is my first Note from the Chair. I'm excited to see what the next two years holds for our group and I'm looking forward to exploring opportunities for more people to be engaged in different pieces of our still relatively young Working Group.

One such opportunity that arose recently was the chance to comment on a potential revision of The Wildlife Society's position statement on firearms. Position Statements are dated (now 10 years, previously 5 years) after which Council must either reapprove it or consider revising or phasing it out. The firearm statement was due for review. But it was added to the March Council meeting, so our request for input had a very tight timeline right near the holidays. We had an open forum for members to share their thoughts as well as opportunities through email. The board then synthesized the thoughts into comments we supplied to the team working on the position statement. We worked with our liaison, Gordon Batcheller, and he expressed his gratitude for our efforts.

I wanted to likewise send a big thank you to all the members who spent time reviewing and sending comments. We don't get to see a final draft until after Council reviews in March (which they may have done by the time you read this) so I couldn't share back a revised version. But from the feedback I received from Gordon, it seemed like they heard at least some of the comments we expressed during the process. The Council will decide whether to accept as-is, ask for revisions, or reject at their March meeting.

We hope to have other opportunities like this in the future for members to be engaged. For instance, if anyone is interested in hosting a topic for a webinar through The Wildlife Society or be part of an ad hoc committee to consider Working Group statements on certain topics. Join us for our April meeting as we discuss this more! Hope to see you all virtually there.

Gerianne Albers



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TWS Hunting, Trapping, and Conservation Working Group



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HTC Officers 2023-2024

Geriann Albers, Chair

Geriann Albers is the furbearer biologist for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. She is a board member with the Indiana Chapter of The Wildlife Society, past board member of the Wildlife Damage Management Working Group, and past president of University of Illinois and West Virginia University Student Chapters of The Wildlife Society. Prior to joining Indiana DNR, she worked as the Assistant Black Bear and Furbearer Biologist in North Carolina, and the Assistant Furbearer Biologist for Wisconsin DNR. She received her M.S. from West Virginia University in 2012. In her free time, she enjoys crocheting, reading fiction, basket weaving, and watching British murder mysteries.



John McDonald, Chair-elect

John McDonald is an Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental Science at Westfield State University in western Massachusetts and Past President of The Wildlife Society. From 1995-2000 he was the Deer Project Leader for the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and from 2003 to 2012 he was a Wildlife Specialist with the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program of the US Fish & Wildlife Service in the Northeast Region where he administered Wildlife Restoration and State Wildlife grants to 13 state fish and wildlife agencies. John is a TWS Fellow and Associate

Editor for the Wildlife Society Bulletin and the Journal of Wildlife Management. He was one of the founders of the Northeast Section's Wildlife Field Course and has served as the organizer and one of the lead instructors for the course since 2009.

Membership Corner

Check out a member's story about Fur School at Suny ESF in the article on page 5!

Do you have a hunting, trapping, or general field work story you want to share with fellow HTC members? Send them to Amanda Veals Dutt at amveals@gmail.com with subject line "HTC Membership Corner" to have your story featured in our next newsletter.

HTC Officers 2023-2024

Tom Decker, Past Chair



Tom is a Certified Wildlife Biologist® and works for the US Fish & Wildlife Service in the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR). Tom previously has 25 years' experience working for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and for the Massachusetts' Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, holding several positions including Furbearer Biologist, Director of Wildlife, and Director of Operations. Tom has been active member of The Wildlife Society for several decades including serving on TWS

Council. Tom is a TWS Fellow and National Conservation Leadership Institute Fellow. He is also Life Member of the American Society of Mammologists and a Professional Member of the Boone and Crockett Club. Tom is an instructor for the national Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow program and the Trapping Matters – Professional Development program. He is a certified hunter education and trapper education instructor in Massachusetts and a certified instructor in the Vermont 4-H Shooting Sports program. Tom holds BS and MS degrees in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and a bachelor's degree in Geography from Worcester State University.

Valorie Titus, Secretary-Treasurer

Val is the Program Manager for Wildlife Resources Management at Hocking College in Nelsonville, Ohio. She has been hunting and fishing her entire life, and has started to learn more about trapping. She's a certified hunter safety instructor, as well as a Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow instructor. Her research has focused mainly on the conservation and management of reptiles and amphibians and wildlife health, but she has recently started to dabble in game species and human dimensions work. She is an active member of TWS, having held a number of positions at the state, regional, working group, and recently served as the NE Representative to Council before moving to OH. She is an alum of the Leadership Institute and is a TWS Fellow. Val completed her PhD in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior at Binghamton University in 2013.



HTC Officers 2023-2024

Pat Jackson, Board Member

Pat Jackson graduated from the University of Missouri in 2007 with two Bachelors, one in Forestry and another in Fisheries & Wildlife. After graduation he enjoyed a short stint of wildlife field work in southeast Alaska, transitioned to full time trapping in Missouri, and then moved to Hawaii in 2008. In Hawaii, Pat spent two years doing vertebrate pest work focusing on feral cats, rats, and feral swine removal. In 2010 Pat moved to Utah and began work on a PhD focusing on coyote biology, diet, and home ranges in central Nevada. He is currently the Predator Management Staff Specialist for Nevada Department of Wildlife. His professional interests include wildlife damage management, animal capture techniques, Best Management Practices for furbearer trapping, public outreach, and predator management. Pat is an avid trapper, fisherman, and hunter; primarily focusing on big game in the

west. One of his favorite aspects involves teaching others to big game hunt and trap. He also thorough enjoys sharing and teaching others to butcher and prepare wild game.



Bryant White, Board Member

As the Program Manager for Trapping Policy and Human Wildlife Conflicts for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), he helps lead the efforts of the Sustainable Use of Wildlife and Wildlife Resource Policy committees, and the Furbearer Conservation, Human Wildlife Conflict, and Feral Swine working groups. He leads efforts to develop Best Management Practices for Trapping in the United States and Best Practices for human-wildlife conflict resolution. He also engages with CITES, the IUCN, the International Wildlife

Management Congress, the International Union of Game Biologists, and other domestic and international wildlife conservation groups. He also

represents the United States as a member of the Joint Management Committee for the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards. He has authored numerous peer reviewed scientific publications on furbearer management and human-wildlife conflict resolution. Bryant has also served as an instructor for the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow program since 2010 and he is passionate about hunter and trapper education.

Membership Corner: Fur School U

By: Jacqueline Frair

This spring break (March 15-17), 18 students majoring in wildlife science and conservation biology at SUNY's College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, New York completed a 3-day "Fur School". The content of the course closely aligned with "Trapping Matters" workshops; content for each day is shown below, including a lot of hands-on learning opportunities.

Day 1

Classroom topics: Best Management Practices, trap identification/modification/preparation, and trap setting.

Experiential learning: Dry land setting body-gripping and foothold traps and cable restraints.

Day 2

Classroom topics: Furbearer management, research and restoration, furbearer diseases and safe handling, and fur markets.

Experiential learning: Setting traps in aquatic environments.

Day 3

Classroom topics: Communications, humane dispatch, and release of non-target species.

Experiential learning: Safe handling and preparation of fur.

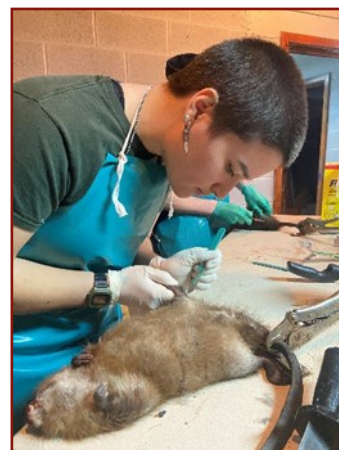
Unfortunately, a nor'easter the day before the class hampered our ability to find tracks and set traps outdoors, but we muddled through. Course instructors included several biologists from the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation with assistance from a few retirees and a professor at the college.



1 Andy MacDuff (DEC), 2 Justin Garcia, 3 Joey Roberts, 4 Audrey Tamasy, 5 Isabella Mustafa, 6 Sofia Lathrop-Olmedo, 7 Jesse Sebring, 8 Becky Jones, 9 Celebrity Wright, 10 William Herr, 11 Tim Pyszczyński (DEC), 12 Scott Smith (DEC, retired), 13 Jim Carmody (NYS Trappers Association), 14 Tim Watson (DEC), 15 Jenelle Grigeevich, 16 Olivia O'Hara, 17 Peter Roy, 18 Julia Lotempio, 19 Brianna Svitak, 20 Klementyna Cemerys, 21 Raymond Bailey, 22 Jake Glum, 23 Brandon Wingert, 24 Jacqui Frair (SUNY ESF)

Membership Corner: Fur School U

We had a wide range of students attending; students grew up all over the state from New York City to Buffalo, ranged from freshman to seniors in college, and included those who expressed interest in the content as well as those with reservations about the course from the start. Yet all came with open minds, left considerably more knowledgeable about regulated fur trapping, and had big smiles on their face after putting up their very first fur! Ultimately, the course culminated with students receiving a Trapper Education Certificate that enables them to hold a trapper's license in the state of New York.



New York's Fur School has traditionally focused on education for early career professionals, particularly new state biologists with no previous exposure to regulated trapping. The NY Fur School is run by the NY Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and modeled after the successful Fur School run by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. As mentioned above, Fur School closely aligns with Trapping Matters workshops and is aimed to help new biologists handle the challenges of overseeing the most controversial and least understood aspect of wildlife management, trapping. The NY DEC has increased opportunities to attend Fur School in the state to meet this demand. This was the first year Fur School was delivered specifically to college students, and from all perspectives it was a huge success. Our group of instructors have plans to continue offering Fur School U annually at ESF.

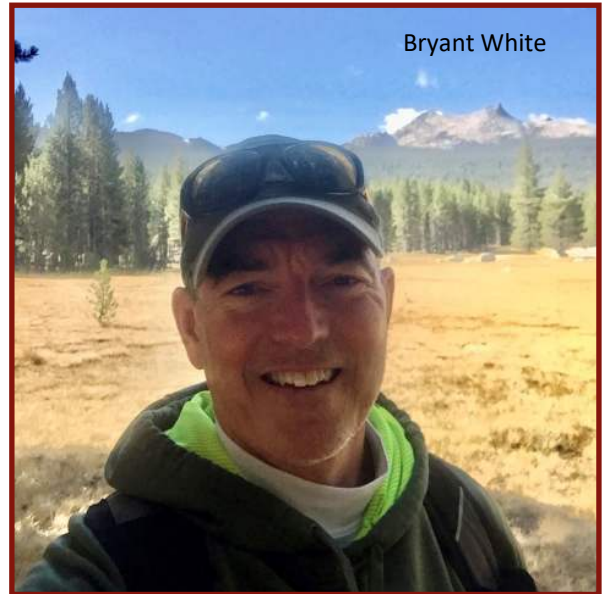


BMP Trapping Matters

What Do You Think About Trapping?

By: Bryant White

First of all, I want to thank you all for electing me to be on the Executive Board of the Hunting, Trapping, and Conservation Working Group. I am totally immersed on a day-to-day basis in the types of efforts this group engages in, and I hope I can do something good for this group during my tenure based on that experience. To start with, I was asked to write a short article for the newsletter about “trapping”. For the past twenty years my career has revolved around conducting research and outreach and education about trapping. And let me be the first to admit, there is still a lot we don’t know that will require additional human dimensions research, field studies and laboratory efforts, but we have learned a few things.



One thing we know is that most of the public knows very little about trapping. In a recent focus group effort, conducted by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, when members of the public (who were not wildlife professionals) were asked what they thought about trapping, the most common response was something like “I don’t think people do that anymore”. In a recent survey conducted of TWS membership, when members were asked about the use of foothold traps over 21% said they didn’t know enough about the topic to answer the question. (Menale et al., 2022) And, by the way, that number had increased from ~15% in a similar survey of TWS members and a few other professional organizations (Muth et al. 1998).

Hopefully after you read this you will no longer be in that group. Please don’t think I am judging those TWS members who said they don’t know enough about the topic to answer. I appreciate their honesty. If anything, that is an indictment of universities failing to provide more education on this topic. I know many university programs do have a curriculum that teach students about trapping, but some do not. This is where the Hunting, Trapping and Conservation Working group can help. Here are a few things about trapping you might want to know.

BMP Trapping Matters

What Do You Think About Trapping?

Trapping is an important topic to know something about because it is used extensively in many of the most important wildlife management and conservation efforts in North America (I don't have time to discuss the global use of trapping (maybe another article) but the basic uses apply not just in North America. The reintroduction of numerous species (river otter, wolf (gray, red, Mexican), beaver, marten, snowshoe hare, etc.) was made possible by trapping. If you want to move animals from one place to another to establish a population, you must catch them first. Trapping is often used to protect threatened and endangered species of animals and plants (sea turtles, island and shore nesting birds, etc.). State Fish and Wildlife agencies use animals harvested by trappers to study population health; check for diseases and parasites, heavy metals and other pollutants, to understand population dynamics, and to quantify reproductive rates. Additionally, trapping is used to protect livestock from predation (although there are many techniques used to do this including other lethal and some non-lethal), to protect infrastructure (bridges, roads), property (homes, buildings, etc.), agriculture, forests, sensitive habitats and human health and safety. Many agencies require trappers to report their harvests, and this provides an index for populations. Some species (bobcat and river otter) fall under federal CITES regulations regardless of the state of capture and these harvests must be reported by all states. I would venture to say that trapping is used for more purposes than even hunting.



Photo credit: J. Vollers

Nathan Kluge, Furbearer Biologist for Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, explains how to use foothold traps at a Trapping Matters Workshop in Helena, Montana.

BMP Trapping Matters

What Do You Think About Trapping?

Trapping is conducted by agencies, conservation organizations, professional wildlife control operators and members of the public (licensed trappers). While these groups often have different motivations for engaging in the activity, social science indicates that most members of the public trap for various reasons from wildlife and habitat management to simply using this activity as another way to spend time with family and friends in the outdoors.

Trapping is a very heavily researched activity relative to some of its most contentious points including, animal welfare (are animals injured by traps), selectivity (what gets captured or doesn't in traps), safety (do traps pose a threat to users and the public), and efficacy (are devices effective at capturing targeted species). In 1996 the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies started the Best Management Practices for Trapping in the United States program (BMP) to evaluate those criteria (White et al. 2020). In conjunction with the International Organization for Standardization and the American National Standards Institute, protocols and evaluation criteria to evaluate traps were developed. Standards were developed for lethal capture and live capture systems. The BMP program operates under those protocols and evaluation criteria.



A young trapper goes a field with a traditional wooden trapper pack and gear.

Photo credit: B. White

BMP Trapping Matters

What Do You Think About Trapping?

For live capture the goal of the standard is to minimize injury (and associated pain, stress and suffering) so that if a captured animal is released, its survival will not be compromised. Field projects are conducted annually to capture animals using traps that are commonly used and to test new innovative trap designs. Wildlife veterinary pathologists conduct full body necropsies on captured animals to evaluate and score injuries relative to the ISO standards leading to a trapping device either being recommended or not.

For lethal capture the goal of the standard is to render the animal irreversibly unconscious (brain dead) leading to death, quickly. This type of precise evaluation can only be conducted in a laboratory setting. Research partners in Vegreville, Alberta, Canada at the Alberta Innovates Technologies research center perform these tests in a world class compound under scrutiny of IACUCs. Canada and the U.S. share data gathered through their respective programs regarding trap evaluations.

The BMP program has produced a lot of great data on trapping after having evaluated over 725 trapping devices, in over 500 individual field projects, across 43 states. For example, some traps perform much better than others. We found that 41% percent of traps tested failed to meet the standards. Overall selectivity for furbearer capture was 93%, so trapping can be very selective if the right techniques are used. Trapping can be done safely without risk to threatened or endangered species, and people and pets. During over 500 field projects across 43 states, no people were captured, and no threatened or endangered species were captured. 1.25% of captures were free ranging dogs but none required veterinary care.

Finally, trapping is an activity that is regulated by state and federal fish and wildlife agencies. In order to trap in the majority of states, one must have a license and complete a certified trapper education course. Regulations often dictate season timing and length, harvest limits, where traps can be set, what species can be harvested with traps, what types of traps can be used, and how often various trap types must be checked or tended. Another thing to note is that most species that are trapped by licensed trappers are abundant. While there are some twenty-three or so species classified as furbearers in North America, the most commonly trapped species include raccoon, coyote, muskrat, beaver, red fox and bobcat. These species are all abundant across their respective ranges.

And if you do support trapping, you are in good company. The Wildlife Society has a standing position statement on trapping that is supportive of the activity as does the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians and the American Veterinary Medical Association. In addition, most Internal Animal Care and Use Committees require the use of BMP recommended traps when conducting research that involves trapping wildlife.

BMP Trapping Matters

What Do You Think About Trapping?

I knew it would be impossible for me to write a short article so let me wrap up by saying, if you read all of this, thank you. If you have interest in learning more about trapping, there are lots of opportunities. AFWA maintains the North American Trapper Education Course which many states use to educate and certify trappers for licensing. Anyone can take the course for free. AFWA also conducts one-day professional development workshops called Trapping Matters and we conduct 4-day trainings in everything related to furbearer management at our Wild Fur Schools. If you are interested in attending one of those reach out and let me know. AFWA also has two websites that have lots of great information on Trapping: the official AFWA site and Furbearmanagement.com. The next time someone asks you about trapping, you should be able to answer that question, easily.



Attendees at a
Trapping Matters
Workshop in
Augusta, Maine.

Citations:

- Menale, R., S. J. Riley, and J. F. Organ. 2022. Attitudes of The Wildlife Society members toward uses of wildlife. Wildlife Society Bulletin e1419. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wsb.1419>
- Muth, R. M., R. R. Zwick, M. E. Mather, J. F. Organ, and J. J. Daigle. 2006. Unnecessary source of pain and suffering or necessary management tool: attitudes of conservation professionals toward outlawing leghold traps. Wildlife Society Bulletin 34:706-715.
- White, H. B., G. R. Batcheller, E. K. Boggess, C. L. Brown, J. W. Butfiloski, T. A. Decker, J. D. Erb, M. W. Fall, D. A. Hamilton, T. L. Hiller, et al. 2021. Best management practices for trapping furbearers in the United States. Wildlife Monographs 207:3-59.

Links:

- Best Management Practices for Trapping in the United States <https://wildlife.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/19385455/2021/207/1>
- North American Trapper Education Course <https://conservationlearning.org/mod/page/view.php?id=3470>
- Official AFWA site <https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/furbearer-management>
- Furbearmanagement.com <https://furbearmanagement.com/>

The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, & Wildlife-Associated Recreation – Coming Soon!

By: Tom Decker



The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation has been conducted since 1955. It is one of the longest running surveys of public activities in the United States. The survey is typically conducted every five years of U.S. residents regarding their hunting, angling, and wildlife watching activities. The results of the 2022 survey will be released this fall (2023) and will also include information on total number of target shooters, archers, and boaters.

The survey is coordinated by US Fish and Wildlife Service economists Richard Aiken and Jerry Leonard in collaboration with state fish and wildlife agencies via an Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency (AFWA) technical committee. The survey provides information on participant activity, economic information, gender, age, and other demographics. The most recently conducted survey publication is the 2016 National Report. The data is extremely useful for agency staff, researchers and contractors related to current participation rates and accurate data for assessment of recruitment and retention.

2016 National Report: <https://www.fws.gov/program/national-survey-fishing-hunting-and-wildlife-associated-recreation-fhwar>



About Us

Webpage: <https://wildlife.org/htcwg/>

Officers 2023–2024

Chair: Geriann Albers
(galbers@dnr.in.gov)

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Past Chair: Tom Decker
(thomas_decker@fws.gov)

Secretary/Treasurer: Valorie Titus
(titusv@hockings.edu)

Board Member: Pat Jackson
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Board Member: Bryant White
(BWhite@fishwildlife.org)

Membership: **xxx**



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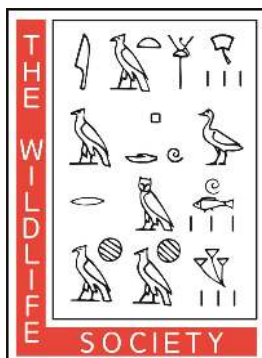
Upcoming Events



Spring Working Group Meeting

Thursday April 13th 4-5:30 pm EST, Virtual

Join us for a general member meeting to touch base between annual conferences.



Annual Conference Workshops

Sunday November 5th, Louisville, KY

Our working group is sponsoring two workshops at this year's annual conference in Louisville. More details coming soon.

- Animal Trapping Techniques for Researchers and Managers
- New Media Communication Skills and Strategies for Wildlife Professionals

Trapping Matters Professional Development Workshop

Sunday April 30th 9 am-5 pm EST, Hershey, PA

Workshop at the 78th Annual Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference.

