

TRAPPING

in New Mexico





New Mexico public lands are dotted with dangerous leghold traps, body-crushing traps, and strangulation snares lying in wait for unsuspecting wildlife and companion animals.

For over a third of the year, private, commercial trappers place these cruel devices across the landscape, turning the Land of Enchantment into the Land of Entrapment.

Other legal loopholes allow some traps to be set year-round, even without licenses or reporting requirements.

A 2015 poll found that 69% of New Mexico voters oppose traps and poisons. Only 22% support the use of these devices.¹

This archaic practice harms New Mexicans of all stripes. It transforms places of escape, solace, and fun into areas of threat and trauma. It decimates wildlife populations. It threatens our growing outdoor recreation economy and our critical tourism economy.

And it is unjust.

We feel strongly that this situation needs to fundamentally change. Public lands should not be the arena for this kind of cruelty and exploitation.

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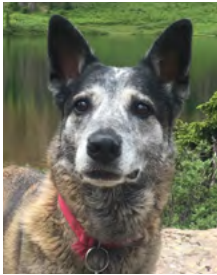
Cover photo: ©2018 ART RESCUES (note: this is not a real trap - it sculpture intended to show the scale of the damage that trapping causes)
Photo left: Born Free USA/Respect for Animals

TRAPPING INCIDENTS IN NEW MEXICO:

A Statewide Problem

A. November 25, 2018

Roxy was out for a walk with her owner on public land when she got caught in a neck snare. Her owner was unable to figure out how to release her quickly enough and she strangled to death in his arms.



B. November 20, 2020

A man on his morning stroll near Santa Teresa encountered a horrible stench and discovered the bodies of numerous skinned coyotes dumped to rot in the desert. Photos of the carcasses show signs of trapping. About 40 song dogs had been killed and skinned.



Photo: Kevin Bixby

C. November 27, 2018

A dog, later named Kekoa, was found by Valencia County Animal Control. Kekoa had been stuck in a leg hold trap for several days and had tried to chew his own leg off. He also had bite wounds covering his entire body. Argos Animal Rescue had to amputate his leg because it had been fractured from the trap. His medical bills cost over \$3000.



D. December 3, 2013

While out on an elk hunt, a man came across a bear cub caught in a trap set near a wildlife watering hole. The hunter was drawn to the area because of the cries from the trapped bear. By the time the hunter found the bear, the bear's front left paw was almost completely cut off aside from a tendon still attached and keeping him caught in the trap. The hunter called NMDGF, who sedated the bear, gave him a dose of antibiotics, and released him.

E. Winter 2020

This Mexican wolf pup was part of the Prieto Pack in the west of the Gila National Forest. He lost a paw to a private leghold trap and the entire pack was ultimately destroyed in large part due to "accidental" trapping incidents. Traps continue to threaten the recovery of endangered lobos.

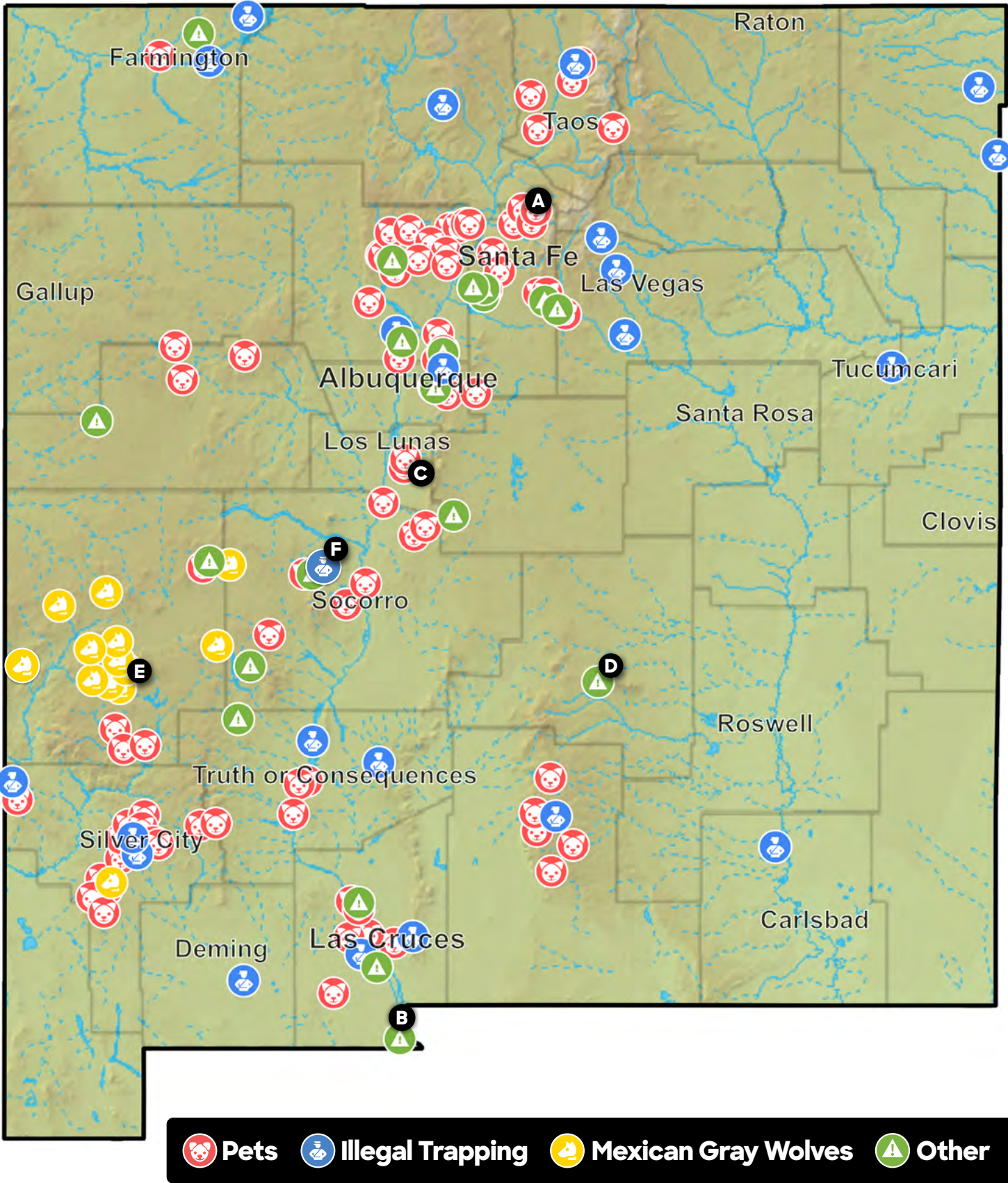


F. April 2018

Found washed up on a ranch near Magdalena, this bobcat displays the anguish and suffering that so many animals endure in leghold traps. It is impossible to tell if the cat died of starvation, dehydration, drowning, heat, or cold. But in any case, it died a horrific death for no reason.



trapfreenm.org



CRUELTY

Traps are cruel.

Trap modifications, trapper education, and so-called expertise cannot change that fundamental fact. Animals are either gruesomely killed or are allowed to endure physical and psychological horror for hours and hours as most traps are only required to be checked once per calendar day.

The evidence for the suffering is in washed-up carcasses, in vet bills, in traumatic personal accounts, and in shocking pictures.

The “lucky” animals that don’t die from being crushed, from starvation or dehydration, or from depredation face a grizzly end. The death inflicted by trappers on animals to be skinned for pelts is horrific—and if the killing methods were executed on a family pet, for example, it would be unequivocal, illegal animal abuse. To protect the value of pelts, trappers are known to kill animals via strangling, drowning, bludgeoning, and chest stomping.

Cruelty is cruelty, and there is no way to justify or explain away the amount of suffering caused by private, commercial traps.

Leghold Traps



Photo: Lauri Dodge

The most common type of trap in New Mexico causes broken legs, deep lacerations, dislocated shoulders, torn muscles and ligaments, broken teeth, infection, dehydration, starvation, hypothermia, hypoxia, and often amputation.^{4, 5, 6}

Psychological torment accompanies the physical suffering—animals can find restraint to be highly distressing.⁷ A sight that is too common is a foot left in a trap—in fact many species of animals, including dogs, make the choice of a three-legged life rather than continued restraint.^{8, 9, 10}

Suffering can be even more severe for non-target animals that get caught in traps, as these animals are often smaller than the target species. **Studies show that the capture of non-target animals occurs as much as 67% of the time.**^{11, 12, 13, 14}

Long and short-term survival chances can be greatly compromised for even the fortunate animals that free themselves or are released.¹⁵ Numerous animals in New Mexico have been rescued from leghold traps, only to die later from injuries, shock, or infection.

The American Veterinary Medical Association, American Animal Hospital Association, and the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association all oppose the use of steel-jaw leghold traps because they are cruel and inhumane.^{16, 17, 18} Leghold traps result in injuries that can exceed welfare standards recognized by the World Organization for Animal Health.^{19, 20}



Photo: Kathleen Turley

Body-Crushing “Kill” Traps



Photo: Born Free USA

Body-crushing traps—often called Conibear traps—are intended to instantly kill their victims, but often inflict suffering. Less than 15% of kills are instant and up to 40% of trapped animals experience slow, painful deaths.²¹

Along with these failings, a huge problem with body-crushing traps is that, when they do kill their victim, and the victim is a non-target animal, there is no going back.

Aquatic Traps



Both leghold and body-crushing traps are allowed to be set in water, including shallow water. Aquatic animals such as beavers, muskrats, and river otters, all of whom are adapted to spending long periods of time swimming and diving underwater, can slowly suffer from hypoxia before eventually drowning in underwater traps.

The New Mexico Game Commission recently voted to extend trap check requirements to once every other calendar day for any trap submerged in water—meaning animals may be dead, suffering, or partially drowned for up to just under 72 hours. The state’s reason given for this change is that since these traps are designed to kill instantly, the animal is not left suffering. However, “the Conibear trap often results in animals being seriously injured and suffering for many hours or days before being found by trappers...Because the size of the animal or the way it enters the trap cannot be controlled, non-target animals often get caught in these traps.”²²



Snares

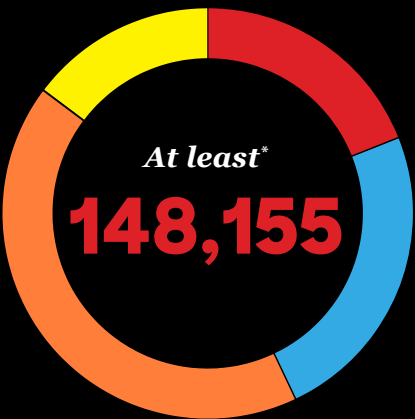


Snares, metal cables designed to strangle their victims, are indiscriminate like leghold traps but errors cannot be remedied. Except in rare cases, snared animals struggle and die—removing a dying animal from a neck snare is extremely difficult. Along with at least one endangered Mexican wolf, private trappers’ neck snares are culpable for the death of domestic dogs in New Mexico, including Roxy who died in a snare on public land as her owner tried to free her.



THE TOLL OF TRAPPING

At least **148,155**² animals were killed by private trappers between 2008 and 2020 in New Mexico, more than the population of Las Cruces.



■ Bobcats
■ Gray Foxes
■ Coyotes
■ Other



Total Bobcats from 2008-2020:
28,080
representing 19.0% of all animals killed



Total Gray Fox from 2008-2020:
35,598
representing 24.0% of all animals killed



Total Coyotes^{**} from 2008-2020:
62,605
representing 42.3% of all animals killed

Additionally



Mexican Gray Wolves caught in traps in NM from 2002-2020:
43³

- 7 of whom died
- 18 of whom were injured
- 4 of whom required amputation

At last count, only 87 Mexican wolves roamed in New Mexico. That number was much lower when many of these incidents occurred.

¹ "Mandatory" reporting rates range from 28.6% - 87%, depending on the year. The average reporting rate in this time period was 73.8%
² **Coyotes and skunks are entirely unprotected species and have not been required to be reported by trappers for several years. We have extrapolated coyote numbers based on historical trends (see Appendix B).

TOURISM AND NEW MEXICO'S REPUTATION

New Mexico's reputation is to enchant. An enormous part of our state's economy is built around tourists who come during every season to enjoy rich and diverse culture, unique and delicious foods, and of course, spectacular public lands.

In 2019, visitors to New Mexico spent \$7.4 billion, generating \$10.4 billion in total business sales. Nearly \$1 billion was spent on recreation. The tourism economy generated \$2.8 billion in jobs.²³

OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY

New Mexico is diversifying, stabilizing, and growing its economy by investing in the outdoor recreation industry, supporting in-state businesses, and attracting out-of-state tourists with the splendor of our landscapes.

2019 saw the creation of the Outdoor Recreation Division housed within the Economic Development Department. The charge of this division is to "expand the outdoor recreation economy to every corner of New Mexico and bring jobs, prosperity, and wellness to all state residents." The Outdoor Equity Fund was created to ensure that everyone—especially under-served communities and youth also get to enjoy New Mexico's outdoors. Our outdoor recreation economy is set to grow even more moving forward.

Already, the outdoors—and especially recreation on public lands—is a big piece of New Mexico's economy.

Traps on public lands tarnish our reputation and they threaten tourism. No visitor wants to risk injury visiting the Land of Enchantment. And nobody should have to experience discovering a suffering animal, a paw left in a trap, or skinned remains, on public lands.

Several states, including our neighbors to the west and north, have acted to end problems inherent with public lands trapping. Arizona no longer allows any leghold trap, body-crushing trap, or snare on any public land.²⁴ Colorado forbids the use of any type of trap other than live box-type traps on public lands.²⁵ California does not allow any leghold trap, body-crushing trap, or snare on public lands for

recreational or commercial purposes.²⁶ Washington does not allow any leghold trap, body-crushing trap, or snare on any public lands except by permit to take a problem animal.²⁷ The major rationale for these states moving to protect their public lands is public safety.

Public lands trapping is a self-inflicted disadvantage in the competition for tourists and their dollars. We have fallen behind other destinations even as we try to rescue a pandemic-hit economy. "The Land of Entrapment"—dangerous traps and dead or suffering wildlife—just isn't so appealing.



In 2017, outdoor recreation was found to generate just under \$10 billion in consumer spending, \$2.8 billion in wages and salaries, \$623 million in state and local tax revenue, and nearly 100,000 direct jobs.²⁸ The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to make outdoor recreation and the public lands it is built around that much more important to New Mexico's economy.

This emerging industry is not reliant on extraction or consumption. Instead it is based on the inexhaustible beauty of safe, accessible public lands and promises employment that is both profitable and sustainable.

But trapping is legal on almost all of New Mexico's public lands, including U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land

Management, and state trust lands. Traps on public lands conflict with this budding economy, turning enchanting landscapes into dangerous and threatening destinations.

At the date of publication, four Western states had taken steps to protect people, pets, and native wildlife as part of their tourism and outdoor recreation economies. Tourists and residents alike can enjoy the great outdoors on public lands in those states, without fear of discovering suffering wildlife languishing in a trap or fear of that the dogs or children accompanying them may step into a trap themselves. New Mexico needs to catch up with our neighbors to stay competitive as a haven for the outdoor recreation industry and the prosperity it promises.

ECONOMICS OF TRAPPING

Commercial trapping on public lands for private profit is problematic in principle and does not benefit New Mexico’s economy. The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation explicitly prohibits the commercialization of wildlife. And, by-and-large, trapping is not a lucrative practice, and it is trending down.

Markets suggest that it may be an aberration for anyone to make significant money from fur sales. Fur as a fashion statement has precipitously declined and an ever-growing list of fashion houses have pledged to not use fur. In fact, in an October 26, 2019 letter written from the North American Fur Auctions (NAFA) to their wild fur consigners, they stated that “there appear to be hurdles that may be difficult to overcome. At this point in time, we are not in a position to guarantee a wild fur collection in 2020.”²⁹ Since this statement, NAFA has gone bankrupt.³⁰

The average New Mexico trapper who attempted to sell every pelt from the 2018-2019 season grossed between \$264.54 and \$440.76 (see Appendix D). Taking into account the costs of a license, traps, baits and lures, chains, stakes, catchpoles, knives, fuel, and of course time, it is inaccurate to call trapping a major source of income for any but the most prolific trappers.



Trappers themselves know that trapping has declined in profitability to the point that furs are worth next to nothing. These comments come from various trapper blogs:

If you are one of those guys that used to say; “I’d trap if fur was worth nothing”. You got your wish!

Actually, the market may need to improve before prices climbed up to the “nothing” mark.

If the prices get any worse the fur buyers will pay you to keep your fur.

I just do it because I enjoy it and it gives me something to do during the winter. Plus trapping helps maintain my “manly physique” and overall good looks...😬

Red fox amaze me how bad they have become. Just hardly any demand for them at all.

Fur prices.....HAAAAAAAAAAAA
HAAAAAAAAAAAA..HAAAAAAAAAAAAA....

...there’s no foreseeable increase in most wild fur...

There is way more supply than demand

Terrible market and no report can say anything else. Red fox for instance 60 70 year lows and that’s not even figuring inflation

Regarding an estimate of next year’s fur prices and projected demand): bad...real bad...infinityily really bad...so bad Tarzan had to quit swingin vine to vine... i’ve heard they may be down a little 🤔

Stick a fork in it the fur market is done. I’ve been trapping for 50 years I have seen the market go up and go down but nothing like today Sadly it is over.

This is the worst I’ve seen it and I wouldn’t be afraid to say it’s the worst it’s been in 150 years.

31, 32, 33, 34

Private trappers’ impact on state coffers is probably neutral at best. A trapping license costs a relative pittance here. For only \$20 (\$9 for juniors), a trapper is given free rein to wreak havoc on native mammal populations. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish pays to administer trapping licenses, police trapping, and deal with the public relations fallout when traps maim or kill companion animals or listed species.

Moreover, while gross receipts tax is applicable to nearly any sale, lease, or licensing of property and services performed, trappers are exempt from paying state gross receipts tax. Truckers, fishing guides, grocery baggers, contractors, landscapers, road flaggers, and just about anyone else you know pays gross receipts tax. Not trappers, who are stripping our landscapes of a public asset for private profit.³⁵

The argument that banning trapping is an urban attack on rural lifestyles and traditions is disingenuous and misleading. Trapping license purchases are concentrated in urban areas.³⁶



The challenged economics of trapping suggest the activity’s cruelty is little more than a historical reenactment hobby. Actual costs are unlikely to be recouped and it’s reasonable to state that trapping is not profitable. The illusion of “harvesting” wildlife for profit belongs in past centuries and actually diminishes the economic potential of rural communities and residents.

There are no bag limits for furbearers in New Mexico and any trapper can kill as many animals as he wants. Reporting is spotty at best, but we know that one individual killed 546 foxes and bobcats from 2016-2018. That breaks down to approximately \$0.10 per animal going to the state.

Finally, ending trapping on public lands does not mean the end of trapping in New Mexico. Private trappers can still utilize New Mexico’s many private lands.

Fashion brands that have pledged to stop using fur:

J. Crew	2005
Polo - Ralph Lauren	2007
Tommy Hilfiger	2008
Gap	2016
Armani Group	2016
BCBG	2017
Gucci	2017
Michael Kors	2017
Yoox-Net-a-Porter Group	2017
Burberry	2018
Chanel	2018
Diane von Furstenberg	2018
H&M	2018
Intermix	2018
Maison Margiela	2018
Versace	2018
Asos	2019
Coach	2019
Farfetch	2019
Furla Group	2019
Phillip Lim	2019
Prada Group	2019
Macy’s Inc.	2019
Victoria Beckham	2019
Nordstrom	2020

PUBLIC ACCESS
AND PUBLIC
SAFETY

During trapping season, public lands become veritable minefields.

Traps are allowed on Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and state trust lands, totaling approximately 32 million acres. These are the lands that New Mexicans have the most access to, where we recreate and find solace, and where wildlife should be protected and revered. New Mexicans have had dangerous and injurious encounters with traps across the state’s public lands, from the alpine forests of the southern Rockies to the Chihuahuan Desert.

Even on public lands, trappers give no indication as to where their dangerous devices lie in wait. There are no signs or markers to give an unsuspecting hiker, hunter, angler, or wildlife watcher warning. And, when a pet dog follows

her nose to a trapper’s bait, the damage can be significant. Unlucky dogs have lost their lives to traps in New Mexico, but even the fortunate ones can lose limbs and wrack up veterinary fees. Trappers are not legally responsible to help with any costs that their devices cause. If a trapper catches your dog, he is not liable and don’t expect any assistance with what can be an astronomical veterinary bill.

As if to add insult to injury, a licensed trapper can access state trust lands at no cost. For an individual looking to watch wildlife, hike, bike, or camp, that same access costs \$35.



Photo: NMDOG.org



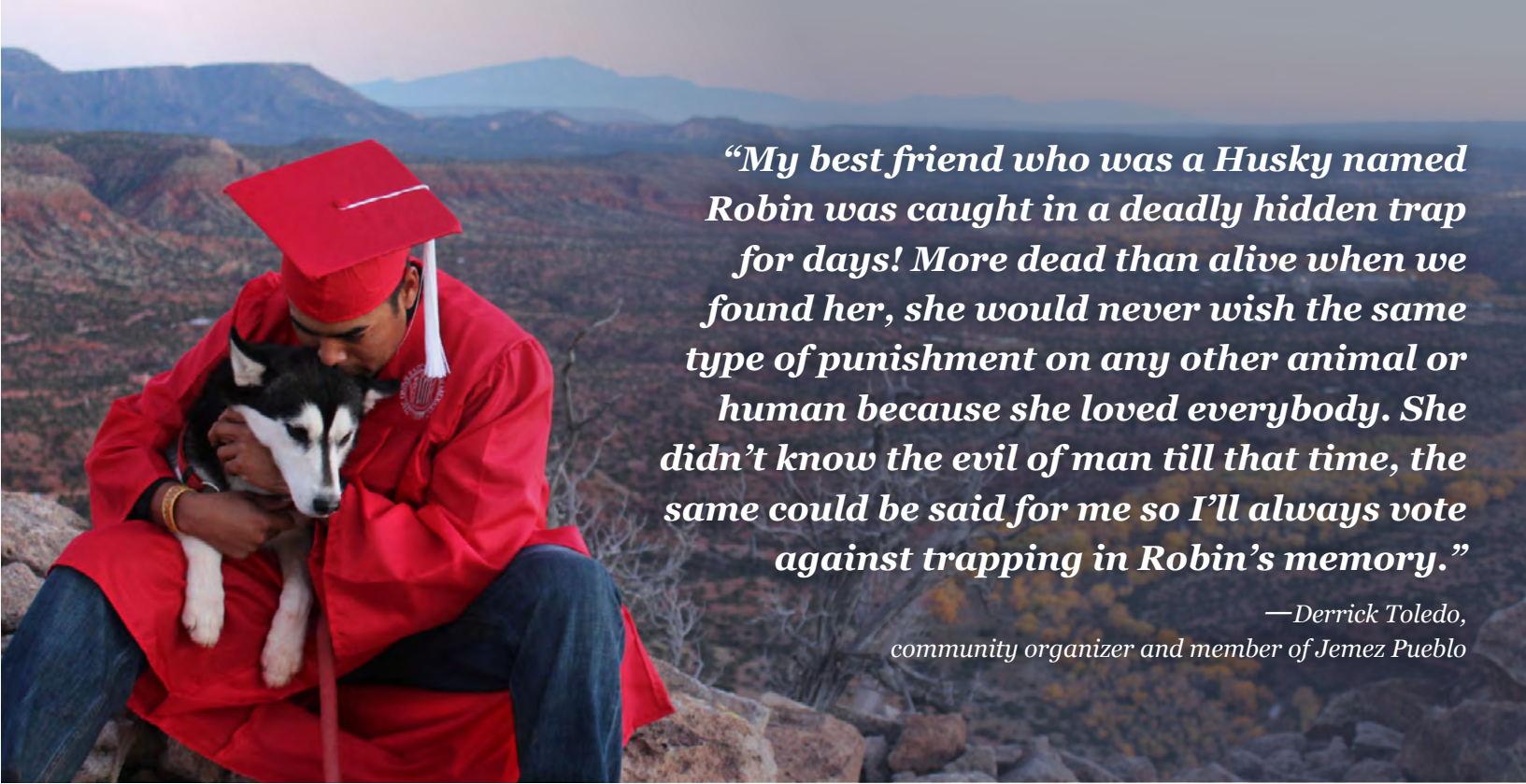
“For me, fall and winter is when any juniper or cedar on public lands may be used to rig a wire snare that kills pets and wildlife indiscriminately. It’s time something be done about this horrible situation.”

-Dave Clark, whose dog Roxy died in a neck snare on public lands

“As someone who found a coyote struggling and hideously injured in a trap and who subsequently had to rescue my own dog while she was screaming in pain from stepping into the jaws of a hidden trap, I can state unequivocally that these traps are brutally inhumane.

Even worse, the possibility of repeating those experiences is traumatizing enough to discourage being in the forest I love during the winter when traps can be hidden almost anywhere.”

– Mary Katherine Ray, avid hiker, photographer and wildlife enthusiast



“My best friend who was a Husky named Robin was caught in a deadly hidden trap for days! More dead than alive when we found her, she would never wish the same type of punishment on any other animal or human because she loved everybody. She didn’t know the evil of man till that time, the same could be said for me so I’ll always vote against trapping in Robin’s memory.”

—Derrick Toledo, community organizer and member of Jemez Pueblo



“I have cared for pets caught in leg hold traps and can testify to the heartache, suffering and sometimes death, that these devices cause. They are cruel and indiscriminate. The physical, emotional and financial toll is avoidable and unacceptable.”

— Dr. Carolyn Fletcher, a New Mexico Veterinarian



“I’m forever haunted by my dog’s anguished yelps and cries with his paw clamped shut in a tight steel trap. I could not free him because my hands were disabled by freezing cold and bleeding knuckles from trying. The sun was going down and I only had a weak cell signal making it hard to call for the help I needed. Traps are dangerous for animals and people.”

– Kathleen McDonald, whose dog Jasper has been trapped twice



INTERFERING WITH NATURE

Disease

A common refrain from trappers and their allies is that trapping controls the spread of diseases such as rabies. However...

...the National Academy of Sciences Subcommittee on Rabies has determined that *“persistent trapping or poisoning campaigns as a means to control rabies should be abolished. There is no evidence that these costly and politically attractive programs reduce either wildlife reservoirs or rabies incidence. The money can be better spent on research, vaccination, compensation to stockmen for losses, education and warning systems.”*³⁷

...the Center for Disease Control has concluded that *“Continuous and persistent programs for trapping or poisoning wildlife are not effective in reducing rabies reservoirs on a statewide basis.”*³⁸

...the National Academy of Sciences Subcommittee on Rabies states that *“there are simply no data to substantiate claims for the efficacy of long-term trapping programs.”* They also concluded that regardless of any trapping efforts, rabies will run its course.³⁹ Trapping and killing animals *“can produce unexpected and unwanted effects such as an increase in epidemic amplitude”*⁴¹

...Game & Fish highlights a report on *“Trapping and Furbearer Management”* on their website, which states that *“Regulated trapping will not (and is not designed to) eradicate diseases.”*³⁹

In fact, trapping has been shown to increase, rather than decrease, the prevalence of disease, as well as the probability of disease being transmitted between species. When diseases are transmitted across species, biodiversity, conservation efforts, livestock and associated industries, and even human communities are threatened.⁴⁰

Rodents, not carnivores, are primarily responsible for spreading diseases, including those that infect humans. About 60% of all diseases that impact humans originate in rodent species.⁴¹ These include Lyme disease, hantavirus, Lassa fever, bubonic plague, leptospirosis, and tick-borne encephalitis.^{42, 43} Carnivores such as coyotes, foxes, and bobcats hunt and kill many rodent species.

When carnivores are killed in traps, the incidents of zoonotic diseases (infectious diseases that can be transmitted between humans and wildlife) increases.^{44, 45}



Unfettered Exploitation

The world’s biodiversity is collapsing. We are witnessing the sixth mass extinction event of the earth’s history. New Mexico’s wildlife is impacted by habitat loss, drought, fires, and climate change already.

Unlimited trapping should be unthinkable in the face of these crises. But, in New Mexico, trappers can kill unlimited foxes, bobcats, beavers, badgers, ringtails, coyotes, muskrats, ermines, and weasels.

Game & Fish does not have any real scientific data on how populations of furbearers are doing. During a recent rulemaking process, Game & Fish staff relied on statistics provided solely by trappers (including a graph titled “Trapper Opinion on Bobcat Population Trend”) to justify a lack of bag limits on these species.

But this lack of scientific data hasn’t led to any restrictions on how many animals can be killed. In contrast, deer, elk, pronghorn, bear, cougar, and fish populations are monitored with quotas and bag limits set accordingly and revisited frequently.

Many New Mexicans tell stories of having encountered beautiful bobcats when they were growing up. But sightings seem more and more rare. Private trappers killed over 12,000 of these felines since 2013.

Inexpensive trapping licenses, coupled with unlimited killing, means that trapping in New Mexico is one of the most egregious, exploitative ways that an infinitesimally small special interest benefits at the cost of the broader public.

Native Carnivores

The health of western life and landscapes is closely tied to the essential roles that native carnivores play. Carnivores help maintain healthy ecosystems by controlling prey populations, promoting plant communities, and increasing biological diversity. New Mexico is home to a diverse array of native carnivore species including the critically endangered jaguar and Mexican gray wolf.

Apex carnivores, such as wolves, bears, and lions, tend to get most of the attention, but mesocarnivores (mid-sized carnivores) are key to our desert ecosystem as well. Mid-sized carnivores native to New Mexico include coyotes, four fox species, ringtails, badgers, and bobcats.

Carnivores play a critical ecological role across New Mexico’s native landscapes by preying upon smaller wildlife and maintaining a balanced food web.^{46, 47} By increasing competition amongst these smaller animals, mesocarnivores can help increase the diversity and abundance of waterfowl, songbirds, and rodent species, which improves overall biological diversity.^{48, 49}



Coyotes perform an important ecosystem service in urban and suburban areas by suppressing populations of small carnivores like skunks and raccoons whose numbers have grown because of the presence of human food sources. In their informational posters about New Mexico’s wildlife, even the Game & Fish praises coyotes’ “high intelligence and amazing ability to adapt to a variety of habitats.” Despite this, coyotes are a “non-protected” species, which means they can be hunted and trapped without limit year-round.

Photo: Bethany Cotton





Swift foxes are a species whose presence and health can indicate the health of grassland environments. The presence of swift foxes on the landscape benefits other wildlife, including prairie dogs and grassland birds. Swift foxes, however, have undergone major population declines and now occupy less than half of their historic range.⁵⁰ Despite this, trappers have killed over 500 Swift foxes in the last decade in New Mexico.



Over the past three decades, increases in Lyme disease across the Midwest have coincided with a decline in the red fox, an important small-mammal predator. It has been suggested that mesocarnivores such as red foxes are best at strongly regulating rodents. Red foxes kill large numbers of small mammals because of dietary preferences and prey-catching behavior, making them a key species in suppressing and controlling diseased rodents in areas near human habitation.^{51, 52} Private trappers have killed at least 1,162 red foxes in New Mexico since 2013.

Indiscriminate Killing

Indiscriminate killing of social carnivores like coyotes has been shown to interrupt the social structure of packs, which can in turn lead to a host of problems for the ecosystem and for humans using the land.

For example, when coyotes are killed indiscriminately their natural population control becomes disrupted. This, in turn, can trigger an adjusted, accelerated breeding schedule, which ultimately leads to a local increase in the coyote population. When breeding coyotes are killed, their pack becomes unbalanced, leading to juvenile pack members breeding and hunting. An increased number of juvenile males in an already upset population results in even further breeding, amplifying the probability of human-wildlife conflict.^{53, 54, 55}

As the saying goes, when you kill a coyote, two will show up to its funeral. And, data suggests that carnivores like coyotes don't take a significant toll on New Mexico's livestock (see Appendix E).

Beavers and Climate Resilience

Beginning in the 19th century, the fur trade led to the systemic near-extirpation of beavers throughout most of the United States, including New Mexico.⁵⁶ Seen as easy prey to be turned into hats and pelts, beavers stood little chance against the massive effort to strip them from every stream, river, pond, and lake within reach. Now, as the West faces the unpredictable and unprecedented effects of climate crisis, scientists, ranchers, advocates, and farmers are beginning to understand the huge potential benefits of healthy beaver populations throughout our watersheds.

Beavers help store water, replenishing aquifers and raising water tables. They mitigate against drought and even flooding.^{57, 58} Their infrastructure creates aquatic habitat, riparian habitat, and wetland habitat—one of the rare and disappearing habitat types in New Mexico. Their presence promotes plant diversity and wildlife presence. They even clean water! Beaver ponds act as nutrient sinks: the levels of dangerous toxins decrease as water passes through beaver dams.⁵⁹

By increasing the amount of surface water, raising the water table, maintaining flow in otherwise intermittent streams, and filtering water, beavers help create a more stable riparian and aquatic ecosystem that can provide and improve water sources for wildlife, people, and livestock.

But beavers are killed in large numbers by private trappers. Between 1980 and 2000, even while beaver reintroduction efforts were underway, 3,029 beavers were legally trapped and killed in New Mexico.⁶¹ Since 2013, over 650 beavers have been killed by private trappers.⁶² The average price for a beaver pelt in 2019 was a mere \$11.54 (see Appendix C). Beavers are worth far more alive than dead, yet they continue to die in traps throughout our drying state.



“Though beaver activity can be a nuisance to human urban and agricultural enterprises, their benefit far outweighs the negative impact... Overall the positive industriousness and ecological contribution of this largest of North American rodents is to be respected and valued.”

-New Mexico Department of Game and Fish⁶⁰



VISION FOR TRAP-FREE PUBLIC LANDS

New Mexico has a bright future. Our state has incredible natural resources. Amazing, diverse, beautiful public lands are not only a cultural heritage but also the basis for new, stable economic engines for New Mexico and especially its rural communities.

But in order to maximize our state’s potential, we must catch up to 21st century science and values in terms of how we treat native wildlife and how we think about public lands and public access to our incredible landscapes.

“Roxy’s Law” represents an opportunity to protect people and their companion animals. It represents relief for native wildlife who are already struggling with habitat loss and the effects of climate change. And it represents a more equitable and economically viable use of public lands.

Banning private traps from New Mexico’s public lands is common sense. Over 100 countries have banned or heavily restricted wildlife trapping. Our closest neighboring states have done it.

It is time for Roxy’s Law. It is time to make New Mexico’s lands free of cruel, dangerous, and indiscriminate traps.



METHODOLOGY & APPENDICES

Methodology

Coyote and Skunk Estimates

Starting with the 2014-2015 trapping season, Game & Fish no longer required harvest reports for non-protected species (coyotes and skunks). Therefore, in order to compile a comprehensive and accurate estimate of trapped animals, it was necessary to extrapolate the number of skunks and coyotes trapped each year after the reporting requirement was eliminated. To determine how many coyotes were trapped since 2015, a correlational analysis was run comparing the percentage increase or decrease in number of animals trapped from year to year (from 2008 to 2018) for each trapped species (badger, beaver, bobcat, gray fox, kit fox, muskrat, raccoon, red fox, ringtail, and swift fox). By averaging every percent increase or decrease across all species each year, one overall percentage change was determined for each year. The correlation between these percentages and the percentages for the years of coyote data available was 0.77 (77% correlation). In order to determine the highest possible correlation, the correlation between each individual trapped species and coyotes (i.e., the correlation between bobcat and coyote was 0.42) and an exhaustive list of combinations of species [i.e., all foxes, all non-aquatic species, and combinations of various species with high individual correlations between their percent increase or decrease and coyote’s percent increase or decrease each year (i.e., the average of red fox, badger, swift fox, and ringtail)] were calculated. The correlation between the average of all species and coyotes was highest (0.77), so that yearly percentage increase/decrease was used to estimate how many coyotes were killed in the years since the reporting requirement ended.

To determine how many skunks were killed since 2015, the same correlational analysis was run as was done for coyotes. However, rather than estimating how many individuals from each skunk species were trapped (striped, spotted, hooded, and hognose), the total number of all skunks trapped was totaled and estimates were made for all skunk species combined. The highest correlation found for skunks was with the average of the percent increase or decrease from year to year of raccoons and the inverse of number of trappers who responded to the mandatory harvest report. The correlation between raccoons and the inverse of trappers and skunks was 0.82 (82% correlation).

See Appendix A for raw data and Appendix B for extrapolated estimates.

Average Pelt Prices

In order to determine average pelt prices, 2019 fur sales across the Western US (Fallon, NV fur sale, Utah Trappers Association fur sale, and Colorado Trappers and Predator Hunters Association fur sale), as well as larger fur sales (NAFA Auction and Fur Harvester’s Auction) were examined. The average price that a trapper received for each species was determined for each sale and then averaged across local sales and all sales.

See Appendix C for raw data.

Income per Trapper

In order to determine a trapper’s average income from selling pelts in 2019, data was collected on how much pelts from each species sold for at several fur auctions following the 2018-2019 trapping season (see “Average Pelt Prices”). To find the average percentage of pelts that were sold for any given species, the percentage sold across local sales and all sales were averaged. Two average incomes per trapper were then determined: one based on local sales and one based on all sales. This was accomplished by multiplying the harvest number for each species by the average price (local and all) for each species by the percentage of pelts sold (local and all) for each species. Once these values were determined for every trapped species, all values were then summed to determine the total income for all trappers (across both local and all sales). This total was then divided by the number of trappers who reported trapping in 2019 to determine the average income per trapper based on local sales (\$440.76/trapper) and all sales (\$264.54/trapper).

See Appendix D for raw data.

Appendices

Appendix A: Wildlife Killed by Private Trappers

		Trapping Season													Total	% of total
		2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020		
Species Trapped	Beaver	213	83	61	73	79	121	88	151	67	82	73	107	91	1289	0.87%
	Muskrat	28	25	83	212	42	71	156	119	66	43	22	6	15	888	0.60%
	Nutria	32	0	15	8	10	15	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	85	0.06%
	Red Fox	84	82	78	75	168	177	267	165	120	188	140	112	170	1826	1.23%
	Swift Fox	264	133	43	28	55	82	76	96	52	18	39	14	8	908	0.61%
	Kit Fox	142	120	67	75	192	147	140	207	185	149	81	77	119	1701	1.15%
	Gray Fox	6234	4178	1694	2447	2549	3288	3133	2290	1796	2192	2353	2121	1323	35598	24.03%
	Ringtail	268	229	184	133	107	110	151	72	48	57	119	52	66	1596	1.08%
	Ermine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.00%
	Long-tailed Weasel	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	6	0.00%
	Badger	213	182	133	132	168	171	206	172	267	203	129	106	184	2266	1.53%
	Bobcat (CITES)	4240	3218	1715	1833	2274	2455	2057	1649	1661	1978	1817	1855	1328	28080	18.95%
	Raccoon	437	303	341	383	384	373	376	304	358	210	415	346	436	4666	3.15%
	Coyote	6235	4524	4609	3835	4642	5311	6235	5225	4387	4185	4833	3800	4784	62605	42.26%
	Spotted Skunk	26	16	13	26	13	3	18	281	331	253	366	333	378	6640	4.48%
Striped Skunk	1494	429	788	428	470	435	291									
Hooded Skunk	5	1	2	0	0	1	3									
Hognose Skunk	32	67	54	4	23	28	28									
Total		19950	13590	9881	9692	11176	12788	13230	10731	9339	9559	10387	8930	8902	148155	
% of total		13.47%	9.17%	6.67%	6.54%	7.54%	8.63%	8.93%	7.24%	6.30%	6.45%	7.01%	6.03%	6.01%		
Bobcat (report)		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1980	2057	2145	1437	1514	1736	1814	1630	1314	15627	

Appendix B: Coyote Trap Numbers Estimates

Species	Year													
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Bobcats Trapped	4240	3210	1715	1833	2274	2455	2145	1649	1661	1978	1817	1855	1328	
Percent change in Bobcats		-24.29%	-46.57%	6.88%	24.06%	7.96%	-12.63%	-23.12%	0.73%	19.08%	-8.14%	2.09%	-28.41%	
Gray Fox Trapped	6234	4178	1694	2447	2549	3288	3133	2290	1796	2192	2353	2121	1323	
Percent change in Gray Fox		-32.98%	-59.45%	44.45%	4.17%	28.99%	-4.71%	-26.91%	-21.57%	22.05%	7.34%	-9.86%	-37.62%	
Red Fox Trapped	84	82	78	75	168	177	267	165	120	188	140	112	170	
Percent change in Red Fox		-2.38%	-4.88%	-3.85%	124.00%	5.36%	50.85%	-38.20%	-27.27%	56.67%	-25.53%	-20.00%	51.79%	
Raccoons Trapped	437	303	341	383	384	373	376	304	358	210	415	346	436	
Percent change in Raccoons		-30.66%	12.54%	12.32%	0.26%	-2.86%	0.80%	-19.15%	17.76%	-41.34%	97.62%	-16.63%	26.01%	
Badgers Trapped	213	182	133	132	168	171	206	172	267	203	129	106	184	
Percent change in Badgers		-14.55%	-26.92%	-0.75%	27.27%	1.79%	20.47%	-16.50%	55.23%	-23.97%	-36.45%	-17.83%	73.58%	
Kit Fox Trapped	142	120	67	75	192	147	140	207	185	149	81	77	119	
Percent change in Kit Fox		-15.49%	-44.17%	11.94%	156.00%	-23.44%	-4.76%	47.86%	-10.63%	-19.46%	-45.64%	-4.94%	54.55%	
Beavers Trapped	213	83	61	73	79	121	88	151	67	82	73	107	91	
Percent change in Beavers		-61.03%	-26.51%	19.67%	8.22%	53.16%	-27.27%	71.59%	-55.63%	22.39%	-10.98%	46.58%	-14.95%	
Swift Fox Trapped	264	133	43	28	55	82	76	96	52	18	39	14	8	
Percent change in Swift Fox		-49.62%	-67.67%	-34.88%	96.43%	49.09%	-7.32%	26.32%	-45.83%	-65.38%	116.67%	-64.10%	-42.86%	
Ringtail Trapped	268	229	184	133	107	110	151	72	48	57	119	52	66	
Percent change in Ringtail		-14.55%	-19.65%	-27.72%	-19.55%	2.80%	37.27%	-52.32%	-33.33%	18.75%	108.77%	-56.30%	26.92%	
Muskrats Trapped	28	25	83	212	42	71	156	119	66	43	22	6	15	
Percent change in Muskrats		-10.71%	232.00%	155.42%	-80.19%	69.05%	119.72%	-23.72%	-44.54%	-34.85%	-48.84%	-72.73%	150.00%	
Coyotes Trapped (Known Values)	6235	4524	4609	3835	4642	5311	6235	5255	4387	4185	4833	3800	4785	Coyotes Trapped (Estimated Values)
Percent change in Coyotes		-27.44%	1.88%	-16.79%	21.04%	14.41%	17.40%	-15.72%						
Average percent change across all species		-25.63%	-5.13%	18.35%	34.07%	19.19%	17.24%	-5.42%	-16.51%	-4.61%	15.48%	-21.37%	25.90%	
Correlation between average percent change across all species and percent change in coyotes	76.62%													

Appendix B: Skunk Trap Numbers Estimates

Species	Year												
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bobcats Trapped	4240	3218	1715	1833	2274	2455	2145	1649	1661	1978	1817	1855	1328
Percent change in Bobcats		-24.10%	-46.71%	6.88%	24.06%	7.96%	-12.63%	-23.12%	0.73%	19.08%	-8.14%	2.09%	-28.41%
Gray Fox Trapped	6234	4178	1694	2447	2549	3288	3133	2290	1796	2192	2353	2121	1323
Percent change in Gray Fox		-32.98%	-59.45%	44.45%	4.17%	28.99%	-4.71%	-26.91%	-21.57%	22.05%	7.34%	-9.86%	-37.62%
Kit Fox Trapped	142	120	67	75	192	147	140	207	185	149	81	77	119
Percent change in Kit Fox		-15.49%	-44.17%	11.94%	156.00%	-23.44%	-4.76%	47.86%	-10.63%	-19.46%	-45.64%	-4.94%	54.55%
Red Fox Trapped	84	82	78	75	168	177	267	165	120	188	140	112	170
Percent change in Red Fox		-2.38%	-4.88%	-3.85%	124.00%	5.36%	50.85%	-38.20%	-27.27%	56.67%	-25.53%	-20.00%	51.79%
Swift Fox Trapped	264	133	43	28	55	82	76	96	52	18	39	14	8
Percent change in Swift Fox		-49.62%	-67.67%	-34.88%	96.43%	49.09%	-7.32%	26.32%	-45.83%	-65.38%	116.67%	-64.10%	-42.86%
Muskrats Trapped	28	25	83	212	42	71	156	119	66	43	22	6	15
Percent change in Muskrats		-10.71%	232.00%	155.42%	-80.19%	69.05%	119.72%	-23.72%	-44.54%	-34.85%	-48.84%	-72.73%	150.00%
Raccoons Trapped	437	303	341	383	384	373	376	304	358	210	415	346	436
Percent change in Raccoons		-30.66%	12.54%	12.32%	0.26%	-2.86%	0.80%	-19.15%	17.76%	-41.34%	97.62%	-16.63%	26.01%
Ringtail Trapped	268	229	184	133	107	110	151	72	48	57	119	52	66
Percent change in Ringtail		-14.55%	-19.65%	-27.72%	-19.55%	2.80%	37.27%	-52.32%	-33.33%	18.75%	108.77%	-56.30%	26.92%
Badgers Trapped	213	182	133	132	168	171	206	172	267	203	129	106	184
Percent change in Badgers		-14.55%	-26.92%	-0.75%	27.27%	1.79%	20.47%	-16.50%	55.23%	-23.97%	-36.45%	-17.83%	73.58%
Beavers Trapped	213	83	61	73	79	121	88	151	67	82	73	107	91
Percent change in Beavers		-61.03%	-26.51%	19.67%	8.22%	53.16%	-27.27%	71.59%	-55.63%	22.39%	-10.98%	46.58%	-14.95%
Trappers	1174	1238	551	821	1090	968	1528	1768	1451	1536	1662	1686	1666
Percent change in Trappers		5.45%	-55.49%	49.00%	32.76%	-11.19%	57.85%	15.71%	-17.93%	5.86%	8.20%	1.44%	-1.19%
Skunks Trapped (Known Values)	1525	513	857	458	506	467	340	281	331	253	366	333	378
Percent change in skunks		-66.36%	67.06%	-46.56%	10.48%	-7.71%	-27.19%						
Average percent change (based on raccoons and inverse of trappers)		-18.06%	34.02%	-18.34%	-16.25%	4.16%	-28.52%	-17.43%	17.85%	-23.60%	44.71%	-9.04%	13.60%
Correlation between average percent change across raccoons and inverse of trappers and percent change in raccoons		81.66%											

Appendix C: Pelt Prices

	Badger	Beaver	Bobcat	Coyote	Gray fox	Kit fox	Muskrat	Raccoon	Red fox	Ringtail	Spotted Skunk	Striped Skunk	Ermine	Swift fox
Fallon Fur Sale, NV, 2019	\$15.31	\$11.82	\$456.35	\$71.72	\$16.79	\$9.26	\$3.27	\$5.01	\$18.29	\$10.83	\$7.32	\$10.45		
Utah Trapper's Association Fur Sale, 2019	\$9.3		\$403.59	\$56.64	\$12.38	\$8.91	\$3.17	\$6.49	\$16.2	\$10.36		\$12.15		\$8.42
CO Trappers & Predator Hunters Association, 2019	\$13.55	\$11.20	\$280.70	\$65.85	\$14.28		\$2.17	\$8.40	\$17.65	\$11.00		\$13.32		\$10.21
Average Across Local Sales	\$12.72	\$11.51	\$380.21	\$64.74	\$14.48	\$9.09	\$2.87	\$6.63	\$17.38	\$10.73	\$7.32	\$11.97		\$9.32
Fur Harvester's Auction, March 2019	\$26.02	\$7.91	\$415.93	\$87.53			\$3.8	\$12.28	\$11.42			\$3.9		
Fur Harvester's Auction, May 2019	\$17.07	\$18.69	\$403.5	\$23.25			\$4.03	\$11.29				\$5.38	\$2.04	
NAFA Auction, March 2019		\$10.46	\$79.51	\$103.69			\$3.59	\$11.7	\$14.2					
NAFA Auction, June 2019	\$28.7	\$9.18	\$76.62	\$112.84	\$13.04		\$3.51	\$7.04				\$5.56	\$3.17	
Average Across All Sales	\$18.33	\$11.54	\$302.31	\$74.50	\$14.12	\$9.09	\$3.36	\$8.89	\$15.55	\$10.73	\$7.32	\$8.46	\$2.61	\$9.32

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Appendix D: Trapper Income

Species	Harvest Numbers, 2019	Average Percentage of Pelts Sold Locally	Average Price at Local Sales	Average Percentage of Pelts Sold across All Sales	Average Price across All Sales	Harvest # x Avg price local x % sold local	Harvest # x avg price all x % sold all
Badger	106	91.50%	\$12.72	67.60%	\$18.33	\$1,233.71	\$1,313.10
Beaver	107	100.00%	\$11.51	86.83%	\$11.54	\$1,231.57	\$1,072.51
Bobcat	1855	99.90%	\$380.21	74.30%	\$302.31	\$704,590.43	\$416,669.20
Ermine	1	no data	no data	30.00%	\$2.61		\$0.78
Gray Fox	2121	100.00%	\$14.48	73.33%	\$14.12	\$30,719.14	\$21,965.14
Kit Fox	77	99.10%	\$9.09	99.10%	\$9.09	\$693.25	\$693.25
Red Fox	112	93.75%	\$17.38	71.63%	\$15.55	\$1,824.90	\$1,247.58
Swift Fox	14	72.00%	\$9.32	72.00%	\$9.32	\$93.90	\$93.90
Weasel	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		
Muskrat	6	100.00%	\$2.87	92.83%	\$3.36	\$17.22	\$18.73
Nutria	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		
Raccoon	346	100.00%	\$6.63	82.17%	\$8.89	\$2,295.12	\$2,526.59
Ringtail	52	75.50%	\$10.73	75.50%	\$10.73	\$421.26	\$421.26
Total income for all trappers:						\$743,120.50	\$446,022.03
Number of Trappers who Reported in 2019:						1,686	1,686
Average gross income per trapper:						\$440.76	\$264.54

Appendix E: Livestock Depredation

Depredation represents a small portion of livestock deaths

Native wildlife attacking livestock accounts for an incredibly small portion of overall annual livestock deaths in New Mexico and the United States as a whole. In 2015, only 2.4% of all adult cattle deaths in the U.S. were the result of depredation. In New Mexico, only 0.07% of cattle died from depredation. Additionally, only 0.11% of New Mexico’s calves, which are more likely to be killed by carnivores than adult cattle, died as a result of depredation. Only 3.8% of all cattle operations in New Mexico reported any cattle deaths caused by carnivores, and the cattle that died from depredation only accounted for 0.1% of overall inventory.⁶³

Although sheep are easier targets for carnivores, only 28.1% of all adult sheep deaths in the U.S. were the result of depredation in 2015. In New Mexico, only 2.0% of sheep and 2.4% of lambs were killed by carnivores. Only 12.4% of all sheep operations in New Mexico reported any sheep deaths resulting from depredation, and the sheep that died from depredation only accounted for 3.4% of overall inventory.⁶⁴

Neighboring states have thriving livestock industries despite bans on trapping

Arizona, California, Colorado, and Washington all have thriving livestock industries, and despite broad restrictions on public lands trapping, these states all experience lower rates of depredation than New Mexico. This suggests that not only is trapping an ineffective way to prevent depredation, but it may actually be exacerbating the situation.

Several studies have determined that when more coyotes and other carnivores are killed (from shooting, trapping, or poisoning), more livestock deaths occur as a result of predation. A 2016 analysis compared lethal and nonlethal strategies for managing livestock predation. It was found that nonlethal methods reduced livestock predation more effectively, and predation actually increased after some lethal methods.⁶⁷ A 14-year study conducted by the USDA found that trapping coyotes did not prevent or reduce sheep deaths. Instead, it was found that the more time trappers spent killing coyotes, the more lambs were killed by predation.⁶⁸ Another study completed by several universities as well as USDA’s National Wildlife Research Center showed that sheep predation rates in Idaho were 3.5 times higher where lethal control was used than in places where nonlethal methods were used.⁶⁹

Cattle Deaths from Predation ⁶⁵				
	% operations with any cattle deaths	% operations with ANY calf deaths	Cattle deaths as % of inventory	Calf deaths as % of inventory
New Mexico	3.8	15.0	0.1	1.5
Colorado	4.4	7.9	0	0.5
Arizona	3.4	12.2	0.1	1.1
California	3.4	11.4	0	0.4
Washington	0.8	2.4	0	0.2

Sheep Deaths from Predation ⁶⁶				
	% operations with any sheep deaths	% operations with any lamb deaths	Sheep deaths as % of inventory	Lamb deaths as % of inventory
New Mexico	12.4	10.4	3.4	5.9
Colorado	12.4	10.2	2.6	3.8
Arizona	34.8	8.5	5.6	3.5
California	5.6	6.1	0.8	1.3
Washington	6.2	4.5	2.3	1.5

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This report was prepared by Mikaila Wireman and Chris Smith of WildEarth Guardians with help from and on behalf of the TrapFree New Mexico coalition. For more information, please visit TrapFreeNM.org or WildEarthGuardians.org or email info@wildearthguardians.org.

