

Fur-trapping story ruffles some readers

Jock Hatfield's article in the March 2 Daily Emerald entitled "Out-foxing Back Country Beavers" has left me with a rather disturbing question on my mind: Is this article for real or is it merely another entry in Mr. Hatfield's now defunct column, "A Typewriter Warmed in Hell"?

Mr. Hatfield's article on the subject of fur trapping is one of the most biased and uninformed I have ever read.

"Trappers have saved some species from extinction," he writes, and he cites the example of the bobcat. The bobcat was going extinct as a predator until the "trappers got it promoted to fur bearing rank . . . and its population boomed. Now the bobcat furnishes a regular crop."

The fact is the bobcat was not removed from the predator list until the 1977 Oregon Legislature passed a statute placing it onto the fur bearer list. Two trapping seasons later I find it hard to comprehend how a species that was so close to extinction has suddenly grown to a population so large that it furnishes a regular crop without its numbers suffering.

One of the trappers from whom Mr. Hatfield received information

uses the argument that trapping is essential in the control of wildlife diseases, these most commonly being rabies, sarcoptic mange, and distemper. These diseases are density dependent — as the number of animals in a population increases, there is greater interaction among its members and the spread of disease is greater. Trappers say that by removing part of the animal population, the chances for disease are lessened.

The problem with this argument lies in that state fish and game departments manage wildlife on a sustainable yield basis, meaning that annual quotas assure that only that portion of the population not needed to retain optimum breeding numbers is trapped in a given season. Therefore, any population loss lasts only until the next breeding season.

"Trappers desire large populations of animals, so there will be plenty of pelts for the following season," writes Mr. Hatfield. The desire for large populations of animals is blatantly inconsistent with the so-called objective of reducing wildlife populations as a way of preventing disease.

Symptoms of diseases such as sarcoptic mange and distemper are lethargy and loss of appetite. Trapping techniques require that an animal be attracted to a food bait or be caught while moving. Therefore, it is usually a healthy animal which gets caught in the trap, not the diseased one. By removing healthy animals and leaving diseased ones at large, the wildlife population's general health deteriorates.

"The state fish and game department hires county trappers to keep coyote and wolf populations down." The largest wolf populations today in the lower 48 states exist in Minnesota, Glacier National Park in Montana, and in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. There is literally no wolf population in the state of Oregon, although I have been told of a large black animal resembling a wolf which hides out near Bend; however, she's as elusive as Bigfoot and nobody really knows what she is.

Mr. Hatfield consistently refers to the "off-set trap," which is, in reality, the leg-hold trap or steel-jaw trap. Larger forms of the leg-hold have off-set jaws, but not all leg-holds are off-set. In the state of Oregon all leg-holds No. 3 or

larger must have a jaw spacing of at least three-sixteenths of one inch, thus the label "off-set." It is also illegal to use a steel leg-hold larger than a No. 4½ or with a jaw spread larger than 9 inches, and it is illegal to use any instant kill trap having a jaw spread of 9 inches or more in any land set.

It is the non-selectivity of the leg-hold trap that environmentalists are fighting. A five-year study by the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests showed that in commercial trapping three non-target animals are caught for every target animal. These may include porcupines, flying squirrels, owls, eagles, woodpeckers, ducks, geese, blue jays, dogs, and cats. Even children have been caught in these traps.

The leg-hold trap has already been outlawed in nineteen nations of the world. Such a ban is in keeping with the anti-cruelty laws already in effect in every state, which provide criminal sanctions against persons who "torture, torment, beat, maim, mutilate, unnecessarily kill or inflict any other act of cruelty upon an animal." It is inexcusable that 20th-century America still permits such a barbaric treatment of

animals that was once a necessary means of obtaining food and building a base for commercial trading.

In future endeavors Mr. Hatfield might check his spelling of names, as he misspelled Sara (No "h") Polenick of Defenders of Wildlife and Cathy ("C" not "K") Johnson of the Survival Center. I might add that Rick Johnson is a representative of the Greenhill Animal Shelter and not of Greenpeace. These are minor details; however, they might serve to keep Mr. Hatfield out of trouble in the future.

Environmentalists have often been called "elitist," yet I find nothing more elitist than Mr. Hatfield's closing. "Trappers and loggers are the only ones who really appreciate Oregon backcountry, Gillman believes. 'It's beautiful country. Not many people get to see it or understand it.'" With the number of people using the Oregon wilderness increasing by 14 percent every year, it really bothers me to think that all these people are going to the woods and not appreciating it.

Cathy Johnson
senior, recreation and park management

'Absolutely without merit'

Jock Hatfield's attempts to show the benefits of trapping ("Out-foxing Back-country Beavers") were so absolutely without merit as to make me wonder if he thought about what he was writing. For instance, he details the drowning of a beaver, and then writes "It spent no time suffering . . ." There is no possibility that an animal could drown — quite literally both its lungs full with water — and not feel pain.

He also writes of how trappers saved the bobcat from extinction. Any ninth-grade biology student knows that when an animal's numbers drop they will reach a certain low, and then its food source — depleted because of its previous overrunning of the area — will rise dramatically, which will in turn — in the case of bobcats — raise the bobcat population. Mama Nature knows what she's doing. And do remember; the reason the bobcats were near extinction is because of overhunting and overtrapping, and misused technology's encroachment on wilderness.

But it is the last paragraph that really catches my fancy. "Trappers and loggers are the only ones who really appreciate Oregon backcountry" is both stupid and a lie. I realize the point that was trying to be made — that those who live and work in nature have a far different view of it than do those folk who only visit, which is true, though I would not say it is a better view, or even a more realistic one — but I actually believe loggers appreciate the backcountry is tantamount to believing the military appreciates civilians because they make such fine targets. Jock Hatfield, get it together; have you ever seen a clearcut?

Peter Nelson
sophomore, english

'Trappers kill for money'

The Friday article on trapping offered the following observations: "Trappers . . . are the only ones who really appreciate Oregon backcountry." Perhaps a rational reapplication of this logic would be as follows: Rapists and muggers are the only ones who really appreciate Eugene's bike and jogging trails.

Strange, isn't it, how those that profit from destroying some portion of nature can be so sure they appreciate the natural world more than environmentalists.

Now I realize that trappers think themselves moralists and heavy thinkers, but I happen to know that their favorite philosophical question is "If a trap snaps shut in the forest, and there is nobody there, does it make any money?" (They also ask, "What is the sound of a three legged coyote clapping?" but that is another matter.)

The article gave several seemingly good rationalizations for trapping, but I must ask this: If there was no money involved, would these people still trap?

Trappers kill for money. Any other reason they give is false. Their trade is no more respectable than child por-

theirs



nography. I can assure you that furs draped around the necks of the vain have no redeeming social value.

Bob Henrickson
senior, sociology

'Admit they enjoy killing'

Having run a trap-line myself some years back, no one can convince me that trapping is a humane or noble sport. The thing that bothers me most about trapping (and hunting) is the hypocrisy of its supporters. Instead of talking about loving the outdoors and preventing the pain and suffering present in nature, why can't they simply admit that they enjoy killing and the money that accompanies it. At least I could respect their honesty.

Chris Buckley
sophomore, psychology

Sports ticket suggestion

I was a "winner" of the Athletic Pass lottery last fall and did not have the money nor did I desire to see all the

games on the schedule, so I sold my right to buy the pass to the first person I could find.

The recent controversy over the future costs of tickets, going over \$50, makes me want to offer the following solution:

If there are 4,000 seats reserved for students at each game, and the basketball schedule has 15 events, that's a total of 60,000 student tickets for the season.

These 60,000 seats should be divided equally between the total number of students at the University, using a lottery to determine which games each student would receive tickets for. The cost of four or five tickets would certainly be within range of almost anyone.

Attending an intercollegiate athletic event should be part of every student's experience while attending the University. It's possible that over the course of four years, a person's number may never be picked. It's not an all or nothing world. Think about it!

David Royal
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