Recreational-Sport Trapping and Young People

The Federal Government and our New Jersey State Division of Fish, Game and Shell Fisheries have long promoted trapping among children as a healthy outdoor sport or recreation. Within the last few years, the Division issued a document entitled, “Fact Sheet—A Statement on Wildlife Issues,” subtitled, “The Role of the Steel Trap in Wildlife Conservation.” This document praises leghold trapping and comments that curtailing such activity will result in damage to recreational trapping in New Jersey.

Recreation is defined by the dictionary as “play” or “amusement.” Yet language is consistently subverted by trapping enthusiasts, and used as a propaganda tool to corrupt youth and to serve the callous economic interests of the fur industry. Thus the child who commits a grossly cruel act is playing and amusing himself.

The following excerpts from a letter to the Branch illustrate typical recreational trapping:

“...a squirrel was taken away by the Animal Rescue League after at least an hour of torture by slow strangulation. The boy had been told that squirrels were rodents, and when he caught the animal, he felt he had performed a public service.”

Perhaps parents who permit children to use the barbaric trap are not aware that their children are breaking the law, of the excruciating animal suffering involved, or of the possible psychic damage to the child himself.

We believe that choices children make as they mature will be determined by what they have learned about the sanctity of life and a sense of empathy for others, both human and animal. The enlightened society attempts to teach the importance of compassion, by example and by law.

Yet leghold trapping tends to reinforce a negative view. Since this trap is designed in such a way that any animal caught must be mutilated and cannot be instantly killed, the young trapper is faced with having to dispose of the animal by some means. Clubbing or stoning to death is one method, standing on the animal’s chest to suffocate it is another, strangling another.

The New Jersey Branch has documented many cases in which children have been witnessed attempting to kill trapped animals by exceedingly primitive and gruesome methods.

(Continued on page 2)

Dr. Ashley Montagu, one of the outstanding scientists and anthropologists of our age, and Member of the Branch Advisory Board, wrote:

“What you have written me concerning the trapping of animals in New Jersey is appalling. Man’s inhumanity to man is bad enough, but his deliberate cruelty to defenseless animals is even worse, and utterly indefensible. The encouragement of such activities in the name of ‘sport’ is pathological. Sport is play in which one rejoices in the fun of the game and the victory of the winner whoever he may be, but in no sense can be conceived to involve the infliction of the least harm upon another. To encourage such cruelty in children in the name of sport or for that matter in the name of anything else is to engage in the development of unfeeling people who will regard this kind of ‘sport’ and violent conduct as a normal part of life, whereas it is in fact a disorder and a disease of the mind. The personality of children cannot help but be damaged by such activities, and rendered cruel and unfeeling not only toward animals but also toward human beings. It is no wonder that America is the most violent nation in the world. Anyone who harms a defenseless animal or inflicts pain upon an animal is a coward, a bully, a disgrace to life. Anyone who encourages children in such activities ought to be incarcerated in a mental institution for the purposes of rehumanization.”
THE GREAT HUNTERS BAG THEIR BEARS

By Gordon Smith
Chronicle Sports Editor

By the hundreds they marched into the woods.

The mighty hunter was to have his day. The only day Pennsylvania allows the great, spartan warrior to shoot at the sleepy bear.

He would get one chance, perhaps, if he were lucky. When the moment came, his heart would pound furiously, his face would blush, his throat would throb as adrenalin dashed and darted his body.

Others would wonder, as they had before, if shooting a bear was really moralistic, since there just aren’t that many in these parts. The age-old question of gun control would spring forth again in some minds as the hunter, car and bear passed by.

In the end, it would be revealed there was an “overkill.” Too many females would be taken. But little would it matter to the great hunter who has bagged his bear.

One-hundred bear would be killed in the time it takes the sun to rise in the east and set in the west. One-hundred men would live to tell of their conquests.

Others would come home empty-handed, but with tales to spin for ever. Two who killed an already dead bear wouldn’t come home. At least not right away. When they arrive, there will be a cold, porcelain table, organ music, flowers, caskets.

They’d be Maynard Branome of Lafayette Hill and Don Phillips of Philadelphia. It would be their misfortune to be mistaken for a bear by a 13-year-old Schuylkill County boy, happily hunting with his dad.

It would later be revealed the men were killed at 6:10 a.m., one-half hour before legal starting time for hunting this week. It would be revealed no shots should be fired until 6:34 a.m.

Thirteen-years-old, God.

—Allentown, Pa. Gulf, Nov. 25, 1975

TRAPPING (Cont.)

means. A small sampling: axing a raccoon to death, storing a skunk to death, clubbing a raccoon with boards, kicking a living trapped blue jay, removing a opossum from a trap and hanging him from a tree to die. Are these really the experiences we want our children to enjoy? Are we willing to subject our children to the brutalizing effects of witnessing frantic and painful struggles and then battering on a helpless creature for the other hand, of relegating animals to the category of “things” to avoid the recognition of their suffering?

Two years ago, a member of the New Jersey Fish and Game Council (which sets State trapping regulations) wrote to a local newspaper commending it for an article depicting the trapping activities of school children. Reading the article, he stated, "was like a ray of sunshine . . . The boys are having fun and making a little money and I can’t think of a better way for them to employ their time and work off some surplus energy.”

Contrast this Fish and Game Councilman’s “ray of sunshine” with the cries of anguish from the following selection of trapping cases documented within the past 2 years by the New Jersey Branch. Many of these abuses directly involved juveniles whose present and future health from the past is of increasing concern to citizens throughout the State.

Pet Cat-caught in leghold for 18 days. Dilocated elbow and nerve damage. One hundred claws and permanent loss of hair on paw. Morris County.

Hunting Dog-beagle caught in 2 legholds which were part of a group of 5 legholds connected together by a heavy chain and concealed with dry grass. Rescued immediately by owner. Middlesex County.

Cat-caught in leghold for 2 days. Bone exposed for 2½ inches on one leg. Unable to retract claws and permanent loss of hair on paw. Morris County.

Pet Cat-caught in leghold for 2 days. Bone exposed for 2 inches on paw, wound gangrenous. Middelsex County.

Hawk-observed for 2 days. Bone swelled to twice its normal size. Bergen County.

Cat-caught in leghold for 18 days. Bone exposed for 2½ inches on paw. Middlesex County.

Dog-German short-haired pointer caught by right hind leg in a homemade steel cable snare set by children. Rescued immediately by owner. Middlesex County.

Raccoon—found in leghold set behind a children’s skating pond. Destroyed. Middlesex County.

Cottontail Rabbit—both hind legs severed except for 1 tendon. Found in area used by children playing. Morris County.

Sereech Out—both legs crushed and broken, bones protruding. Suffering from severe trauma. Destroyed. Middlesex County.

Pet Cat-Siamese caught in leghold, sustained severe fractures of right hind leg and died. Middlesex County.

Pet Dog-caught by paw in leghold set behind a children’s skating pond. Bergen County.

Pet Cat-caught in leghold for 4 days. Right hind leg injury resulted in amputation of 2 toes by veterinarian. Mercer County.

TRAFFICING CASUALTIES DOCUMENTED

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Preview of HSUS teaching units “Sharing: You and the Animal World.”

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At last someone has written a counterpart to those hundreds of books celebrating purebred dogs. Underdog champions the cause of the mixed breed dog, that often neglected animal which bears such undistinguished titles as mutt, mongrel, cur. This book was authored by two men with exceptional expertise in the field of dog study and dog training. Siegal is contributing editor of Dogs Magazine and Margolis is director of the National Institute of Dog Training, Inc.

Underdog shows rare sensitivity for the plight of a major segment of the dog population, a group that is the undeserved victim of an identity problem. In this book the mixed breed dog is portrayed as an animal that is not inferior but rather disadvantaged. The authors contend that registered dogs have behavioral characteristics that are common to their breed. A mixed breed dog is less predictable, and its training requires a special approach.

Underdog is a must for the library of all those who champion the cause of the nation’s millions of mutts.

Guy R. Hodge

And now, humanitarians in New Jersey will have the opportunity to meet author Matthew Margolis who will explain how and why he came to write a book solely about the mixed breed dog. Since Underdog is a functional training manual, Mr. Margolis also will show us his highly effective, yet humane, training methods.

Come to the annual meeting, meet Matthew Margolis and learn all about training dogs.

Fanwood, N.J., March 5, 1976

Dear Members of the Humane Society:

Just a note to thank you for your assistance earlier this week in reference to a phone call I made regarding a pigeon with a broken leg. Yours was the only organization able to come up with a solution to my problem and hopefully alleviate its suffering! I was able to contact Mrs. Gisela Karlan and we managed to get our “patient” to her, hopefully for surgery. Even if it did not survive at least with her help it had a better chance than in our inexperienced hands. Enclosed is a check as a thank you for all you’ve done! If you have any literature available on the society I’d be interested in learning more about it.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Kathryn Tobitsch