

'A real bad deal': Dog survives being caught in trap

Posted: Wednesday, December 02, 2009

By JOSEPH ROBERTIA

For many mushers, having a dog caught in a snare or trap is a constant concern. For mushers Jane Faulkner and Mindee Morning, this fear became a reality late last month while running a dog team in the Gaswell Road area, not far from Faulkner's home.

- Photos

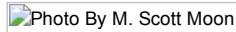


Photo By M. Scott Moon

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Photo By M. Scott Moon

Mindee Morning sits with Jane Faulkner's dog Lucy last week. The dog was caught in a trap while running free with Morning during a sled dog training run. "I have been going up there for seven years and never had something like this happen," Faulkner said.

Faulkner is signed up to run the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in March. Morning is her kennel partner and has been helping Faulkner by training a second dog team.

On Nov. 21, just after dusk, Morning had left the yard with her dog team pulling a four-wheeler, when she noticed Lucy -- a retired sled dog that had gone to Nome with Faulkner during the Serum Run a few years ago -- had broken her chain and was following the team.

"We don't normally take loose dogs," Morning said. "She appeared out of nowhere and was running along."

Stopping and turning around a team of fresh, energetic huskies is difficult to potentially dangerous, so Morning decided to keep going with the run. She traveled several miles on her regular training loop and was heading home when Lucy got into trouble.

"We were about 1 3/4-miles from civilization with houses and cars," Morning said. "Lucy was only about 10 feet off the road when I heard her start screaming. I thought she must have hit a porcupine."

Morning brought the team to a halt. She called for Lucy, and with her headlamp she began scanning the darkness in the area where the frantic yelps were coming from. Lucy never came and Morning could see nothing, but with 12 dogs still hammering their harnesses, she couldn't step away from the team to search for the downed dog.

"It was a real bad deal," Morning said. "I had to balance what was best for the 12 over what was best for the one, so I made the decision to try and get the dogs home as quickly as I could and then come back."

On the way, Morning passed Faulkner, who by this time had hooked up another team and was heading out for her own training run. Morning explained to Faulkner where Lucy was and that something bad had happened to her.

Faulkner found the location, quickly tied her team to a tree, and found Lucy roughly seven feet off the road. The dog was laying on her side still screaming, having stumbled into a trap set in the crook of a tree root. Slammed on her neck was a large conibear trap -- a device not meant to hold, but to kill whatever it closes on.

Faulkner, fearing a dog could one day get caught in a trap, was educated on this particular device. So, rather than attempting to pry the jaws of the trap open, she attempted to compress the side-springs to release Lucy.

"I tried to remove it without success," Faulkner said. "It was rusted and didn't move easily."

Faulkner used her cell phone to call a neighbor, Gordon Orth, in the hope of getting more muscle to save the dog's life. Back at Faulkner's, Morning had safely secured her dog team and headed back with a pair of bolt-cutters.

"You can imagine my 11 dogs waiting for me for over an hour," Faulkner said. "I couldn't leave my Lucy alive, though. She is my constant companion, and she cried when I would walk away to check the sled dogs."

Orth and Morning arrived together. Morning took Faulkner's team home, while Orth and Faulkner tried to release the dog, but the two of them still couldn't budge the trap and their attempts caused Lucy more pain.

"The bolt cutters were the ticket," Faulkner said. Orth was able to cut the bar across Lucy's neck.

"It was a miracle," Morning said. "That trap could have shattered the vertebrae in her neck."

Instead, the dog was able to move once released.

"She was in shock and had a swollen neck for days," Morning said. "But she lived, that's the important thing. I was so grateful she made it."

Morning said she learned a lot from the experience.

"I will never take a loose dog again," she said. "I'd abort the run. It's just not worth the risk."

Morning also said she held no ill will toward trappers as a whole, despite this recent event.

"I'm not down on them," she said. "But I wish there had been something like a 'set traps ahead' sign to warn people. I would never have gone down there with a loose dog if I'd known."

Faulkner echoed similar sentiments.

"I am glad to get this out because I want people to know that there are traps on Gaswell Road," she said. "I see a lot of other people walking their dogs off-line up there."

Larry Lewis, a wildlife technician with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, said trapping season opened Nov. 10 and -- species dependent -- could run as late as the end of May or beginning of April.

He said it is legal for trappers to attempt to catch furbearers on public land where trapping is legal, as well as on their own property, and private property if they have the landowner's permission.

Faulkner, Morning and Lewis were uncertain of the ownership of the land where Lucy was caught, but Lewis said that if legal, the area seemed like an adequate distance from nearby residences for a trap to be set.

"Even when legal, I advise trappers to avoid setting traps in areas where there's an increased risk to catch a dog," he said. "But in that area, it seemed reasonable if there were no obvious signs of the location being publicly used by people or pets."

That being said, Lewis said from the description of the trap type, as well as the location it was set, he questioned the experience of the person who set it.

"It doesn't sound like it was somebody who knew what they were doing," he said. "Setting in a crook of a tree would be good for marten or wolverine, but I can't imagine anyone thinking either of those species would be there."

Lewis added trappers aren't the only ones who should act responsibly during trapping season. Pet owners, even those living outside the leash law areas of city limits, should be aware of the potential danger of traps in remote and semi-rural areas at this time of year.

Lewis said even in residential areas, he frequently gets requests from people seeking the assistance of a professional trapper after coyote has harmed or killed a family pet.

"We all need to be aware and considerate of each other," he said. "I would advise pet owners to keep their dogs under control during trapping season."

As to Morning's request that areas with traps have some form of sign or marker to warn people, Lewis said that's not an option most trapper would favor.

"Then you run the risk of people taking the fur from the trap, or anti-trapping people fouling the trap or taking the trap itself, both of which are illegal," he said. "It's a real catch-22."

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By Tim Mowry (/authors/tim-mowry)

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner

Alaska officials show how to release trapped pets

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Bob Hunter demonstrates releasing a pet from a trap at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2014, in Fairbanks, Alaska. A recently released brochure, titled "Trap Safety for Pet Owners," is part of a concerted effort by ADFG and the Alaska Trappers Association to increase public

education about trapping and reduce conflicts with pet owners. (AP Photo/Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, Eric Engman)

FAIRBANKS (AP) — Anyone who doesn't believe a normal person with no knowledge of trapping can open a body-gripping Conibear trap should talk to Sarah DeGennaro.

A wildlife technician at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Fairbanks at the time, DeGennaro, who is also an artist, was asked to draw some illustrations to accompany a brochure the department was putting together for pet owners about how to release their pets from traps and snares.

As part of her research, DeGennaro tried out the different release techniques for herself. She was able to open all the different types of traps, including leg-hold traps, body-gripping traps and snares.

"That leash one is pretty difficult," DeGennaro admitted, referring to a technique in which a dog leash is used to pull open the springs on a Conibear 330 body-gripping trap. "It's strenuous to try to do that."

But DeGennaro, who knew nothing about trapping when she started the project, was able to do it.

"I had to do that to try and figure out how the illustrations should look," she said.

In that sense, DeGennaro served as a guinea pig for the project. The newly released brochure, titled "Trap Safety for Pet Owners," is part of a concerted effort by ADFG and the Alaska Trappers Association to increase public education about trapping and reduce conflicts with pet owners.

The pocket-sized, fold-up, brochure describes in detail the three kinds of traps that pet owners may encounter — foot-hold, body-grip and snares — and step-by-step instructions, complete with drawings by DeGennaro, on how to remove them.

"It came out awesome," said Mike Taras, a wildlife education specialist for ADFG in Fairbanks who worked on the brochure.

The brochure includes suggestions for a "trap removal tool kit" that pet owners can carry with them in the event an animal is caught in a trap. The kit includes things like a stout rope or strong leash that's eight feet long, something to use for a muzzle to avoid getting bit, bailing wire or zip ties to hold open trap springs and a piece of wood to put under a trap to keep it from sinking in the snow.

The brochure also contains general information about trapping that pet owners should know, such as keeping dogs on leashes when walking in the woods, never trying to release a wild animal, and being aware that it is illegal to tamper with legally set traps or snares.

Joe Letarte, president of the Alaska Trappers Association in Fairbanks, was happy the way the brochure turned out. Given the sensitivity of the topic involved, the brochure received considerable critical review, he said.

"There were a lot of people involved in it," he said. "It was a lot of work and I think the end result is pretty good. I think it's going to benefit everybody."

Letarte said the brochure was tested out on other non-trappers like DeGennaro.

"We had people who knew nothing about trapping or traps do it," he said. "They were able to read the brochure and open the Conibear."

The department printed 5,000 of the brochures, which are available free from ADFG offices. The brochure may also be viewed and downloaded on ADFG's website at www.adfg.alaska.gov.

The department also recently produced a series of five videos showing pet owners how to open the different traps featured in the brochure, including body-grip, coil-spring, jump, long-spring, and snares. The videos are posted on ADFG's website (www.adfg.alaska.gov).

"They really show you how these traps work," said Taras, who produced the videos. Bob Hunter, hunter education coordinator for ADFG in Fairbanks, starred in the videos. Hunter used his daughter's stuffed husky as a dummy in the videos and the traps he used were painted blaze orange for better visibility.

"It worked out pretty well," said Hunter, who joked that he's hoping his role will earn him an invitation to the Cannes Film Festival.

Granted, if a body-grip trap works the way it's supposed to, there's a good chance it will kill a dog before it can be released, Hunter said. Body-gripping traps like Conibears are designed to kill animals quickly by breaking their necks, he said.

"It depends on the size of the dog, the size of the trap, how it gets caught and its initial reaction to the trap," Hunter said of freeing a dog from a large, body-grip trap. "It's not like you can just squeeze it here and you're done. You have to know how it works and use the leash properly to get leverage."

In the video, it's obvious that Hunter has to use considerable effort to get the trap open.

"We tried not to downplay it," he said. "It's not easy but it can be done."

To that end, Hunters offers tips in the video such as using a round leash instead of a flat leash because flat leashes can get caught on the gap in the springs and bind up. He also emphasizes quick action and warns pet owners to be careful about injuring their dogs when trying to release them from traps.

Overall, Hunter said the videos turned out “very well.”

“They’re very brief and they go through the different positions to get better leverage,” he said.

Granted, most dogs probably won’t be nearly as cooperative as his daughter’s stuffed husky, Hunter said, but the videos “give people a better idea of how the traps work.”

The idea for the brochure and videos came as a result of increased demand from the public for workshops on how to release pets from traps, mainly in the Southcentral region, Taras said.

After searching the Internet for other videos on releasing pets from traps, Taras said the department decided to make their own.

“It was hard to find good, quick videos that show you exactly how to get your pet out in the proper way,” he said. “The stuff we have right now it the best out there.”

Like the brochure, the videos received considerable scrutiny. In fact, some last-minute editing was required after it was noted that Hunter used the term leg-hold instead of foot-hold twice in the video, even though the term leg-hold has been used for more than 100 years.

DeGennaro was happy to help with the project and said she hopes it will help reduce conflicts between trappers and pet owners.

“I think it’s great to have pet owners know traps might be out on trails and they need to be aware and ready if anything happens,” she said. “Hopefully it can save some dogs’ lives.”



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Mat-Su

As suburbia replaces frontier, Mat-Su considers restricting trapping for the first time

✎ Author: **Zaz Hollander** ⌚ Updated: January 9 📅 Published January 8



On Friday, Jan. 6, 2017, a sign at the Crevasse Moraine Trailhead in Palmer reminds pet owners to leash their pets while using the trails. The trails are adjacent to areas used by trappers, and occasionally dogs can be caught in a trap or snare. (Loren Holmes / Alaska Dispatch News)

PALMER — Matanuska-Susitna Borough officials are considering a historic ban on traps and snares at schools and along trails popular with dog owners.

The conflict between trailside trapping and pets is on the rise in this growing municipality with frontier roots that's given way to expanding suburbia. The population of Mat-Su topped 100,000 last year, making it the second largest municipality in the state behind Anchorage.

Progress on the proposed borough law comes as winter's trapping season gets well underway and residents report several dogs caught in snares or traps since December in the Knik River Valley and off Archangel Road in Hatcher Pass.

A draft ordinance proposed by borough Assembly member Dan Mayfield of Big Lake and co-sponsored by Matthew Beck from Palmer would ban all trapping on school grounds except for educational demonstrations. It would also bar traps or snares on borough property within 100 feet of the sinuous, hilly trails at the 360-acre Crevasse Moraine trail system near Palmer.

The proposal calls for \$150 fines for a first offense, \$300 for the second offense and \$500 for the third and any subsequent offenses. Violators forfeit their traps.

Numerous Alaska towns and cities already restrict trapping in some way including Anchorage, Valdez, Fairbanks and Juneau. But efforts to address trail conflicts outside city limits have run into **opposition around the state**.

If Mat-Su does adopt some form of the proposed law, it would mark the first time the borough restricts trapping.

Right now, if a loose dog gets caught in a trap or snare on borough property, the dog owner is breaking the law. The trapper isn't.

Not popular with anybody

The proposed Mat-Su legislation has roots in a **petition presented to Mayfield** last year by a nonprofit called Alaska Safe Trails Inc. More than 3,500 signers urged the borough to ban trapping on school grounds, at Crevasse Moraine and at Government Peak Recreation Area near Hatcher Pass. Government Peak isn't included in the proposed draft because of what Mayfield described as "convoluted" land management questions because the area includes state land that the borough manages.

The proposed ordinance that emerged a few months ago isn't supported by either trails advocates or trappers.

"Trappers are kind of giving some pushback because they think this ordinance may be the first step in several steps of outlawing trapping," Mayfield said. "And the folks who are really engaged in providing safe trails in the borough are against it because they don't think it goes far enough."

The ordinance is expected to be introduced for a public hearing at the end of the month, with hearings to begin in February or March.

It's already gone before several borough boards: the Mat-Su School Board; the animal control board; and the Parks, Recreation and Trails Advisory Board, which took public testimony at three meetings and will hold another later this month.

Mayfield said he expects the legislation to change as it moves through the process.

"The idea here is to get it in front of the Assembly and to get the people of the Mat-Su to provide us with testimony ... and make good, sound decisions on what we have to do, taken in light of the fact that we've got an immense amount of growth happening in our area," he said.

Time to share?

Alaska Safe Trails founder Lynn Mitchell said in an email that the group is "withholding support" for the proposed ordinance because it was "gutted under pressure from the trapping community."

The ordinance at this point only serves to sanction trapping with setbacks rather than an outright ban at Crevasse Moraine, Mitchell said.

Potential exemptions for underwater sets or tree sets for marten further erode the intent of the ordinance and make for confusing, hard-to-enforce provisions, critics say.

Bill Mohrwinkel, a Knik River resident who works as a wilderness guide in summer and concert promoter in winter, signed the petition and now is working with Mitchell.

Mohrwinkel said his 30-pound husky mix got caught in a leg-hold trap in December at a popular walking area near the river but he managed to free her without injury. He's equally concerned about an old trap he found behind Swanson Elementary School just 2 feet off a well-used Matanuska River trail.

Mohrwinkel wants high-use recreation areas in the borough totally off-limits to trapping: Crevasse Moraine, Government Peak, the Matanuska Lakes system, Matanuska River Park and Wasilla and Palmer city limits. He's asking for quarter-mile setbacks on borough- and state-maintained trails including Lazy Mountain, Pioneer Peak, Archangel Road and Mint Glacier trail at Hatcher Pass, Mohrwinkel said in the email and during an interview.

It's "disingenuous for trappers to use leash laws as an excuse" when several Assembly members have agreed most people don't keep their dogs on leash at all times, especially in parks and on trails, Mohrwinkel wrote in an email to Mayfield, Beck and Lazy Mountain Assembly member Jim Sykes.

"This borough has grown considerably since I moved here 24 years ago and continues to grow," he wrote. "We have a problem now with dogs getting trapped. It's going to get worse and it's time to be proactive. It's time for the trapping community to share."

Unintended consequences

Trappers say they're able to police themselves.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game posts signs at trailheads warning trappers to abide by the **Code of Ethics** found on the back of Alaska's trapping regulations. Among other things, the code recommends trappers "(p)romote trapping methods that will reduce the possibility of catching nontarget animals" and get landowner permission before trapping on private property.

When the Mat-Su ordinance first surfaced, the Alaska Trappers Association met with Mayfield to push voluntary measures — like avoiding popular trails — that "worked so well in Fairbanks, before we enshrine something in borough ordinance," said Pete Buist, a hunting guide and former state Game Board member who represents the statewide association.

Buist agrees that most trappers don't make sets close to busy trails, so it's the less ethical ones who can ruin it for everyone else.

"That's fair," he said. "It's also fair to assume they're not going to be very impressed with a borough ordinance any more than dog people are impressed with a borough ordinance that includes a leash law. Everybody ignores the part they don't like."

Trappers don't want to catch dogs, he said: It's bad for the trap, bad for the dog and bad publicity overall.

"Smart trappers don't set traps where they're going to catch a dog," he said. "Then again, if somebody's just letting a dog run it's really difficult to make sure those two things don't come together."

Asked about the 100-foot setback at Crevasse Moraine, Buist shared an anecdote. A friend was skiing with his dog off-leash in Fairbanks. He got back to his car at dark but the dog wasn't with him. It had been caught in a trap more than 100 feet off the trail and the skier struggled to find the animal, Buist said.

"The dog ended up dying because it was set back," he said. "If it had been closer to the trail, then he might have been able to find it."

Not Fairbanks

There's no comparison between Fairbanks and Mat-Su, according to Todd Estey, who moved to the Valley from the northern community nearly six years ago.

His wife, Julie Estey, traveled thousands of miles on area trails training for the 2008 Yukon Quest sled dog race, Estey said. Any traplines were marked with flags. The couple attended trappers' events.

"She never had one issue," he said Friday.

Then the Esteys bought 26 acres on the Knik River and moved down with 12 dogs, mostly Alaska huskies.

Since then, six dogs have been caught in six traps including one last month. All survived, though one nearly died and cost thousands in vet bills. Estey wonders if traps had anything to do with two other dogs that disappeared completely.

Two of the traps were on the Esteys' own property. Two more were illegally set on private property next door. Two sat near trails.

"I just can't believe what the trappers are getting away with out here," he said, blaming a few unethical trappers making the whole community look bad. "They roll in with their \$50,000 pickups and their \$30,000 side-by-sides and I can see their tracks in the snow. You can see where they just literally put one foot down and set their trap. It really is about laziness in my view."

Leash law overlays debate

Trappers say pet owners who keep their dogs restrained don't have to worry about traps — ethically set or otherwise.

Dog owners in the Mat-Su are required to keep dogs on leash at all times on borough land unless the dogs are participating in an organized activity like dog sledding or hunting dog trials. Owners are allowed to keep animals under voice control, but only on their own property.

The law can be hard to enforce along the Valley's increasingly popular trails.

Matt Hardwig, the borough's chief animal control officer, said his "hand would fall off" if he wrote tickets for off-leash dogs at Crevasse Moraine.

Animal control has four officers to patrol a borough the size of Ireland. They don't have the time — or the desire — to patrol trails for loose pooches, Hardwig said.

"We're trying to enforce the intent of the law, not the letter," he said.

Hardwig said he's received no reports of leashed dogs caught in traps. He knows of only one incident where the owner was near the dog, and that was at least 40 yards away.

Loose dogs accounted for 180 aggressive dog cases in 2016, according to animal control statistics. The department fielded nearly 1,000 reports involving some degree of "danger of life and safety," Hardwig said.

Asked what the borough does to enforce leash laws on popular trails like Crevasse Moraine, he said the department mostly assumes people police themselves.

The Crevasse Moraine trails have become "an unofficial dog park area" where Hardwig said traps haven't historically been a problem.

"But I think people want to make it a safe haven for their animals," he said.

About this Author

Zaz Hollander

Zaz Hollander is based in Wasilla and covers the Mat-Su region for the ADN.



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Dog owners beware, it's trapping season in Alaska

✎ Author: **Craig Medred** ⓘ Updated: September 27, 2016 📅 Published January 19, 2013

Trapping season is open in Alaska and once again, some loose dogs are getting caught.

Attitudes on dogs in traps seem to track attitudes on free-running dogs. Owners of free-running dogs that get caught in traps are shocked and appalled that it could happen. Skiers, hikers, snowshoers and others unhappy by being accosted by other people's loose dogs don't seem at all upset.

Either way, according to Irene Lindquist of the **U.S. Forest Service** in Seward, everyone should stay alert to the risks.

Keep dogs on leash

"Quite a few dogs have been caught in traps in Seward Ranger District," Lindquist reported this week. "A dog was caught in a trap directly off West Juneau Road on Monday. There are traps on Snug Harbor Road that are also catching dogs. One dog had to have his foot amputated."

Both West Juneau Road and Snug Harbor Road are in the Cooper Landing area, but Lindquist said that is not the only area in Chugach National Forest with dog-versus trapping conflicts.

"Many areas and locations used for winter recreation have active trap lines that are directly off a road or trail," she said. "There are some trap lines where the trapper is a fair distance off a road or trail, but these are also a hazard to a loose dog who is lured by strong scents to the trap. Our current (hard-packed snow) conditions allow for easy and fast travel off trail for a critter to get into trouble quick."

Dog owners are advised to keep their animals on a leash, or in sight and under voice control. To help dog owners unfamiliar with trapping or traps, Lindquist said, the **Alaska Trappers Association** is offering a shared-trails presentation at Cooper Landing Community Hall at 7 p.m. Friday. The association has put together a DVD that explains how to recognize traplines, the various kinds of traps used in Alaska, and what to do if your dog gets caught in one.

The DVD covers the specifics of how various traps work, and how to open them to release a dog. Lindquist said trappers will attend the Cooper Landing meeting to demonstrate. Dog owners who act promptly can usually free dogs unharmed.

Lindquist said the purpose of the meeting "is educational and not to debate individual views of trapping." She also said she can provide loaner copies of the DVD to people who might not be able to attend the meeting but want to know how to free a dog caught in a trap. Hands-on training is better than anything viewed on a computer screen, but the DVD could help dog owners.

Learn how to open traps

How to open a leg-hold trap is obvious to most people, but Conibear traps -- designed to trap and kill wild animals -- can be confusing to the those unfamiliar. There is a good explainer on how to free dogs from Conibear traps [here](#). Another video on how to free dogs from cable-lock snares is [here](#).

A leash or rope can be a vital aid in opening a Conibear, another reason to always carry a leash. Both Conibear traps and snares are used regularly in Alaska. People venturing into the backcountry during trapping season are likely to encounter them.

If you want to borrow a copy of the trapper association DVD, Lindquist can be reached online at ilindquist@fs.fed.us or by phone at 907-288-7748.

Contact Craig Medred at [craig\(at\)alaskadispatch.com](mailto:craig(at)alaskadispatch.com)

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Posted March 18, 2015 02:47 pm - Updated March 19, 2015 10:26 am

By Rashah McChesney (/authors/rashah-mcchesney)

Peninsula Clarion

Game board spikes Kenai Peninsula trapping restrictions

Comments 1 Share



Several types of traps sit on display for trapping hopefuls during a class for people seeking permits to trap on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday Oct. 25, 2014 in Soldotna, Alaska.

After facing a series of restrictions that could have virtually eliminated trapping in certain areas of the central Kenai Peninsula, trappers were told by the Alaska Board of Game to trap responsibly, but freely.

On Wednesday, board members briefly discussed the proposals — which would have restricted trapping near trails and campgrounds in Cooper Landing, Seward and Moose Pass — before voting them down unanimously.

While supporters of the proposal testified that trapping near trails was a threat to children, dogs and others on the trail, Alaska Department of Fish and Game Area Management Biologist Jeff Selinger said his office does not often hear about accidents with traps.

“Historically there have been user conflicts in this area with local residents and trappers and pets getting caught in traps,” he said. “It’s an issue that’s talked about a lot, but the reality is that we do not hear about a lot of animals getting caught in traps directly and the department level.”

Several board members said that though they were dog owners, they could not support the restrictions to trapping that did not also place an onus on dog owners to be responsible with their pets.

“The trappers do have some rights on their part,” said Board Chairman Ted Spraker, who traps on some areas of the Kenai Peninsula. “We hear the same thing in the (Mat-Su Valley) where there have been some problems ... the people with dogs, some of them very vociferously think that there should be no containment of their dogs.”

The Cooper Landing based group that submitted the proposals, the Committee for Safe Public Lands and Trails, testified to board members that it was primarily interested in developing a working relationship with the Alaska Trappers Association.

Board members chided the group for failing to come to an agreement with the trappers before approaching the board with a regulatory proposal.

During public testimony Ken Green, who spoke for the committee, told board members that he had been unable to get the trapper’s association to cooperate in negotiations after he refused to withdraw his proposal from the Board of Game agenda.

In February, Green said, the trapper’s association posted several signs in Cooper Landing. The signs caution trappers to avoid conflict by not trapping near trails, turnouts and other populated areas. The signs also caution pet owners to be responsible for their pets and avoid going off-leash.

Alaska Trappers Association President Randall Zarnke disagreed with Green's characterization of the negotiations and said the signs were an effort to resolve the issue without regulatory involvement.

"I was disappointed ... to see what I saw was a good faith effort by the trapping community to find a way to compromise and work with people, really seemed to end in an impasse," said vice-chairman Nate Turner, who traps near Nenana. "I think this could have been resolved at a more local level and that's something that we always encourage."

Both Spraker and Turner cited other places in the state near Juneau and in Fairbanks, when trappers and recreational users came to agreements about trail use without going through the regulatory process.

"This is an important issue to the authors," Turner said. "I would just encourage them to continue to take the hand that's been offered and ... find some ways to resolve local concerns."

Reach Rashah McChesney at rashah.mcchesney@peninsulaclarion.com or follow her on Twitter @litmuslens.

Trapping and recreation collide in Cooper Landing (<http://bit.ly/1BH0rSg>)



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Getting trapped in the controversy over trapping

By Howard Delo Nov 19, 2015



Let's talk about a controversial subject here in the Valley – trapping!

Most of the trapping seasons opened on Nov. 10, but a few were already going and a couple of others won't open until mid-December. Be sure to pick up a copy of the 2015-2016 Alaska trapping regulations booklet if you plan to do some trapping or if you intend to recreate in known trapping areas.

That's the controversy — non-trappers using the same areas where one or more trappers have made sets to harvest the various species of animals allowed under the trapping regulations. We are all familiar with the annual media story of somebody's dog being caught in a trap or snare set in an area popularly used by the public.

Usually, when the facts are made known in these situations, both parties are at fault. The story generally goes something like this.

Joe and Jill Public and their kids were out skiing a local trail and Fido, who was running loose and unleashed, suddenly seemed to just disappear. After an hour of frantic searching, the dog was found caught in a trap or snare. If the owner is lucky, the dog is released basically unharmed. We all know the other alternatives which are too often the actual outcome. Either way, another family is turned against the management tool of trapping.

OK, who's at fault here?

First, the recreating family failed to control their pet by having it on a leash. I know, everybody claims the dog was under voice command, but really, how many of us own pets that instantaneously respond to voice commands while out "playing" on a family trip?

If we're truly honest, very few can answer affirmatively here.

How about the trapper? In my opinion, the trapper should never have made sets in or near a known, popular, developed, and frequently used recreation site. The trapper should concentrate their efforts in more remote and difficult to access locations which would generally not be used by non-trappers.

This last statement, however, doesn't mean only wilderness locations. I can think of several specific spots within a mile of my house where traps could be set with little concern about interfering with someone's outdoor recreational plans. Some of these locations involve water sets for beaver, otter, or mink. Done properly, specific types of water sets target only the intended species and usually are undetectable to the untrained eye. For that reason, the trapping I have done since moving to the Valley has all involved water sets.

When I lived on Afognak Island, I was the only person who trapped the surrounding few miles around the fish hatchery where I worked. Everybody kept their dogs under control (foxes and bears eat dogs), so I didn't have that concern. I also didn't have to worry about trap thieves, a common problem here in the Valley as I understand things!

I trapped beaver, otter, marten, and fox with an occasional muskrat just for good measure. I almost always made water sets for both beaver and otter. All my marten sets, eventually, were at least 5 feet off the ground in a box and I used the Conibear-style trap (a killer trap) to be sure the three aforementioned species were quickly dispatched. I lost one marten from a ground set to a fox and another, hanging almost six-feet off the ground, to a brown bear in mid-December.

Who'd of thunk!

I learned to conceal my trap sets, not because of human thieves, but because of the fox and bear episodes and a rather slow-to-learn bald eagle working an elevated marten set one day. My fox sets were normally ground sets using leghold traps, but I was very careful where these were placed in relation to the trails commonly used by folks and their dogs living at the hatchery. I would also tell the other folks if I had a set in a general area so they were aware if they decided to wander out that direction.

Wildlife management is a complex science/art. Any time species numbers are manipulated by man, the effects will ripple into the other species in the area. Oftentimes, that ripple requires regulation of predatory as well as prey species. Other species can cause damage with their activities (beaver) or destruction of important fish numbers (otter and mink). Most of the species involved in trapping are not easily hunted. Done ethically and humanely, trapping is a valuable management tool.

Trappers need to practice ethical and humane trapping techniques.

Opinions

Irresponsibility to blame for Cordova dogs killed by traps

✎ Author: **Annette Janka** ⓘ Updated: September 29, 2016 📅 Published January 20, 2013

CORDOVA -- I was heart-broken to hear of the two dog deaths recently, caused by traps within the city limits of Cordova. For me, it is especially upsetting, because just five years ago, in 2007, I put so much time and energy attempting, and failing, to establish a city ordinance that would protect our pets and families from irresponsibly set traps. When my dog was caught in a large leghold trap, I began to learn more than I ever wanted to know about traps

This issue is not necessarily whether you are for or against trapping. It is about controlling irresponsible trapping that conflicts with other land users.

If every trapper would willingly follow the guidelines written in the Alaska Trapping Regulations pamphlet, we would have fewer conflicts and we might not need to discuss this. The pamphlet says, "Act responsibly as a trapper and conservationist by trapping in ways to minimize conflict between trapping and other users, e.g., avoid high recreational use areas. Avoid situations where you might catch a domestic dog or cat, such as near homes or trails frequently used by hikers, skijorers, dog mushers, or other people."

Cordova ordinance a joke

But as in any law, there are those who use their freedom in irresponsible and selfish ways that endanger others. It is these people that require laws to protect the rest of us. It is to the advantage of the "responsible" trappers of Cordova to support laws that will clearly define for the "irresponsible" trappers what behavior is allowable. If you are a trapper, be honest with yourself. Which are you?

I was on the City Council appointed task force that created the present city ordinance on trapping. The final product was a joke. There is no location in Cordova where a trap cannot be placed, except the Parks and Open space zoning district which includes the ski hill. (That doesn't help dog owners, since dogs are not allowed on the ski hill.) The trappers on the trapping task force who were the most vocal were uncompromising and obstructionist. They refused to mark their traps in any fashion, or choose even a small geographic area that could be designated as trap free where dogs could run off leash, or provide the smallest trapless corridor along even one road way. They even refused to prohibit traps in the downtown area while admitting that it wasn't good trapping. So we are still left with the problem now.

Outdoor recreational activities in Cordova, and the entire nation, have become more and more popular in recent years. Cordova is a wonderland for non-consumptive sports like snowshoeing, skiing, snowboarding, ice skating, hiking, biking, photography and snowmobiling. There is no location within Cordova's city limits that is not used by people enjoying the great outdoors. Dogs are often companions who enjoy these activities, and they are legally allowed to be off leash in the post-1993 annexed city limits. It is legal for dogs to be leash-free beyond Skater's Cabin on Power Creek, beyond Eccles Creek on Whitshed Road, and across the lake from Skater's Cabin out the highway.

Cordova's trappers are also recreational users, but they are different in that their use of the land becomes exclusive, because leaving dangerous metal objects hidden under moss and snow or up in tree branches unattended makes it unsafe for the other users. So this becomes a recreational user issue. No one recreational user should prohibit all other users safe access to the land.

Traps and more traps

Besides the trap that killed the two dogs, a trap was reported last week on the trail out to the Eccles Lagoon homes. I have personally seen traps 25 feet off of the beginning of the Hartney Bay Trail, a large Conibear on the shoulder of the highway past the 6 Mile houses (80 percent out of the water), a trap 10 feet off the Old Ski Hill snowshoe trail, off of the Eyak River Forest Service trail (illegally still set in June), on the hill behind the houses on Lake Avenue, and under the bridges by the Forest Service informational kiosk near the airport. Trappers on the task force admitted to the presence of traps in the culverts out Orca Road, Power Creek and the flats between the 6 mile homes and the airport. The Cordova Times reported in the police report a cat being caught in a trap in the Lake Avenue area. I have two personal Cordova friends whose dogs have been caught in often fatal-sized Conibear traps set just feet off of car parking areas, and one friend who saw an eagle caught in a trap on a Forest Service trail. Another friend talked about trying to eat at the Reluctant while a land otter screamed outside the window caught for days in a leghold trap. There was a deer caught and then killed by coyotes in a snare at the Old Ski Hill chimney. Unbelievably, there was a trap set underneath a picnic table at the Sheridan Lake trailhead! One of my friends was on a walk on the breakwater with her small children when one said, "Look, Mommy. What's this?" and before she had time to react, had picked up a Conibear trap, long forgotten and thankfully already sprung.

Even if it is obvious that a trap is set in a highly public use area, not even city and agency officials in Cordova can remove it, because of the history of Alaskan trapper's lobbying forces that years ago created laws protecting their interests. Individual municipalities now have the jurisdiction to define trapping laws within their boundaries. The cities of Juneau, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Valdez, Homer, Gustavus, Nome and probably others, all have major trapping restriction ordinances.

The other problem specific to traps and dogs is that traps are not just powerfully snapping metal jaws, some of which can jump 10 feet when sprung, but they are baited with extremely powerful scents. The trappers on the ordinance task force said that commercial scents could carry over a two mile distance. Even if trappers would agree to mark their traps with survey tape, your dog is going to be into it before you will be aware of its existence. What self-respecting dog could pass up a bucket of bones? Sadly, not Shadow and Holmes.

So now it is up to us as fellow Cordovans to come up with a solution to this issue. We must do better than we did five years ago. I really believe that we, as mature adults, should be able to have differing opinions without

losing sight of how we are all neighbors, connected by mutual friends and family and our love of our Alaskan home. Most of us share more in common than differ. I am remaining open to intellectual conversation, with the purpose of defining an improved plan.

I just overheard a character on my children's video game say "There is no puzzle without a solution." I believe it. Do you?

The commentary first appeared in [The Cordova Times](#). The views expressed here are the writer's own and are not necessarily endorsed by Alaska Dispatch, which welcomes a broad range of viewpoints. To submit a piece for consideration, e-mail [commentary\(at\)alaskadispatch.com](mailto:commentary(at)alaskadispatch.com).

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Annette Janka is a resident of Cordova, Alaska.

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Posted October 13, 2015 10:49 pm

By Emily Russo Miller (/authors/emily-russo-miller)

Morris News Service-Alaska/Juneau Empire

Juneau woman who freed eagle from trap back in court

Comments 9 Share

In John Forrest's eyes, anti-trappers have been springing his traps, stealing his catch, destroying his equipment and generally hindering his livelihood for years. The offenders have always remained faceless, and they've always gotten away with it.

"It's an ongoing issue," Forrest said of such incidents from the witness stand Monday in Juneau District Court.

Last winter, that changed. Forrest finally found out, through "a number of coincidences" as his attorney put it, who had sprung several of his traps on Davies Creek trail in December 2014: Kathleen K. Turley, whom he sued last month seeking \$5,000 worth of damages.

Except Turley — who rescued an eagle ensnared in one of Forrest's traps that day — isn't who Forrest thinks she is, her attorney Nicholas Polasky argued before Judge Thomas Nave during a small claims trial Monday. Polasky described his client as a born-and-raised Alaskan who hunts grouse, deer and brown bear, has animal skins and hides on the walls of her house, and raises meat rabbits to butcher and eat.

"She's a hunter," Polasky said in opening statements. "She's a person who's not against trapping and is not the type of person that we think Mr. Forrest probably thinks that she is."

During testimony Monday, which will conclude in a Thursday hearing, Turley fully admitted to springing two of Forrest's traps on Dec. 24 and another on the 27th.

The reason? There was a bald eagle, still alive, in one of the traps on Dec. 24. As she worked for about an hour freeing the bird from the twisted metal chains and leg clamps, she tied up her dogs to a nearby bush and set off a marten box trap to keep them from getting in the same sort of trouble.

The second trap she released, she said, was as she hiked back down the trail that evening with the injured eagle in her backpack. She said she stuck a stick in a trap on the trail, again, to prevent her dogs from sniffing it and getting their noses clamped.

"That was not my intent," she said on direct examination from Polasky, who asked if she was purposefully trying to hinder Forrest's trapping. "My intent was to keep the dogs out of the trap."

The third time was on Dec. 27 as she was leading a group of 10 Juneau Alpine Club hikers on the trail. It was getting dark and someone had gotten separated from the group earlier in the hike, she said. There was a trap close to the trail and she was nervous someone behind her wouldn't see it. She said she released it "to make sure no one was injured."

Zane Wilson, Forrest's attorney, emphasized that the lawsuit is not about any of the traps that Turner sprung in her efforts to save the bald eagle on Dec. 24, which was later euthanized. He said it was about the other three traps Turley described.

"Just to make it perfectly clear, we're not asking for anything with Ms. Turley (related to the eagle)," he said to Judge Nave. "It's not up to Ms. Turley to decide where Mr. Forrest traps. That's up to Mr. Forrest and the State of Alaska. Ms. Turley needs to be told that what she did was wrong, and she needs to have some consequences for her actions. That is why we are before the court today."

Turley said she usually hikes past traps in the woods on her hikes, and she only sprung these traps because she deemed them a hazard to dogs and people. Unlike major hiking trails in Juneau, there aren't any requirements for trappers on Davies Creek to keep traps a certain distance off the trail.

Polasky told the judge, who will issue a decision in the case on Thursday, that the statute in question requires the plaintiff to prove that Turley had the specific intent to obstruct or hinder Forrest's traps. Turley had no such intent, her attorney said, saying his client intended "to make sure the traps don't hurt her dog, or have to deal with another situation like the eagle."

She's not "a person who is out to get in the way of trapping at all," Polasky stressed.

Some 20 people packed the courthouse Monday to lend Turley support. Polasky said she is being held up as a champion of the anti-trapping movement, which is a role she doesn't want.

"I'm not opposed to trapping," she said on the witness stand Monday.

Turley testified she actually kept the incident with the eagle from the public eye because she thought it would be "bad PR" for trappers. It was kept under wraps until early January — when Alaska Wildlife Troopers cited her for hindering lawful trapping, a misdemeanor criminal offense. Like Forrest and his attorney in this lawsuit, Troopers said the citation did not relate to the traps she sprang while releasing the eagle.

In response to the citation, Turner posted a picture of the eagle on a popular Juneau Facebook page. The picture shows the eagle lying on the ground, both its legs ensnared. It stared straight at the camera.

Almost instantly, community members rallied by her side, and the case against her was dropped. Juneau District Attorney James Scott dismissed the case at her January arraignment.

"When she's hiking and she comes across an eagle in a snare, I encourage her to rescue that eagle again, and I will screen that case out as well," Scott added at the time.

Sue Walker, one of Turley's supporters, called the case "completely inappropriate."

"I believe the fact that she sprung the traps while carrying the injured eagle, ... trying to keep her other dogs out of the trap is entirely reasonable."

Mike Weber, a Palmer resident and part of the group Alaska Safe Trails, used the photo of the trapped eagle in half-page advertisement in the Juneau Empire on Sunday. "How does the law view this?" the ad reads. "If you're a trapper, you can 'incidentally' kill as many of these as land in your trap. By its inaction, USFWS in Alaska gives its implicit approval. However, the Bald Eagle Protection Act does not exempt 'incidental' kill. If you're anyone else, a feather could cost you \$5,000. Selective enforcement IS discrimination."

Alaska Wildlife Troopers in Juneau said previously that Forrest would not be in trouble for killing the eagle.

"Not by us, no," Trooper Aaron Frenzel said in a January interview, adding that the traps were set lawfully. "It's an incidental catch."

When Forrest's attorney asked what he thought of the photograph while on the witness stand Monday, Forrest responded, "I thought it was a great photograph, and if I hadn't personally caught the eagle, I'd say the guy knew what he was doing. The eagle had a trap on both feet."

That statement caused everyone in the courtroom to pause, and Forrest quickly continued, "But, that is — if there's an ugly side to trapping, that's what it is. That particular photo. But it's no different than going fishing, and bringing a fish up ... and throwing it back in that ain't going to make it. It's just the way it is."

Forrest said it takes a lot of time and effort to trap for a living. He clears the trail at the beginning of trapping season, obtains the bait and sets the traps. It takes five to eight hours to check his trap line once a week. He has 20 traps in a three-mile line on Davies Creek trail. On average, he traps a marten, a mink, a couple beavers and maybe a wolverine each week.

"You put all this time and effort into something, and somebody comes along and fools around with it," he said, describing his frustration. "It's kind of like going out and setting ... crab pots and going out a week later and two pots are gone, and the crabs have been taken out of the rest. It's like what the heck am I doing out here? It leaves a bad taste in my mouth."

He added, "I want her to realize she did something wrong that was against the law, and ... if the prosecutor had done his job on the first go-around, we wouldn't be here wasting our time and more money. What she did was wrong."



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Trap inside city limits kills family dog

✎ Author: **dogblog** ⓘ Updated: April 29, 2016 📅 Published August 7, 2008

[img_assist|nid=135075|title=Grizzly|desc=Tony and Natalie Lazenby's Rottweiler died when it was caught in a neighbor's Conibear 220 trap in Anchorage.|link=none|align=left|width=350|height=262]

Here's a sad story that appears in the Saturday, Nov. 29, paper.

By DEBRA McKINNEY

dmckinney@adn.com

One minute a family dog named Grizzly was playing in front of the house, the next he was shrieking and thrashing wildly, a trap locked in a death grip around his head, his face distorted by the pressure and pain.

The 4-year-old Rottweiler, pet of Tony and Natalie Lazenby and loved by others in the neighborhood, died a couple of hours later, his throat crushed, the Lazenbys said.

It took four people to get the trap off the dead dog's head.

The Conibear 220 spring-loaded trap that killed the dog Wednesday is now in the hands of authorities. It's designed to kill foxes, beavers and coyotes. Dogs occasionally die in them, too, but typically while on hikes with their owners in wild places, and typically in areas open to trapping.

Not in a neighborhood full of dogs, cats and kids, where this trap was set. The Lazenbys think one of their neighbors set and baited it, but no charges have been filed against anyone.

Enforcement supervisor Bradley Larson said Animal Control will be turning the case over to Det. Jackie Conn, who handles animal cruelty crimes for the Anchorage Police Department.

It's against the law to negligently set a trap in city limits — punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and a year in jail.

It's also a crime for any person, with criminal negligence, to maim, mutilate, torture, kill or do any number of horrible things to animals.

The Lazenbys are devastated by Grizzly's death, and driven to see the person who killed him held responsible.

"We want to make sure it's properly prosecuted and properly handled, so the law does what it's designed to do," Natalie Lazenby said Friday. "We're going to fight this until we don't have any breath left."

THE DOG SCREAMED

The Lazenbys bought their house three years ago in this old, tucked-away neighborhood just east of the Old Seward Highway and south of Dimond, an area with an eclectic mix of trailers, houses and combinations of the two.

"All the neighbors know each other," Tony Lazenby said. "We congregate. We have barbecues in the summer."

Grizzly's best dog friend was a 6-month-old black German shepherd named Mid who lives nearby. On Wednesday morning, the Lazenbys got a call asking if Mid could come play.

Tony Lazenby was shoveling his driveway about 8:30 that morning as the two dogs romped, trying to catch snow flying off his shovel. He got distracted for a couple of minutes, the dogs wandered off, and then he heard his dog scream.

Grizzly came running back with his head in the trap, all bloody and crazed with pain — "Hideously so," Natalie said.

"There's nothing I could have done to get it off of him," said Tony.

It wasn't easy but the Lazenbys were able to get the dog into the house and secured in their room.

"Our bedroom looked like a crime scene," Natalie said.

Frantic and unsure what to do, they made a flurry of frustrating phone calls before finally getting some help.

Grizzly was still alive when two animal control officers arrived. They wrapped the dog in a blanket and took him to Pet Emergency on Lake Otis. By the time the dog got into the emergency room he was dead.

Afterward, the officers returned to the house, and the police showed up. They followed the dogs' tracks through the snow to a neighbor's house, where they found a bucket on the porch baited with meat, Tony Lazenby said.

It was a plastic bucket with some grooves cut into it," he said. "That would hold the trap open with the bait inside. When an animal would put its head in to get the bait, it would trigger the trap.

"It was fresh snow so you could see the area where Grizzly was spinning around trying to shake it off."

The neighbor was not home at the time, and the Lazenbys have not contacted him.

"It's been tempting," Natalie Lazenby said. "But we're respecting the investigation."

"What if it had been a kid?" Tony Lazenby said. "It's just perplexing to me."

SAD AND MAD

The Lazenbys got Grizzly four years ago as an unexpected Christmas present from Tony's mother.

"They get such a bad rap, the breed," Natalie said. "We really wrestled with whether to keep him.

"We're so glad we did because he was such an exceptional animal. I don't think he even knew he was a dog, let alone a Rottweiler. He was just a perfectly little child in a doggie suit. I could leave a side of beef thawing in the kitchen and he wouldn't dream of touching it.

"My mom called him her grand pup. He was just so dearly loved."

Grizzly's gruesome death has stunned the neighborhood.

"I just can't get over it," said Ruby Stratton, owner of Grizzly's playmate Mid. "He didn't bother anybody. Not at all.

"It could have been my dog," she said. "They were together that morning."

Yes, the Lazenbys admit: Grizzly was off leash.

"But he wasn't unsupervised," Natalie Lazenby said. "He wasn't running amok."

"I'm thinking he wouldn't have gone to the neighbor's if he hadn't smelled the bait," Tony Lazenby said.

Neighbor Lily Doss-Puder called the Lazenbys "highly responsible" dog owners.

"Tony always took care of that dog," she said. "He was always watching him. That dog was on his radar 24-7."

Doss-Puder loved Grizzly and so did her 3-year-old son. The two played together a lot.

"You'd walk up to the dog and he would just start jumping on you and kissing your face," she said. "Dog-licks all the time. Just the friendliest dog ever. My son just fell in love with him. I mean, I loved that dog myself, but he grew up with that dog practically.

"We're all shocked about it and saddened and mad. We're going to all miss Grizzly."

Find Debra McKinney online at adn.com/contact/dmckinney or call 257-4465.

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Trappers, dogs clash on trails

Brian O'Connor Jan 17, 2015



PALMER — Despite years of review, borough animal ordinances amended Jan. 6 have left

unresolved what users of local trails see as a major issue: dogs that become entangled in traps set for wild fur-bearing animals.

Proposed amendments to Chapter 24 of borough code had included sections pertaining to dogs and traps. However, those were removed after borough attorney Nick Spiropoulos expressed concerns about potentially infringing on state authority, according to several people familiar with the issue.

On one side, fur trappers worry that what they say are the unethical actions of a minority of trappers who trespass or place traps close to hiking trails will give their pastime a public black eye. Dog owners who say their best friends have lost limbs and lives in snares placed on private property and too close to hiking trails say regulation is necessary to prevent further dog injuries.

Officials with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game say they aren't sure how many times and under what circumstances dogs encounter snares. That's in part because the agencies they report to can range from Alaska Wildlife Troopers to local police to none at all, according to Todd Rinaldi, an Area Wildlife Biologist with Fish and Game.

"In the excitement and anxiousness of the moment, people are putting their pet as the big priority, and not knowing who to turn to to report these issues," he said.

A booklet containing regulations handed out by the state contains guidelines for minimizing the effects of traps on other users, Rinaldi said. Guidelines include avoiding high-use recreational areas, homes or trails frequently used by hikers, Rinaldi said.

"The interesting conundrum here is trapping is legal in these areas right now, however, off-leash dogs are illegal," he said.

Trappers who set foot on private property without permission are trespassing, and should be referred to law enforcement, Rinaldi said.

Trappers say their particular form of public use is controversial, but equally legitimate to other forms of popular public land use. No trapper is trying to catch a dog, said Earl Bragg, an officer with the Alaska Frontier Trappers Association, a local chapter of the statewide

Alaska Trappers Association.

“If somebody’s dog gets caught in a snare, we look bad,” he said. “It’s automatically our fault.”

The Association’s position, which contributed to the removal of the trapping section from the amendment to borough ordinance, is aggressively pro-trapping in part because trappers face a lack of understanding from a minority of people, Bragg said.

“The way we look at it, 10 percent of the people are anti-trapping,” he said. “It doesn’t matter whether it’s wildlife management or recreation.”

Bragg said trapping is a necessary part of responsible wildlife stewardship.

“It maintains a healthy ecosystem,” he said. “On a winter like this, nothing’s going to freeze to death.”

Both associations try to educate people about responsible trapping, and responsible users adhere to the ethical guidelines, Bragg added. That includes placing traps 25 yards or more from trailheads, and educating the public on how to open traps in the event that limbs — dog or human — become trapped or ensnared, Bragg said.

“That’s how we do it,” he said. “We don’t need regulations saying you can’t do this. We’re doing wildlife management.”

In addition, irresponsible dog owners who let their dogs roam bear at least some portion of the responsibility for their dogs’ injuries, Bragg added.

“We’re legal, you’re not,” he said.

Those words likely come as little comfort to some local residents. A flurry of incidents early in 2013 document at least two dogs becoming ensnared in and around the Settler’s Bay neighborhood, and one dog was reportedly shot and dumped in a lake after becoming entangled in a snare set on private property, according to letters sent to the Frontiersman at the time.

More recent reports are hard to come by, in part because dog owners are afraid to speak up, said Lynn Mitchell, co-founder of the Alaska Safe Trails group, which intends to address the issue.

“It’s really a public safety issue,” she said. “These traps, they’re like little landmines hidden on our property.”

The disparate locations where unethical traps are found, including incidents on the property of Houston High School, point to endemic abuses on the part of trappers requiring regulation, Mitchell said. She’s seen animals left in traps for weeks at a time, starving to the point where birds were pecking at them, and passersby have had to step in and perform mercy killings. Animals are sometimes left to starve in plain view of children and the elderly, Mitchell said.

“I know I’m being provocative here, but somebody has to,” she said.

Mitchell also disputes the borough’s interpretation of state code, and says the borough assembly could address the issue, if it had the political will to do so.

“Kenai borough and Fairbanks borough regulate this activity,” she said. “It’s not like we’re trying to ban trapping. We’re just trying to get them to do what they’re telling each other they should do.”

The Willow Dog Musher’s Association is also seeking opinions on the issue, according to secretary Jamie Wright. Dog mushers out practicing often encounter pet owners frantic about dogs who have become ensnared, though it usually doesn’t become a problem for the teams themselves, unless one of the dogs breaks free, Wright said.

“I’m trying to be part of the educational process as far as forwarding the warnings to people I know,” she said. “It’s really beyond most people to recognize that there may be a trap in that vacant lot across the street. It doesn’t have to be tagged. It’s just silently there and the potential is there.”

Specific stories about dogs suspected to have been snared can be found at alaskasafetrails.org (<http://alaskasafetrails.org>). Educational materials about responsible trapping can be found online at akfrontiertrappers.com (<http://akfrontiertrappers.com>), alaskatrappers.org (<http://alaskatrappers.org>) or adfg.alaska.gov (<http://adfg.alaska.gov>).

Contact Brian O'Connor at 352-2269 or brian.oconnor@frontiersman.com (<mailto:brian.oconnor@frontiersman.com>).

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Trapping case concludes in court, sparks legislative effort

Mar 29, 2014

PALMER — A high-profile lawsuit over trapping in the Mat-Su's core area has reached a conclusion, but possible legislative changes to trespassing rules are still underway.

According to court documents, the story begins Nov. 10, 2013, with Nicolene Jordan, who for 21 years has operated a gravel pit with her husband, Mark Loomison, on a homestead that was once a potato farm near Colony High School.

That day, she spotted a vehicle near the pit's entrance. Loomis later investigated and found at least 38 traps with associated bait, including a moose calf carcass and severed moose heads.

Turns out, the traps belonged to two men, Rick Craig Ellis and John Cyr. Ellis is active in the trapping community and a member of the Alaska Frontier Trappers Association. Cyr is an Alaska Wildlife Trooper.

Though they were on private property, authorities said they weren't breaking the law, which allows for trapping on private land unless no trespassing notices are clearly posted at every possible entrance to a property.

So, the case wound up in Superior Court in Palmer, where on March 10, it was officially closed.

"The defendants, by and through their attorneys, ... hereby offer in settlement of all legal claims and remedies to allow entry of an order trespassing defendants from subject property and an order that defendants be enjoined from trapping activities on subject property," court documents state.

In other words, as long as Cyr and Ellis don't set foot on the property again or trap there, Jordan and Loomis are satisfied. They also handed over a \$250 check to reimburse Loomis and Jordan for the cost of the court case, a photocopy of which was included in the court file.

Meanwhile, in Juneau, Sen. Bert Stedman, R-Sitka, has sponsored a bill changing state trespassing laws.

The bill is a relatively short one, just two sentences long. It cuts out a piece of Alaska statutes that carved out a right for people to remain on "apparently unused land" that isn't fenced or enclosed or posted with notices 144 square inches or larger, written in English at each access point to the property.

Stedman has said his bill was in reaction to this Valley case.

"As a landowner, you have the right to regulate activities on your property. However, in Alaska, current state law gives a person the privilege to enter and remain on unimproved or apparently unused land that isn't posted with 'no trespassing' signs," Stedman writes in his sponsor's statement of the bill. "Furthermore, a sign must be placed at each roadway or access point onto the property. Many Alaskans own private property in remote locations with inclement weather. No trespassing signs can be blown down, removed by vandals or covered by snow. The lack of visible signage should not absolve trespassers of guilt."

The bill has a counterpart in the House of Representatives and, as of late last week, had made it out of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Contact Andrew Wellner at 352-2270 or andrew.wellner@frontiersman.com (<mailto:andrew.wellner@frontiersman.com>).

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Posted March 14, 2015 10:05 pm - Updated March 15, 2015 10:30 am

By Rashah McChesney (/authors/rashah-mcchesney)

Peninsula Clarion

Trapping, recreation collide in Cooper Landing

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Photo by Rashah McChesney/Peninsula Clarion Nate Turner, vice-chairman of the Board of Game, listens to a presentation on lynx tracking in Southcentral Alaska on Friday, March 13, 2015 in Anchorage, Alaska.

Three communities on the Kenai Peninsula have become the center of a battle between residents who want their dogs to be able to roam free on trails and roads and others who want to spend a few months in the winter trapping for fur and food.

During the second day of the Alaska Board of Game meeting on game issues in the Southcentral Region of the state, the board heard testimony on two proposals would restrict trapping near trails and campgrounds in Cooper Landing, Seward and Moose Pass. The restrictions would include a prohibition on most trapping within 250 feet of any road that leads to a public or private property and the boundaries of all the private properties. This would include trapping near high-volume campgrounds and trails such as the Resurrection Pass Trail, the Lower Russian Lake Trail, Crescent Creek Campground, the Russian River Campground, Kenai Lake beaches and a slew of trails near Seward.

During public testimony, advocates of the proposals said they fear that their animals will be injured and they want legal restrictions on where traps can be set. Opponents testified that legal restrictions were unnecessary and that trappers shouldn't entirely bear the burden of restriction as some irresponsible dog owners contributed the problem.

"So many of our members are dog owners that we understand their side of it," said Alaska Trappers Association President Randall Zarnke. "We don't want to catch dogs for a lot of reasons, most of which is that we don't want to hurt the dogs. (But) we also don't want to create a black eye (for ourselves)."

Zarnke said both dog walkers and trappers have a right to use the land and in many areas of the states, it's common knowledge that traps will be out during the winter months.

"We're not saying that people shouldn't walk their dogs in the winter, but they have 8 months of the year when we cannot trap, so there are no traps out in the woods and (they) can't give us the time that we've traditionally had to do our activity?" he said.

Ken Green, who spoke for a group called the Committee for Safe Public Lands and Trails in Cooper Landing, submitted both proposals to the Board of Game. Green said his group was primarily interested in developing a working relationship with the Alaska Trappers Association and putting regulations in place that would require all user groups to work together.

"None of us really have the authority to make these kinds of informal, almost under-the-table type of agreements because nobody knows who is going to be around," Green said. "What we need is a structure ... some kind of a framework. Then we can bargain with what are going to be the best areas to close for trapping in certain areas like campgrounds."

Green and Zarnke have met before — but the discrepancy between their characterization of those meetings, and subsequent events, indicates a breakdown in communications between the two groups.

Green told board members during his testimony that his group has tried unsuccessfully to negotiate with the Alaska Trapper's Association.

"They decided that if we don't withdraw our proposal completely, just withdraw it, they had nothing to talk to us about," Green said.

Zarnke disagreed with Green's assertion. He said the Alaska Trappers Association had tried several times to propose a solution that would require mutual cooperation between dog owners and trappers. One that, he said, has worked well in Fairbanks.

"We developed a program ... we've designated a couple of areas outside of the city limits, on opposite sides of the city and on that there are signs posted that say 'We the Alaska Trappers Association recommend that there be no trapping in this area.' As you leave the area there's a sign — not from us — that says 'We hope you enjoyed your time with your pet, we remind you of the borough's leash law and recommend that you adhere to it outside of the boundaries of this area.' It's mutual because both sides are recommending things to their own users."

Despite the breakdown in communication, the Alaska Trappers Association in February posted several signs along highly trafficked areas in Cooper Landing, warning trappers to avoid conflict by not trapping near trails, turnouts and other populated areas. The signs also caution pet owners to be responsible for their pets and avoid going off-leash.

Green said those signs were appreciated, but didn't do enough to resolve the issue.

For residents on both sides, the issue is deeply personal.

Green said two of his three dogs have been caught in traps as he walked with them on a beach in Cooper Landing.

"I was lucky because I was there at the moment to step in and pull them out," he said. "The first one was a small trap, the second one was a snare and that was really worrying because the dog was under a tree ... right on the beach and it had pulled the snare so tight that I could barely get it off."

Cooper Landing musher, Robert Bear, told the Alaska Dispatch News that he had been mushing a team when one of his dogs got wind of a scented trap, veered toward it and got caught. Two others of his dogs chewed through their lines on Snug Harbor Road — a road

along the south shore of Kenai Lake — and got caught in the traps. One lost a foot and the other a leg.

Green said the number of reports that he has heard of dogs getting caught in traps has risen in the last five years. As the population grows, Green said there will likely be more recreational usage of the trails on the Kenai Peninsula.

“We know, and most everyone else knows, that things on the Kenai Peninsula are changing a little bit and Cooper Landing is a really hot spot for that change,” he said. “We have to have regulations, whether we want them or not.”

Dianne MacLean, President of the Kenai Peninsula Trapper’s Association, she felt the proposals would cover a broad area of land on the central Kenai Peninsula and make trapping burdensome for all but the most fit trappers.

“(The trapper’s association) feel that this seeks to impact much more than just those local community areas,” she said during her testimony. “It just goes far beyond what we would have expected... the area that they’re talking about — 250 feet on either side of the trail — is almost 2 football fields for unleashed dogs to run. We’re not sure that’s really a reasonable thing to expect. That, with some of the restrictions that we already have on the peninsula ... it’s just getting harder and harder for people to really spend much time trapping and that runs the risk of trapping disappearing one day.”

Reach Rashah McChesney at rashah.mcchesney@peninsulaclarion.com.

Alaska’s Board of Game will meet through March 17 to consider proposals on areas in the Southcentral region of the state. For more information on proposals and to listen in on the meeting vist: bit.ly/BoardofGame (bit.ly/BoardofGame)



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Traps and pets don't mix

By Angie Lewis Mar 28, 2015

There are endless horror stories of dogs being caught in traps as they are out for a walk with their guardians on public lands in the Mat-Su Borough or at local schools. It seems that trappers are more highly regarded by our borough officials than are walkers, people harvesting plant life, people training dogs, dog mushers, skiers, joggers, or cyclists. This one user group — trappers — is effectively controlling how our public lands are used.

These proponents of trapping on the trail systems of the Mat-Su Borough are quick to refer to the leash laws and how dog guardians are breaking the law when their dogs are off leash. Many responsible dog guardians only allow their dogs to be off leash when they are in the middle of the woods, allowing their dogs to enjoy the freedom that is in the nature of a dog. Other dog guardians are involved in training their dogs to hunt or to take part in search and rescue trainings. Why is it that the rights of the trappers supersede the rights of all the other residents who enjoy our public trails?

Trappers who set their traps close to the trails or near schools need to be stopped. There should be no trapping allowed on public trails. Alaska has ample land available to individuals who wish to trap — areas that are frequented for recreational use should be safe for all participants.

A couple of years ago, I was walking my dog on a trail quite close to a residential area, when I heard the jaws of a trap shut loudly. I had never heard a trap before, but there was no doubt in my mind that it was in fact a trap. Its jaws had closed on my dog's pad, luckily missing the remainder of his foot. He was less than 10 feet off the trail. That is how close the trap was set.

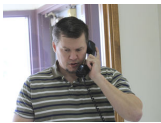
On a walk in the woods today, with my dog, I realized how many times I walked off the designated trail. There were so many huge water puddles, that I needed to go into the woods to walk safely. But I really wasn't safe, nor was my dog. I spent so much time worrying about

traps that my walk was no longer enjoyable or relaxing. Trapping on heavily used trails needs to be eliminated.

These public trails and school grounds should be safe for all users and not just to provide convenience to trappers. It is only a matter of time before a child, frolicking in the woods, is injured by a trap. Let's not wait until then!

Angie Lewis is president of Alaska Animal Advocates.

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Sep 28, 2015

Outdoors/Adventure

Traps or snares that injure, kill off-leash pets concern Mat-Su dog owners

✎ Author: **Lisa Maloney** ⓘ Updated: June 30, 2016 📅 Published February 3, 2015

In late November of last year, Jim Maddry and a training partner, both members of the Matanuska Valley's MAT+SAR K9 search and rescue dog unit, had their dogs out on an exercise in one of their frequent training areas: the woods near the Menard Sports Center in Wasilla. As they turned off the trail on a shortcut back to their vehicles, they noticed one of Maddry's dogs, Piper, was missing.

"We called out and heard a yap," Maddry said later over the phone. Only with the help of the other dogs could they find Piper, who is pitch black, trapped in the shadows under a spruce tree with a snare around her neck. "She couldn't bark anymore, she couldn't yap," Maddry said. "I tried to undo the snare but it was so tight -- you have to tighten down to release it, and I was afraid of breaking her neck."

Maddry carries cable cutters for just such a situation. With them, he was able to cut the snare off Piper. When his other dog, Yukon, got several toes caught in a spring trap near where Piper had been snared, Maddry was able to set him free too. Both dogs were ultimately okay. "I was amazed -- they were like, no big deal," Maddry said. "I was the one that was traumatized."

Not all dog-trap encounters in the Mat-Su area end so well. When I called area veterinarians, estimates of how frequently they see dogs with injuries from traps ranged from one every few years to five or six a year at Big Lake-Susitna Veterinary Hospital.

Dr. Adriana Fisher of Big Lake-Susitna Veterinary Hospital described the injuries that can result. "The Conibear [body hold] traps are pretty much fatal," she said. Even a short stay in a leg-hold trap can result in what Fisher described as "pretty intense flesh wounds" down to the bone, requiring weeks of sedation-assisted bandage changes to heal properly. If a dog is caught in a leg-hold trap for long, the loss of circulation to the trapped limb can result in amputation. A snare around a limb can result in amputation for the same reason -- or death if it's around the neck.

Conflict as population booms

The Alaska Safe Trails website is peppered with a handful of stories about dogs caught in traps that, while technically legal like the traps that caught Maddry's dogs, were set near areas frequented by walkers, skiers

and cyclists with their dogs and children. In one of the reported cases, a retired sled dog lost a leg to a snare near the Houston school trails.

"It truly is incompatible to have that kind of activity right next to the trails. It isn't what the trails were designed for," said Lynn Mitchell, the Mat-Su accountant who founded Alaska Safe Trails in response to reports like those featured on the website.

Alaska Safe Trails just began circulating a petition in hopes of generating public support to prohibit trapping in a few specific areas: The Crevasse-Moraine trail system, the Government Peak recreational trail system, and Borough core area schools. Mitchell said the petition had about 100 signatures in two or three days, and that people were uniformly surprised to find that there are currently no rules against trapping in those areas.

Legal traps, illegal dogs

Separating trapping from high-use recreational areas might seem like an easy fix, but there are a few tangles just below the surface. The first is that the borough has a leash law just as Anchorage does, even if it's not frequently enforced. So while the traps that dogs are getting caught in may be legal, the dogs getting caught in them aren't -- with the exception of those participating in an organized activity like Maddry's training exercise.

"Just as a trapper being questioned of their ethics, one could think the same of the owner who allows their dogs to run off leash or get out of their enclosures (which is illegal)," wrote Al Spencer, president of the Southcentral-based Alaska Frontier Trappers Association, in an email.

But legal or not, many dog owners love giving their pets freedom, just as trappers love having the freedom to place their traps. "The combination of new or young trappers and people ignoring the leash law is a recipe for problems," said Pete Buist, past president and spokesman of the statewide Alaska Trappers Association, in a phone interview. "Occasionally you get older or more-experienced folks that trap close to town, but usually that's not the case."

Policing their own?

The second tangle is determining who actually has the authority to ban traps set on borough lands, and how. Trapping falls under the legal purview of Alaska's Board of Game, but municipal governments do have some indirect control -- if they can walk the tightrope of exercising their power in a way that's not pre-empted by state law. The Mat-Su Borough attorney's office recommended against a proposed 2013 ordinance to limit trapping for exactly that reason.

In several cases, the Alaska Trappers Association has stepped in to negotiate a resolution between trappers and other user groups. "We feel it's better to work out a cooperative agreement, rather than to force the issue through via ordinance," said Buist in an email. "We realize that a municipality can close lands OWNED by said municipality to some activities, but the normal tendency of municipal governments in the heat of public outcry is to try and restrict trapping on all sorts of land."

But Alaska Safe Trails isn't asking, and the Alaska Trappers Association isn't offering to broker a solution in this case. "We're not even saying we're trying to ban trapping. Why should we even have to ask for [these restrictions]? It's so logical," said Mitchell in a phone call.

Mitchell says that Alaska Safe Trails is trying to work through local government because the organization is asking for very narrow, specific restrictions. But in a phone call Ken Marsh, information officer with the state's Division of Wildlife Conservation, pointed out that anybody can present a proposal to the Board of Game to adjust trapping regulations in the Mat-Su Borough or anywhere else in the state.

The Game Board will be holding its Central/Southwest Region meeting at Wasilla's Lake Lucille Inn Feb. 13-Feb. 20. The deadline for lodging a comment has already passed, but they will be accepting public testimony and trapping is expected to come up as an issue.

Protecting your dog

What about protecting your dog now? Keeping him on a leash is definitely the best bet for his safety and yours. "[The leash law] is not to keep your dog out of a trap, although it will," said Hugh Leslie, recreation and library services manager for the borough. He and Marsh pointed out that the leash law also protects dogs from a number of other hazards: Being hit by a cyclist or snowmachiner, stalked by coyotes or wolves, or charging back to you with an angry mama moose or bear in tow -- all of which have happened in Southcentral Alaska.

If you do run your dogs off-leash or let them explore off-trail on a long leash, you can take a page out of Maddy's book and carry cable cutters to increase your chances of quickly rescuing them from a trap or snare. You can also watch a series of videos on the Alaska Department of Fish and Game website that show how to release your dog from several types of traps, along with common signs that you might be on a trapline. Search for "sharing the trails" to find this information, along with a downloadable brochure.

Finally, I contacted the Alaska State Troopers to find out if releasing your own pet from a trap could incur any sort of legal liability. Capt. Bernard Chastain, operations commander for the Alaska Wildlife Troopers, said that it does not. But springing other traps can expose you to legal action. If you see a trap that you believe is illegally set or poses a public safety hazard, the best thing to do is call the troopers.

"We get phone calls all the time," Chastain said over the phone. "We'd be glad to go out and check to make sure those [traps] are set in a legal location and not something that's going to cause a public safety hazard for everybody."

Anchorage freelance writer Lisa Maloney reported on *Alaska Search and Rescue dogs* in October. Reach her at lisa@maloneywrites.com.

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Untrapping can save a pet's life: Opening trap can mean life or death

Posted: Friday, December 04, 2009

By Story by Joseph Robertia

As was illustrated by the recent incident involving musher Jane Faulkner's dog being caught in a trap (Peninsula Clarion, Dec. 2), it is important for more than just those pursuing furbearers to know how to operate the tools of the trade.

- Photos

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Using a Conibear brand trap and a coyote pelt, Rob Massengill of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game demonstrates one technique for getting a pet out of a trap:

The Soldotna Community Schools Program, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Kenai Peninsula Trapper's Association will host a trapping and snaring clinic from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at the Soldotna Sports Center.

Reduction of user group conflicts and instruction in safe and ethical trapping methods are the primary goals of this clinic.

"The non-trapping public and youth interested in trapping are encouraged to attend," said Larry Lewis, a wildlife technician with Fish and Game. "Morning sessions are geared towards instruction for those with little or no trapping experience."

Lewis said these sessions will focus on an introduction to trapping, understanding the regulations, how to release your pet from a trap or snare if accidentally caught, and ways to recognize and avoid a trap line while engaged in other recreational activities.

There will also be emphasis on mentoring youth and making trapping a family activity, and tips from the experts on trapping methods for furbearers, fur handling and sewing. Afternoon sessions will include more advanced snaring and trapping topics, such as lynx trapping methods and break-away snare building.

Lewis said for pet owners, being prepared for the unthinkable could be the best way to save a pet's life, which is why this class is invaluable.

"It's good to practice this before you need to do it," he said.

Faulkner's case illustrated this point. She was well-versed on how to open the body-gripper type trap -- a Conibear 330 -- that her dog was caught in, but still ended up having to use bolt cutters to free her pet.

Lewis said the key is not to try to free a caught pet by trying to pry open the jaws of the trap -- which slam shut with 90 pounds of pressure and typically crush the spinal cord, vertebrae or trachea of the animal inside.

"Prying on the jaws is worthless," he said. "The key is to compress the springs, and secure them with the safety catch."

Those with incredibly strong hands may be able to do this by themselves or with a partner, but Lewis said the best way to compress the springs is to always carry a length of rope that can be used to cinch the springs down.

"It's a leverage device to help hold the springs while compressing them," he said. Lewis used a length of roughly pencil-thin rope, roughly 6 to 7 feet long, with a loop on the end from an overhand bow knot. He said a dog leash, shoelace or belt could also serve as a leverage device in an emergency situation.

The rope is run through the top loop, or eyes, of the spring, where it meets the jaws on the side of the trap. This rope is then run through the bottom loop, then back through the top loop again.

"It doesn't take much to pull up the line," Lewis said. "You pull and take up the rope until the sides of the springs meet or are close enough to secure the safety catch. Then you do the same thing with the spring on the other side."

Another option, which can be even quicker, but doesn't stabilize the injured animal's neck as well, involves putting the looped end of the rope around the pet owner's foot as an anchor.

Then, the rope is run through both loops of the spring, then back through the loop closest to the foot. The pet owners can then, while standing on the chain of the trap, pull up on the rope to compress the springs (see photos).

Lewis said pet owners who find their dog in the situation of being caught in a trap should also remember to do their best to make sure the pet has an open airway, and stabilize the dog before, and while, attempting to open the trap.

"You don't want to add to the situation or complicate it by having it get a worse neck injury," he said.

This may mean holding the animal down or even sitting on it to restrain it, and covering its muzzle with a jacket or tying its jaws closed to ensure it doesn't bite since the animal will be scared and in pain if still alive.

Lewis also recommended that those who doubt they could effectively open a trap by hand or in the manner described could purchase a tool called a trap setter/opener -- a large pliers-like device.

"They're good to have on hand," Lewis said, "and they typically only cost around \$10."

Regardless of the tactics and tools available, freeing a trapped pet before it suffocates is still a tall task Lewis said, but one most pet owners would agree is still worth attempting.

"It's kind of like CPR," he said. "The basic premise is the victim is going to die anyway, so you just do what you can do."

Admission is free to this weekend's clinic and no registration is necessary. For more information, call the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at 262-9368.

Joseph Robertia can be reached at joseph.robertia@peninsulaclarion.com.

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