

LTAHA NEWS

This year will present many challenges to our association as we began enacting plans for growth and diversity in our membership. Our goal to educate the youth and general public is stronger than ever while assisting and monitoring any legislation that affects our trade. Through awareness and communication we plan to offer LTAHA members the knowledge and empowerment to help run their association and help in the decision making process. We are looking for members willing to give a few days a year to aid in education programs, class room interventions and youth education work shops. The hours spent working for the cause of trapping will be rewarding and remembered for years to come.

This year we lost a great asset, member and friend with the passing of Mr. Don Aycock after a lengthy illness. Mr. Don had been a member of the LTAHA from its inception and was the second Life Member on the roll. Mr. Don was also appointed to the Louisiana Fur Council where he represented the trapping community and our interest for a number of years. Through his countless hours of meeting, financial support and kind words Mr. Don touched every member of the association whether they knew it or not. His presence will be missed, but his legacy will endure forever.

We also saw the passing of an avid trapper and LTAHA member Larry Ardoin in a tragic boating accident while doing what he loved best. The accident occurred while Larry was scouting and preparing for the up coming season on the Red River south of Shreveport, La. An avid outdoorsman, Larry grew up old school and still carried on many of the old tradition. His knowledge of wildlife and fur handling kept him busy through out the season and into the spring most years. His love of the Red River and the fur that was produced there could be seen in his eyes while he was on the river. His presence will be missed by all who knew him, but his memory will live in the hearts of those who loved him.

Please remember these families in your thoughts and prays as they face the challenges that lies ahead with the loss of their loved ones.

This year's member meeting held on April 10, at Camp Clear Water was a great success with lots of laughter and good times for all. The new location was perfectly suited for the event with privacy, covered areas, easy access and natural locations for demos. The event kicked off at 8 am with the meet and greet, followed by demos from many different members on coon trapping, cat trapping, coyote trapping, beaver trapping and pelting demos. Also we had NAFA agent Sterlen Kirschman boarding pelts to the NAFA specifications and picking up NAFA bound fur. The list of members who participated or help put the event on is too long to list and someone would be over looked, but everyone did a wonderful job making the event a fun filled time and very successful. I will also mention that we ate very well and our hats are off the kitchen group. Thanks for all the hard work and dedication to the origination.

The LTAHA held two youth education work shop, one in September and the other in March. Both were centrally located at the LWDF education complex in Wood Worth, La. The three day event offered class room time covering ethics, laws, history and equipment with LWDF, USDA and fur purchasing agents as guest speakers. There were two days of on the line training and permitted trapping for different species. Also pelting demos were offered and shown for after the catch training. At the September event Alligators hunting and alligator skinning was presented by Ronnie Guy and Clint Perkins. These events reach many new up and coming trappers who other wise would have no opportunity for on the line training with qualified instructors. It offers our association a chance to instill ethics and proper techniques, to ensure new trappers are up holding long held traditions with politically correct motivations. For those who have instructed, cooked or helped sponsor these events, a big round of applause is in order as well as a hardy "Thank You, job well done." For those who have not attended or helped with one of the Youth Education work shops, you are missing out on a fun filled weekend spent with some great folks. Although they are called Youth Education work shops, many adults new to the sport or trade attend. Please help support these events as they are becoming the number one out reach programs.

Check our new web page and message board at www.louisianatrappers.com/officers.html. This is a great place to find information or to share it. The board is up dated monthly with events and news as it becomes available. Check it out and join us on the message board for Q&A's and general discussions.

Louisiana trapper makes unique catch

It was the late spring of 2004 when I was given the invitation to join a local hunting club located on 6,000 acres near my house in Rosepine Louisiana. My son and I went to sign up and pay our dues at the camp. As we were standing around talking to other members waiting for the meeting to kick off, we noticed a bulletin board with various pictures from hunting seasons past and a poster with a picture of a bobcat with a radio tracking collar on it. We read the poster and it stated that wildlife biologist had released a bobcat in Ft Polk Louisiana with a tracking device attached to it and that it had been tracked to our lease and if we happened upon it then to please avoid taking it but if we did take it then to please call the number on the collar and let them know the disposition of the cat. Not thinking much more about it and not a trapper at the time, we had our meeting and went about our business.

Each hunt that we made, my son would say many times over “dad, wouldn’t it be cool if we saw that bobcat with the radio tracking collar on it”. As the 2005 hunting season rolled around, it kind of became a ritual to mention that cat and how nice it would be if we saw it. During the season, I had a conversation with my 92 year old neighbor and he mentioned trapping and told me a few stories that struck a cord with me. He gave me 3 Victor long spring # 2 traps and told me how to catch coon. It did not take long to realize that there must be something that I was doing wrong because I was having no luck. Not knowing any other trappers, I searched the internet and entered the word “trapping”.

I spent the next several months intrigued reading all the information I could, I ordered stacks of books and videos and read every catalogue. It did not take long and I was ordering coil spring traps, urine, lure, a sifter, rebar stakes, pack basket.....you get the picture. As the 2006 trapping season rolled around, me and my son were doing some scouting and the new ritual began- “hey dad, wouldn’t it be cool if we caught that cat with the tracking collar on it”. For what ever reason, bobcats were not our priority, we wanted to catch coyotes and that is what we set out to do. Then one day I snared a rabbit and something had taken a bite out of it. At first I threw the rabbit in the bushes and then it struck me what I had read in Hawbackers book about nailing a squirrel to a tree to catch a bobcat. I figured if a squirrel would work, then surely a rabbit would as well, so we did and caught our first bobcat that very same day. Seeing a bobcat up close for the first time did something to me inside and my new mission in life was to catch as many bobcats as I could.

On the evening of February 5, 2007, my son had basket ball practice and could not come check the traps with me so my wife and I went. As we approached the third set I saw that we had something and I saw what it was wearing around its neck. At long last, there it was, the subject of every hunting trip conversation, every trapping run..... we did it!! Talk about a grown man jump up and down and do a funny little chicken dance right there in the middle of the woods acting like a fool. I was on cloud 9!!!!!!!

Having dispatched all my other cats I caught that season, this was to be the first one that I was going to release. I put my catch pole around its neck and handed it to my wife to hold down while I took its foot out of the trap. As soon as I got close, the cat moved, my wife screamed and dropped the pole and I came within in a fraction of an inch of having my eyes gouged out.(You have to remember, rookie year there). Out of reflex and fast fading light, I quickly dispatched the cat and set out for the elementary gym to show my son our dream catch. I believe I stood up while driving all the way to the school (about 3 miles away) shouting and saying “Thank you Jesus” over and over. I could not get to that school quick enough. I jogged into that gym, hollered “we got it bubba, we got the cat with the collar”!!!!!! I am always playing jokes on my son so he was skeptical and said nuh uh..... but he knows me well and saw the look in my eyes and he knew I was not kidding.

I went home and removed the collar and put the cat in a deep freezer as it was late and no one answered the phone when I called the number on the collar. The next day from work I nervously called the number and the biologist answered the phone. I really had no idea what to expect but I figured I could always hang up on them if the conversation went south. I explained that I caught it and killed it and the biologist was surprisingly happy to hear from me. Turns out that they are doing research for the government on what impact does the military training at Ft Polk have on the wildlife and the collar had quit working 2 years prior and all their research was lost. Since I caught it, they were able to weigh the cat, GPS location where it was caught and complete the research for that animal. Catching it also was an opportunity for them to fix the collar and place it on another bobcat as the government had them on a tight budget and would not allow the purchase of any new collars. After all was said and done, the biologists were happy, I was happy and my son still says” dad, wouldn’t it be cool if we.....”

Wesley Blanchard is a LTAHA member and Board of Director from Rosepine, La.

Editors Note:

For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counselors there is safety. Proverbs 24:6

Is there a war looming in our state? As we look around the country at all the states that have given up their right or modified the way which they take fur, the answer would be yes. When will this great battle be played out in the court rooms of our state? No one knows for sure, but it will come one day, and when it does we need to be prepared.

Growing up in the North West corner of Louisiana I learned the art of trapping at a young age from James Foster. James was a depression era trapper who grew up in times most of us will never know. James guarded his secrets to success with silence which he was taught by his father. Today silence has become the down fall of our trade. Not so much the silence of the best lure or the location, but the silence of knowledge that trapping is still a viable sport and industry in our state. Many who read this letter will remember the fur boom of the 80's when there was a coon trapper on every corner. Those days are long gone and with it the publics awareness of the sport and trade. With every boom there will be a crash, but the crash of the late 80's has left our sport and trade with a generation gap of twenty years. With such a void, we have our work cut out for us in educating the youth and young adults of these generation lost and those to come.

The goal of this letter is not to put the fear of a looming battle in your list of things to worry about, but rather to call on each member to assist the association in spreading the knowledge about the need for trapping in our modern world. This is a call to arms for our members and prospective members. Just as the verse taken from the Holy Bible above states, seek wise counsel for your wars. That is what we are doing. We are calling on our membership of school teachers, preachers, retirees, police officers, military, veterinarians and any other profession that has breath in their lungs or ink in their pin to carry the message throughout the state. With the vast knowledge and wisdom of our diverse membership there is no reason we can not carry the message to the state in general conversation gaining support through awareness.

The old saying "the best offense is a good defense" rings true with our sport and trade. There is no need in going on the offense looking for a fight, but we want to be prepared if trouble comes knocking on our door. So what position can a member fill in the association? The position of water boy has already been filled, but we are looking for some good line backers and free safeties. All kidding aside, we need to compile and arm ourselves with sound practices and pro propaganda which every member can share with others in their everyday life. And for those who have the desire or ability can carry the message to young people in association work shops, 4H classes and high school shop classes we need you.

The days of the general population accepting the sport of trapping are gone forever without education and awareness. The goal of the LTAHA is to arm each member with the ammunition needed to seek out their strengths to carry the message that the fur industry in Louisiana is still alive and needed. This is your notice that the time is now to stand up and take action so the heritage we hold so dear is not lost through legislation and misinterpretation forced upon us by outsiders who believe your rights are man given not God given. Not only was our God the first to use animals skins to cloth man, he also gave us dominion over all animals in the earliest written history in Genesis 1:28. Since 1866 Louisiana and the south in general has been forced to accept others beliefs and views on how we should conduct business in our state. It's time we stand together, putting our combine strength into a well founded plan for action so our trenches are dug deep and our cannon aimed precise for the day when the knock is heard at our states door.

The LTAHA is looking for member stories. Please feel free to share line expenses, tips, tools and sets. Help this news letter grow and become something we look forward to every four months or so.

Please Contact the Editor by mail or email with submissions.

Tony Howard

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Meet the 2010 officers:

President and Youth Coordinator: Curtis Cruse, 372 Hwy 843, Kelly, LA 71441 Phone 337-288-8959

Vice President: Bobby Farris, 1446 Hwy. 473, Florien, LA 71429. Phone 318-565-9331

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Board of Directors:

Ronnie Guy (2 year term)

Eugene Broxson (2 year term)

James Gallaspy (3year term)

Steve Hardy (1 year term)

Wesley Blanchard (3 year term)

Kirk Hammatt (2 year term)

Travis King (3 year term)

Steven Hughes (3year term)

John Linzay (1 year term)

Eric Cottrell (3 year term)

Through out the year many members present information to 4-H, FFA, Boy Scout and school class rooms promoting the use of wild fur as a renewable resource. These events give us the opportunity to spread the message that trapping is still a viable and needed part of the modern world, while sharing information about the wild life of Louisiana with students. Our goal is not to force the issue of trapping on students, but rather to offer the chance to see trapping as something other than a barbaric sport of generations passed. These events are most times not advertised or even put on a LTAHA schedule as our members are making personal appearances solicited by the leaders of the local organization. We encourage any LTAHA member who has the opportunity to speak at one of these events to feel free to do so. If you need help, material or coordination please contact: **President & Youth Coordinator:** Curtis Cruse, 372 Hwy 843, Kelly, LA 71441 . Phone 337-288-8959, **Vice President:** Bobby Farris, 1446 Hwy. 473, Florien, LA 71429. Phone 318-565-9331, **Secretary/Treasurer:** Tony Howard, 170 Thomas St. Sarepta , LA 71071. Phone 318-423-7860. E-Mail info@louisianatrappers.com. We need volunteers for the up coming National Hunt and Fish day in September, our biggest state wide out reach event of the year. Please devote one day to give back for the education and understanding of the general public.

Did You Know?

<http://www.furcommission.com/resource/Resources/FAF.pdf>

In the developed countries that produce the bulk of the world's fur, controls are strictly enforced by the appropriate authorities. However, controls can fail, most often in developing countries or during times of war and civil unrest. For this reason, a "safety net" is provided at the international level.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), a treaty established in 1973, now with over 130 signatories, monitors and controls international trade in wildlife and its products and, when necessary, completely bans trade in selected animal stocks. Thus the fur trade may make use only of species which are capable of sustaining a harvest. Almost always this means that the species is abundant. However, on occasion permits may also be given to trade in less abundant species if this will provide conservation benefits.

LOUISIANA'S FUR INDUSTRY

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/experience/nutriacontrol/furindustry/>

At one time, Louisiana was the leading producer of mink and muskrat fur pelts in North America. Fur prices have dropped in recent years, making the time and effort required for trapping less productive and less lucrative. Many coastal resource users have been forced to seek employment in the oil and gas industry and elsewhere and it is questionable whether they will ever return to trapping. During the 2001-2002 trapping season, fewer than 1,000 trapping licenses were sold statewide.

Louisiana's history of trapping furbearers and alligators has played an important role in the state's culture and economy. New Orleans in the 1720s was a major trading center on the Mississippi River and, as such, was hub for the fur trade. As muskrat trapping flourished in coastal Louisiana during the early 1900s, the fur industry started to grow. In fact, by 1912, trapping was so widespread in Louisiana that the legislature imposed trapping season dates and required trappers to be licensed.

In the late 1940s, the most abundant fur produced in Louisiana was muskrat. However, that changed only a decade later when nutria surpassed muskrat both in numbers trapped and in pelt value.

European demand for nutria kept prices high through the mid-1950s. However, in 1955, supply overcame demand and prices for nutria pelts dropped. The sudden lack of demand resulted in an over-abundance of nutria, and their destructive effect on crops and marshland was quickly felt. In an effort to increase the demand for nutria once again, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries searched for new markets interested in nutria products. By the mid-1960s, the German fur market began importing more than one million pelts of nutria per year.

Nutria harvests peaked in 1976 at 1.8 million pelts worth \$15.7 million to trappers. In 1981, the price per pelt reached an average of \$8.19. But it was during this time that the international fur trade began to slow and prices dropped precipitously. A number of factors contributed to the fur industry's decline and to the sudden drop in prices during the 1980s:

- The overproduction of European farmed furs caused a glut of supply that affected the downward pricing of all fur. Fashion trends shifted away from long-haired, wild-fur garments. Leather fashions became more popular.
- Over 20 percent of all American women owned a fur garment or fur-trimmed item, leading to the conclusion that the market was saturated.
- Animal rights protestors were beginning to influence public attitudes toward fur.
- Consumer spending took a severe downturn because of the 1987 stock market crash, the luxury tax imposed in 1991 on furs, jewelry, luxury automobiles, boats, and aircraft, and the 1992 Gulf War recession.

Market promotion of nutria fur and meat has been somewhat successful through the Fur and Alligator Advisory Council and the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act's "Nutria Harvest and Wetland Demonstration Project," but these efforts provide only a small part of the solution.

The global fur market, which was a major factor in keeping nutria populations and their habitat in balance, has substantially declined. This, in turn, has weakened the incentive for trappers to harvest nutria, and a growing nutria population now has become a serious threat to Louisiana coastal wetlands. The continued increase in nutria will most certainly transform marshlands into open water.

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Remember National Hunt and Fish day will be coming up on Saturday, September 25, 2010 in various locations around the state. If you have the opportunity, please come out and join other members in representing the trapping community and the LTAHA.

Also we are planning on hoisting two more Youth Education Camp in the month of September. We will be asking for volunteers to cook, instructors and transport students.