

'Instrument of torture' creates many victims

I KNOW Mary Katherine Ray whose dog Greta was recently traumatized in a leg-hold trap, as reported in the Albuquerque Journal. As the head of the trap-free campaign of the Sierra Club/Rio Grande section, she was the person I contacted after my two dogs — and I myself — got caught in traps while walking in the Carson National Forest that surrounds my home. The peace and beauty of my daily walk in the forest that day in December 2010 was shattered by howls of pain from my dog. I found him with his foot caught in a trap. Having never seen this instrument of torture before, I didn't know how to open it properly so I simply put my fingers in and pried it open. Wally's paw came out, but the trap closed over my fingers. Now I was trapped. It was late in the day and temperatures were below freezing. I could see no way to open the trap with my fingers caught inside the jaws. Luckily for me, this particular trap was tied around a tree and I was able to untie it and run down the mountain and eventually found a neighbor who was home and could remove the trap. My other dog was not with me and I knew she must have also been trapped. Her trap was staked into frozen ground and I realized that if I had been caught in that trap I might not have survived. This dog required multiple stitches; I needed a tetanus shot, antibiotics and an X-ray. One finger remains damaged to this day.

While more and more people and their dogs experience this trauma every winter season there are other victims who cannot speak out against this shameful human activity: the bobcats, foxes, coyotes, beavers, porcupines and many other animals who unsuspectingly walk into the clutches of a painful death. We humans create so much pain and misery in this world, both for our own species and for "all our relations" in the animal realm. It is time to change that. Let's make this the year we finally put an end to trapping on our public lands.

ARIFA GOODMAN
San Cristobal, N.M.

Photo of injured pet worth a thousand words

THANK YOU so much for running a photograph of the dog caught in a trap on the front page of the Feb. 17 issue. To actually see a pet injured by a trap is worth a thousand words. A majority of citizens in New Mexico do not support trapping on public lands. Yet our elected officials fail to act for us and change the law responsible for this. The current dissatisfaction with elected officials throughout our country is motivating voters to identify and support individuals who are going to honestly represent our opinions. Let's put our representatives and senators in New Mexico on notice. We want this law changed, and we are not willing to wait much longer.

CYNTHIA SEYB
Los Lunas, NM

Reader recounts frantic effort to save her dog

ABOUT A YEAR ago, Murphy, my 64-pound Lab mix, and I were finishing up an evening hike in the Gila National Forest where we have hiked for years. As we headed up an old jeep trail to our car, I heard Murphy squeaking and crying. I found him about 30 yards up a hill off the road with his paw caught in a steel trap. I ran up to him but couldn't control him due to his panic, fear and pain, and even if I could, I didn't know how to free him from the trap. So I hiked/ran about a quarter mile up the road to Highway 152 and flagged down a truck with two men and a kid. They hiked down with me but Murphy was

What will it take?



COURTESY LAURI DODGE

A fox is caught in a leg trap in December near an unpaved section of NM 165 about a half mile west of the Sandia Man Cave. It's not a unique occurrence.

Readers share their experiences with traps in N.M.'s wilds and call for action

still too wild with pain to control, and neither of them knew how to release the trap anyway. So they walked back up to the highway and I stayed with Murphy. By then it was dark.

I knew Murphy wouldn't make it if I left him there, so I dug around in the dirt and was able to detach the trap from its anchor. I then cradled Murphy's forelegs (with the trap still in his paw) in my arms and we walked, slowly, up the road, he on his hind legs. Luckily, we made it up to the highway where the two guys had waited for me! They had spoken to a vet who told them how to release the trap. They had me sit with my back to a tree, wrap Murphy's head in a coat, and then each of them stepped on the two side bars to release the trap. It worked. I was so fortunate and grateful for their help.

I then drove Murphy down to my house where a local vet met us. The vet told me that Murphy was really lucky he didn't lose a leg, much less his life. Steel-traps are hidden and indiscriminate. There is no place for such traps in New Mexico's multi-use public lands.

BONNE BEAVERS
San Lorenzo, N.M.

Traps are indiscriminate predators on public land

THERE'S A DANGEROUS predator on our public lands that many aren't aware of. It's quiet and virtually invisible. It's indiscriminate and lies in wait for unsuspecting prey. It's here

this time we knew exactly what was going on and released him quickly before too much injury.

These dangerous devices hidden all over our recreational areas have essentially destroyed our enjoyment of the forest. Every walk is stressful because even with vigilance there's no defense, and we're always in danger. Just as importantly, the cruelty to wildlife is needless and inexcusable. It's heartbreaking and has no place in civilized society.

PATRICIA FOY
Jemez, N.M.

Traps should not be allowed near hiking trails

MY DOG Maxi got his right foot caught (in a steel-jawed trap) while hiking on a public trail (in the Lincoln National Forest). I was able to get his foot out before (the trap caused) major damage. But many dogs are not so lucky; many have lost their legs and lives. This type of trap is outlawed in most states, but the state of New Mexico allows these traps to be set within 25 yards of a hiking trail. This is a public safety hazard. This is a hazard to small children and adults as well as pets. Yet the state will not even post signs or do anything to warn the public.

DON CHILDS
Cloudfroot, N.M.

Traps pose danger to search and rescue crews

THESE BARBARIC devices pose a danger to search and rescue personnel, both canine and human. In 2014, my dog was caught in one in Los Alamos County. Since that time, we have been successful in banning them in Los Alamos County, but that offers no comfort when I respond as a volunteer on a search in any of the other public lands in N.M. The last thing we should be worrying about is a hidden device capable of injuring us. Our focus should be strictly on the lost or injured subject. Traps are indiscriminate in what they trap, and they cause horrible suffering to the animal once caught. Please help us ban these archaic monsters.

TERRY DUBOIS
Los Alamos

Editor's note: DuBois is a member of the Mountain Canine Corps.

New Mexico laws on traps are irresponsible

A FEW years ago shortly after I became aware of the trapping issue, I was with our local rock club on a field trip on BLM land. As we arrived and began to spread out, a truck drove up with several people and stopped to see what we were doing. They informed us that this was an area where they had set traps. There were a few dogs among us, and naturally we were concerned for their safety as well as our own. The trap owners did not show us where the traps were and drove off. We proceeded with caution and there were no incidents of injury, but it pointed out how much danger these traps — legal or illegal — pose to the general public. This was a site that several of us had been to many times before with no suspicion of trapping in the area. This illustrates how irresponsible these laws are and how shamelessly unconcerned are trappers with public safety. Additionally, it's another example of how backward, cruel and antiquated the laws are in New Mexico. The fact of it having been done forever doesn't make it right. The fact that it is a legal form of income doesn't make it ethical. Remember cock fighting? How barbaric are we, anyway?

KYLE MEREDITH
Silver City

year-round, causing untold suffering and painful, prolonged deaths ... yet we currently have no defense against it. None.

Fourteen months ago, it got our dog.

We were finishing a walk in the national forest when we heard her screaming and yelping. The sound was chilling and no words can truly describe it. Because we were in a narrow, wooded canyon, her cries echoed off the sheer walls and it was impossible to pinpoint her location. It sounded like she was moving and some predator was carrying her off. After about half a minute, all was quiet. We searched and called. Nothing.

Finally we heard her screaming again, obviously in pain, and there she was very close to where we were walking. Indeed, a predator had gotten her, but not a four-legged one. We were stunned to see her caught in a steel-jawed foothold trap! She was panicked, yelping, and biting frantically as we released her — hard to do safely. We carried her to the car where she went into shock and foamed at the mouth. It was terrifying.

Her foot healed, but she broke six teeth trying to get free; one all the way to the gumline. Five had to be extracted, requiring surgery and weeks of aftercare. This one encounter took five vet visits (each a three hour round-trip), and cost over \$1,000.

A few months ago, and even with our constant attention and tight control, our other dog got caught in a trap! Again the screams of pain, but