

Provincial Updates Required

by Frank Phillips, VP Labrador Region

By now we all know the market is worse than last year. Obviously a lot of fur was not trapped or went into the freezer this season. Hopefully the glut of ranch mink is drying up and next year we can turn the corner.

I would like to bring Labrador members up to date on two items I have been trying to get changed for two years, and a third item that I am considering to put into motion.

Related to this, and on the positive side, a change in senior management of our Wildlife Division in late 2007 has meant things are better than they have been for a long time with regard to getting a better reception to our proposals.

There is a bit of a chicken and egg thing going on here though. There are no registered traplines here, so in most areas there is a race to catch fur before the other guy does. No registered traplines means, on average, fewer serious trappers. Fewer serious trappers, on average, have less of a vested interest in improving trapping. This very easily translates into a weaker, less committed trapper lobbying effort to government for positive professional change.

Proposed Updates:

1) Checking live holding sets.

Live holding sets are required to be checked daily. This is out of sync with other northern areas of Canada. No one seems to know how a regulation that may be okay in Newfoundland was also put into place for Labrador. We are looking for a one-week check period given the long distances, extremes of weather and nil access we often have to deal with here.

For the barren areas of the coast, where snares cannot be practically deployed, people are either forced to break the law or forego harvest of fox, which is easily the biggest item in those areas. Fox are not so numerous or so valuable that a person can afford financially to check live holding sets daily. The other main problem with this regulation is that, for all practical purposes, it makes legal lynx trapping impractical. Again, people forego harvest or take a chance on breaking the law. Given snares can be used for lynx, this is not so much a problem as with barren ground foxes.

2) New trapping licences.

No progress to date, but I am still trying to get a freeze on new trapping licences for areas corresponding to Moose Management Areas 53 and 48. In short, these are Upper Lake Melville and Labrador West areas of high access and very heavy trapper numbers.

Essentially those of us who are trapping through the thick and thin of markets are overrun with gold diggers when prices go up. Trapper licence sales show this. For example, in Labrador City/Wabush in 1998, 49 licences were sold versus 91 in 2013. In Goose Bay in 1998, 70 licences were sold versus 138 licences in 2013. These figures mean an 86% and 97% increase respectively. New entrants are targeting mostly marten and are skimming the cream off the top from the thick and thin trappers.

The government's take seems to be, so far at least, to keep on issuing trapping licences no differently than small game licences because everyone has a right to trap, so never mind managing trapper numbers.

This is problematic to wise management, and support for hobby trapping appears to prevail at the expense of professional trappers. The only apparent cap to this problem has been that most local instructors will not give courses as they only increase local competition at their own long-term expense.

Anyone in Newfoundland and Labrador reading this can relate if your mink went to \$180+ average, like our marten did in 2013. The price has since fallen to half that. How much mink gear would be out there if mink were worth that average? Guys now taking 50-100 mink a year would be swamped with gold digger competition.



3) Arctic fox.

In some years, and in particular on the coast the further north you go, Arctic foxes can be quite numerous. There is nowhere in Labrador that Arctic fox have not occurred, but the coast is the place of greatest abundance. They follow food resources southward, especially seals on the sea ice in late winter and spring. In some years, they are beginning to arrive south in abundance at the close of the season on March 20. As best as I can determine, their fur is still good then, unlike most furbearers. On the NWT barren grounds and Alaska's north slope, the season goes to April 15. At one time it went into May in Labrador. The rationale behind this now earlier Labrador closing date requires an explanation.

Some years Arctic foxes were quite plentiful on the coast and the resource was being wasted by not allowing harvest when they just started to get most plentiful. I require additional consultation on this, but at present am proposing extending the Arctic fox season (trapping and shooting) to April 15 on sea ice, coastal islands and areas of the mainland within 100 meters of the high water mark. Incidence of accidental capture of coloured fox would be minimal if AIHTS approved body-grip traps were used for Arctic fox harvest. Similarly, for inland areas of Labrador, I do not see a problem shooting up to April 15.



The Arctic fox pictured above is one my eldest son shot on March 18 this year on the bay ice. This animal is very well furred. If he had come across the fox three days later on March 21, it would have been illegal to harvest, even though still quite prime.

Newfoundland & Labrador Trappers Association 39th Annual General Meeting & Convention



Photo Credit: tango7174

August 15-16, 2015
Salvage Bay Motel • Eastport, Newfoundland

Schedule of Events

Friday, August 14:

8:00pm - Directors meeting to finalize agenda for the AGM

Saturday, August 15:

9:00 - 10:00am - Registration

10:00am - 12 noon - AGM & guest speakers

12 noon - 1:00pm - Lunch

1:00pm - 3:30pm - AGM & election of directors

3:30 - 5:30pm - Auction

5:30 - 8:00pm - Complimentary BBQ & children's games

8:00pm - Directors meeting & election of the executive

9:00pm - Entertainment provided by our own musicians

Sunday, August 16:

9:00am-12 noon - Adult trap setting, log sawing, sling shot, etc.

12 noon - Checkout time

For further information, contact Hayward Smith:
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