



# TRAPPED:

EXPOSING THE VIOLENCE OF ANIMAL TRAPPING IN THE U.S.

SPRING 2022

IN COLLABORATION WITH



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*Warning: Some readers may find the information and images presented in this report distressing.*





# FORWARD



Angela Grimes  
Chief Executive Officer  
Born Free USA

This report aims to provide an inside look at the trapping industry in the United States by presenting the real words of trappers and trapping educators. While the investigation took place in the United States, it is representative of trapping practices around the world and the extreme suffering they cause. These powerful vignettes undeniably expose the pain of animals; the so-called “sportsman” or “recreational” nature of trapping; and the misinformation that attempts to make trapping seem humane.

But, make no mistake: trappers cause millions of animals extreme fear, suffering, and death. Attempts to make the fur and recreational trapping industries more humane through trap modifications, or any other regulatory adjustments, are ultimately ineffective and meaningless to the victims of trapping.

Animal skins and flesh are no longer necessary to human survival as they were hundreds and thousands of years ago. Humans and society have evolved – in their means of meeting basic needs for food, shelter, and warmth, as well as thoughts about the role the natural world plays in our lives – yet trapping practices have not.

In this report, we present a fraction of the brutality of the trapping and, by relation, the fur industries that were captured by our investigator. The whole of the graphic, horrific images obtained are hard to be processed by empathetic hearts and minds, however readers who wish to see more can find them at [bornfreeusa.org/trappingexposed](http://bornfreeusa.org/trappingexposed).

*“There is a distinction to be drawn between relying on wild animals for subsistence and survival, and setting recreational traplines, treating many wild species as “vermin,” or running companies which slaughter captive wild animals on an industrial scale for the fashion industry – now thankfully beginning to retreat. As a species, we have done many things of which we can be justifiable proud. But not when it comes to trapping. This archaic throwback to the past is well beyond its sell-by date and is a stain on our humanity. It’s time we evolved. It’s time to call time on trapping.”*

– Will Travers OBE, Born Free USA Co-Founder.

We hope our readers – animal welfare advocates, the public at-large, and lawmakers – use the findings of this investigation to become more informed, to inform others, and most importantly, to make systemic changes to the law to end these antiquated, unnecessary, and barbaric practices.

# TRAPPED:

## EXPOSING THE VIOLENCE OF ANIMAL TRAPPING IN THE U.S.



According to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), the total number of animals killed for their fur by trapping in 2018 (the last year for which data is available) was 2,778,955.<sup>1</sup> This will be the minimum number of animals actually killed by traps in the U.S. during that year, as it does not account for deaths caused by trapping for purposes other than for fur. Only 13 states demand that trappers file a report to document the number of lives taken and just five states require information on unintended victims. As such, it is impossible to assess the true scale of the practice across the U.S. What is clear, though, is that many millions of animals –

both intended and unintended targets – are cruelly injured and killed each year in traps. Recent research estimates that, in early 2022, there were between 96,000 – 146,000 trappers active in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

The range of species targeted by trapping is extensive. Beaver, bobcat, coyote, fisher, fox, marten, mink, muskrat, opossum, otter, raccoon, skunk, and weasel are commonly trapped animals. Gray wolves are also now increasingly targeted in hunting and trapping in those states where they have been delisted under the federal Endangered Species Act. Only two states control the number of traps each trapper is permitted to set.<sup>3</sup>

The different types of traps include foothold (or leghold) traps, which capture animals by snapping closed and gripping their feet or leg so that they cannot escape; Conibear (or body-gripping) traps, which snap closed on the body and either kill or seriously injure the victim; and snares/cable restraints, which are wires that tighten and lock around a limb, neck, or body of an animal. Animals may spend hours, or even multiple days, injured, stressed, and struggling in a trap before the trapper returns to kill them.

After an animal has already suffered through being trapped, if not killed outright by the

1 Fishwildlife.org. n.d. Furbearer Management :: Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. [online] Available at: <<https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/furbearer-management>> [Accessed February 8, 2022].

2 Born Free USA. 2021. Crushing Cruelty: Animal Trapping in the United States | Born Free USA. [online] Available at: <<https://www.bornfreeusa.org/campaigns/trapping/crushingcruelty/>> [Accessed January 28, 2022].

3 See Ala. Code § 9-11-254 (Alabama); Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Furbearer Regulations [online] Available at: <<https://www.eregulations.com/oklahoma/hunting/furbearer-regulations/>> [Accessed February 16, 2022].

trap itself – or drowned in the case of drowning traps – they may be clubbed to death, shot, suffocated by the trapper kneeling or standing on them, have their necks broken, or a combination of these methods.

Animals who manage to free themselves from a trap, by gnawing or pulling off limbs for example, may carry with them injuries that fester, cause infection and, in turn, lead to long-term suffering or death.

## FASHION VICTIMS

Pelts from animals caught in these traps are often sold at fur auction houses, ready to be made into frivolous fur clothing, trims, and trinkets, destined for both the domestic and international markets.

Consumers and the fashion industry are increasingly turning their backs on fur, with opinion polling showing growing public distaste for it. A 2020 poll in the U.S. found 72 percent of the public opposed to killing animals for their fur.<sup>4</sup> A 2020 U.K. poll found that only 3 percent of the British public wear real fur, and the words 79 percent of British people most closely associate with a fashion brand selling fur are ‘unethical,’

‘outdated,’ ‘cruel,’ and ‘out of touch.’<sup>5</sup> An increasing number of international design houses, brands, and retailers have stopped using the fur of animals killed on fur farms and in the wild, including Gucci, Prada, Chanel, Moncler, Nordstrom, and Net-a-Porter. Even Canada Goose, which for years had trapped coyote fur at the center of its brand, has ended the purchase of fur and will end manufacturing products with fur by the end of 2022.

Recognition of the cruelty of fur is also driving political moves to ban its sale. In the U.S., California was the first state to do so, following bans in Los Angeles and San Francisco. More recently, cities in Massachusetts, Michigan, Colorado, and Florida have enacted similar legislation.<sup>6</sup>

In the United Kingdom, Humane Society International’s Fur Free Britain campaign for a fur import and sales ban is gaining momentum, attracting the support of the public and Members of Parliament, and leading the U.K. government in 2021 to publish a Call for Evidence on the U.K. fur trade, to inform policy for a potential ban.

## EXPOSING THE VIOLENCE

In 2021, Born Free USA, working in collaboration with Humane Society International (HSI) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), went undercover in the U.S. trapping industry. Our investigator attended the National Trappers Association Convention in Iowa in July 2021, then went on to attend a state-sponsored “Trappers Education Course,” provided in partnership between Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Iowa Trappers Association, before going out on trap lines with three trappers.

What our investigator saw, heard, and documented was harrowing. Some of the images and footage obtained are too graphic for us to share publicly. We have produced a short video of evidence that we are providing to lawmakers, which can be provided on request, though we recommend viewer caution.

**Warning: This report provides graphic descriptions and images of animal cruelty and suffering. Please read with caution. This report is not suitable for minors.**

4 Research Co. 2020. Canadians and Americans Differ on Issues Related to Animals. [online] Available at: <<https://researchco.ca/2020/09/22/canada-us-animals/>> [Accessed February 8, 2022].

5 yougov.com. 2020. Fur Regulation Survey. [online] Available at: <[https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/5r7ryfdp97/HSI\\_FurRegulation\\_200305\\_w.pdf](https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/5r7ryfdp97/HSI_FurRegulation_200305_w.pdf)> [Accessed February 8, 2022].

6 See Cal. Fish & Game Code § 2023 (California); Los Angeles Muni. Code § 53.75; San Francisco Health Code Art. 1D; Wellesley Town Bylaws Art. 53A (Wellesley, MA); Ann Arbor Code Ch. 91 §§ 7:361-7:365 (Ann Arbor, MI); Boulder Muni. Code § 5-6-17 (Boulder, CO); Hallandale Beach Code § 6-19 (Hallandale Beach, FL).



# THE REALITY OF TRAPPING IN THE UNITED STATES:

## A SUMMARY

This report documents the evidence collected on the dates July 22-24 and November 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, and 27, 2021. To the best of our knowledge, everything documented by our investigator is currently legal.

We have chosen to present this evidence as excerpts taken directly from our investigator's field notes. What you will read are verbatim accounts of our investigator's experiences, and direct quotes from trappers themselves.

Our investigator documented:

### ANIMAL SUFFERING:

- Animals trying to escape foothold traps and yelping in pain as they are bludgeoned to death with a baseball bat.
- A badger shot in the head from close range, having been caught in a foothold trap.
- Raccoons writhing on the ground in violent spasm after being hit on the head with a baseball bat. Their bodies being tossed carelessly into the back of a truck while their limbs are still kicking, with no attempt to establish if they are still alive.
- One raccoon hit at least five times in the head and throat with a baseball bat, stood upon, kicked, and thrown in the back of a truck.
- A trapper noting that a raccoon in the truck bed is still alive, despite having been repeatedly bludgeoned. The trapper states: "I don't know

what [the raccoon's] problem is," before getting back in the truck, leaving the raccoon to continue to suffer.

- A beaver found hanging dead from a tree in a snare. The trapper laughs as he tells our investigator that he forgot to bring a stake (to secure the snare to the ground) but had set the snare regardless.
- A fox said to have been killed by other animals while held in the trap's jaws. The fox had tried so hard to escape that their leg had snapped clean through.
- A muskrat drowned to death; their lifeless body thrown on top of a pile of animal corpses in the back of a pickup truck.
- The bloody toe of a coyote torn off and left in the jaws of a trap during the animal's escape. The trapper added the toe to his grisly souvenir collection of other previously

retrieved toes, displayed on the truck dashboard.

- A trapper tells our investigator that he found just the leg of a raccoon in a trap the previous day. The raccoon had chewed off their own leg in a desperate bid to escape.

### TRAPPING OF NON-TARGET SPECIES

- The body of a black and white cat visible in a photo of bloody coyote and raccoon carcasses piled high. The trapper confirms he caught a cat.

### SOCIALLY REPREHENSIBLE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

- Reassurance to trappers that in the event of a child getting caught in a trap, the local Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is often "on your side" and if a child's parent were to sue, the DNR may threaten to give the family a citation for tampering with the traps.



recorded over the course of just nine days. Three of those days were spent at the convention, one at the Iowa Department of Natural Resources trapping workshop, and five were spent with trappers out in the field. With an estimated 96,000 – 146,000 trappers currently registered in the United States,<sup>1</sup> not including illegal and government agency trappers, the sheer scale of animal suffering cannot be overstated.

- A trapper attributing her passion for coyote killing to ‘vengeance’ and citing her preference for using a baseball bat to kill animals.
- A speaker at the convention apparently threatening violence if laws to restrict trapping are implemented. He said: “We’re ready to go.... I probably shouldn’t say this on tape... [name of trapper] said ‘*I may lose this battle, but there is going to be a hell of a pile of brass around me when this is all over.*’ Where do we get the bullets?”

### INTENT FOR ROUTINE LAWBREAKING AND FLOUTING

- An auctioneer at the National Trappers Association’s President’s Dinner auctioning a steel-toothed trap that is widely banned in the U.S., and coyly

stating “most things are legal in Iowa... as long as they’re done late at night.”

- Sale of toothed-jaw bear traps (generally illegal to use across the U.S.) at the National Trappers Convention. Recreational bear trapping is illegal in 49 states.
- During an Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) trapper training, an instructor joking about the use of firearms not permitted for certain species, saying “if it ain’t legal, don’t tell the DNR.”
- Open discussion about the possibility of increasing an individual’s bobcat trapping quota by applying for permits in the name of dependent children.

All of this violence and animal suffering was witnessed and

### TRAPPING REGULATIONS

Trapping defenders claim that it is a strictly regulated activity. The fur trade states, on its FurMark website,<sup>2</sup> that “Wild fur in North America is subject to a wide-ranging system of laws, regulations, checks, and controls that emphasize the sustainability and welfare of all fur-bearing species and protect endangered species.” However, there are no federal rules (except on a narrow subset of federal lands), and trapping regulations vary from state to state in the United States. Thirteen states that allow recreational and commercial trapping allow trappers to check their traps less than once every 24 hours. Some states only require checks to be made every 72 hours, meaning animals can be left caught in traps for up to three days. Where states do

<sup>1</sup> Born Free USA. 2021. Crushing Cruelty: Animal Trapping in the United States | Born Free USA. [online] Available at: <<https://www.bornfreeusa.org/campaigns/trapping/crushingcruelty/>> [Accessed January 28, 2022].

<sup>2</sup> Furmark.com. n.d. North American Wild Fur. [online] Available at: <<https://www.furmark.com/certification-programs/north-american-wild-fur/>> [Accessed February 8, 2022].

allow trapping, those wishing to trap can purchase a trapping license for a small fee, and there is no requirement for them to undertake mandatory training in around half of all U.S. states. Indeed, a 2015 survey of U.S. trappers showed that only 39 percent of those surveyed had taken a trapper education course; only 42 percent had heard of Best Management Practice (BMPs) for trapping and, of those, only 66 percent said they currently use them and plan to continue using them.<sup>3</sup>

The Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS) allows traps that may take up to five minutes to kill an animal (with the exception of martens and stoats). The AIHTS has been criticized by veterinary and welfare experts, including the Scientific and Veterinary Committee of the European Commission, which stated<sup>4</sup> that an animal suffering in a lethal trap for five minutes, and the use of drowning traps for semi-aquatic mammals (such as beavers), could not be considered ‘humane.’ The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) states

“Drowning is not a means of euthanasia and is inhumane.”<sup>5</sup>

A number of states have introduced prohibitions on trapping, including banning the use of foothold (leghold) traps, Conibear traps, and/or snares. The trapping of bobcats is outlawed in nine states and both California and Hawaii have banned trapping for recreational and commercial purposes.<sup>6</sup>

Trapping frequently involves extreme animal suffering, as this report clearly demonstrates, and it is high time that it is consigned to the history books for good. It is a stain on the desire of the United States to be seen as progressive and science-based in its animal welfare and environmental legislation that it lags behind more than 100 countries that have banned or severely restricted leghold traps within their territories.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, leghold traps have been outlawed in the U.K. since 1958.

For more details on the current regulatory landscape of trapping in the United States, please refer to Born Free USA’s 2021

report, *Crushing Cruelty: Animal Trapping in the United States*.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The grim evidence presented in this report speaks for itself, and supports our recommendations for:

- Federal policymakers to implement legislation such as the Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act, which would prohibit the use of foothold (leghold), snare, and similar traps within the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- State policymakers to implement statewide trapping bans on both public and private land.
- Retailers to prohibit the sale of inhumane wildlife traps that cause suffering to animals.
- Fashion brands and retailers to stop using and selling real animal fur.
- Legislators in countries such as the United Kingdom that import fur from trapped animals to introduce fur import and sales bans.

3 Fishwildlife.org. n.d. TRAP USE, FURBEARERS TRAPPED, AND TRAPPER CHARACTERISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES IN 2015. [online] Available at: <[https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/3115/2106/4349/FINAL\\_AFWA\\_Trapping\\_Report\\_2015\\_ed\\_2016.pdf](https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/3115/2106/4349/FINAL_AFWA_Trapping_Report_2015_ed_2016.pdf)> [Accessed February 8, 2022].

4 Eur-lex.europa.eu. 2022. EUR-Lex - 52004AE1637 - EN - EUR-Lex. [online] Available at: <[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2005.157.01.0070.01.ENG](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2005.157.01.0070.01.ENG)> [Accessed February 8, 2022].

5 AVMA, AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2020 Edition, p112 [https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/2020\\_Euthanasia\\_Final\\_1-15-20.pdf](https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/2020_Euthanasia_Final_1-15-20.pdf) [Accessed February 8, 2022].

6 Born Free USA. 2021. Crushing Cruelty: Animal Trapping in the United States | Born Free USA. [online] Available at: <<https://www.bornfreeusa.org/campaigns/trapping/crushingcruelty/>> [Accessed January 28, 2022].

7 Library of Congress, Laws on Leg-Hold Animal Traps Around the World, 2016 <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/lglrd/2016479005/2016479005.pdf> [Accessed February 8, 2022].



# THE NATIONAL TRAPPERS (NTA) CONVENTION

IOWA, JULY 22-24, 2021



Our investigator attended the National Trappers Association Convention, held at Spencer, Iowa. The convention comprised dozens of stalls selling traps and associated paraphernalia. During the three-day event, the investigator attended multiple talks by trappers, who shared information on their own experiences, and particular elements of trapping. Here, we present excerpts from our investigator's field notes.

## **Excerpt One: Account of a coyote trapped by their jaw in a leg-hold trap.**

“As an aside when [the trapper] was discussing traps behaving unpredictably, he recalled a time when he found he had caught a coyote by their bottom jaw with one of his foothold traps.” [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

## **Excerpt Two: Trapper likes to kill snared coyotes with baseball bats as “vengeance” for a coyote “stealing” her kill on a hunt.**

“[The trapper] said she got into trapping coyotes because she was an avid deer hunter and once shot a deer in the liver and waited a few hours before going to find the deer's body. When she discovered it, she realized the deer had been picked apart by coyotes. [The trapper] attributed her passion for coyote trapping to ‘vengeance.’ [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

When asked how she kills the animals she catches, she said she prefers to use a baseball bat.” [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

### Excerpts Three and Four: Threats of violence and jokes about illegal trapping at the NTA President's Dinner.

"I sat at a table which happened to include several established members of the NTA and a former regional president. During the evening's discussions, there was substantial talk of encroaching legislation pushed by animal rights advocates that they deemed ridiculous. One of the trappers at the table said that, 'The law is an obstacle to go around to get what you want on the other side... that's all the law is.'"

"An item being sold was a foothold trap with teeth. The auctioneer said he had just learned that toothed traps were still legal in Alaska. He went on to coyly say that most things are legal in Iowa as well as long as they're done late at night."

### Excerpt Five: Suggestion of DNR threatening legal action to families of children caught in traps.

"I spoke with two insurance brokers from [Company Name]. They spoke about some of the reasons even independent hobbyist trappers may wish to acquire insurance.

When asked about whether issues like human children getting caught in traps was a liability to be concerned with, they said that the local Department of

Natural Resources (DNR) is often 'on your side' and if a child's parent were to sue, the DNR may threaten to give the family a citation for tampering with the traps." [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

### Excerpt Six: Bear traps on sale.

"Many vendors sold exceptionally large foothold traps. When asked about them, they would also say they were bear traps... Placed next to one vendor's bear traps were signs saying 'Warning Bear Traps.'

One of the State Trappers Association vendors had a toothed bear trap on their table, and they were selling raffle tickets for the chance to win it. When asked about whether it's legal to use it, the representative said it isn't legal anywhere."

***Note: Bear trapping is illegal in all but two states and toothed bear traps are illegal nationwide.***

### Excerpt Seven: Threats of violence over legislative trapping bans.

"A trapper commented: 'I think the country is ready – I think the trapping community is ready to go. We're ready to go. One of the New Mexico people said – and I probably shouldn't say this on tape "I may lose this battle, but there is going to be a hell of a pile of brass around me when this is all over." That's the attitude – I am at the same point. The step becomes, where do we get the bullets?'" [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) TRAPPING WORKSHOP

NOVEMBER 20, 2021

**Excerpt One: DNR Employee highlights legal loophole to exceed the bobcat killing quota.**

“[DNR Conservation Officer] expanded upon the bobcat quota discussion to acknowledge that quotas are counted for each member of the family, including children, and while they couldn’t do a lot to necessarily enforce it, he hoped that if people were using their children’s’ names on tags, the kids were at least out there with them.” [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)



A beaver is skinned as part of the taxpayer-funded Iowa Department of Natural Resources training course.

**Excerpt Two: Joking about legality of shooting as beaver is skinned**

***Caution: Graphic description and image of animal skinning***

“When the beaver’s pelt was pulled from their face, a portion of their skull came with it, including their upper teeth. It was determined by those in the room that the beaver’s skull had been shattered by a gunshot wound to the head.

[Instructor 1] said he had used

a ‘0.17 HMR’ [a type of rifle cartridge]. He added ‘*I kind of wrecked his world last night.*’ When someone asked if it was legal to shoot beavers, [Instructor 1] added, ‘Not with a shotgun. Mink, muskrat, and beaver you can’t shoot with a shotgun.’ He then said, ‘I guess if it ain’t legal, don’t tell the DNR.’ [Instructor 2] added that it’s not legal to shoot them over water with a rifle either to which [Instructor 1] hesitated before saying ‘well don’t tell them, guys’ and then they both smiled.” [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)



# TRAPPING WITH TRAPPER ONE

IOWA, NOVEMBER 21, 2021



## Excerpt One: Beaver found hanging from a tree in badly laid snare.

“[Trapper One] caught a beaver in a snare tied to a tree next to a beaver slide leading down to a creek. The beaver was dead, hanged around the torso. When asked if he intended to hang the beaver with the snare, [Trapper One] said, ‘*Nah, not really. I just forgot my stake.*’ Normally snares are staked into the ground and stay at ground level. When asked if snares will usually kill animals, he said that they often kill coyotes because ‘*they get wrapped up in it.*’ He put the beaver’s body on the hood of his truck and asked me to take a photo of him with it for his dad. He put the beaver in the back of his truck and left the property.”

[CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

# TRAPPING WITH TRAPPER TWO AND TRAPPER THREE

IOWA, NOVEMBER 23, 2021



Photo: Raccoon raises their free arm and tries to struggle out of the trap as the trapper hits the animal with the bat.



Photo: Raccoon caught in a leg-hold trap looks up at the trapper as he raises his baseball bat.

**Caution: Graphic descriptions of animal suffering and cruelty.**

## **Excerpt One: Raccoon repeatedly bludgeoned in the head, face and neck.**

“[Trapper Three] grabbed a baseball bat from the bed of the pickup and walked up to the trapped raccoon who was staring up at him. He raised the baseball bat to about eye level and then hit the raccoon in the head. The raccoon made an audible sound when hit. [Trapper Three] stepped on the raccoon’s chest/neck and began freeing the raccoon’s arm from the trap. Once released, he put the raccoon a little higher on the hill and struck them again with the bat against the back of their neck. He grabbed the raccoon by the fur on their back and tossed them 7-8 feet toward the truck. [Trapper Two] picked the raccoon up off the ground and put them into the truck. Their limbs were kicking violently as they were dropped into the truck bed. This continued for several seconds.” [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

## **Excerpt Two: Raccoon hit five times in head, face and throat, thrown several feet, dumped in truck bed.**

“[Trapper Two] stopped the truck at another raccoon in a trap in a roadside ditch. Everyone got out of the truck and [Trapper Three] grabbed the baseball bat again. [Trapper Three] swung the bat around in his hand as he walked up to the raccoon and then struck them in the head. The raccoon made an audible sound as [Trapper Three] hit them. He then stepped on the raccoon’s torso. [Trapper Two] shouted to [Trapper Three] to alert him that the raccoon wasn’t dead yet and to turn them over and ‘throat punch him’ before he does anything else. [Trapper Three] used his foot to push the raccoon over and said he was unable to put the raccoon on their back. He hit them again on the side of the head. When that still didn’t kill the raccoon, [Trapper Two] walked up, took the bat and struck the raccoon in the head again. He declared the raccoon dead and walked away.





Photo: The raccoon was hit multiple times on the head and face with the baseball bat, remaining conscious throughout.

[Trapper Three] threw the raccoon several feet down the hill and [Trapper Two] once again said ‘he’s not dead’ before walking up, and demonstrated his strategy to turn them on their back and hit them in the throat. The raccoon, conscious and holding onto the bat as [Trapper Two] holds it against their chest, looked up at the people around them. [Trapper Two] swung the bat and struck the raccoon again in the side of the head. The raccoon was still visibly conscious, so he raised the bat high above his head and swung it down to hit them again. The raccoon made another audible gasp on impact and then began to spasm violently.” [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

#### **Excerpt Three: Account of raccoon chewing their leg off to escape a trap.**

“[Trapper Two] explained that a raccoon may chew their leg off if they are caught too far down toward their paw. He explained that if caught closer to their shoulder they wouldn’t be able to, but that they are liable to chew their leg off to escape if they can reach it. They said raccoons



The conscious raccoon holds onto the baseball bat as the trapper brings it up to hit the animal again in the face.

and muskrats are most likely to do that and that it’s uncommon with coyotes and bobcats. [Trapper Three] added that yesterday he had a trap in the water in a rocky area that had caught a raccoon and it was meant to drown them, but that the raccoon was able to climb onto a rock high enough to chew their leg off and escape.”

[CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

#### **Excerpt Four: Fox caught in foothold trap, likely killed by coyotes. Leg snapped clean through.**

“Trappers noticed a foothold trap in a valley in the middle of the field had been set off and it appeared to be holding a dead fox. When they stopped to take a look, they discovered the fox had been killed, which they presumed to be the work of coyotes. They discovered that the fox’s leg was broken and [Trapper Two] said he believed the fox had broken their own leg trying to escape from the attacking coyote(s). The fox had been bleeding from the neck, but [Trapper Three] decided he wanted to take the pelt for his wall at home.” [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)



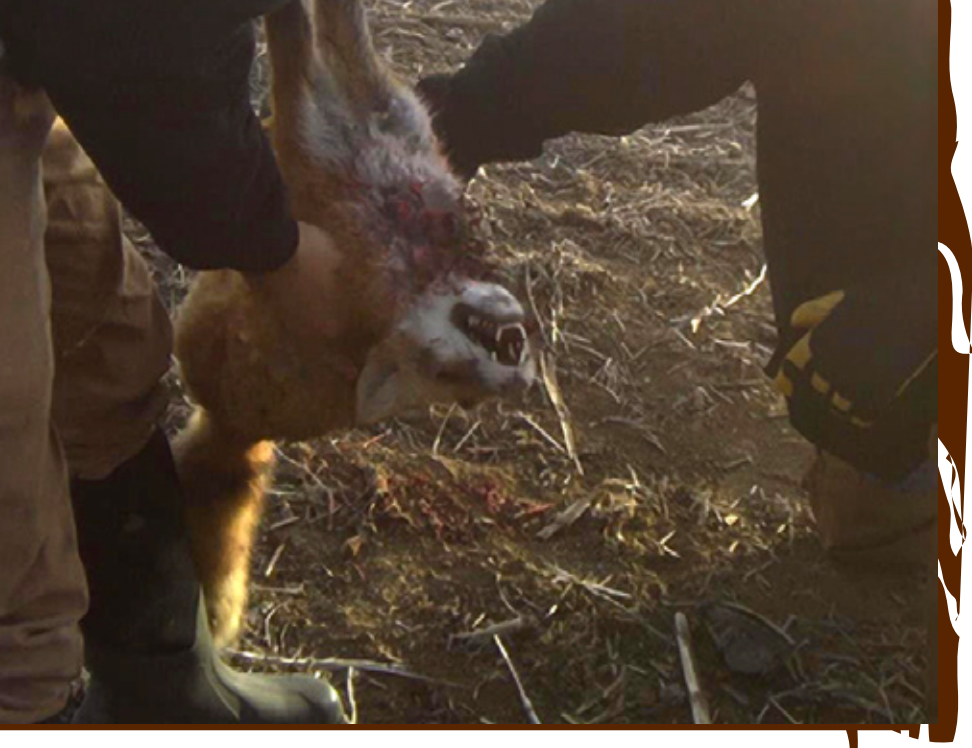


Photo: The fox was found dead and bloody in a trap. Their leg snapped clean through the bone. The trappers suspected the fox had been killed by coyotes.

**Excerpt Five: Raccoon hit multiple times in head, thrown eight feet, hit again.**

“[Trapper Two] drove up to another raccoon stuck in a foothold trap by the side of the road. [Trapper Three] walked up to them and held the bat over their head. He hesitated for a moment while [Trapper Two] shouted ‘hit him!’ [Trapper Three] struck the raccoon on the head and [Trapper Two] said, ‘Well he’s not dead but at least he’s stunned real good’ He told [Trapper Three] to throw the raccoon up to the road which [Trapper Three] did (the raccoon was thrown approximately 7-8 feet). [Trapper Two] stepped on the raccoon’s neck and held his weight on them for approximately 30 seconds. [Trapper Three] brought [Trapper Two] the baseball bat and

[Trapper Two] flipped the raccoon onto their back and hit them in the throat three times before picking them up and putting them in the back of the truck. [Trapper Three] follows up by saying ‘and then it’s a bloody mess when you’re skinning them.’” [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

**Excerpt Six: Coyote toe found in trap and kept as grisly souvenir.**

“A coyote’s back foot had become stuck in the trap but the coyote had been able to escape by ripping their foot out, leaving a single toe behind. The toe, with fur and nail intact and about two inches of muscle fiber/tendons protruding from the base, was removed from the trap and thrown on the ground. [Trapper Three] picked it up and brought it toward

the truck, saying, ‘I’m going to add it to your collection.’ He explained that [Trapper Two] had recently found a ‘perfect’ red coyote caught in a trap that he decided he wanted for his ‘wall of death’ (a wall in his home where he mounted his kills) and as soon as he pulled up, the coyote darted away, leaving two of their toes in the trap. Those connected toes had been placed on the dashboard and [Trapper Three] placed the newly found toe in the same spot.” [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)



Photo: Trappers laugh as they talk about the coyote toe ripped off in a trap. They kept the toe as a souvenir.



Photo: Raccoon looks up at trapper before being hit in the head with a baseball bat.



Failing to kill the raccoon with the first blow, the trapper stepped on their neck, then repeatedly hit the animal in the face and throat with the bat.



The raccoon is thrown into the back of the truck.

**Excerpt Seven: Raccoon found alive in truck, bludgeoned multiple times in head and left spasming on the ground.**

“While [Trapper Three] was grabbing a tool from the back of the truck, he noticed that one of the raccoons was still alive. He picked up the baseball bat and hit the raccoon firmly in the head three times. [Trapper Two] yelled at [Trapper Three] to hurry up and [Trapper Three] responded, saying he had to take a moment because ‘*Mr. Coon was standing up looking at me.*’

When getting back into the truck, I alerted them that the raccoon appeared to still be alive and [Trapper Three] responded, ‘*I don’t know what [the raccoon’s] problem is.*’ [Trapper Two] drove off.

When we stopped at the next creek, [Trapper Two] got out and pulled the still-living raccoon out of the back of his truck. He raised the baseball bat far above his head and swung it down on the raccoon’s head. The raccoon kicked and flailed for at least 45 seconds before becoming still.”

[CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

*Note: Our investigator did not know whether it was the first, second, or third raccoon caught that day who was still alive in the above excerpt. If it was the first, they had been left to suffer in pain for 1 hour and 24 minutes; if the second they had been left to suffer in pain for 1 hour and 2 minutes and, if the third they had been left to suffer in pain for 26 minutes.*

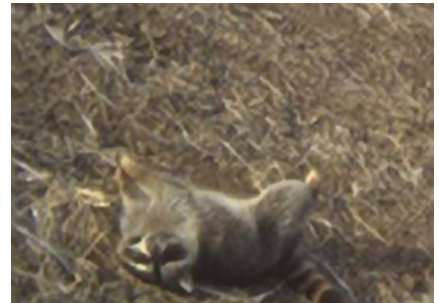




Photo: One of the raccoons was still alive. They were struck three more times with the baseball bat.



At the next stop, the raccoon was still alive. They were thrown on the ground and struck hard in the head, resulting in the animal going into violent spasm.



The raccoon was left spasming on the ground, then thrown back into the back of the truck.

### Excerpt Eight: Cat caught in trap demonstrates the ease with which “non-target” animals are killed.

“Closer to the door [of Trapper Two’s shed]... there was a pile of yet-unskinned animals, including a small black and white mammal near the bottom of the pile. He had previously sent me a photo of the same area where the animal was similarly visible. When asked what the small black and white animal was, he said ‘*that’s a cat.*’ He confirmed the cat had been caught in a trap.”



Photo: Within the large pile of carcasses in the trapper’s shed, the belly and paws of a black and white cat are visible.



# TRAPPING WITH TRAPPER TWO AND TRAPPER THREE

IOWA, NOVEMBER 25, 2021



## Excerpt One: Conversation with Trapper Two on illegal hunting.

“[Trapper Two] emphasized that everything he’s doing is 100% legal but that there was a time earlier in his life where he wasn’t always doing everything legally and he’s still careful about drawing attention to himself. He explained that he used to hunt all of his meat for a period of his life, including all through the winter, adding that he wasn’t always hunting in the designated season, or using legal methods.” [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

## Excerpt Two: Raccoon shot in head and thrown in truck.

“The raccoon had pulled the trap out of the ground and become stuck in the culvert. [Trapper Two] instructed [Trapper Three] to grab the 0.22 caliber rifle out of the truck. [Trapper Three] grabbed and loaded the gun. He then tried to pull the raccoon out by the trap chain still staked into



the ground, but the raccoon was resisting too firmly. [Trapper Three] handed the rifle to [Trapper Two] and pulled again. When the raccoon’s head came out of the culvert, [Trapper Two] fired a shot into their head. [Trapper Three] removed the raccoon’s paw from the trap while the raccoon started twitching and vigorously kicking their legs. [Trapper Three] threw the raccoon’s body onto the road where they continued to twitch. [Trapper Three] picked the raccoon up again and took them across the road where he held them upside down to let the blood drain into the grass. After several seconds, he dropped the raccoon in the back of the pickup truck.” [CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

## Excerpt Three: Trapper laughs at idea that animals are sentient.

“[Trapper Three] spent a moment discussing his parents’ views on hunting and trapping. He said his mother hates that he kills animals and is concerned for the animals’ suffering. He said his dad winced when he accidentally hit two different deer. [Trapper Two] started giving examples of what [Trapper Three] should say to his mother, including showing her pictures of sick and diseased raccoons and coyotes and photos of cattle injured from coyote attacks. [Trapper Two] spoke of coyotes eating a horse alive and then scoffed at the idea of coyotes having feelings.”

[CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)

# TRAPPING WITH TRAPPER ONE

IOWA, NOVEMBER 26, 2021

## Excerpt One: Badger caught in snare shot dead.

“At the next property with some traps set along a beaver dive toward a creek, [Trapper One] pointed out a large hole with dirt kicked all over around the trap. A badger had been caught in the snare and dug a large hole approximately four feet deep and several feet wide. The badger was hiding in the deepest part of the hole with the snare around their neck. The badger snarled at [Trapper One] as he looked at them. With the revolver from the front console of his truck, he aimed at the badger’s head and fired, killing the badger. [Trapper One] pulled the badger out of the hole and brushed them off, complimenting the pelt. He brought the badger to his truck and loaded them into the back. He explained that badgers are a relatively rare catch for him and that he was quite excited to have caught one.”

[CLICK TO VIEW CLIP](#)







## CONCLUSION

The testimony in this report, and the accompanying images, audio, and video recordings, paint a disturbing picture of animal cruelty and suffering, coupled with a willingness and intent to flout the minimal and inadequate trapping laws. From the most prominent members of the National Trappers Association, through to government and taxpayer-funded trainers, to individual trappers, this evidence has provided a snapshot of the reality of trapping in the United States. While some individuals, including those on government-led training courses, joked and alluded to illegal trapping, everything documented by our investigator is currently legal.

Trapping frequently involves extreme animal suffering, as we have clearly demonstrated in this report. The cruelties we have exposed are in stark contrast to the PR claims of certification schemes such as Furmark, which promise that North American Wild Fur programs “prioritize the sustainability and welfare of all fur-bearing species.”<sup>1</sup> Our evidence also completely undermines the fur trade’s claims that wild fur is “subject to a comprehensive system of laws, regulations, checks, and controls.”<sup>2</sup> It is time for change. It is time for an end to this violence.

Consumers, businesses and legislators all have a role to play to end this cruelty, in the U.S., the U.K., and elsewhere. While U.S. policymakers need to implement legislation to prohibit the activity, there is also an important role for policymakers overseas, in countries that provide markets for trapped fur. Consumers, retailers, and fashion brands also have the power to drive change by stopping buying fur from animals cruelly farmed or trapped.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.furmark.com/what-is-furmark/how-it-works>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.furmark.com/certification-programs/north-american-wild-fur>



## WE MUST END THIS CRUELTY: ACTION FOR CHANGE

**Born Free USA** is working to end trapping in the U.S. by virtue of a number of different avenues:

- With federal policymakers to implement legislation such as H.R. 4716, the Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act. This bill, led by Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), would prohibit the use of foothold (leghold), snare, and similar traps within the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- With state policymakers to implement statewide bans on both public and private land.
- With members of the public to raise awareness surrounding the realities and extent of trapping across the country and by empowering them to take action to make change in their localities.
- With retailers to prohibit and restrict the sale of traps, particularly online, with a focus on major retailers such as Amazon and eBay.
- With animal rescue and rehabilitation organizations that care for victims of trapping via our Trapping Victims' Fund, which provides relief for veterinary bills for victims.
- With other grassroots, national, and international organizations in coalition towards change.

You can support this important campaign, which seeks to save the lives of millions of animals across the U.S. every year by visiting **[bornfreeusa.org/trappingexposed](https://bornfreeusa.org/trappingexposed)** and taking action today for an end to cruel trapping.

**Humane Society International** is campaigning for a Fur Free Britain and is calling on:

- The U.K. Government to urgently introduce a ban on the import and sale of all real animal fur.
- Designers and brands to end the use of all real fur in their collections, and retailers to stop selling real fur products.
- Consumers to recognize the cruelty of the fur trade and pledge to go fur-free.
- Compassionate citizens to show their support for HSI/UK's Fur Free Britain campaign by signing the petition at: [hsi.org/FurFreeBritain](https://hsi.org/FurFreeBritain).

**The Humane Society of the United States** is working to end the fur trade by eliminating demand for fur products and is calling on:

- City- and state-level legislators to introduce city- and state-level bans on the sale of animal fur products.
- International designers, brands, and retailers to announce fur-free policies.



### **ABOUT BORN FREE USA**

Born Free USA works to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs. We oppose the exploitation of wild animals in captivity and campaign to keep them where they belong—in the wild. Born Free USA's primate sanctuary is one of the largest in the United States and provides a permanent home to monkeys rehomed from laboratories or rescued from zoos and private ownership. Learn more at [bornfreeusa.org](http://bornfreeusa.org).

### **ABOUT HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL**

Humane Society International works around the globe to promote the human-animal bond, rescue and protect dogs and cats, improve farm animal welfare, protect wildlife, promote animal-free testing and research, respond to natural disasters and confront cruelty to animals in all of its forms. Go to [hsi.org](http://hsi.org) to learn more.

### **ABOUT THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES**

The Humane Society of the United States fights the big fights to end suffering for all animals. Together with millions of supporters, we take on puppy mills, factory farms, the fur trade, trophy hunting, animal cosmetics testing and other cruel industries. Through our rescue, response and sanctuary work, as well as other direct services, we help thousands of animals in need every year. We fight all forms of animal cruelty to achieve the vision behind our name: a humane society. Go to [humanesociety.org](http://humanesociety.org) to learn more.







IN COLLABORATION WITH



THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
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