

# Opinion



**Free Press  
Viewpoint**

## Conibear traps not humane choice

The state Wildlife Commission has before it a request to ban conibear-type traps from public hunting areas.

The commission should accept this recommendation, and Secretary Mike Hayden should see that these traps are banned in Kansas, at least on public lands.

Conibear traps, often set in plastic five-gallon buckets, are designed to kill whatever sticks its head into the trap. Because your dog will do just that, a trap set for furbearers such as raccoons or coyotes can easily kill a dog.

Carson Mansfield, a deputy police chief in Salina, complained to the Wildlife Commission after his dog was killed by a trap near Kanopolis Reservoir. He and his dog Bella were out hunting rabbits on Valentine's Day when the Bella tried to get at bait set under the trap.

Conibear traps work with two strong springs, closing with up to 90 pounds of pressure on the neck of whatever animal tries to get the bait. Experts say they are almost impossible to release by hand, though there are instructions on the Internet.

One problem is that most hunters probably don't know how to deal with one of these traps. Only an experienced trapper would be able to open one quickly.

Set on public land, these traps are dangerous. They could kill someone's hunting dog, but might maim a child or even an adult who reached into the bucket. Today, Kansas law allows trappers to use them on public or private land.

There's no suggestion that the traps be banned from private land, where presumably anyone hunting with the owner's permission would be warned that a trap had been set. Any marauding dog that strays into private land presumably gets what it deserves.

Because they kill instantly, you could argue that conibear traps are more humane than leg-hold traps often used to catch furbearers. An animal caught in one of these might live for days, or even chew its foot off to escape. But at least a dog or other domestic animal caught in one can be released alive.

On public hunting areas, however, including leases and walk-in hunting tracts, it's likely to be someone's pet or valuable hunting dog that gets caught in a kill trap. Allowing any kind of kill trap on public land is questionable. The trapper just can't know what's going to walk by and be tempted.

Sportsmen ought to be sympathetic to Chief Mansfield's plea. This kind of thing makes all hunters and trappers look bad, particularly when photos of the dead dog are spread around the country.

Let's hope the state does the right thing and moves quickly to ban these devices from public land before it's too late.

— Steve Haynes

### Where to write, call

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715.

**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612.

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612.

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## What do you do when you're going batty?

Pat was going batty last week, and I really couldn't do much to help her.

I got a frantic call about 8 a.m.: "There's a bat in here, and it has me trapped in Kim's office."

As I said, it was 8 a.m. and I was still brewing the coffee. I wasn't all that awake; I was wearing my robe and slippers. I was not real helpful.

Being careful around but not afraid of rats, mice, bats, spiders and snakes, I was confused. How could a bat have anyone trapped?

I had forgotten. Pat doesn't take my live-and-let-live attitude around creepy crawlies. She doesn't like 'em, isn't going to ever enjoy their company and has no plans to become better acquainted with any of them.

My brain was a little slow, but I remembered the last time we had a bat in one of our buildings. I was visiting our Norton office and a bat was discovered hanging around the top of one of the doorways. We called the animal control officer and she came out and removed the bat.

This particular incident stuck in my mind because it was the first time I met Sherry, the animal control officer for the City of Norton. She later applied for, got and still has the job of office manager for *The Norton Telegram*.

The only other bat I could remember was one the cats brought in and deposited on the



**Cynthia Haynes**

• Open Season

back porch. I warned Steve not to step on the dead bat. He assured me that 1) he wasn't going to step on the bat and 2) it wasn't dead. It had hissed at him when he walked past.

That just didn't seem very helpful in the present circumstances. I had a hard time imagining Tigger, our fat old office cat, attacking anything more aggressive than a bowl of cat food.

While I wasn't sure who Oberlin's animal control officer was, I was pretty sure we had one, so I suggested Pat call dispatch and ask for his help.

That was the right suggestion, it seems. The animal officer, Jeff Johnson, came and the bat went and Pat was freed from Kim's office.

"I was cleaning up and I walked in there and it just fell down in the doorway," she told me. OK. That explains everything.

I never did find out how long she was trapped. It's just a good thing Kim has a phone

in her office, or it might have been a long day for Pat, the bat and Tigger.

Speaking of bats, I remember an employee back in Colorado telling us of her experience with them.

They had a terrible bat problem in their home, she said. The bats got under the shingles and came into the house through tiny holes in the roof. There would be bats flying around their bedrooms at night. Not very conducive to either sleep or romance, she said.

Well, at least they didn't have to worry about mosquitos buzzing around the bed at night. Most American bat species are insect eaters, devouring hundreds of beetles, mosquitos and moths each night.

Some stores even sell bat houses for you to put up to tempt these flying mammals to settle in your yard and protect your garden and patio.

Just don't invite Pat over for a late-night outdoor supper if you get one.

*Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at [c.haynes@nwkansas.com](mailto:c.haynes@nwkansas.com)*

## Honesty begins at home

Our local radio station, KXXX, has been playing an old song that was originally introduced and topped the charts back in the late '60s:

"Daddy hates mommy, mommy hates Dad, Cheat on your taxes, don't be a fool, Now what was that they said about the Golden Rule? Never mind the rules, just play to win, And hate your neighbor for the shade of his skin. Stab 'em in the back, that's the name of the game, And mommy and daddy are who's to blame.

"It's really not very funny, what the children say!"

Neither is it very funny what most of us say, or how many of us play the game of life. We attend our churches, volunteer for duty in our service clubs, volunteer to help with youth activities and go all the "good" community activities.

But what do our children see in our everyday at-home examples, and what is the honest example we set for them? I'm afraid we have to go back and listen to that song again. It re-



**Ken Poland**

• Ken's World

ally is mommy, daddy, and the adult community, that's to blame.

We aren't very complimentary when it comes to national, state, or even local government. The standard opinion is that the leaders and representatives in government become crooks when they get to Washington or Topeka. The local officials let their power go to their heads. They are all just looking out for themselves. They commit themselves to policies and make promises they don't intend to keep.

I don't think politicians or community leaders are any different away from home than they are out here. If you are honest, you are honest. If you are looking for excuse for your failures,

you do it right here at home, too. How?

We blame the system or we say everyone else is doing it, so we just as well join the crowd. Someone is jealous of our success or position, so they are making unfair demands on our morals or principles. It is the nature of man to look somewhere other than himself to excuse his failure.

The opportunities are more lucrative the higher we go in politics and government. Other than that, human nature is the same, wherever we are.

Cleaning up the morals and ethics of our society begins with 'me', right where I am. Jesus said we are our brother's keeper. We can't keep our brother moral and honest if we aren't moral or honest ourselves.

*Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at [rwinc@cheerful.com](mailto:rwinc@cheerful.com).*

## Cartoonists choose their own subjects

To the Editor:

I don't appreciate your stupid cartoons of President Obama every day in the *Colby Free Press*.

Please cancel my subscription to the paper and refund my money.

Della Jean Shipley, Hoxie

Editor's Note: Cartoonists draw the president more than anyone else, and Obama is a fresh subject for them. You're likely to see him in cartoons, both favorable and critical, for the



**Free Press Letter Drop**

• Our readers sound off

next eight years. Right now, since he's new, he's in almost all of them. Dubya is gone, and

the new guy is in the spotlight. Sorry, but that's likely what we'll see all spring.

— Steve Haynes

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### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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