

Wildlife Commission should ban these traps

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.

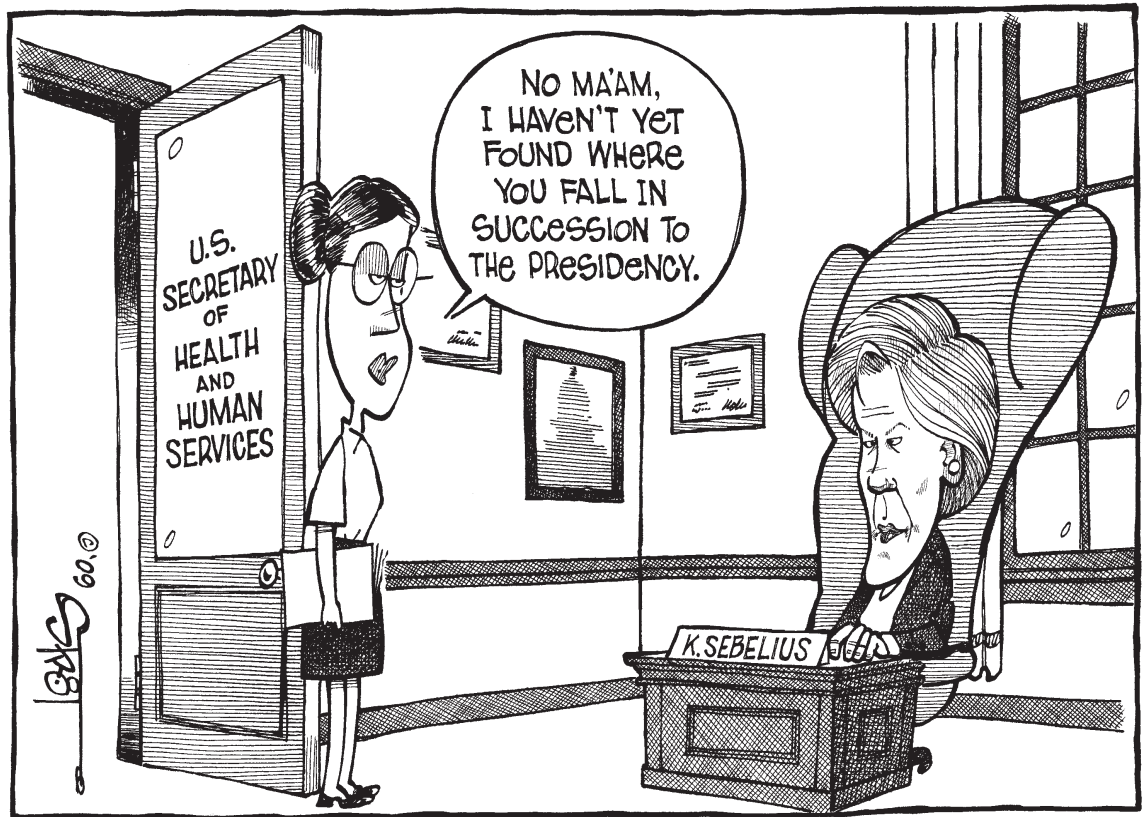
Because they kill instantly, you could argue that conibear traps are more humane than leg-hold traps often used to catch furbearers. An animal caught in one of these might live for days, or even chew its foot off to escape. But at least a dog or other domestic animal caught in one can be released alive.

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



Bat does not thrill employee

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 re-



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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member was one the cats brought in and deposited on the 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.

What should lawmakers do?

How you feel about abolishing the death penalty is one of those personal choices that may depend as much on your experience as anything.

There are strong arguments on both sides. There is no easy, black-and-white answer.

A Wichita-area senator has a bill which would end the Kansas death penalty July 1 to save the state money. Opponents claim a death penalty case costs the state about \$1.26 million to prosecute, on the average, compared to \$740,000 for an "ordinary" murder trial.

An argument for the death penalty, you need look no further than the record of heinous crime left by the most depraved killers society has known. Their actions speak for themselves.

And it can be hard to come up with a reason to show them any more mercy than they have shown their victims.

Duane West of Garden City was the county attorney when Richard Hickock and Perry Smith came to trial in the infamous killing of the Herb Clutter family near Holcomb, father, mother, two children. In an interview this week he backed retention of Kansas' capital punishment law.

The Clutter killings shocked a nation in 1959. Hickock and Smith, recently released from the Kansas State Penitentiary, had heard rumors that the family kept large amounts of cash in a safe in the basement. They plotted the killings as they drove across the state, stopping to buy rope and other supplies. Their plan from the beginning



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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was to leave no witnesses. Their crime and flight was documented in the novel and movie, "In Cold Blood." It's a worthy study of murder and the arguments for capital punishment.

For his part, Mr. West said he had no trouble asking the judge to sentence the two to hanging. The current law is OK, he said, if a little weak.

"They need to get busy and make it stronger," he said. "I think a lot more cases ought to qualify for capital murder than do."

He expressed no regrets over the fate of Hickock and Smith.

"It's not an easy thing ... to contemplate doing," he told the reporter. "Ultimately, I felt like asking the jury for the death penalty was the proper thing to do

"I felt we could do without these two people walking around on the face of the earth anymore. I did not feel the decision was wrong, and they have not killed anyone else since the — that's the main thing."

And there probably is the best argument for the death penalty.

On the other side, other than the huge responsibility of deciding who is to live and who is to die, is the nation's sorry record of false convictions in so many capital and

other infamous crimes.

When defendant after defendant is being released because "new evidence" shows they did not do what a jury had found them guilty of, you have to ask yourself how any jury can be sure enough of a capital crime to recommend death. There is, after all, no appeal from execution.

What to do? I'd say that the expense alone is not a good reason to change the law. If the death penalty is just and deserved, then hang the expense. But if it isn't?

I'm glad I don't have to vote. I'd be interested in hearing what other people out here think, and I'd expect our legislators would too.

From the Bible

This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

Psalms 34:6-7

She's wary of practical jokers

Like father — like son. James has inherited his father's warped sense of humor. I am their innocent victim.

There I was, sitting in my favorite recliner; minding my own business. James entered the room with his hands cupped in front of him. Sweetly, he said, "Look what I found in the van."

Trusting, I leaned forward to see. Then, without warning he dumped a mouse in my lap. OK, it was a toy mouse, but it looked very real. To make matters worse, Jim laughs harder each time the tale is told. Those boys better be careful who they mess with. I don't get even — I get ahead.

— ob —

Progress report on the house: The room that will someday be the dining room is entirely gutted. James has been a lath-and-plaster-ripping fool. He was determined to get it cleaned out by Sunday, and he did. It's far from finished, but I am already envisioning Thanksgiving dinner around the oak table Jim made about 20 years ago.

It's like a Norman Rockwell picture in my min: family and friends gathered 'round. The table practically groaning from the bounty



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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of our harvest. And all set in the beautifully appointed dining room. Beautiful china on a silk table cloth, tasteful draperies at the bay window, silver candle holders with flickering candles aglow....

Urrrh! Wake up, Carolyn! A lot of sheet rock, mud, paint, duct work and flooring have to go in before anybody eats one bite of food in that room. Quit daydreaming and get back to work.

— ob —

A couple of people have asked me if I finished the book I started last week. Alas, I have no book report. In fact, I haven't even picked up the book all week. Remember that "easily distracted" line from last week's column? Maybe next week.

— ob —

This was a milestone week for Jim. Sunday was his 65th birthday. For the past nine years, we have

celebrated his birthday either on our way to or in Mexico. Since our Juarez trip was canceled, I planned a celebration at home.

We invited two good friends over and I cooked Mexican food: Smothered burritos with green chili gravy, refried beans and Mexican rice. Jim asked for his favorite, my homemade carrot cake. And, James asked if we could have homemade ice cream, too. It was a real fiesta. Feliz cumpleaños, mi esposo. Happy birthday, my husband.

— ob —

March is a big birthday month for our family. Jim's daughter Becky was born on the 10th, and my daughter Kara on the 16th. We call them "the Twins." Jim's is the 15th and granddaughter Angelia will be 18 on March 26.

Hallmark makes a killing on us this month.

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Living memorials add real beauty

To the Editor:

A number of years ago, the Oberlin City Council adopted a general landscaping plan for the Oberlin Cemetery. Nan Stanley, cemetery sexton, has done an excellent job planting donated trees around the periphery and lining the drives. This program continues.

We have now reached the next phase of the plan, which includes planting living memorials of peonies and trees on family plots by family members.

Planting peonies at the ends of the memorial stones as a living memorial will add to the beauty of the cemetery. Various colors and types are encouraged.

In early days, it was the custom for families to plant a tree on the family plot. The results of this can be seen in the eastern part of the cemetery. The council now is encouraging people to plant and care for trees (not bushes) on family plots in the

Letter to the Editor

newer sections. Due to spacing and maintenance concerns, trees cannot be planted on every plot, so all planting will be under the guidance and direction of the sexton.

In recent generations, as far as we can tell, no other city is doing this sort of landscaping beautification in a cemetery. Since the planting and care of each tree will be individually

and personally done by the family, and not by the city employees, guidelines need to be developed. I would appreciate a call with any suggestions.

Jay Anderson
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