

**MIDWEST FURBEARER GROUP  
ANNUAL REPORT  
May 19, 2020**

**MEETING TIME AND PLACE**

The 2020 MAFWA Furbearer Workshop was scheduled to be held in Traverse City, Michigan May 18-21, but was cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions on work and travel. However, the work group held a remote business meeting on Tuesday, May 19, 2020.

**ATTENDANCE**

Seventeen furbearer biologists participated in the 2020 business meeting, from 13 Midwest member states (Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin). A complete list of attendees and contact information for state furbearer biologists is available in Appendices 1 and 2.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Forums such as the Midwest Furbearer Workshop provide valuable opportunities for state furbearer biologists to become acquainted with emerging issues and exchange information and ideas related to furbearer research and management. As such, the need for state fish and wildlife agencies to establish/maintain furbearer biologist positions and support travel of furbearer biologists to the annual Midwest Furbearer Workshop is critical to maintaining quality furbearer management and research in each state. It is more important than ever that state agencies are in the forefront of issues related to furbearer management and regulated trapping in order to ensure abundant populations, address important conflicts, and provide sustainable recreational opportunity.

At the 2020 business meeting, we identified a number of topics to discuss ranging from large-scale emerging issues (Covid-19) to individual state regulations and research projects. The following topics were on the agenda and discussed:

- CITES issues related to otter, bobcat and bear
- Collaborative muskrat research status
- Coyotes and artificial light for hunting
- AFWA furbearer harvest database
- Covid-19 and impacts on mustelids, felids, other species
- Bear-wise update

Although the work group enjoyed their discussions and a chance to exchange ideas, we missed the formal presentations on research and management topics, the breaks and evening hours which typically allow much exchange of information on current results from population and harvest surveys, current challenges and issues in furbearer management within each state, and an opportunity to discuss new or proposed research projects. The full workshop provides a good venue for discussing new ideas or issues that affect multiple state agencies. While we were unable to hold the full regular meeting, we were able to discuss a number of important issues and develop some information items. Summaries of these topics are presented below as Director Action or Information Items.

### **DIRECTOR ACTION ITEMS**

None

### **DIRECTOR INFORMATION ITEMS**

1. Covid-19 - Preliminary information primarily from zoos and other captive facilities such as mink farms suggests that mustelids, felids, and possibly canids may be susceptible to Covid-19. Some states have developed handling protocols for research on these species to reduce the risk of human-wildlife transfer. However, much is unknown about the ability of the virus to transfer from humans to wildlife or from wildlife to humans. Even less is known about the potential population level impacts of Covid-19 on furbearing animals. Given the economic and human impacts from Covid-19, the workgroup recognizes that limited funds may be available but encourages funding on research to examine these issues related to Covid-19 and furbearing animals.
2. Support for BMPs Work – The group continues to support the ongoing BMP testing procedures. Recommendations are needed for trap types to test along with varying trap placement and baiting protocol for multiple species. The work group recommends continued support for BMPs at the regional level along with promotion of ongoing research and the need for more public, agency, and trapper outreach.
3. CITES Issues - The USFWS again granted a national no-detriment finding for otter harvest, allowing Midwest (and other) states the ability to continue otter harvest management programs and processing CITES requirements as they have been doing. AFWA is also in the process of submitting materials for a national no-detriment finding on bobcats. Unless significant concerns are found in this process, which is not expected, a no detriment finding for bobcat harvest by the USFWS is expected.
4. Spotted Skunk ESA Review - The Plains subspecies of the eastern spotted skunk 12-month review for potential Endangered Species Act listing by USFWS is set to begin in 2021 with

the listing decision in 2022. Data requests from the USFWS for each impacted state will likely begin in 2021. Listing could seriously impact trapping in Midwestern states.

5. Large Carnivore Report - The group will continue to annually update the Directors on changes in large carnivore management in the Midwest via Appendix 5.
6. Muskrat Declines - The MAFWA Furbearer Group will work continue to seek funding for cooperative research projects to assess causes for the decline of muskrats in the eastern United States with an emphasis on developing management actions to reverse declines where feasible. The MAFWA Furbearer Group believes that there has been a decline in muskrat abundance throughout much of their range in eastern North America over the past several decades.
7. Wolf and Lynx Delisting- USFWS final delisting decisions for lynx and Great Lakes wolves should be released soon although both processes seem to be ‘stalled’ for reasons we do not understand.

The Midwest Furbearer Working Group thanks state Directors for their continued support of travel of state furbearer biologists to the annual Midwest Furbearer Resources Workshop. With tight budgets and restricted travel this annual workshop continues to be a critical component of sound resource management in the Midwest. Annual meetings allow for an open, thorough exchange of information and knowledge resulting in efficient, effective, and sound management of these unique species.

#### **TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources will host the 2021 Midwest Furbearer Workshop. An exact time and location is yet to be determined. A complete list of previous host states is available in Appendix 3.

#### **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1. 2020 Midwest Furbearer Work Group Attendees.....	5
Appendix 2. Midwest Furbearer Biologists – Contact Information.....	7
Appendix 3. Host States of Midwest Furbearer Workshops.....	13
Appendix 4. Large Carnivore Sub-Committee Status Report.....	14

**APPENDIX 1. LIST OF THE ATTENDEES OF THE MIDWEST FURBEARER WORKGROUP VIRTUAL BUSINESS MEETING MAY 19, 2020.**

Last Name	First Name	Affiliation
Albers	Gerriann	Indiana DNR
Bump	Adam	Michigan DNR
Conlee	Laura	Missouri DOC
Dennison	Katie	Ohio DNR
Erb	John	Minnesota DNR
Etter	Dwayne	Michigan DNR
Evelsizer	Vince	Iowa DNR
Fisk	Keith	South Dakota
McTaggart	Stan	Illinois DNR
Palmer	Laura	Kentucky
Peek	Matthew	Kansas Dept. of Wildlife
Roberts	Nathan	Wisconsin DNR
Rosler	Shawn	Wisconsin DNR
Sasse	Blake	Arkansas Game & Fish Commission
Tack	J.P.	Wisconsin DNR
White	Bryant	AFWA
Wilson	Sam	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

**APPENDIX 2. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES FURBEARER WORK GROUP MEMBERS.**

**Illinois**

Stan McTaggart, Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
1 Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702  
217-558-6623; [Stan.McTaggart@Illinois.gov](mailto:Stan.McTaggart@Illinois.gov)

**Indiana**

Gerianne Albers, Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
5596 E State Road 46, Bloomington, IN 47401  
812-822-3304; [GAlbers@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:GAlbers@dnr.IN.gov)

**Iowa**

Vince Evelsizer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
Fish & Wildlife Research Station, 1203 North Shore Dr., Clear Lake, IA 50428  
Office: 641-357-3517; [vince.evelsizer@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:vince.evelsizer@dnr.iowa.gov)

**Kansas**

Matt Peek, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism  
PO Box 1525, Emporia, KS 66801  
620-342-0658 & 620-340-3017; [Matt.PEEK@ks.gov](mailto:Matt.PEEK@ks.gov)

**Kentucky**

Laura Palmer, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources  
1 Sportsman's Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601  
800-858-1549 ext. 4528; [laura.palmer@ky.gov](mailto:laura.palmer@ky.gov)

**Michigan**

Adam Bump, Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
4166 Legacy Parkway, Lansing, MI 48911  
517-285-2678; [bumpa@michigan.gov](mailto:bumpa@michigan.gov)

Dwayne Etter, Michigan Department Of Natural Resources  
4166 Legacy Parkway, Lansing, MI 48911  
517-284-4725; [etterd@michigan.gov](mailto:etterd@michigan.gov)

**Minnesota**

John Erb, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
1201 East Hwy 2, Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
218-328-8875; [john.erb@state.mn.us](mailto:john.erb@state.mn.us)

**Missouri**

Laura Conlee, Missouri Department Of Conservation  
3500 E. Gans Road, Columbia, MO 65201  
573-815-2900 ext 2903; [laura.conlee@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:laura.conlee@mdc.mo.gov)

**Nebraska**

Sam Wilson, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission  
2200 North 33<sup>rd</sup> Street, Lincoln, NE 68503  
402-471-5174; [sam.wilson@nebraska.gov](mailto:sam.wilson@nebraska.gov)

**North Dakota**

Stephanie Tucker, North Dakota Game and Fish Department  
100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501  
701-220-1871; [satucker@nd.gov](mailto:satucker@nd.gov)

**Ohio**

Katie Dennison, Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
2045 Morse Rd., Columbus, OH 43229  
614-265-6383; [Catherine.dennison@dnr.state.oh.us](mailto:Catherine.dennison@dnr.state.oh.us)

**South Dakota**

Keith Fisk, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks  
523 East Capitol, Pierre, SD 57501  
605-773-7595; [keith.fisk@state.sd.us](mailto:keith.fisk@state.sd.us)

**Wisconsin**

Shawn Rossler, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
101 S. Webster St.  
Madison, WI 53707  
608-267-9428; [shawn.rossler@wisconsin.gov](mailto:shawn.rossler@wisconsin.gov)

Nathan Roberts, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
107 Sutliff Avenue, Rhineland, WI 54501  
715-365-8917; [NathanM.Roberts@wi.gov](mailto:NathanM.Roberts@wi.gov)

**Manitoba**

Dean Berezanski, Manitoba Department of Sustainable Development  
Wildlife and Fisheries Branch  
Box 24, 200 Saulteaux Cresc., Winnipeg MB R3J 3W3  
204-945-7469; [Dean.Berezanski@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Dean.Berezanski@gov.mb.ca)

**Ontario**

Stephen Mills, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources  
Wildlife Section  
5th Flr N  
300 Water St  
Peterborough ON K9J8M5  
705-755-1207; [stephen.mills@ontario.ca](mailto:stephen.mills@ontario.ca)

Jeff Bowman, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources  
Wildlife Research and Monitoring Section  
DNA Bldg, 2nd Flr Blk B  
2140 East Bank Dr  
Peterborough ON K9J7B8  
705-755-1555; [Jeff.Bowman@ontario.ca](mailto:Jeff.Bowman@ontario.ca)

**Saskatchewan**

Mike Gollop, Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment  
Fish and Wildlife Branch  
112 Research Drive, Saskatoon SK S7N 3R3  
(306) 933-5767; [mike.gollop@gov.sk.ca](mailto:mike.gollop@gov.sk.ca)

**APPENDIX 4. HOST STATES FOR MIDWEST FURBEARER WORKSHOPS, 1979-2020.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>State</b>
1979	Kansas	2017	Iowa
1983	Wisconsin	2018	North Dakota
1984	Illinois	2019	Oklahoma
1985	Iowa	2020	Remote Business Meeting
1987	Minnesota		
1988	Indiana		
1989	Missouri		
1990	Nebraska		
1991	South Dakota		
1992	Ohio		
1993	Oklahoma		
1994	North Dakota		
1995	West Virginia		
1996	Michigan		
1997	Illinois		
1998	Kansas		
1999	Wisconsin		
2000	Missouri		
2001	Ohio		
2002	Iowa		
2003	Minnesota		
2004	Illinois		
2005	North Dakota		
2006	Michigan		
2007	Nebraska		
2008	Kansas		
2009	Kentucky		
2010	South Dakota		
2011	Wisconsin		
2012	Missouri		
2013	Illinois		
2014	Ohio		
2015	Indiana		
2016	Minnesota		



**APPENDIX 5. LARGE CARNIVORE STATUS REPORT FOR MOUNTAIN LIONS, BLACK BEARS, AND WOLVES.**

**MOUNTAIN LIONS**

	<b>Protected (Y/N)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Estimated population</b>	<b>Harvest (Y/N/NA)<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Recent changes in distribution</b>
<b>Illinois</b>	Y	No breeding population	NA	Rare visitor
<b>Indiana</b>	Y	0	NA	Rare visitor
<b>Iowa</b>	N	<5	NA	Occasional visitor
<b>Kansas</b>	Y	0	NA	None, still getting infrequent dispersers
<b>Kentucky</b>	Y	0	NA	
<b>Michigan</b>	Y	No breeding population	NA	A few transients each year, 52 confirmed sightings since 2008. All but 1 in Upper Peninsula.
<b>Minnesota</b>	Y	No breeding population	NA	Decline in transients apparent from 2014 – 2017 compared to 2010 – 2013, and then recent uptick in confirmations from 2018 - 2020.
<b>Missouri</b>	Y	No breeding population	NA	6-10 transients confirmed each year; 82 confirmations since 1994
<b>Nebraska</b>	Y	No statewide estimate; Pine Ridge Unit: 34 (2019 survey)	Recommended for 2021	3 populations formed since mid-2000s
<b>North Dakota</b>	Y	None available	Y	No
<b>Ohio</b>	N	0	NA	
<b>South Dakota</b>	Y	Approximately 260 in Black Hills, no statewide estimate	Y	No
<b>Wisconsin</b>	Y	No breeding population	NA	Rare transients

<sup>1</sup>Yes indicates the species is protected by state or provincial laws (e.g. listed as a game animal with an open or closed season).

<sup>2</sup>NA indicates the question is not applicable because no known breeding populations exist with the state or province.

**BLACK BEARS**

	<b>Protected (Y/N)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Estimated population</b>	<b>Harvest (Y/N/NA)<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Recent changes in distribution</b>
<b>Illinois</b>	Y	No breeding population	NA	Rare visitor
<b>Indiana</b>	Y	0	N	Occasional visitor
<b>Iowa</b>	N	<5	NA	Occasional visitor
<b>Kansas</b>	Y	0	NA	None, still getting infrequent dispersers
<b>Kentucky</b>	Y	400 in core area	Y	Expanding population
<b>Michigan</b>	N	~12,500	Y	Stable population in Upper Peninsula (80% of MI bear population), expanding population in Lower Peninsula
<b>Minnesota</b>	Y	12 ~ 15,000	Y	Decline from late 90's to ~ 2010, slight increase since
<b>Missouri</b>	Y	540-840	N	Growing and expanding population
<b>Nebraska</b>	Y	0	NA	Rare visitor
<b>North Dakota</b>	Y	No breeding population	N	Regular visitor, with some individual bears overwintering
<b>Ohio</b>	Y	5-10	N	50-100 transients confirmed each year (increasing trend); <5 confirmed reproducing females
<b>South Dakota</b>	Y	0	NA	Rare occurrence
<b>Wisconsin</b>	Y	28,900	Y	Expanding

<sup>1</sup>Yes indicates the species is protected by state or provincial laws (e.g. listed as a game animal with an open or closed season).

<sup>2</sup>NA indicates the question is not applicable because no known breeding populations exist with the state or province.

### WOLVES

	<b>Protected (Y/N)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Estimated population</b>	<b>Harvest (Y/N/NA)<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Recent changes in distribution</b>
<b>Illinois</b>	Y	No breeding population	NA	Rare visitor
<b>Indiana</b>	Y	0	NA	Rare visitor
<b>Iowa</b>	Y	<5	NA	Occasional visitor
<b>Kansas</b>	Y	0	NA	None, have only confirmed 2
<b>Kentucky</b>	Y	0	NA	N/A
<b>Michigan</b>	Y	~662 (2018)	N	UP fully occupied. Minimum population estimate.
<b>Minnesota</b>	Y	~2700 (in winter 2018-19)	N	Slight expansion, most suitable habitat occupied
<b>Missouri</b>	Y	0	NA	Occasional visitor, 7 confirmations since 2001
<b>Nebraska</b>	Y	0	NA	Rare visitor
<b>North Dakota</b>	Y	0	NA	Occasional visitor
<b>Ohio</b>	N	0	NA	
<b>South Dakota</b>	Y	0	NA	Rare occurrence

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<b>Wisconsin</b>	Y	925-952	N	Expanding
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<sup>2</sup>NA indicates the question is not applicable because no known breeding populations exist with the state or province.

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