

The conservation and trapping community lost a tireless advocate with the passing of Doug Haubert on June 4, 2013. Born 58 years earlier on April 10, 1955, Doug grew up like many of us by spending much of his early years outdoors appreciating wildlife. Upon graduation from Gibsonburg High School, Doug served a 38-year career as the Operations Supervisor and later as Stewardship Coordinator for the Sandusky County Parks District. Doug's leadership and drive helped protect 13 properties encompassing more than 2,500 acres of wetland and upland habitats, which are visited by thousands of people who participate in more than 350 presentations and activities each year.

Doug's long list of conservation and leadership contributions extends far beyond the local area of Northwest Ohio, and includes the entire Buckeye State, the Midwest, and in several cases, the U.S. Many people knew Doug as the President of the OSTA from 1994 to 2000. However, he also served as a Trapper Education Instructor since 1990 and mentor to many students, as well as current and future wildlife professionals. For many years, Doug helped instruct a class on furbearer conservation, management and trapping as part of a Wildlife Management Techniques course for wildlife students at Ohio State University. As representatives of the DOW and OSTA, we'd split the 2-hour class in half. I'd briefly introduce the furbearers of Ohio and highlight a few of the many furbearer-related research and management projects being conducted in Ohio, and Doug would spend the second hour providing extensive info from a trappers perspective on the role and importance of trapping, pass around and discuss examples of traps and trap types used, and then pass around an array of tanned furs. Not all of the students in the class each year had previous experience in hunting or trapping, in fact, most didn't have any. However, Doug's ability to connect with people, his passion and knack for teaching others were critical in helping to introduce this topic to future natural resource professionals. I was always amazed by the interest and questions asked by the students, with a few often approaching Doug after the class to ask for more details on where they could go to take a trapper education course.

Doug's contributions at the state level also included a great deal of assistance in trapping red fox and coyotes for a DOW telemetry study during the late 80's and early 90's that was conducted by Jack Weeks, who served as the furbearer biologist for many years until his retirement in 1995. I had the great fortune of trying to fill the shoes of Jack in 1996, fortunate enough indeed because I would soon meet and work with so many incredible people across the state, particularly members of the OSTA. With me being completely new to Ohio, Doug reached out with an invitation to grab lunch in what I'm pretty sure was one of the first phone calls that I received on the job. What followed ended up being the start of the most enjoyable, inspirational and rewarding time in my career, due largely to Doug's willingness to help, his interest in teaching others, his ability to help solve pressing conservation issues, his desire to serve the public, and his interest in perpetuating trapping for future generations to participate in and enjoy. No doubt there were many opportunities that popped up that allowed us to work on some exciting projects, ranging from previous work that needed to be picked up and carried across the finish line to those that were a bit more forward thinking.

Doug was a key in providing a historical context of many of the trapping regulations, and answering questions from a new-guy's perspective. Having come from Missouri, central to the topics that we discussed over lunch were the current status of river otters in the state (largely unknown at the time), what the future may look like given numerous, highly successful otter reintroduction projects throughout the U.S., and whether the OSTA would be interested in participating in a national trap testing effort that was in the early stages of being discussed among wildlife agencies. Doug offered full support from the OSTA however needed, and also offered much advice, help and insights along the way. What made things even more rewarding was the fact that up until that point, I had never worked with furbearers before outside of the waterfowl/nest predator world and had a lot to learn. Doug and many others within the trapping community who were always willing to share information and their perspectives made learning all that much more enjoyable.

Doug was passionate about defending hunting and trapping as well. During the late 1990's, an increasing number of state ballot initiatives were taking place across the U.S. that challenged the ability of state agencies to manage wildlife resources. Closest to home was the Ohio Dove Bill, which Doug volunteered many hours and nights working extensively with the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America to help defeat in 1998. In other states, ballot initiatives were challenging the future of regulated trapping as a tool of modern wildlife management. It was clear, at least to some of us within the wildlife profession and trapping community, that science-based information would be an important step in helping to educate the

public, and fellow wildlife professionals, about traps, trap modifications and techniques that improve the efficiency and selectivity of traps, and the welfare of trapped animals. This led to a national program to develop Best Management Practices (BMP's) for trapping in the United States.

Doug, along with other key representatives of the OSTA, played an integral role in the development of BMP's that ranged from initial discussions, the field testing of traps, reviewing draft BMP documents, getting feedback from others and representing OSTA members at regional and national meetings. Some of the fondest memories that Mark Witt, former Wildlife Research Technician and I have of Doug and his long-time trapping partner, and father, Don Haubert who served as BMP trappers, are working with them on a daily basis as field observers and trap test coordinators. Doug's contributions helped develop the current Eastern Coyote, Red Fox and Raccoon BMP's. For this reason, Doug's involvement has provided benefits that extend far beyond Ohio, and even the Midwest.

As you might imagine, the BMP effort had its share of bumps along the way, and at one point, a significant crossroads between the driver of the BMP effort, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and the NTA. In this particular case, both sides had concerns that weren't being hammered out, and discussions were deteriorating beyond reason. Doug and I discussed the need to host a meeting in Ohio to bring representatives from both sides together, approached Mike Budzik, Chief of the Division of Wildlife with the idea, who agreed and eagerly sent out the invitation to make it happen. I distinctly recall two key examples of leadership that probably influenced the outcome: 1) Doug informing the NTA President at the time that the OSTA may walk to the edge of the cliff with them on the primary issue at hand, but won't jump, and 2) Chief Budzik incorporating time at a nearby skeet range at the end of a very tense afternoon on day 1 to allow everyone to load up and shoot clays. You would think the natural tendency given the tension and events leading up to this meeting would be to NOT arm everyone (a uniformed Wildlife Officer was present who also served as the Range Master), but it was both amusing and amazing to see many of the frustrations meld away in what became a social gathering. What followed was a very productive session the next morning, with an agreement drafted to work cooperatively toward a common goal which was signed at a later date. Perhaps this was a very small intervention in the grand scheme of things, but nonetheless, it was extremely important at the time in having shaped the outcome. The development of BMP's continued to stay on track and has made significant progress, and I believe that Doug helped play a very quiet, although very important role at that intersection.

Doug's contributions leading up to Ohio's first river otter trapping season were also instrumental in helping the DOW determine the success of the reintroduction program, in which we needed to capture otters for a radio-marking study. As those of us who were involved in the project never believed that it was a wise use of sportsman's dollars to take several seasons trying to learn what experienced trappers already knew, Doug was eager to spend a long weekend showing Mark Witt, myself and a few staff from the Killbuck Wildlife Area the ropes based on what he learned by trapping otters in Arkansas with his trapping partner, Ron Reinhart. In 2001, at the start of what became a 5-year study in the Killbuck watershed, Doug set the first foothold traps that were deliberately set in Ohio to catch otters after they were eliminated from Ohio nearly a century earlier. As it turned out, the first set that he made ended up catching the first otter 2 days later, and a family group of 3 otters at a different location the same day. The first otter was caught in a No. 11 double long-spring, similar to the traps used in Louisiana to catch otters for release in Ohio and elsewhere throughout the U.S. We pulled the trap, placed it on a shelf, and presented it to Doug as a token of our appreciation in 2006. We did learn a tremendous amount ourselves along the way, but Doug, along with other trappers and several agency biologists from other states taught us many things that we used successfully to catch and radio-mark 38 otters. It was difficult to get Doug back out on the trapline until the end of the study, but he did accompany us on the last day when we pulled the line in which we caught and released a previously-marked otter.

As the river otter population continued to grow in Ohio during the late 1990's and 2000's, so too did the number that were incidentally caught in beaver sets. Through Doug's help and leadership, the DOW developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the OSTA indicating no violation would occur if non-releasable otters were turned in immediately. This provided DOW biologists with important information, and ensured that incidentally-caught otters were fully utilized. With time, and as all of the DOW offices filled their need for otter mounts, pelts became an important element of fur trunks and Information/Education programs. As most of the otters would end up at Crane Creek Wildlife Research Station, Doug helped the DOW once again by skinning and putting up the majority of otter pelts that were tanned and are now distributed throughout the state.

At the national level, and as a member of the regulated fur harvester community, Doug also provided insights, expertise and perspectives to DOW staff working on a national effort to reform tagging requirements for exporting river otters and bobcats from the U.S. While proposed changes have not been approved or taken place, it was important to understand how and whether different approaches were practical and could be implemented.

More recently, Doug, with the help of his trapping partner and father, once again captured and radio-marked red fox and coyotes in NW Ohio as part of a study designed to test the feasibility of using a helicopter-mounted Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR) unit as a survey tool for large furbearers, with the idea of developing it further for bobcats if it was effective. The idea would be similar, use the existing expertise out there among the trapping community to capture and radio-mark the study animals, and conduct the science-based monitoring that we're trained to do as biologists.

Ultimately, Doug has played a tremendous role in contributing to the field of wildlife conservation, habitat management, and public education and most importantly, has served as a valued mentor and a friend. Like a ripple effect, Doug's contributions continue to spread and influence others in very real and important ways. When you look back and think about the things that have helped shape many of our furbearer conservation success stories during the recent past, there's a good chance that Doug had something to do with it. He was certainly a key element in the success of many things that we, and future generations of trappers and conservationists will continue to enjoy in Ohio and elsewhere. He will be sorely missed, and in his honor, we should continue to make every effort to educate others, make a difference and strive to make the natural world a better place for current and future generations to enjoy.

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