

Dear Mr. Secretary: how many dogs must die?

Mike Hayden, secretary
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks
Dear Mr. Secretary,

I am writing to ask you to correct an injustice, to right a wrong, to help preserve the future of our threatened outdoor sports.

I am asking you, please, Mr. Secretary, to get behind reform of the regulations on trapping on public lands.

It's a travesty, sir, that trappers are allowed to leave deadly kill traps on public land in violation of department regulations and the law. It's a travesty that even one hunter's dog should die a cruel death in such a trap.

First and foremost, if it remains legal to use conibear-type traps on public hunting lands, the regulations must require the trapper to post signs warning hunters, hikers and others about the hazard.

We should be told these traps are present so we can keep dogs and, yes, children away.

In the last couple of years, two hunting dogs have died in apparently untagged traps around Kanopolis Reservoir. Do we have to wait for more tragedies to change things? For, perhaps, a child to be injured?

First, enforcement of existing laws would help. The traps involved apparently were not tagged, as required by law, with the owner's name and address.

Why were they in place in a public hunting area?

While recognizing the rights and benefits of trappers, as with any outdoor sport, shouldn't we expect them to follow the law and to respect the safety of others? Who stands to suffer more from this activity than legitimate trappers?

As our outdoor sports come under increas-

ing pressure, don't we need all the friends we can get? Can we afford the page-one image of dead dogs in traps?

This nation loves its dogs, after all.

As a lifelong hunter and fisherman, I feel the need to both defend and promote outdoor sports.

Our pursuits are threatened by declining numbers, disappearing habitat and the attack of those for whom harming any animal is wrong. Those of us who love the outdoors know hunters, fishermen and, yes, trappers respect and value wildlife.

If fact, I am not telling you anything when I say we know far more about wildlife and the outdoors than those who never leave the comfort of their couches.

Mr. Secretary, how will having more dogs die help us defend our way of life?

I think most hunters could see their dogs in the jaws of that trap.

I speak from experience, because I have had to keep my dog away from traps at public hunting areas. I have had to save my dog from an illegal, untagged trap. (A snare, fortunately, and not a conibear, but hung on the fence of a public recreation area nonetheless.)

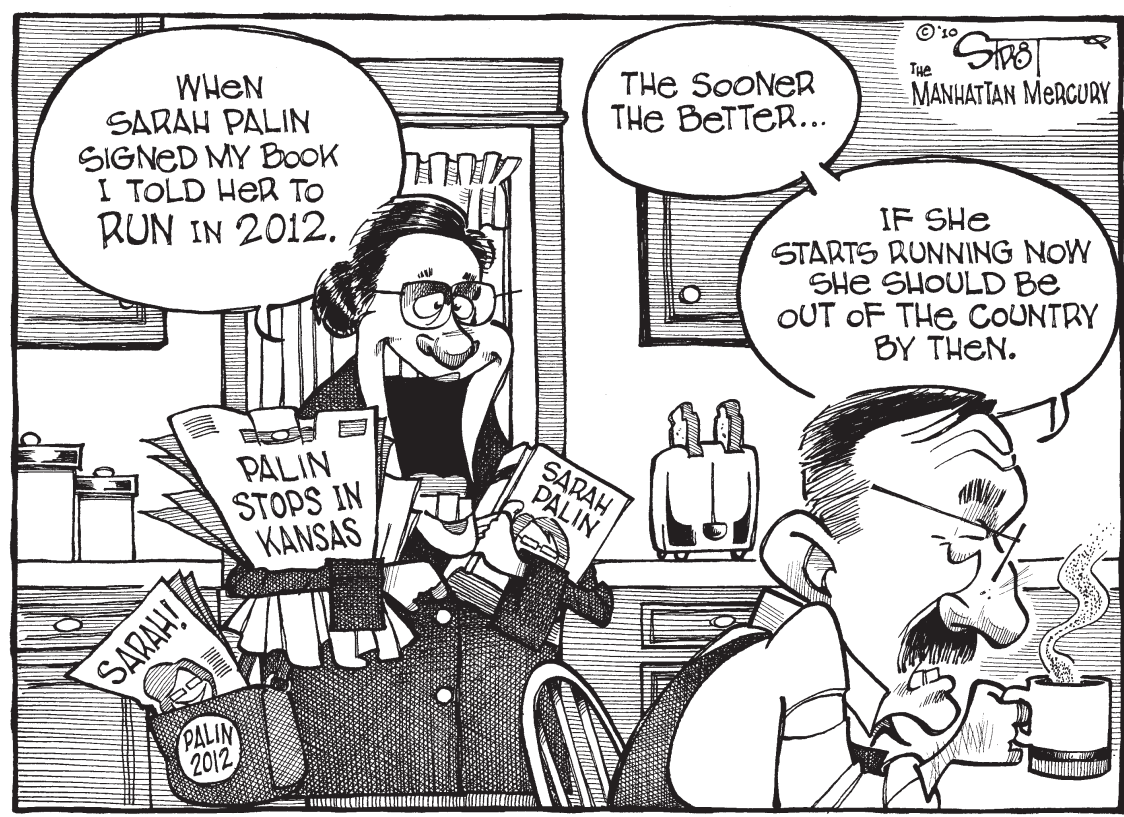
For the good of all outdoor sports, Mr. Secretary, I'm asking you to lead us out of this morass. Do the right thing.

Enforce the law and see that traps are tagged or removed. At a minimum, require signs around lethal traps.

Better yet, ban kill traps from public hunting grounds, parks and other recreation areas.

The future of our outdoor sports faces enough threats without this.

Yours,
Steve Haynes, Oberlin



Decorations light up our life

Lights are going up and on all over the neighborhood.

Around the corner, the retired couple has a whole fairyland in their front yard, and they're not the only ones. Some of these people are going to owe their first born to the city when they get their electric bill in January.

I love it. I love every light the big ones, the white ones, the colored ones, the ones inside, the ones outside, even the dull bulbs that are solar powered.

I have to admit, visiting a friend who had flashing snowflakes the other day almost made me have a seizure — and I don't even have epilepsy or any other seizure-type problem. Still, the thought and the effort were there in her yard, and it brightened the whole neighborhood.

Back down on my block, the next-door neighbors were the first to get with the spirit. They put a lighted Christmas tree on the front porch and rope lights around the railing on their back deck, which is right across from my back deck.

It seemed to get the season off to a fine start.

So the next weekend, I dug out our decorations and lights.

Steve strung the orange power cords all over the yard and attached everything safely to the selected switches. He's my electrical person.

However, he had to leave town, so I was left to put up the lights.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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Spreading the colored lights on the front bushes was easy. It wasn't even too hard to put them on the rose bushes, which usually aren't much fun to decorate.

The white strings went up on the forsythia bush on the side of the house, but the controller for the chasing lights was dead, dead, dead. I've never been that crazy about the chasing lights anyway. They give me a headache, so tossing them in the trash wasn't a hardship.

The "little" cedar tree in the back yard was a chore. It has grown from one foot to 15 or 20, and because it's bigger at the bottom than the top, it's really hard to put the lights on it with a ladder. I opted for a long-handled hook. I still didn't reach quite to the top, but it looks festive and you hardly notice that the bottom two strings are only half lit.

That left the aspen tree out front. I put the icicle lights on it since they won't work on our front porch. Passing by at night, I'm sure, people think that it must be some sort of sculpture. However, it's just icicle lights put up haphazardly because it was getting dark and cold, and

because only about half of them are working. It looks sort of like my sculpture is melting.

This week, the neighbors across the street have their home decorated and the people at the end of the block, and so on and so on for block after block.

It may be the coldest, darkest time of the year, but not in our neighborhood. We have snowmen, elves, candy canes, icicle lights around porches, blinking snowflakes, beautiful trees inside and out and one melting ice sculpture.

Merry Christmas to all and to all a bright light!

From the Bible

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: an when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. *St. Matthew 2: 11*

Christmas will still come

Even if I tried, I could never begin to make up a story like the one we lived over the past weekend. Truth IS stranger than fiction.

It all began Friday morning when I received a call from my youngest daughter, Kara, saying my oldest daughter, Halley, was in the hospital. A gall bladder attack was suspected and she would keep me posted.

A short time later, the suspicions were confirmed and Halley was scheduled for surgery later that afternoon.

Air travel proved too expensive and even though I could get a ride halfway to Dallas, it wouldn't be feasible for Kara to come get me. So, we decided I would drive to Dallas the following day.

In fact, Jim and I were in the van discussing my travel plans and how he would only let me leave if I promised to have a tire looked at on the way.

That was right before we hit the deer. Another vehicle had already hit the deer, and it was lying in the roadway. Even though the other driver had turned around and tried to warn us by blinking his lights, we didn't see the animal until it was too late.

The van sort of "ski jumped" over it and, at first, we didn't think there was any damage. We were wrong. In a very short distance, the van



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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began to make a weird noise and the temperature gauge "pegged out." We were done.

As it happened, son James and his new bride had just left that afternoon on their honeymoon, so we had his pickup to drive. But, wait. There's more.

Sunday afternoon, a friend, in tears, met me in the parking lot outside of church.

A turkey had flown out of the ditch and hit her windshield, shattering it. She and her daughter had to get back to their home near Wichita, and there was no way to make the repairs soon enough.

Jim said, "Let's put it on a trailer and get you home." So, that's the story of our life: always expect the unexpected.

The rest of Halley's story is: the surgery was a success. She is recuperating nicely at her sister's house and will be off work about a week. She said all she has done is sleep, which I say is the best medicine,

right after laughter.

Halley always manages to find the humor in everything. A text message to me right before she went into surgery read, "Best inventions: electricity, air conditioning, Demerol and running water. In that order."

Halley said she will be glad when 2010 is over.

For a girl who has rarely been ill, this has been a year for the record books: two major surgeries in less than 10 months. I know the gall bladder was done with a scope, but anytime you go under general anesthesia, it is major surgery.

I have big plans to do a lot of Christmas candy making and cookie baking. All the ingredients are stacked in readiness on the kitchen counter.

But I'm afraid it will have to wait until the van is fixed. Oh well, all in good time. It will still be Christmas without one more batch of caramel corn or peanut brittle.

Kansas ahead of U.S. on tests

Even before President Bush pushed through the "No Child Left Behind" law, Kansas had developed statewide standards for almost every grade level and practically every subject.

Standards, explained simply, are those levels of competency that every student should achieve at a given grade level. An example of a fourth-grade math standard is: "The student computes with efficiency and accuracy using various computational methods including mental math, paper and pencil, concrete materials and appropriate technology."

We use the standards for each grade level, third grade through high school, each spring to see if our students have mastered these subjects. Our school system is then judged based on the number of students that score "proficient" in all the standards tested in math and reading. We also test standards in science, writing and social studies.

After No Child became law, every state was required to set standards and test students for proficiency. The problem became obvious almost immediately. States like Kansas, and almost all Midwest states, set high standards for their students and worked diligently to achieve them.

Not all states set high standards, nor did they hold their students accountable to the same level as



Red Devil Diary

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other states. There was no way to compare how students in different states were learning and what they were learning. In our mobile society, with many students moving from state to state, it became difficult to assess these students because they had come from a state with different standards.

Starting in 2008, a group of states started working on "Common Core Standards." In November 2010, Kansas became the 37th state to adopt these standards in math and language.

Each state may add up to 15 percent of its own standards to each set of common core standards. The Kansas Department of Education has already begun that process, and we will begin to integrate these standards in our schools starting next year.

Do not expect a huge change. The common-core standards align very well with the standards we have been using in Kansas for years. There will be minor adjustment to what we already teach.

The biggest change will be in how we assess students. Right now, students take one assessment, usually in the spring, to gauge how well they have learned the standards at that grade level. We test every grade, third through eighth, in reading and math, and then the students are tested once in high school.

Starting with the 2012 year, those assessments will change. Unless the law is changed, we will still be assessing the same grades, however, we can begin assessing students throughout the year instead of one test in the spring. There will also be more "performance-based measures" built into the assessments. Schools will be judged on the overall growth of students rather than a one-time, high-takes test.

The landscape of standards and assessments is finally changing into a form that is more conducive to the way we teach students. Our district will keep you informed about these changes as we start to incorporate them into our system.

Reader asks where cats are going?

To the Editor:

Well, the rumors and suspicions are rearing their ugly heads again! Is someone systematically disposing of our cats?

I am missing two cats, the first a dark chocolate brown (almost black) with some white and orange. She has an orange blaze across one side of her face, will be 4 years old in April, is spayed and up to date on her shots. Her name is Keeda, which means "therapeutic."

I got her when she was less than 2 weeks old and fed her with an eye dropper for weeks until she was big enough to eat on her own. Keeda always knew when I was in need of "a hug" and was right there to offer.

When last seen, she was wearing a collar.

The second missing cat is a large-short haired black male, neutered. Both ears are pretty torn up and he has six toes on his front feet.

Midnight divided his time between home at 112. S York Ave. and the apartment complex at South York and Hall. He was born May 1, 2000, and we got him from the McCook Humane Society in July when he was 8 weeks old. He loves being outdoors, prefers it to being inside. I tried to keep a collar on him, but that is hard to do with an outside cat.

I have noticed a lot of the cats in our neighborhood have gone missing in the last two to three months. My daughter had two go missing about the same time "Keeda" disappeared two to three months ago.

I have been told there are live traps set around town. If this is being done and our cats/pets/personal property are being trapped and disposed of, I hope you — whoever you are — sleep well at night.

If anyone has seen my Keeda or Midnight, please call me.

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