Lessons Learned from Working with Trappers to Conserve Wolverines:

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Advancing Citizen Science in Alberta:
Changing Perspectives, Breaking Barriers
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Overview

• Project background/overview
• Participant motivation/perspective
• Lessons learned, recommendations for others
Citizen-initiated science

- ATA approached ACA about a wolverine study
- Trappers: project goals, data collection, logistics
- Biologists: study design, interpretation, organization
- What makes good wolverine habitat? Status?

[Image of trappers in snowy forest]
Value for conservation organization

- Info on data deficient species
- Massive “in kind” support ($300K-$500K/year)
- Building bridges, gaining trust
- Industry habitat protection
Trapping in Alberta

- >1800 Registered Fur Management Areas
- Aside from parks, RFMA’s make up the entire public land base of Alberta
- >2500 registered trappers
- Most RFMA’s are family run; range in size from 1-30 townships
Motivating factors for trappers

• Lack of reliable data
  – Harvest data based on outdated management regime

• Wrong questions being asked, in the wrong place
  – Misrepresentation of true status
Motivating factors for trappers

• Trappers have expertise to offer
• Want to be active participants in helping to maintain sustainable harvest
Value of project for trappers
Lessons learned

• Be prepared to listen
  – You might learn something
Lessons learned

- Be prepared to listen
  - You might learn something
Lessons learned

• Success is not defined by publishing in Ecology
Lessons learned

• Relationships take time to build
  – Trust is earned
  – Provide value back to participants
  – Communicate, communicate, communicate
Lessons learned

• Citizen science is not a threat
• Citizen science enhances and supplements
  – “Auxiliary data”