

## **HIS VIEW Of wolves and inconvenient truths**

*Dan Blanco Moscow-Pullman Daily News*

Devin Rokyta's spluttering, hate-filled editorial of April 5 bashing wolf trapper Josh Bransford marks a new low in journalistic depravity at the Moscow-Pullman Daily News.

Opening his screed with a personal insult ("Despicable people like Josh Bransford ... "), Rokyta signals readers they are in for yet another ad hominem attack on Idahoans who hunt, fish, trap, shoot and generally act like Westerners rather than big media wannabes. As we shall see, Rokyta's self-indulgent invective may be fueling the fires of madness amongst the unhinged who lurk on the fringes of radical environmentalism.

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First, set aside Rokyta's hysterics and review some "inconvenient truths" he and his fellow travelers might like Daily News readers to overlook.

Josh Bransford is not the redneck caricature depicted in the press. He is a professional conservationist who earned his degree at the University of Idaho's College of Natural Resources. His choice of vocation was heavily influenced by a love for Idaho's environment developed through a lifetime spent afield hunting, fishing and now trapping. When contacted, he offered the following observation: "I do not have a particular hatred or fear of wolves. I do have the utmost respect for them as a fully recovered big game animal and as the top predator in the West."

Bransford completed a compulsory day long wolf trapping education course offered by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. He had the proper license and tags, and he was trapping on private land with the landowner's blessing.

Bransford caught the wolf within two days of making his set. During this time he checked the trap three times, exceeding requirements.

There is no substance to the oft-repeated rumor that the wolf was dispatched by someone other than Bransford, who killed the animal less than 90 seconds after reaching the set.

IDFG officials, hypersensitive to any incident involving wolves, have ruled that everything Josh Bransford did was within the law.

Clearly a greenhorn, Rokyta claims snares and foot-hold traps of the type used by Bransford represent a hazard to elk. Snares are commonly fitted with crimped-on "deer stops" specifically designed to prevent the loop from closing on the legs of non-targeted wildlife and livestock. As for trapping pony-sized elk with foot hold traps, where's the proof? Do these allegedly trapped elk outnumber those that die after hanging up in wire cattle fences? Or those killed by wolves?

Sadly, the whirlwind reaped by the inflammatory rhetoric launched by Rokyta and his ilk has come in the form of multiple death threats directed at the wholly innocent Josh Bransford. These murderous threats have been reported to law enforcement, including the FBI, and the wheels of investigation are grinding. The sane among us pray these threats are the work of chinless wonders - armed only with laptops - holed up in basement apartments with way too many kitty cats. Unfortunately, a quick Google

of the term "eco-terrorism" yields a sordid record of criminal violence that underscores the seriousness of the death threats Bransford has received.

What can Idahoans in sympathy with Bransford's plight do to blunt future enviro attacks? Vote! An amendment to Idaho's Constitution guaranteeing the right to hunt, fish and trap using traditional methods flew through the Idaho Legislature this past session and will be on the November 2012 ballot. The amendment's support was wide and deep, and included the votes of a comfortable majority of the Democrats serving in the Legislature. Idahoans will learn more about the campaign to pass the amendment in the months to come, but probably not by reading the Daily News.

Dan Blanco moved to Moscow in 1991 and resides in Latah County.