

Fraser Fur Farm Ronan, MT

Received anonymously.

“In September, 2009, word circulated an investigation was sought for a major fur industry expose. The target: Fraser Fur Farm, largest wildcat farm in the country.

North of Missoula, tucked off a small road east of downtown Ronan, are the cages that may imprison more lynx than exist in the wild in the entire state. Despite it's significance, it is possible no one from the animal liberation movement had seen the inside of Fraser Fur Farm. The only recorded account of animal liberators getting close came in a brief mention in Strong Hearts, Rod Coronado's jailhouse zine. We set out for Ronan, MT, to verify the farm was open, confirm the species and numbers of animals, photograph the captives, map the farm's layout, and release the info to the public.

While most fur farms are easily accessed, Fraser's was an exception. It was immediately clear why help was being sought – this was one of the few farms not visible from the road, unable to be investigated without breaching property lines, and once inside: incredibly difficult to gain access to animals without being in view of a house.

A pre-investigation nighttime visit found the farm sat at the end of a dirt driveway off Terrace Lake Rd. The first visit we stayed to the distant perimeter, familiarizing ourselves with the layout. The outline of cages and rattle of large animals hinted at what lay in the shad-

ows, just out of sight. This level of preparation was necessary because to obtain the documentation we sought, a nighttime visit was insufficient. We would have to access the farm mid-day.

The next morning we parked in a residential neighborhood off Timberlane Road, at what we approximated was a point one mile due south of the farm. Our nighttime survey had found two houses on site, making unsafe any attempt at approaching from the front. Gunshots of hunter's echoed in the forest around us, and we entered the woods. In short time we found the faint outline of a trail, following it along a fence for one mile until we came into a clearing. Our shot-in-the-dark calculation had bore fruit: we were precisely at the rear of the Fraser Fur Farm.

At the only sliver of an angle not visible to either house, we emerged from the forest at the end of a long shed. We were met with the stare of a large, caged lynx. As majestic as imagined, the lynx seemed to have fallen through the cracks of time, pacing endlessly in its cage, waiting for the freedom just out of its reach. We were now two of the only people in the U.S. to ever lay eyes on a live lynx.

We surveyed four sheds and one long row of lynx pens. Available information put the animals held at Fraser as mink, bobcats, and lynx. Four shed housing mink were found to be empty, and it is possible the farm no longer imprisons mink. We were unable to confirm the presence of bobcats, but many sheds were not inspected. One long row of pens held approximately 50 lynx; pos-

sibly more than exist in the wild.

We heavily documented the farm on video and with still photos. The documentation was submitted anonymously to aboveground contacts. We hope they will make these images – which may be the only existing photos of captive U.S. lynx – available to the public.

A final word on this farm: There would be no easy replacement – if any at all – for lost lynx breeding stock. Only one other farm in the U.S. (Gunnink Fur Farm) is confirmed to house lynx. More than any other animal raised for fur, the loss of irreplaceable lynx breeding stock would very likely be the end of this farm, and perhaps lynx farming in the U.S. Lastly, the person to liberate the captives of Fraser Fur Farm will have one historic accomplishment to their credit: possibly doubling the wild lynx population in Montana.

Thousands of us. Only one Fraser Fur Farm. Do the math.

Anonymous”

Inside Fraser Fur Farm

Largest lynx farm in the U.S.

