

AMERICA'S TRAPPING AUTHORITY

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THE TRAPPER

SINCE
1975



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COYOTE #2 - SUPER RANGE ALL CALL

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COYOTE #3 - NATURE'S CALL

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MINK SUPER RANGE ALL CALL

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MINK - NATURE'S CALL

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LENON'S WOLF NATURE'S CALL - PICTURED LEFT - HERB LENON IN THE MID 50'S WITH BIG COYOTE, BIG CAT AND SMALL WOLF.

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Cooperation IS A GOOD THING, AND IT'S HIGH TIME

The National Trappers Association started in 1959, formed largely through the efforts of the Pennsylvania Trappers Association, who recognized the need for a national organization. The PTA itself had been formed only 11 years before and realized the need for a nationwide trappers group.

I'm not going to get off into the political weeds here, but the NTA wasn't in operation for quite a decade before dissension arose within the ranks. Things got hot enough that some trappers cut ties with the organization and formed the Fur Takers of America in 1968.

All this was before my time as a member of either organization. I was 21 when the FTA was chartered, but I was unaware of the existence of either group for years after the split.

But it's not necessary for me to have known about those organizations to know the breakup was harmful to trappers and to trapping. We're already a small minority within a slightly larger minority, and that old chestnut about there being strength in numbers is right on the mark.

I witnessed a similar situation about 15 years ago within my own state's trappers organization. There was a big falling-out, feelings got hurt, tempers rose, and dammit, here we went down that road again. Quite a few members left in a huff and formed their own organization.

I know why our split happened, but I'm not going to delve into it here. But I will say it was unnecessary, and that the split hurt trappers and trapping by weakening both groups – just like the schism between the NTA and FTA.

I'm still pretty much in the dark about why the NTA/FTA took place. I've heard lots of rumors and opinions about it over the last 48 years (that's how long I've been active in trapping associations,) but a lot of it has been conflicting information. I'm sure somebody knows the truth of the matter, but I'm not interested. That it happened in the first place is what bothers me.

What's encouraging, however, is that over the past few years, the NTA and FTA seem to be moving closer together. I guess the hotheads on both sides who bickered and fussed and refused to play nice have finally died off or gotten too tired to stay mad. That's the way I'm reading the sign, anyway.

When these overtures first started happening, I was hopeful the two organizations would merge into one larger unit, but now I'm not so sure that's a good idea. It would all be very kumbaya and we could sit around the campfire and make flower garlands for each other, but I now think the two organizations ought to maintain their separate identities but make a concerted effort to work on major projects together – such as fighting anti-trapping legislation wherever it occurs, whether at the national, state or local level.

If you think anti-trapping legislation isn't much of a problem, ask trappers in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island and Washington how they feel about it. That's right, ten states now have laws banning the use of steel foot-hold traps.

Or, to use the words of The Animal Rescue Site, "only ten states." That's 20 percent. I have another quote from those misguided folks: "...until they [steel traps] are banned in all 50 states, the injury and death will continue."

Notice that word: until. Doesn't sound like they're going away, does it?

So, good on both the NTA and FTA for showing recent signs of getting along. Merge or don't merge; it makes little difference, as long as everybody's pulling in the same direction.

— To contact Jim directly, email him at modernmountainman@gmail.com.

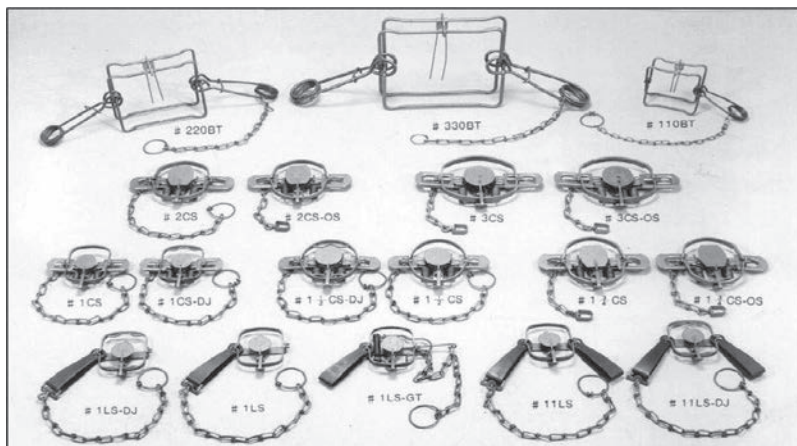


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#155 BT	5"	\$11.69	\$116.95	#11 LS	4"	\$10.99	\$109.95
#160 BT	6"	\$12.79	\$127.95	#11 LS-DJ	4"	\$10.99	\$109.95
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#280 BT	8"	\$21.19	\$211.95				
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CHARLES J. ALSHEIMER

URBAN DEER FAST FACTS

Whitetails in the City? Deer have adapted to neighborhoods, suburbs, and even downtown parks. They thrive where hunting pressure is low and food is plentiful.

Browsing Machines: An adult deer eats 6–8 pounds of plants daily — that's why one night in your hostas looks like a lawnmower came through.

Population Boom: Some urban deer herds exceed 100 deer per square mile — far higher than most rural areas.

Why Repellents Work: Deer rely heavily on scent and taste when feeding. Change either, and you change their behavior.

Double Up: Experts agree — mixing odors, sprays, and motion devices provides the best long-term results.

3 SOLUTIONS FOR URBAN WHITETAILS

If you know anything about white-tailed deer, you know they are more curious than cats. And you probably also know it is very difficult to keep them away from flower and vegetable gardens and expensive shrubs and trees.

If you're in the business of keeping deer out of people's yards, here are three routes many nuisance trappers use with success:

ODOR-BASED GRANULES

Some products, like Deer Scram®, contain natural, organic ingredients such as dried blood, garlic, meat meal, white pepper, and cloves to create an odor that deer associate with death, thus repelling deer from plants, flowers, and gardens without harming them or being unpleasant to humans. It is a biodegradable, granular product that does not wash away easily in rain and can also be safe to use around pets and children.

The combination of ingredients creates a scent that triggers a strong fear response in deer, making them believe

there is a predator or deceased kin nearby, which encourages them to stay away from the protected area. The product is a ready-to-use granule that you simply sprinkle around the perimeter of your garden, trees, or other plants to create a scent barrier.

LIQUID APPLICATIONS

Liquid repellents, like Bobbex®, is an original, unique, foliar spray containing commonplace materials and recycled ingredients. It is formulated and intended to be applied directly on the surface of foliage to repel deer. This leaves a long-lasting, non-phytotoxic, slightly visible, non-burning residue. This residue will not wash off with hosing or rain.

Bobbex is a safe and highly proven natural deer repellent. It safely disrupts the foraging patterns of deer and deters them from browsing on your property. It can also be sprayed on any ornamental or flowering shrub.

MOTION-ACTIVATED DEVICES

These types of devices vary in style and effectiveness. For example, Critter Ridder Motion-Activated Animal Repellent & Sprinkler is a unique electronic repelling device uses a built-in sensor to detect motion and effectively frighten away nuisance critters with startling bursts of water. The compact design and subtle green coloring allow this device to blend seamlessly into any landscape. In addition to providing humane repelling power, it can also be used as a sprinkler for watering your lawn or garden. It is also eco-friendly, using only 2-3 cups of water per spray.

No matter what type of deer problem you encounter, it is wise to employ several styles of deterrents when dealing with nuisance whitetails. One method usually isn't enough, especially in areas with high deer densities.



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KRISTINE TOMANYAN/UNSPLASH

Stone-Bed SET

A small rocky hollow spills down out of the hills. The eons have carved a channel, and left a bit of flat ground towards the mouth of the run. The ground is not fit for anything but some hardy grasses, and it is pastured for cows with a fence surrounding the hollow. A hundred years ago, that pasture was part of a small dairy operation.

The dairy was gone, but they still ran feeder cattle on the pasture through the summer. There was one divider fence across the hollow. Once there was a gate, but now the cattle were just given free run of the place.

That gap was the perfect place for a coyote set. But the conditions for putting in a trap here are poor. This whole bottom is nothing more than gravel till washed out of the hills over the years.

While the grass can grow on the little thin soil that has accumulated over the years, once, you get through that, is it all stones. Digging a trap bed here is a lot like mining. My go-to tool for digging trap beds is a mason's hammer. The chisel end lets me whack away at stones. That's what a mason's hammer is for.

I know I can chisel out a trap bed with my hammer, but I'll never get one deep enough to put the stakes under the trap. The only staking system that would work here would be crossed rebar stakes. Under these conditions, rebar is the only

thing you can drive through stones.

Instead, I'll opt for a drag at the set. But I'm not using the drag in a classic sense. The fence line is overgrown with brush, and I'll just toss the drag back in there. The drag will be tangled up in that brush the minute the animal leaves the set.

The sod is thick here and there is little way to make a conventional set. I've got a little trick for making a set in sod. I start by combing the sod away from the trap bed. I dig an undersized trap bed. Then using the blunt end of my brick hammer, I pound back the edges of that trap bed until it just fits the trap. Stabilizing the trap in that gravelly soil is not easy. With my hammer I chisel out rocks, or pound them down farther. If necessary, I'll grab a couple of small rocks or stones from my sifter and shove them under the trap jaws or frame as necessary. I've said it before and it bears repeating, there's no wrong way to stabilize a trap.

I've been pretty careful with my dirt/gravel mix I've excavated from the trap bed. I use a slide-bottom sifter, and I've closed the bottom for making this set. I don't want to scatter loose dirt around. I'm using a coffee filter for a pan cover. With that in place and the trap well stabilized, I can cover the trap.

I knew I wasn't going to get much dirt on top of the coffee filter, I'm afraid it might be crinkly if a critter steps on it.

The solution is in the solution in my antifreeze bottle. I'll spray the coffee filter with the glycol solution to wet it down and keep it quiet.

Pulling back the slide on my sifter, I hold the sifter directly over the trap. Rather than shake it from side to side, I use my fingers to stir the dirt in the sifter, making it fall directly on the trap. If it weren't for the coffee filter filling the inside of the jaws, I would not have enough dirt to cover the trap. As it is I can get only a thin layer over the pan cover. But I'm not worried.

I've got this set up as a flat set with a bone attractor. The bone is half hidden in the grass with a dab of lure on the end. I have bedded and covered the trap with the bone about 10 inches away from the trap pan. The finishing touch is to rake all the grass I have combed away, back into the center of the circle. The trap bed virtually disappears from sight.

The coyote that messed with that set did a pretty good job of thinning out the brush along that fence while it was tangled up with that drag.



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TRAPPERS' VOICE:

Published September 6, 2025

What's your favorite season to trap: early fall, midwinter or spring beaver?

Comment your pick and why — bonus if you drop a photo from that season.

Terry Louey: I love trapping weasel up here in northern NY in Jan. and Feb.

Dan Mastin: November 10th for red fox.

Mike Rife: Bobcat and coyote here in Iowa on Nov. 1.

Jack Smalley: Winter trapping. I like being alone. I am the only one in the mountains after deer season is over.

PRODUCT OF THE MONTH



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FUR MARKET REPORT

Who would have ever thought **skunks** would be the opening line of a modern fur market report? Times change, and so does fur usage and demand, and this year, skunk is the one animal that everyone hopes to see in their traps. Last year, a new usage for hair coming off of skunk tails took the market by surprise and prices for skunk pelts, pelts with complete and beautiful tails, brought anywhere from 30-100 USD – surprising everyone! The demand for skunk tails continued well after the season, and many people who had tanned skunk pelts on hand sold the tails as fast as they could to take advantage of this red-hot market. The rumor is that the long tail hairs from skunks are used to decorate traditional religious hats, and this drove the skunk tail market above anyone's predictions. This was last year, and I suspect there is not a single skunk pelt in storage or tanned that has a tail left to it, as this is what is wanted – the tail. Some country buyers advertise buying the tails alone, well scraped, well dried, split nicely, and of course, with all the hairs intact. That is one option if you want to avoid skinning and fleshing the entire pelt. With the current market, the tail is what is in demand, but if you intend to ship to an auction house, I suspect they will ask that you ship the entire pelt, skin and tail together, for proper display and sale. Good news with skunk tails, is that they stay fully haired all year round and even early caught skunks will have respectable tails that should do well on the market. This being said, there is a downside to this, is that many nuisance trappers have been harvesting skunks this past summer and selling skunk tails. I think this market will be saturated very fast, so my advice would be to sell as soon as you can after harvest. Do not sit on your skunk pelts too long, I expect the market will already be softer than last year, and then drop down rapidly by spring 2026. Catch them, prepare the tails well, and sell. At the current price for skunk tails, forget raccoons and go for skunks!

Weasels/ermine also do well for their tails, for the very same reason, but those have to be fully white with the black tip. Good news for marten trappers who often catch dozens of short-tailed weasels (ermine) in their box sets. Fisher trappers may also catch long-tail weasels, and I expect the market for them will remain up simply because the offering of weasel pelts is much smaller, and harder to "stimulate" than the skunk market.

Other than these 2 oddities on the current market, marten should remain stable or advance slightly, based on the trends observed at last year's fur sales. Marten is a luxury pelt, comparable to Russian sable, and although it is the staple of northern forest traplines, marten harvest is limited and this helps keep the demand strong.

Fisher dropped a bit in price at the end of last year, and all indications suggest that the price this year should resemble closing prices of last year. Nothing in the trade suggest great changes for this item – a luxurious fur offered in limited quantities, but really depending on the fashion world for its final usage. What you got for fisher

at the end of last will likely be your opening prices when the 2026 selling season starts.

Canada lynx and bobcat (lynx cat in the trade) will do well again this year. The market for bobcat is strongly dependent on quality of skins. Western skins with pure white bellies, well-defined black spots, and fully prime will again sell in the thousands of dollars per pelt, whereas eastern bobcats with reddish bellies and not so well-defined spots will hover closer to the 100-dollar mark. Canada lynx should again average in the \$130-160 USD. As with all luxury pelts, this is a high-luxury market so fully-prime pelts will often double in value compared to unprime goods. If you chase marten, fisher, lynx or bobcat, wait until full primeness before going big as it will be a lot more profitable to do so.

Among the canids, fox and coyotes, the big winners this year will continue to be colored foxes such as silvers and cross. These skins do good because they are in limited supply, and many end up as wall-hangers. In contrast, commercial-grade red foxes, gray foxes and coyotes will remain low. The coyote market is anything but gone now, and anything but perfect pelts should simply not be handled. Harvest coyotes for management purposes, and skin only the very best and fully-prime skins. Anything off color, with any sign of mange, or skins with obvious damages should not be sent to market. Best western pelts may bring you \$ 30-40 USD for skinned and dried skins, but keep your hopes below \$20 USD for even the very best eastern coyotes, if you can sell them at all.

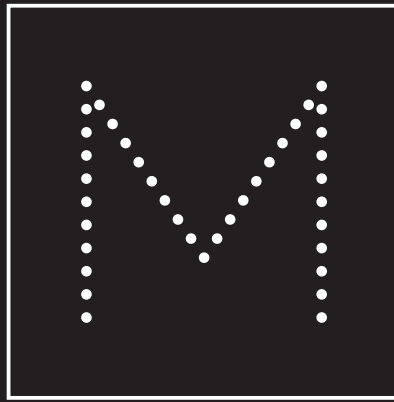


DANIEL SCHMIDT

Water animals will generate limited interest. The beaver market is expected to drop back a little because the latter market has been saturated. For beaver trappers, this means again focus on fully-prime pelts, well-handled, and not much interest in blue skins or small cubs. River otter and wild mink market should remain comparable to last year, days, which means they will sell but at modest prices. Muskrats are not expected to change either, which basically means they will be tough to sell at all. Inventory of unsold muskrats is growing each season, so that market is likely to be tough for a few years. Expect 25-35 on average for well-handled and prime dried skins, and about \$10 less for green pelts. Junk pelts will be tough to sell – if they sell at all.

Raccoons will fit in that same category. The market is all but dead for even the best raccoon pelts, and many buyers now gamble on the very largest, and very best-quality raccoon skins, hoping an eventual end-of-the-war between Russia and Ukraine will restart this stalled market. At this time, trapping raccoons is a pure management exercise, and if you decide to skin and flesh your catch, be picky and toss the smaller pelts, those with damages, unprime blue pelts, etc. The worst thing we can do with a stalled market is flood it even further with "no-value" skins.





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A photograph of a coyote lying on its side on a sandy, reddish-brown ground. The coyote has grey and brown fur and is looking directly at the camera. Its front right paw is caught in a metal trap. The background consists of dry, scrubby vegetation.

TRAPPING IN THE SAND

MIKE BODENCHUK



Sand is scientifically defined as inorganic soil particles between 0.0625 and 2mm in diameter. Sandy soil is similarly defined as at least 50% sand and typically less than 20% clay. Sounds specific, but for trappers we seldom (if ever) have the right sized micrometer to measure the dirt we're about to dig in. What I know about sand is that it requires specific considerations for a trapper to be effective.

Sandy country exists in every state and most of us have to deal with it at some point. I grew up in southern New Mexico where sand dunes, anchored in place by scrub mesquite bushes, were common in desert coyote habitat. In fact, these dunes contained some of the highest densities of coyotes and learning to trap in them was essential. Sandy low country also exists across the Southeast, and, for water trapping, I prefer a hard sand bottom creek to one with soft organic muck. For those running a trapline from a boat, sandy banks along rivers or beaches are the best places to catch furbearers cutting the corners on the waterway. At some point, every trapper needs to consider trapping in the sand.



A cross stake swivel attachment allows you to drive trap stakes at a 45-degree angle, making it impossible to pump the stakes out of sandy soil.

TOOL PROFILE:

DUKE PRO SERIES 450-OS

The Duke Pro Series 450-OS is a coil-spring trap with offset cast jaws and a 4.5-inch jaw spread. Designed with sandy or loose soils in mind, this trap includes a base-plated frame, center-mounted D-ring, and in-line swivels, all of which help reduce trap movement and promote a more secure hold when the ground lacks structure. The PIT pan system features a stainless-steel night latch and offers reliable pan tension and consistent firing—important when dealing with dry, shifting terrain. The trap's offset jaw design helps minimize bedding resistance while maintaining holding power. Factory welding and reinforced build quality mean fewer field modifications are needed, saving time during sets. The 450-OS is often used for predators such as red fox, grey fox, coyote, and occasionally bobcat, depending on local regulations and target size. Its mechanical simplicity and solid construction make it a common option in regions where sandy soil challenges traditional trapping setups.

And let's be clear – not all sand is created equal. Soft beach sand presents different problems than harder packed sandy ridges. Areas where sand is prone to blowing present different problems as well. Bedding a dry ground set in loose sand can be difficult but bedding a water set on a hard sand bottom is a breeze. Where you trap will force you to consider several variables related to your equipment, your sets and even how frequently you need to run your traps.

EQUIPMENT

The first consideration to get past is to determine what type of trap that you want to use. Unlike trapping in rocky country, where digging a trap bed may be difficult, digging out a trap bed in sand is a breeze. And most often, getting enough soil to sift over your set won't be a problem. I never consider hauling extra soil when trapping in sand.

For the dry ground trapper, bedding a coil spring trap in soft sand can be difficult. For me, a 4-coiled trap has more metal touching the bottom of the trap bed and is easier to bed than a 2-coiled trap. And for the same reasons, a double long spring is easier still. Where legal, I prefer a double long spring when trapping in loose sand as I can use the springs, turned back at a 45-degree angle, to help stabilize the trap.

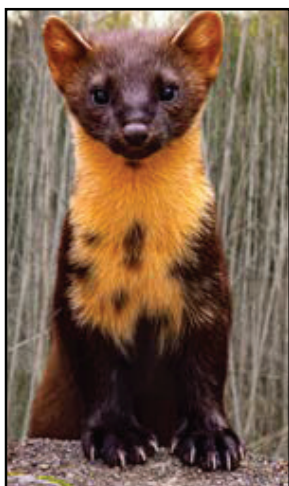
Consider also the free-jaw of the trap. In loose sand, getting the free jaw bedded solid can take a lot of time. Traps with both jaws locked down, such as the MB550's and Sterling MJ600's can make bedding in sand easier still.

As mentioned earlier, bedding a water set on a hard sandy bottom is easier than trapping in the muck. Your equipment choice for water sets isn't nearly as critical as those for land sets. However, if you're trapping in an area which might receive wave action, whether wind driven or boat wakes, be aware that water sets in sand may become choked by sand. I almost never use a pan cover for water sets, but if you're obliged to set under these conditions, consider some under-pan filler to prevent water driven sand from rendering your set inoperable.

PAN COVERS V. UNDERPAN FILLER

For the dry-ground trapper, you'll need to decide whether to use a standard pan cover or an under-pan filler when trapping in sand. Both will work, but each has their own shortfalls. I've used pan covers most of my life and am most comfortable using some type when trapping in sand. For traps with both jaws fixed, a screen cover installed before setting the trap is easy and if the mesh is small enough it will work just fine. But large mesh screen may allow fine sand to

FIGHT THE COLD – SNOW – RAIN

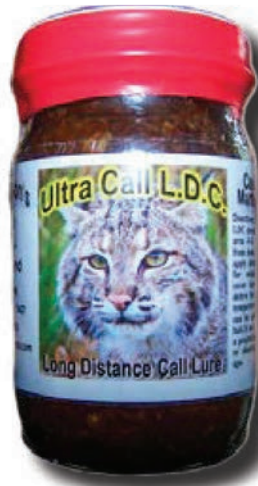


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filter under the pan, especially if you get a rain.

Wax paper pan covers will also work, but in the desert country where I trap there are a lot of rodents in the sandy areas and these will often seek out any pan cover that makes noise. I have abandoned wax paper in sandy, high rodent density areas in favor of plastic sandwich baggies just to reduce the digging by rats and mice.

For covering the trap, I tend to bury my traps a little deeper in sandy areas than I do in clay or loam soil, simply to prevent a hard wind from uncovering them. By making the area between the jaws a slight depression (less than ¼”), I find that I still have a solid foot catch and if the wind blows my traps are still operable afterwards.

ANCHORING VS DRAGS

Perhaps the most critical decision to make is how to secure your traps. While anchoring traps in the rocks – using earth anchors or stakes – can be difficult, doing so in the sand may be difficult for the opposite reason. Driving a stake in sand is easy but getting it to hold is the difficult part.

Because most of my traplines run across multiple types of soil, I have multiple options in my truck at any time. In a 5-gallon bucket I'll keep 14”, 16” and 18” stakes and the longer ones get used when I need to secure a trap in sandy soil. I also prefer a trap with a longer chain – some 18-24” or so – to prevent the captured furbearer from pumping the stake out of the ground.

For many, the obvious option is to use a drag. Digging the hole deep enough to bury the drag under the trap isn't that hard and if there is enough brush to help tangle the drag, a drag system seems to be the right choice.

But there can be a few reasons to force you to reconsider drags. In windy areas, the marks made by the drag can be erased by the wind in short order. There's nothing worse than standing at the location where your trap used to be and not knowing which direction to look. A good trap dog can help mitigate this risk, and checking your traps early each morning will also reduce the risks.

Another drag consideration is the terrain itself. Remember those sand dunes I learned to trap in? In that country, coyotes would stay in the spaces between the dunes and could frequently go a long distance with a drag. I learned in that area to use a longer chain- up to 12'- to have a better chance that the drag would cut the corner and tangle up quicker. Without

the longer chain, I had to rely on a dog to find my coyote more often than I liked.

For the production line trapper, where time is money, keeping your coyote on site is faster than looking for one on a drag. When I trap sandy areas without any competition (private land behind locked gates) or when trapping for research, I will stake my traps and run the line early enough that the animal doesn't fight the system too long. A double stake swivel attachment allows you to cross-drive 2 stakes at a 45-degree angle to the chain which make it almost impossible for the animal to pump the stake out of the ground. Just remember which traps have the double stake set-up when you go to pull traps, or you'll feel foolish trying to pump the stake out yourself!

SET TYPES

Every trapper has a set they like and for canines it's hard to beat a good old fashioned dirt hole set. Unless you're trapping in the sand. A typical dirt hole will collapse in loose sand. A dirt hole also attracts blowing sand like a magnet. Typically set on the downwind side of some backing, any blowing sand will settle in the hole and cover your bait or lure.

Above-ground bait sets have the advantage of not being filled in by blowing sand, but any exposed bait can still get covered. Adding bait or lure to porous surfaces, like the inside of a cracked leg bone, can increase the likelihood that the scent will still disperse after several days of wind and sand.

Flat sets are the easiest to make in sandy soil areas. Because native plants can be spread out in sandy areas, you may want to bring in your own backing. A femur or vertebrae from a cow, a charred piece of wood or even a large, dried cow patty can be both an eye attraction as well as backing for your set. If you know you're going into the sandy country, be prepared and have enough backing to make the sets you'll need.

Setting traps in sandy soil is an acquired skill. You'll likely have to find the right recipe for your own area and species, but taking these considerations into account will get you on the right track faster.

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SANDY SOILS &

PLENTIFUL COYOTES

Within the Southeastern United States, the states with the most sandy loam soils are generally located in the Coastal Plain region, including Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Alabama.

Key areas with sandy loam soils include:

- **Coastal Plain:** This is the largest geomorphic region in the southern U.S. and extends along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. The parent material for these soils is often marine in origin, and they are typically deep and well-drained.

- **Atlantic Southern Loam Plains:** A specific region stretching from southern North Carolina through South Carolina and most of Georgia is well-known for its deep, sandy loam soils. These soils have an ideal texture for agriculture, leading to extensive farming of crops like corn, soybeans, and wheat.

- **Study locations:** Scientific studies on Coastal Plain soils frequently use sites in these states to represent sandy loam texture. For example, research conducted in Kinston, North Carolina, found that soils in the region were predominantly sandy loam.

- **Soil series:** Specific soil series found in these states are described as sandy loam. The Springhill soil series, for instance, is found in the Coastal Plains of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina.

While sandy soils can be found in many states, the Coastal Plain areas of the Southeast, in particular, are characterized by a high prevalence of sandy loam.

States with high coyote populations in the Southeast include:

1. **Texas:** Known for having the most coyotes in the entire country.
2. **Arkansas:** Shows a very high number of coyotes, found in every county.
3. **Louisiana:** Has a sizable population, with black coyotes being a notable feature.
4. **Alabama:** Experiences significant coyote presence, especially in urban and rural areas.
5. **Georgia:** Has a large coyote population, with black coyotes also observed in the state.
6. **Kentucky:** Home to a substantial number of coyotes, particularly in its central and southeastern regions.
7. **North Carolina:** Has a large population with significant numbers of black coyotes.



BOX TRAPS ARE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE WHEN TARGETING FURBEARERS IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS THROUGHOUT THE SEASON.

BY STEPHEN VANTASSEL
PHOTOS BY DANIEL SCHMIDT

The dramatic increase of urbanization in recent years, coupled with the subsequent loss of deep woods and farmlands, many trappers are discovering that safe use of the foothold in many areas is no longer possible. They know that it just is not work taking the risk of pinching the toes of a domesticated animal and feeling the brunt of a suburbanite's ire. But while trappers could bemoan the loss of the good old days, it is imperative that we learn to adapt to these new circumstances to preserve our trapping heritage. This means that trappers need to be as proficient in box trapping as they are with other traps. It also means that old attitudes toward the box trap, such as "it's a child's toy" or "a compromise to the antis" need to be changed. For these opinions are both uninformed and costly. Uninformed because the antis are not just opposed to the foothold trap but are opposed to all traps, including the box trap. Their opposition to the box trap stems from the belief that the trap causes a claustrophobic anxiety in captured animals. Thus, in their opinion, the trap is as much psychologically cruel as the foothold is (supposedly) physically cruel. Costly, because effective use of the box trap can open many trapping lands where landowners would not permit other kinds of traps.

I use the term "box trap" rather than the more common term "live trap" because I think the term box trap provides a better description of this form of trapping. For the box trap is not the only trap is not the only trap that captures animals alive. The foothold trap is a live

BOX'EM UP



trap, also. In our discussions with the antis and landowners, trappers should use the term box trapping to counteract the popular misconception that footholds kill.

But before one can talk about how to use a box trap, one must first get a handle on the trap itself. Every good box trap contains three key qualities, which I designate with the invented words “catch-ability” and “hold-ability.” Catch-ability refers to the effectiveness of the trap’s trigger mechanism and the suitability of its overall size for the target animal. Every trapper knows that one of the first duties to be done to a box of the new footholds is a pan adjustment. The reason for this, of course, is to ensure that the trap will trigger properly. The same goes for box trapping. The box trapper must be sure that the trap he uses has a trigger that is both wide and sensitive enough to catch the animal. Generally, I like foot pedal triggers that are three to four inches wide and extend the whole width of the trap. On the one door trap models, I shy away from the solid metal plate foot pedals in favor of the steel rod pedals, because critters have been known to step over the solid pedals. The only reason that I can offer for this phenomenon is

that the solid food pedals are easier to see. Thus, more likely for the animal to step over it. Remember that, like us humans, animals also take the path of least resistance.

The proper trigger tension or sensitivity is a more difficult concept to describe. Obviously, the heavier your target animal, the stiffer you want to adjust the trigger. Generally, one can accomplish this by ensuring that the trigger mechanisms have more surface to surface contact. The principle that one should follow is the same as for foothold triggers. I’m sure that with a little practice setting and triggering the trap, you will see what trigger positions are needed for lesser and greater sensitivity.

Trap size is another important aspect of catch-ability area which is often overlooked by those who make their own box traps and even by some who commercially produce them. As there are different strengths and sizes amongst the foothold traps, so there are different sizes in box traps. As an effective all-around trap for city raccoon, squirrel, opossum and skunk, I like 10”x12”x36” dimensions with a 25” entrance before the trigger. Losing an animal by a backout with this trap size has been a rare occurrence for me.

A backout occurs when the trap door gets jammed on the animal's behind thus allowing it to back out of the cage. You will find that traps that have a gravity steel bar door lock will lose fewer animals to backouts than the two door Hav-A-Hart. The reason is that unlike the Hav-A-Hart, the wire trap door lock starts locking the door shut as soon as it is triggered. The Hav-A-Hart locking bar must wait until the door falls far enough for the bar to set in the two metal locking posts.

My personal experience with Hav-A-Hart is that if you want to keep both doors open with their #2 squirrel trap and #3 raccoon trap, purchase the next size up. Otherwise, use the one door method with a block of wood under the half of the foot plate which is closer to the open door. This forces the animal to enter the trap deeper before it triggers the trap, thus ensuring more catches. I hope you do not get the wrong idea. I have had good success with the two door Hav-A-Hart traps, but I also found that they need a lot of modifications when they get old which can be frustrating when you want to make a quick set.

As a side note, larger traps also can help in catching doubles. But more importantly, I use the larger size traps also can help in catching doubles. But more importantly, I use the larger size traps because there is nothing more frustrating than an empty sprung trap. Only with the larger size trap you can be sure that you did not have a backout, so it forces you to assume that trap sprung due to improper stabilization. With all the variables in trapping it is good to be able to rule one out.

Hold-ability is that trap quality which keeps the animal in the cage. This is a key weakness with wooden traps because they decay, split and offer other weaknesses where a determined raccoon could break free. So, metal and wire traps in offering years of dependable use are the preferred trap construction medium. But metal's strength should not lull the trapper into a false sense of security. The wire construction for the trap should be at least 18 gauge with a ½ inch mesh held together by ¼ inch steel rod construction frame. Do not accept anything less, for a raccoon will tear your trap apart if he can find a weakness.

This leads us to door locks which are the most vulnerable part of a box trap. The door must close smoothly, swiftly and lock securely in place when triggered. This is a big order for most box traps but is nevertheless a vital one. Most box traps have doors that close smoothly and swiftly, but few have doors that close without much leeway. The reason for this sort of precision stems from the actions of many caged animals. Many trapped animals will go after that part of

the cage that offers the most movement. If there is too much play in the door, the animal will slam into the door for some time hoping to open it enough to escape. This is cruel to the animal and can, over time, cause a stress fracture in the metal locking mechanism, resulting in lost fur.

Finally, an often overlooked but necessary component of hold-ability is a large, strong handle. This handle should be situated so that one can manipulate the trap in any position with one hand. It must also allow sufficient room between the handle and the cage so that when the trapper grips the handle, his fingers cannot be reached by the animal's prying claws and teeth. Obviously, the tighter the mesh on the cage the less safety distance is necessary. Of course, placement of a wide wooden or metal plate between the handle and the cage will ensure your safety even more. Chances are if the handle fulfills the above requirements, it will be strong enough to hold a drowning chain when one throws the trap into deep water. It is important that every trapper ensures a strong place to attach the chain. Otherwise, you might be wading in the stream to regain your lost trap when the attachment breaks.

The upshot of these requirements that most home-made box traps are woefully deficient in these vital areas. While some home-made traps have worked efficiently, the time and expertise needed for the necessary trap adjustments would make using a home-made trap unprofitable. So, I believe, for most trappers, commercially made traps are the best way to go. But if you decide to build your own. Be sure to use high-quality materials and construction methods. In time, you will be glad you did.

Now that we know what qualities comprise a good box trap, let us look at the four basic elements of successful box trapping: location, stabilization, bait and security. Although all four elements are necessary to put a lot of fur on the stretcher, most trappers I think would agree that location is the most important. In other words, a properly set trap with the world's strongest lure won't catch you anything of value if placed in Times Square.

So, remember that all the pre-season work necessary for other forms of trapping also apply to box trapping. Fortunately for me, I do not need to say any more about this area because The Trapper articles have done an excellent job in telling trappers how to find animal sign. However, this is not the case for the last three elements. I will be focusing on them.

Anyone who has used hoot holds for any length of time knows that the two steel bars which form an X at the base of the trap must lay flat on the ground to prevent

the trap from tipping and triggering at the wrong moment. In a similar manner, the same idea also applies to box trap. However, this time a larger area needs to be leveled out. The entire base of the box trap needs to rest against the soil. It's important to do this properly because the box trap is very susceptible to misfires.

Misfires are those times when the trap is triggered by an animal who is wither bumping against the trap's walls while reaching through the wire for bait or who is tipping the trap during their entry. But the necessary level of stabilization is harder to accomplish than it sounds. For not only does one have to level a larger area than for the foot hold but one must also bear in mind that box traps warp over time, thereby making dips and bilges in a trap which causes the trap to be unsteady in level soil.

1. BE MINDFUL

So how is a box trapper to deal with this? First the trapper must determine if the trap placed in a particular spot needs to be stabilized. The test for this is to lay the trap on the ground to locate those areas where the trap floor does not rest flush with the ground. In grassy or leafy areas where it is difficult to tell what parts are flush with the ground or not, place your palm on the top of the cage and gently motion trap from side to side. If the trap requires little effort to tilt it, then you know that you need to stabilize it.

After you decided the trap needs to be stabilized, scrape down the larger bilges and fill in the larger gaps with your trapper's trowel. Then set the trap in the now semi-leveled soil, grab both ends, and slide the trap lengthwise backwards and forwards while applying gentle and firm pressure downwards. While you are doing this, the trap's wire mesh floor will further level the soil as well as giving the trap a woodsier look. Check the trap's stability again with the above method.

While the method I just described works fine, there are many instances where the land is just too difficult to level with that method. Locations on exposed roots or stones all work together to make box trap stability an almost impossible task. There are three alternatives which a trapper must consider when he is confronted with a stabilization problem. First, he may try to move the trap to a different spot. That alternative is of course the easiest, but sometimes the best stabilization spot is not the best trapping spot.

2. PICK THE RIGHT BOXES

The second method is to place a three to five pound flat patio block, or split log on top of the trap. This added weight helps the

trap to settle into the ground by forcing it to bend and mold around its foundations. In cage traps, these objects also serve a second role as an umbrella for the bait. Of course, one needs to be careful how much weight he places on the trap. For too much weight will warp the trap and could also interfere with its triggering mechanism. This is why I like to use wire traps that have ¼ inch steel rod ribbing every ten inches or so to add strength to the trap.

The final way to stabilize your trap is by placing three cinder blocks around the bait end of the trap. By laying these blocks directly against the trap walls, you have created a buttress to prevent the trap from tipping over and excessive vibration. The three cinder blocks also add protection against an animal's triggering the trap by increasing the distance for the animal, who is reaching for the bait through the cage or trying to dig underneath the trap to get the bait. The two solid sides of the cinder blocks should lie on the ground and face the sky. This allows the animals to see and smell the bait while still providing added bait protection. Remember, the cardinal rule in box trapping is that the animal will always go directly to the bait first. No animal that I know of will access the trap's entrance to get the bait without checking out other possible avenues first.

3. BAIT THEM RIGHT

Most trappers have a lot of experience in the third area, bait. But the kind of bait one uses depends upon where and when one decides to trap. If you are planning to trap in deep woods country, then use whatever kind of bait you wish. On the other hand, if you plan to trap in suburbia, then you need baits and lures that do not readily lure dogs and cats. This may be easier said than done because feral dogs and cats which are prevalent in suburbia, eat everything.

In fact, the estimated feral cat and dog population in my home state of Massachusetts stand at 2,000,000. So, let it be understood that they can be quite a problem. With those warnings in place, I recommend the following cat-resistant baits and lures. For raccoon and opossum, oil of anise works well, and I'm told that essence of sweet corn does also. For skink, I use molasses but make sure it's strong and placed in a flat bowl to increase surface area to the air.

But there is more to baiting than the kind of bait one chooses to use. One needs to ensure that the bait has exposure to the air and yet remains protected from rain and snow. Generally, this is only a problem for the wire traps because the two door Hav-A-Hart traps utilize solid aluminum doors which protect bait from rain. So, for wire

traps, I use either a flat stone (if weather is good) or a trash bag wrapped on the side of the trap facing the wind to protect the bait from washing out.

Security, or maintaining possession of one's trap, is probably the most difficult aspect of box-trapping to accomplish. Their bulky size and shiny metal make them stick out in the woods like a spotlight on a dark night. And a stolen box trap is equivalent in cost to about a dozen foothold traps. So, one thing is for certain, the odds are stacked against your maintaining ownership of your expensive trap. However, there are a few ways to decrease your risks.

First, be sure to do your preseason work. That is know where the animals are and determine ahead of time exactly where you are going to set them. The reason for this work is to keep your time in the woods as short as possible. Remember, suburban woods are small and often have the local kids roaming them. Be discreet and try to work during the times that they are at school. You don't want to have them see you and raise their curiosity.

Second, check your traps at a distance (use binoculars if you can). This will prevent people from finding your traps by following your tracks in the snow. The corollary of this is to pull a trap as soon as you catch something. You will

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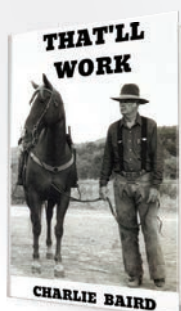
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Raccoons are one of the most common furbearers taken in box traps, which allow trappers to harvest fur while greatly reducing the chance of catching non-target animals.

probably have to do this anyway because most communities do not allow a firearm discharge within 500 feet of a dwelling, so you will have to drown the animal instead.

Third, chaining your traps to a tree will also help slow a trap thief down. Be sure to place the chain around the strongest part of the trap body, not the handle because the handle can be easily cut off. However, if you choose to chain your traps, be prepared for the possibility that they could be vandalized instead of stolen.

4. BREAK THEM UP

A fourth preventative measure to trap theft is to break up the outline of your trap with branches and leaves or dig a hole in an embankment and place your trap inside. You would be surprised how a little ingenuity can camouflage your trap from even a skilled woodsman.

The last method is to find a few suburbanites whose property border woods and then set the traps in their backyard. This way you have people who will be able to keep an eye on your trap and notify you if you have caught something.

I hope this article has given some of you the confidence to try to box trap on your own trap lines. Although much more remains to be said about box trapping, I'm sure that with a little practice, you will find that the box trap can provide as much challenging excitement and fur as other forms of trapping.



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BY ANDREW ZYSEK

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Skunks are up in price. Some broad-striped skunks are selling for as much as \$90 at fur harvesters, which has caught the attention of many trappers. Fortunately, skunks are relatively easy to trap using simple, effective sets. Still, they are often mishandled in the skinning shed, which cuts into their full potential value. When handled properly, skunks can be one of the most profitable furbearers on the line.

November 2025 THE TRAPPER 27



DAVID ASTIN/WINDIGO



Photos 1, 2 & 3 setting the cubby

ANDREW ZYSEK

Skunks den in dry ditches, brush rows, sandy draws, and sandy pine patches. Their dens are easy to identify by a worn trail leading to a hole, with grass pulled toward the entrance. Black and white hairs are often scattered near the opening. Skunks rarely spray at their dens unless directly threatened. They're also commonly found around round bale piles, abandoned buildings, and old silos – great places for dirt hole sets.

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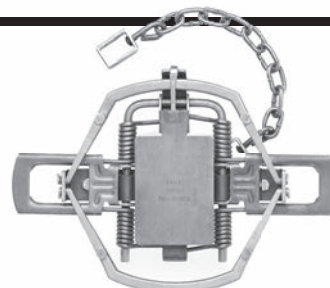
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When choosing traps, number 1 double jaw long springs or coil springs are ideal. Skunks tend to chew on numbed feet if caught in larger jawed footholds. Since they don't fight a trap as aggressively as some furbearers, an 18-inch rebar stake usually provides adequate holding power.

Two reliable sets for skunks are the den set and the cubby set. The den set is effective because it targets animals where they're already active. This approach eliminates the need to lure them in from a distance. Cubby sets, on the other hand,

can be built anywhere conditions allow. A cubby might be a hollow tree in a brush row, a dry culvert in a grassy ditch, a makeshift enclosure inside an abandoned building, or a natural pocket on a ditch bank. Simplicity is key.

SETTING AT THE DEN

On an overgrown sandy creek bank, a trail leads directly into a skunk den. About a foot away from the entrance, use a trowel to dig a shallow trench roughly a foot long. This

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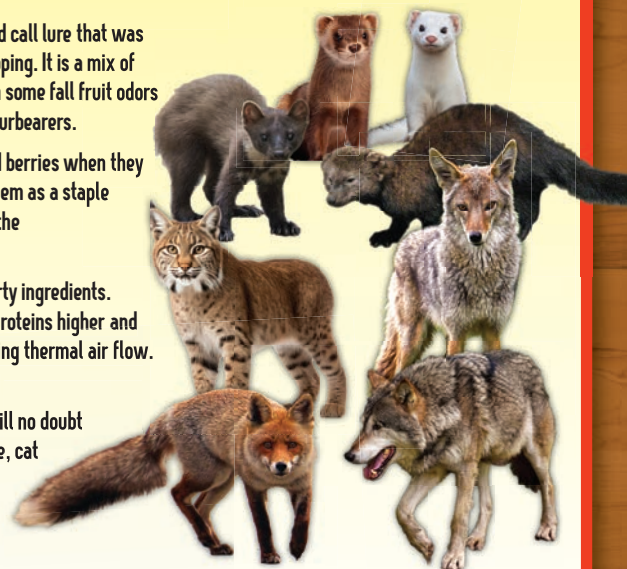
HIGH SIERRA, is a sweet musky food call lure that was built primarily for Marten and Fisher trapping. It is a mix of multiple meat protein odors blended with some fall fruit odors that are very attractive to both of these furbearers.

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TOOL PROFILE: LENON'S SHELLFISH PASTE BAIT

Lenon's Shellfish Paste Bait is a fishbased paste preserved with shellfish oil, formulated to deliver a strong, lingering scent appealing to a range of furbearers including mink, otter, raccoon and various canines. Although not marketed specifically for skunks, its rich odor profile may still attract skunks when used near their trails or den entrances. For skunk sets, especially in livetrapping or nuisance control contexts, the paste can serve as a supplemental foodtype bait alongside skunkspecific scents. Its oil-based formulation helps it adhere well to wood or soil surfaces and slowly release aroma over time. Sold in multiple jar sizes (from 8 oz to gallon), the bait is noted for its pleasant but potent odor and decent longevity even in outdoor conditions. In skunk trapping, it may be worth testing in combination with attractants tailored to skunk curiosity and glandular cues.



disguise the trap with a few leaves, then place a stepping stick near the jaws. Finally, add a squirt of fish oil to each side of the trap.

SETTING THE CUBBY

In wooded areas, a simple cubby can be built using three 18-inch blocks – two laid parallel on the ground with one across the top. Four inches in front of the cubby entrance, hammer out a shallow trap bed. Stake the trap using the full length of the chain and cover it lightly with leaves. A stepping stick goes near the jaws and spring. Bait the cubby with a chunk of tainted fish and add fish oil for scent.

SKINNING AND HANDLING

Skunks are one of the easiest animals to skin – most of the work is done with the fingers. A small string tied around one foot and secured to a bench helps keep the legs spread.

Make an opening cut from the ankle bone to the base of the tail on both hind legs. Slowly peel the fur from the legs and use fingers to work between the bone and pelt. Cut the fur free at the ankles. Round-nose pliers can grip the flap of fur above the pod sack. Pull upward gently and carefully free the membrane attaching the pod sack to the body. Always keep the knife blade angled down into the carcass to avoid puncturing the pod sack.

Once the greenish-brown anal tube is visible, the pod sack is free to be cut from the body. Set it aside on the bench for later use.

Next, pull the tailbone out using a tail stripper. Work the hide down toward the front legs and free them with finger pressure. To release the ears, make careful cuts just above the cartilage, keeping holes small. Continue pulling the pelt

down over the face, cutting minimal holes for the eyes and finally freeing the nose and bottom lip.

When done properly, the pelt is free of holes and nearly odorless.

FLESHING AND FINISHING

After skinning, hang the pelt overnight to allow fat to harden. Once firm, flesh and stretch the hide just like a raccoon. Split the tail wide open with a Tail Zipper and remove as much fat as possible. During the drying process, a grease rag can be used once a week to wipe down the pelt and remove surface oils. A properly dried skunk pelt should crinkle like paper.

EXTRACTING AND SELLING GLAND ESSENCE

Once the pelt is complete, return to the pod sack. Skunk essence can be sold for \$15–30 per ounce depending on purity. Use a 9mm syringe to pierce either side of the pod and slowly extract the contents. The initial yellowish, creamy essence is the most valuable. Once fatty material appears, stop extraction.

Pour the essence into a plastic-capped 4-ounce bottle. Metal caps will corrode from contact with the essence. Depending on how full the sacks are, a skunk may yield a full ounce or more. An additional ¼ ounce of fatty essence may also be collected and sold at a lower rate.

OTHER MARKETABLE PARTS

The skunk's head, if cleanly removed with pruning shears or a belt axe, can be sold to taxidermists for \$1–2 apiece. It's an easy way to squeeze out a little extra profit.

CONCLUSION

Though smelly, skunk trapping is simple and surprisingly profitable. With careful handling and attention to detail, a single skunk can be turned into multiple income streams – fur, essence, glands, and even the head. This season, the skunk reigns as the king of the trapline. Those who take the time to trap and use every part will see the biggest rewards.



trench helps discourage the skunk from reentering the den after capture.

Stake the trap as far from the hole as the chain allows. Bed the trap in the center of the trench, with the trigger set at half notch—not hair-triggered like a mink set. A skunk should be fully committed before engaging the trap to ensure a clean pad catch. Position the trap jaws to face the hole so the skunk steps between them. Lightly

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AGAINST THE ODDS

HUNCHES, GUESSES AND GUMPTION ARE PART OF THE TRAPPING GAME

BY CARY RIDEOUT
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LORAIN EBBETT-RIDEOUT

Few outdoor enthusiasts endure the conditions a fur trapper does quietly accepting outcomes that would make a sensible person quit for home. Trappers play against odds and outcome forever counting on one more roll of the dice. Rough weathers worst, exasperating setting situations and finicky fur bears all add up to a test of anyone's belief in luck. Bucking the hard pan outcome takes nerves of steel with no room for half measures.

THE HAIL MARY SET

Sports enthusiasts love to discuss the Hail Mary Pass, that nearly hopeless last ditch try in the face of little chance of success. But in the trapping trade we live by such stubborn belief that would make any fan shake their head. Every lodge pole prowler has a back up set for those occasions when the dice go against you leaving you feeling like a rank amateur on their first weasel line. The following might play in your favour so here goes.

Say a flat set or any dirt hole configuration is not producing but getting plenty of careful cautious attention. The kind of situation where mild annoyance bubbles over into increasingly frantic frustration. Tracks with maybe some droppings even a dab of digging to just add to the aggravation. Maybe it slacks off some but soon returns. Every new option burns out leaving you with fur running free. But the real oddity is the visiting continues albeit not with any pattern.

Enter the HM Snare Set. With so much activity you'll likely have discernible paths leading into the dead zone. So why not carefully trace this out? Avoid the anger and keep to one side well off any tracks. It might take some time, and time is always limited on a trap line, but if your Irish is up, you'll make time. Choose only one clear traveled pathway don't blanket the whole district with snares you want this to be super subtle super sneaky. The snare set requires a location with natural darkness no open ground where the sun or moonlight can glimmer the wire. Avoid any alterations other than a couple very thin guide twigs. Use a lock small as possible yet strong enough for the target as should the wire size. You could stain the wire dark but if you keep out of light it'll be nearly invisible. Hang the lock offside and use a species-specific loop height/width. Don't worry about any other targets stay focused on your snarky pest. Use drags instead of stakes and never check closer than necessary. Will this set buck the odds in your favour? Wish I could say 100% yes but in these situations it's a gamble. But like the coaches say when the Hail Mary Pass fails, there's always next season guys!



Scouting both old and new trapping terrain keeps odds in your favour.

SENSIBLE STUBBORNNESS?

In fur harvesting you've got to be steadfastly determined and plenty of nerve doesn't hurt either. Right off the mark this is vital for a new member of the trade to understand. Our sport requires an unbelievable level of concentration few outdoor lifestyles demand. Even a simple (and there is no such thing as a simple trapline) requires nearly year-round attention. Right along with this the need for unwavering belief in your choices. Except when they don't work and then it comes down to having to decide if you stick it out or switch gears. Changing sometimes works and sometimes it doesn't as any trapper knows. Sometimes you'd be better off to fold and go home. Stubbornness is an admirable trait true but it can sure cloud your eyesight at times.

Working a new district one season I stumbled onto a late season beaver dam the kind that "appears" as if by magic with no previous indications. Chalking it up to sketchy scouting due to other obligations I stopped my day and went looking. Castor was pushing a \$50.00 bill per pound along with fur actually paying so another flowage was just what I was looking for. In this case the dam was slanted across a steep narrow valley supported by two small dams upstream but where the new occupants were bunking didn't stand out. A walk up both sides brought no clues but peeled indications. Now understand it was late in the day, I'd had success that need attention and with deteriorating light I quickly slapped in a couple crossing sets certain that this was the easy answer. Negotiating the difficult trail back to the logging road was cheerful with the expectation of a big blanket bachelor on the next check.

Smugly approaching the new dam later that week I was surprised by the emp-

ty, unfired traps. Now right here you are probably shouting hey Rideout, check closer for recent sigh. Yeah, that's would have been wise but being smarter than the average bear and wanting to prove this would work I walked off. Next time was nearly the same except for a large muskrat. Three stops later and no beaver on this new dam system. At this point experience should have kicked in resulting in serious examination on how to proceed in the most profitable manner. But stubbornness is a powerful guide and difficult to ignore.

In fairness the season was well along and as usual I was massively overextended. Too many sets too many miles and increasingly fewer days on the calendar. Snow had begun to drift into the picture on the next check but no further developments. By now I was almost frantic certain there had to be fur in that dam and I was the man to catch it. The cards had to go my way, so I bumped up the steel ratio with more sets. But the effort went unrewarded and with mere days left I decided to pull out. But not before I recalled a bit of advice from the past about odd dams like this one. Spending an afternoon, I walked up stream three football field lengths and discovered my mistake. Busting out of the alders there was a huge dam holding a massive lodge and an epic feed pile. I nearly cried. Instead of this simple step to success I had fought the now obvious stubbornly certain I had the methods to win. Nothing wrong with bucking the odds except when consistent frustration is the outcome.

DEAL THE CARDS

Fur trapping is all about long odds. Take an average season for an example where you spend months preparing from scouting to catching to skinning. Once the season closes, you sell off the fur

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Winter snow has all the cards in the trapping game.



Early snow and bitter cold shows who has the cards in this game.

catch which may take months if it goes to a large international sale. Then with nearly a year passed the envelope please! Trouble is by then we are again preparing for the next season with

little time to even take notice. At most we note the good, grumble on the poor and average out prices to convince ourselves another season will be better.

These days trapper have to deal with increasingly tougher odds such as forest fires licking up countless acres where wildlife woods. Autumn weather occurrences are bad enough dealing dreary difficult cards. Drenching downpours that flood sets or worse float off the foolish who don't tie tight seem more so. Deep cold once the opponent of trappers up in the North Country now seems to be hitting some usually sunny spots. Big snow wrecks setting for days sometime changing your plans permanently if the wheel of chance spins off your lucky number.

HUNCHED OVER

In the financial world of risk management there's little room for silly Spidey sense that unexplainable notion of possible success. Obviously, none of these people are trappers since we cheerfully operate by a hunch. Understanding the hunch sadly is akin to alchemy and as likely to succeed.

Any trap line traveller needs to be watching for a whole list of things from strange man tracks to bears who refuse to den up to approaching weather fronts trapping is no place for blinders. Hunches fall into this grouping as well since no hunch begins without some scrap of indication. Scouting can put the seed of a hunch into your mind and once settled in tough to push away. Time feeds it, thinking incubates it and there'll come a day when you will have to follow that hunch.

Back when coon was going for good cash hunches worked pretty fair. Traveling the County daily was part of my civilian job but this trapper scanned the roadside for sign. My hunch-radar watched for water, grub potential and most important coon coils. Droppings near a road edge were a pretty fair indication of a corn raiders crossing made more so if I walked down into the scrub and found a spot littered with droppings. We all know raccoons often evacuate themselves before crossing the tarmac occasionally right on the road. A hunch like this had me skinning come November and is still worth noting even if the returns are a bit less today.

One source of hunches has to be the trees we wander through. Among bea-

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ver men no other hunch is more solid and successful like bright green leaves of poplar or aspen. Many an old timer got out just as the spring leaves broke out for new flowage potential by noting the fresh leaves. As it was explained to me it might not harbour any fur this year but was worth investigating each season for potential. Still a hunch that might work.

Another foliage hunch that can make the difference sometimes is the dramatic line between trees. The clear change from say spruce to maples we know so well up here in the North Woods. This line is classic fur country with mustelids or canines running these sections hard. If you add a few beechnuts for extra appeal, it's a hunch worth investigation. Look for distinctive mustelid droppings, stumps scratched up and canines tracks along this deciduous switch. Many times, this hunch will reveal a water course so mink or otter who love the hilly waters might add to the mix. Hunches. Never let one go by even if it's bucking the odds.

Dead standing trees the kind drowned out by beaver flowages are a hunch too many trappers ignore but that's letting fur slip into another's grasp. Old, abandoned dams seldom get any attention. It might be dried up grassy swale but cats or canines prowl this and so should you. Old dam systems even the ones with little wet stuff still offer food with shelter to fur. A few frogs with a rodent or two and dry digs appeal to prime fur. Hunches. Never let one go by even if it's bucking the odds.

MOSTLY EDUCATED GUESS

Guessing is sometimes a trapper's only option when bucking the odds. Most of us think we are pretty canny at decided just where that fur bearer will cross paths with our attractive set. But there's a big difference between ordinary guessing and using scanty sign to attempt pinpointing the possible. Which is still guessing. If you ever have the opportunity to observe a real pro it's quite an education watching them trying to make a somewhat sensible guess. My lone experience was practically wordless with what appeared aimless walking while muttering on the lousy time of day to out in the open. One of my trap-pings acquaintances was downsizing his outfit and stopped to talk with me. Instead of dickering the discussion turned to how to set my oat fields behind the house.

Initially everything was quite positive as we walked with him noting features, but he became more unsatisfied by the minute. Offering any polite input on my part was out of the question and I kept silent. After sullenly stomping around a few acres, he began explaining the intel gathered admitting it was guessing time. Watching the wind tossed dry oats he pointed to the upper end of the field. There. Go right up along the edge to the corner and put in a set back about 50 yards. What was the appeal I inquired? Impatient to be off the subject and sell steel he said the wind seemed to quarter off a nearby hill and it ought to spread the lure scent out over the surroundings. Unsure to explain why he felt it was "foxy" and surmised the open all-round terrain should instill confidence when on the approach. Maybe. Plus, the chosen spot was near the tractor trail a natural travel way and he felt the sun would be on the spot longest keeping it fresh smelling on frosty days and hopefully into the night. But I'm not guaranteeing anything he said so don't blame guessing. About all you can do is gather up the



Old flowage offers a way to beat the odds and corner prime fur.

clues and spin the wheel! I never did buy his steel but following his guess I did catch two reds right up on the point he thought would work.

Vegas gamblers would walk away from the world of trapping recognizing the odds stacked way too high in the houses favor yet we grimly play the hand we're dealt every time. Because bucking impossible odds is just another day on the trap line. And we wouldn't want it any other way. Trap fair and be safe.





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DISPATCH Considerations



John & Mom
dispatching a Coyote.
TOM BEAUDETTE

Land trapping for different species of furbearers requires an assortment of different equipment. The list is long and must be, in order to be successful.

One item not talked about very much is a firearm that is used to dispatch trapped animals on the trapline. At first glance on this subject, the most practical firearm and caliber is the .22 long rifle. It will humanely dispatch just about any furbearer we can catch. It is a great choice for young folks just getting started in the sport of fur trapping. Young children that are going to be trapping should be taught firearm safety religiously from the beginning. From an early age, my son came with me on my traplines. We taught him how to dispatch coyotes and beaver with a .22 Cricket long rifle.

The .22 rimfire is and always will be the go-to for a trail gun.

There is a step-up for some trappers, though, that might need something more.

In the early '70's, during the first fur boom that was bringing serious money for coyotes and bobcats, the competition then for fur was tremendous. Most ranchers had a trapper to work their ranch. One of the best ways to compete in high competition areas was to access land that restricted vehicle travel. It was a good plan but a game changer because traps and equipment had to be packed in. A handgun was the only choice and because there were folks that would eagerly steal one's fur, I decided to carry a single-action pistol in a heavier caliber for protection. That worked out well then, and today not much has changed. But I still always have a .22 rim-fire pistol with me on the trapline.

Stepping up in bore size are the .32 caliber handguns. There are a lot of .32 offerings. In modern revolvers, though, the .32 H&R and the .327 Federal are good choices. The .327 Federal magnum shoots a 90-grain bullet to over 1300

Going without a handgun is not an option when snaring. I recommend either a single action or double action revolver. I remember one incident when snaring for mountain lions on a depredation issue. The snare was secured on a steep, downward trail at the end of a long finger of a canyon. I anchored a disposable stake on the side of the trail at an angle. It was not the best choice, but I had no other option. We'd had quite a few wet snows, and it was a nightmare of mud to get back into the main canyon to check sets. We got to the set where the trail went steep into a tangle of thick cedars and rocks. As I looked at the set, I found the area on the narrow trail torn up and the disposable stake pulled out of the bank and gone. My friend and I both looked down the steep, mud laden trail and saw something tangled in a large cedar tree below us. We both tried going down the trail and we both slipped and fell in the mud. I slid to the bottom, as if I was on a sled, close to the thrashing critter. I drew my single action .45 and instead of a lion, we had a very large coyote. My pistol got a good dose of mud in it but was still functional. My buddy's 10mm auto was frozen tight with mud and would not cycle. If it had been a bad (er) situation, my friend's pistol would have been useless.

All revolvers have their limitations, but I still think under most conditions it will fire when needed. Today, most trappers, when preserving fur or doing animal damage control work, will use an ATV or side-by-side UTV. It is not a problem to include a .22 pistol or rifle in a case to carry in the vehicle and then have a more substantial caliber on one's side if needed. Of course, if one is running a water line for beaver or other critters, things could change there, but there are still options. I usually take a single action .22 W.R.M. in a soft case and a 12-gauge shotgun in a case. I then carry a single action pistol in a heavy caliber for whatever could arise. The shotgun is a luxury and if the occasion arises, I carry a small game permit along with my trapping license. It's nice to have for an occasional quail or rabbit that comes along. Really, choosing a trapline sidearm is not a complicated subject. All one has to do is figure out what need might arise.



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I wish this dude would try trapping some bobcats!

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TRAP



SMART

CATCH ONLY WHAT YOU WANT,
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BY SERGE LARVIÈRE

Selective trapping is second only to humane methods when discussing how we harvest animals. You can design the world's best traps, but if you're catching species with no value—or worse, species that should never be taken—you'll have a hard time justifying your activities. Trappers naturally think about selectivity, and sometimes non-target catches are acceptable if they're legal and desirable. On my 2024 coyote line, for example, I set snares on approach trails near a bait station and caught a beautiful Canada lynx. While not my main target, lynx are legal and valuable, so that catch was welcome. Most of my bait stations are meant for coyotes and red foxes, the most abundant canids here, but they just as easily take lynx or bobcats, both less common but still legal.



Selectivity is about catching what you want and avoiding what you don't. The list of "unwanted" species varies depending on location. For me, running coyote snares, it's long. Deer and dogs are absolutely off-limits, and while I could legally take raccoon or fisher in snares, they're poor choices for both fur quality and humaneness. Wild canids and wild cats are fair game, but I take great care to avoid the two Ds – dogs and deer. Dogs are avoided by communicating openly with landowners, steering clear of risky areas, and using dog-proof bait stations if necessary. I remind landowners that kill snares are unforgiving on pets, and I look for trespasser tracks before setting. Deer are avoided by using my hunting experience: staying off beaten trails and field corners and relying on breakaway s-hooks as insurance. Like most trappers, I use common sense, but selectivity can be improved further.

1 – PASS IT UP

Judgment is your best tool. If there's risk, move on. A coyote trail with deer tracks? Leave it. A farm dog on the loose? Leave it. A neighbor who sometimes walks her dog across the fence? Leave it. Over the years, I've passed up countless sets and developed what I call a "healthy paranoia" about dogs. I always ask about them first, and if I sense any risk, I won't set. Early in my career I had to release too many dogs; now I'll do anything to avoid that situation.

2 – USE TIMING TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

In northern regions, waiting until mid-November helps avoid raccoons and skunks because they're dormant. That timing also happens to coincide with peak fisher season. If you do catch a coon or skunk that late, it will usually be a large male with a prime pelt.

3 – GO SMALL

Trap and snare size matters. Smaller loops reduce deer catches, and smaller traps reduce incidental risks across the board. On my raccoon line, I rely on 220s rather than 330s, while some states even restrict trappers to 160s. Smaller gear forces you to be precise, but it keeps non-targets out of your sets.

4 – CHOOSE LOCATIONS WISELY

Avoid setting where incidental species are likely to travel. I avoid pocket sets for mink because rac-

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coons quickly ruin them. Instead, bottom-edge sets with 110s work well even in coon-heavy areas. For beaver in populated areas, fully submerging 330s nearly eliminates risks to ducks, geese, and dogs.

5 – MAKE BAIT WORK FOR YOU

Bait choice influences what you catch. Sweet baits are highly attractive to raccoons but far less appealing to cats than sardines. Likewise, elbow sets for mink perform better without bait, avoiding raccoon interference. Small changes in bait can filter out incidentals.

6 – SET HIGH

Elevating bait boxes reduces dog catches. Four feet up on a log or tree keeps dogs out but still draws fisher and late-season coon. On public land or farm country, height plus small traps like 160s greatly reduce risk.

7 – FINE-TUNE TRIGGERS

Dog-proof traps revolutionized raccoon trapping by eliminating most non-target catches. Their pull-trigger design works for raccoons but not dogs or cats. Adjusting trigger tension, position, or pan pressure further refines selectivity, keeping out turtles, otters, or small birds.

8 – BOX OUT INCIDENTALS

Weasel boxes with small openings allow almost exclusive weasel catches. Covered pails and wire mesh can also work, though determined dogs may still break in. Exclusion devices aren't foolproof, but they help in many cases.

9 – WORK WITH ANIMAL BEHAVIOR

Understanding how animals move reduces mistakes. Canids usually sneak in from thick cover, not straight from the road. Setting snares behind bait, away from the obvious approach, catches coyotes and foxes while spar-



ing stray dogs. Raptors, on the other hand, need clear landing space. Keep bait hidden and avoid snares between bait and open ground to minimize bird catches.

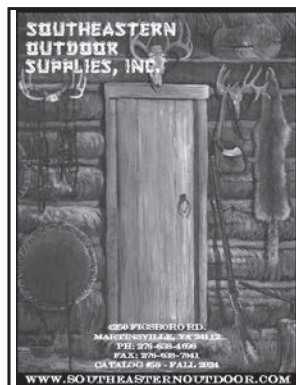
10 – RELY ON RELEASE SYSTEMS

Breakaway s-hooks have saved countless deer and moose from snares.

I've released both by hand before, and it's no fun. These devices give large animals a chance to escape while sparing trappers the headache. Yes, a coyote may occasionally pull free, but that's a trade-off I'll accept. In big game country, they're mandatory.

CONCLUSION

Catching only your target animal is the mark of a skilled trapper. Some areas make it harder, but avoiding non-targets should always be the top priority. Find the hot spot, set with selectivity in mind, and walk away knowing your trap is meant for one thing only. The only surprise should be the size and color of the animal you catch.



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

With Summer coming to an end and Fall starting to take shape one can look forward to the hunting and harvest seasons but don't ignore the fact that in the once great State of Colorado others are working ferociously to make sure that they accomplish their goals and never allow us to pursue game in anyway shape or form.

Dozens of events have been attended in no less than six States this Summer and many more are on the books for September, October and through the end of the year as well. Not to mention the fact for preparing for the next Legislative Session and the 2026 Gubernatorial race and the Legislative races that will either allow the pendulum to hopefully swing back to the middle or maybe the pendulum is just taken off of the clock.

While I currently sit on multiple Committees and Focus Groups including the Furbearer Working Group and the Statewide Beaver Management Working Group there are many things that are being thrown at, not just the hunting community as a whole but specifically individuals that are in pursuit of Predator and Furbearer Harvest opportunities.

Don't under estimate what our enemies are doing. They want to stop the ability to sell raw fur which is evident in the Citizen's Petition by the Center for Biological Diversity that was submitted to the CPW Wildlife Commission in July. They also want to and very well might accomplish restricting or prohibiting Furbearer Harvest, especially if we stand idle and do not engage, and I am not talking just about a few Board Members and myself. I am talking about when the time comes, likely in early 2026 that our community, our membership will need to once again step up and do exactly what we did in 2019 and in 2020 and 2021 and 2022 and 2024 when we beat these extremists back with 3 Citizen's Petitions, 1 Bill at the Capital and twice last year on Proposition 127 and Ordinance 308, the Fur Ban.

When the Call to Action is made of showing up and engaging our community better make the time, set aside whatever else is going on and show up at the Commission Meeting in Denver in January and in March and maybe even later in 2026.

In the meantime buckle up!! Have you seen the new 2 Commis-

sion Appointments? Have you paid attention to the lopsided misrepresentation? Have you sat on your laurels thinking last years victories won the war? We have won every battle we have engaged in since 2007 but the war rages on. This is no time to be complacent with mediocrity.

We often get asked, what can I do? The answer is help fund the oppositional effort against these extremists agendas. To do so you send a donation to CTPHA, PO Box 193, Canon City, CO 81215 or go to coloradotrapp.com or savethehuntcolorado.com to Support the Legal and Lobbying arm that is the only reason that we have been successful in defeating these measures.

The other thing one can do is Volunteer. Volunteer for an event. Volunteer for outreach. Volunteer to help Save the Hunt. If you don't have time? Bullshit! Make the fucking time! If you have time to go hunting and trapping, take the damn time to help!! If you still say you don't have the time then Support the Cause financially to help fund the attorneys and the lobbyists and the monthly accounting and the everyday expenses that it takes to fight this crap 80 plus hours a week.

The anti's are doing it. The anti's want to take it all the way and they want it bad. How bad do you want to save it?

Look for other partnership raffles to come this Fall to help Support the Cause.

Outdoorsmansdays this year was fantastic, surpassing previous attendance and engagement and if you didn't make it you missed a lot of what this report was all about.

A giant thanks to all of the Sponsors and Presenters and Volunteers that help make the event a fantastic one and while it was a celebration of the CTPHA 50th Anniversary it's up to everyone to make sure that we have the ability to celebrate the 51st or 52nd or 60th of the organization.

As we always say don't stand on the sideline waiting for someone else to do, everybody needs to get into the game.

Contact your Board Members. Reach out to us. Help with the battles so we can win the war.

Dan Gates
President

SECRETARY REPORT

Hi Everyone!

I would like to welcome our new member Toby Stensland, Evergreen, CO.

Well, by the time you receive this issue, we would be just having the Outdoorsman's Days Event or just got done with the event. I will report on the activities in the November issue. I hope you all were able to attend and participate. It is CTPHA 50th Anniversary!

For the most up to date information please go to the websites, coloradotrapp.com and savethehuntcolorado.com and coloradooutdoorsmansdays.com and make sure you check out "Through the Gates" to Save The Hunt Podcast on all your favorite Podcast streaming services.

I would like to remind everyone, please continue signing up New Memberships. This has always been important but especially now.

Please make sure if you have an email address, I have it. I also need a current phone number. This is the only way we are keeping our membership up to date with the current information and events on a timely fashion because of the rising costs of printing and postage and the unreliability of delivery of the mail and the inability to communicate immediately. So if you want to be kept in the loop make sure I have your correct EMAIL Address. Please go to the coloradotrapp.com website you can renew your Membership or join our association there. We also have merchandise that is available for purchase. This tool has been very effective and efficient so far. Please make sure you continue to checkout the website for updated information. This will be the most current.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact me at 719 275-4077 or office@coltpha.com.

Karen Gates
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www.connecticuttrappersassociation.com

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NEWS REPORT

As I type this on September 1st 2025, I HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED THE October issue of the Trapper. So, I assume you will be receiving this November issue well before our CTA Fall Rendezvous. Since we are expanding our annual rendezvous I will give you all the details! The Rendezvous will be held on Saturday October 11th at the Fin, Fur, and Feather Club 213 Chewink Road in Chaplin, Ct. 06235. The Rendezvous will commence at 8:00am. Chairman Cameron Kelsey has done an outstanding job of putting this year's event together!! There will be six DEMOS as follows;

8:30 to 9:30 Scott Kneeland

Under Ice and Cage Beaver Trapping

9:30 to 10:30 Cameron Kelsey Raccoon Trapping

10:30 to 11:30 Gregg Schumacker Skunk

Trapping and Handling

11:30 to 12:30 Bryan Flowers General Trapping

12:30 to 1:30 Tom Hart Mink Trapping

2:00 to 3:00 Anton Kaska Cage Trapping Fisher

CTA MEMBERS MEETING AT 3:00PM

Vendors to be present:

Wildlife Control Supplies

Blake Daugherty

Trapper Don

Bryan Flowers

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Massachusetts Trappers Association

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Vermont Trappers Association

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National Trappers Association

National Trappers Foundation

Fur Takers of America

There will be a cash Raffle, Maine Bear Hunt Raffle, Door Prizes, Chance Auction and at 1:30 the First Annual CTA Trap Setting Contest!

Breakfast and Lunch will be provided.

So come and enjoy! It will be a great day!

Unfortunately, the fur market is not looking very strong! Fur Harvesters Auctions Inc. conducted their two Canadian auctions, March 2025 and June 2025 and the results were not very good. Overall, long haired skins fared better than short haired water animal skins. So, let's hope the market improves. Obviously, don't start trapping until the fur is fully prime!

The CTA is still working on trying to get a trapping season open for Bobcats. It appears that it could happen in a couple of years.

The Connecticut DEEP did a very good job of ensuring that the five anti-trapping proposals that were introduced into the 2025 Connecticut General Assembly were killed in committee and never were brought to the floor of the Senate or House of Representatives. Of course, our CTA lobbyist Julie Camarata was right there to insure that was the case!

Hope to see all of you at the CTA Fall Rendezvous, it should be super!

DO HAVE GOOD TRAPPING SEASON!!

Tip Garritt, CTA Director At Large East

Idaho Trappers Association



www.idahotrappers.com

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MTPCA 2025 CONVENTION REPORT

Another great convention in the history books. What makes a convention great? The people. Does it take thousands? No. It only takes those folks who come and make difference. And thank goodness we had plenty of those folks attend this year.

All of our five buildings were completely full of vendors. In fact, the night before convention, I had to turn down a vendor for an inside spot as we were full up. That is a good problem to have. This year we had several new vendors that have never been to our convention before. We have hopes they will come back again next year.

Our annual Friday night donation dinner brought in \$1256.00 all that money is used for the kids raffle program. Each year there are around 15 "Starter" kits given away to lucky kids (Must be present to win). 20 years ago my son won one of the Muskrat starter kits. It filled the trunk of my car. (Yes, I drove a car to convention that year). After seeing how hard those volunteers worked, and all the smile it brought to those kids, I had to find a way to help. That's how I got involved.

Other than being a little on the warm side, the weather was good. No rain. Attendance was right where we thought it would be for the fur market. And folks had plenty to see and do while here. From seeing some of their favorite trappers giving a demo, to playing games, to a fine meal and finally our fundraiser live auction. Speaking of fundraisers, I must add this. The MTPCA has a "Major Raffle" each year with the prizes raffled off at convention. Most years there are over 30 prizes. All good prizes, no junk. The number one Grand prize is a \$2000.00 shopping spree at Jay's sporting goods. This year one of the prizes was a Henry rifle. The gentleman who won it called Carl our raffle coordinator and told him "He had a double lung transplant a while ago and had to sell some of his rifles to help pay some medical bills. One of those rifles was his Henry. Now he won a Henry to relax it". And then, The person who won the Grand prize called me and said "Joe, please find a member with a couple young kids who can use this gift and I would like to see it paid forward for the next few generations as my kids and grand kids don't need it".

Two great stories from two great trappers. At the beginning of this, I asked what makes a convention great, the people. And we have those people.

If you have never been to the MTPCA convention in Ewart Michigan, you should give it a try. Good location, easy to get to, plenty of room, fairgrounds are set up nice for vendors, tailgaters and attendees.

Until next year, Happy Trapping,

Joe Velchansky Sr.
 President MTPCA

Fur Sale Dates & Places
December 20-2025.
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DNR Sports
Kalamazoo, MI

April 18-2026
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March 21-2026
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Greenville, MI

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Trappers of New York Cortland County

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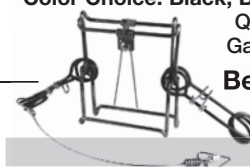
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Membership — Don Rolfs, 201-538-2256

Well, now that the primaries are over, we know who is running for Governor. I urge all of you to make sure you are registered and vote. I can't tell anyone who to vote for but just remember to look at their records. Vote for the person you feel will best reflect your way of thinking. Even if that person does not win, our vote shows Trenton we are watching them. Every politician always wants a higher office, which means they have to walk a fine line and avoid offending too many voters. That's one way to keep them from ignoring us.

Keep in mind that our convention will be on October 5th this year. Once again, the Space family has kindly allowed us to use their property for our meeting. We will have the usual mix of dealers, tailgaters, demos, and our dinner and general membership meeting around noon. Remember to bring the wife and kids—the zoo is a great way to spend a few hours. A trip through the museum always reminds me of this country's great history. Every time I walk through, I find something I never noticed before.

I guess that's enough for now. Remember to be safe, have fun, and bring a kid with you—they are our future. Enjoy the summer! Jim

North Carolina Trappers Association



www.nctrapper.org

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Vice President — Robert Newsome, sgtnunu@yahoo.com
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September 26-27: North Carolina Trappers Association Convention at Johnston Co. Livestock Arena 520 County Home Road Smithfield, NC 27577.

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Public Relations Director — Dan Lynch, 15 Rolling Rock Rd., Boyertown, PA 19512, 610-427-0616, lynchdaniel99@gmail.com

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello Everyone,
 By the time you receive this, the trapping season will be in full swing. I hope you are all having a great season and were able to participate in one of the many fall PTA events. The PTA districts are the grassroots of the organization. They are hosting the fall mini rendezvous, trapper training schools, and will be hosting many upcoming fur sales. They were at the county fairs, youth field days, and sports shows this past summer educating the public about trapping. They do an extraordinary amount of work on our behalf, so when you get a chance, thank them or, better yet, donate some of your time.

I'm finding out that much of this job is building relationships. I attended the NTA rendezvous in Harrisonburg, VA. I had a great conversation with the new NTA president, Rusty Kramer, and the FTA president, Jason Wisniewski. I want to thank the VA Trappers Association for putting on a great event. The FTA, NTA, and PTA all have the same objective, the betterment of trapping. A strong bond between the organizations benefits all of us.

One relationship that I'm most proud of is the PTA relationship with the PGC. I recently participated in the first PGC 2025 Advanced Trapping Clinic at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area. Many of the instructors are past or present officers of the PTA. Roughly 50 students were registered, many of whom I recognized as PTA members, and all received a full day of advanced trapping knowledge. Courtney Brauns, Hunting and Trapping Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation Specialist for the PGC, did an excellent job organizing and running the event. I hope there are more.

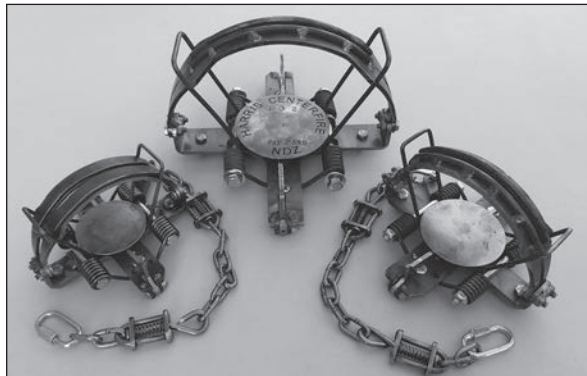
Dan Lynch, our PTA Public Relations Director, is currently working on a large display that will fill a 10 x 12 room and all four walls, educating the public on trapping and its importance in today's world. This will be on display at the PGC Conservation Heritage Museum at the Middlecreek Visitors Center in 2026, which receives hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Neither of these things would be possible without our excellent relationship with the PGC.

PTA History books are now on sale and selling quickly, so be sure to get your copy. I hope to see all of you at a PTA fur sale or spring banquet.

Thanks,
 Don

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VP EAST REPORT

I have been busy, like many of you are, participating in Youth Field Days, Trapper Training Schools and county fairs. I had the opportunity to again attend and help man the booth at the Troy Fair with District 9. They have a very nice set up and display that gets a lot of traffic at their booth. It's always time well spent interacting with the public and having the chance to promote trapping in a positive light. I have a part in 3 of the 4 Trapper Training Schools that we do in my home district. I am happy, like all of you that help teach at these schools, to have a chance to teach the next generation of trappers. It's something we didn't have available when we were youngsters. Thank you to all of you that choose to give of your time and talent in this way.

I had the chance to be one of the instructors at the Advance Trapping Clinic that was put on by the PGC at Middlecreek Wildlife Center. Courtney Brauns from the PGC put this together and got some of us PTA members to teach it. Tom Keller gave a great presentation on the biology and better understanding of the 3 animals the clinic targeted – bobcat, fisher, and otter. We all came away from it with a little more knowledge about these 3 critters. It was great to see the PTA and PGC working together on this project.

Mike Spittle
717-648-1552

VP WEST REPORT

Wow, I can't believe it's August 23rd and I'm writing my report for the November issue of The Trapper. By this time, hopefully all your traps are ready, permissions have been secured, and you have steel in the ground. In September my son and grandson would have been on their first bear trapping trip to Maine. Hopefully, the trip was successful, but you'll have to wait until my next report for that update. If anyone has the opportunity to attend the Arnot Sportsmen's Club's youth trapper training day don't miss it. All of the youth learned a lot and went home with some traps. The club fed everyone, and tailgaters were even present with a nice selection of supplies. If you're interested, check out their website for details of next year's event. If you've never been to the Elk Expo it's worth the trip. District 4 is represented there each year with a booth to talk trapping. It was really exciting that one of the district 4 members was drawn for an elk tag, and they were even there at the event to hear their name called. Best of luck on your hunt.

Until next time, tight chains.
- Ralph

PR DIRECTOR REPORT

Dan Lynch PR Director

Greeting fellow trappers, trapping season is finally here and in full swing. I am typing this write-up in late August and thinking about the 18 new trappers we just finished helping at the southwest Trap Camp in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. I am sure they are super excited to get some traps set on some of their first trappings ever. It is so much fun to help new folks get involved in trapping and even though we may sometimes get bogged down in our own lines and so focused on making sure we get a specific number of traps set each day or maybe an old line pulled and a new line set that we forget that there are lots of folks just starting out that need some help and encouragement from those of us with lots of years and experience. If you know someone who is new, or needs some help, do not forget to give them a call or text to see how it is going and check to see if they need some help with some skinning or maybe some advice on setting. If you are one of those new trappers from the southwest or northwest PGC/PTA Trap Camps from this year or last year, do not hesitate to reach out to one of the instructors from your camps if you need a little advice from time to time.

On another topic, we are working hard on completing the educational trapping display that will be featured in the Conservation History Museum at the PA Game Commission's Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area Visitor's Center. The display will feature information on breaking down the myth's surrounding trapping, the history of beavers in North America, information about the PTA as well as information about the species we trap here in the commonwealth. We plan to have the display completed in January of 2026 and it will be on display at the center for an entire year.

As always, if you need any PTA educational supplies, contact your district director and have them reach out to me.

Sincerely,
Dan Lynch

NEXTGEN REPORT

Hey Trappers!

Since my last report, the PTA NextGen Committee has been hard at work. One of our biggest highlights was our partnership for the very first Kids Corner implemented at the Maryland Fur Trappers Sportsman's Show, August 1-2 in Boonsboro, MD. The Kids Corner was held both Friday and Saturday, with about 20 kids visiting on Friday, and 45 on Saturday for a total of 65 kids under 14! In the Kids Corner, we made pinecone bird feeders to take home, dressed up for the old trapper photo booth, colored, played the 'Who Lives Here' habitat activity, trapping trivia, and

the furbearer ID game. Every youth left with a prize, courtesy of MFTI. Additionally, most of our volunteers and helpers fit into our 16-30 age range! Thank you to all who came out and helped.

On June 21, we were invited to present a trapping program at a Women's Outdoor Class for the Lenape Chapter of the North American Versatile Hunting Dogs Association at Martz's Game Farm in Dalmatia, PA with Aubree Anderson from the SHESide. We identified our PA furbearers, learned the basics about traps using our Freepop 3D traps, and took a walk through a trapline simulation, making sets and providing instruction for a variety of land and water sets. The ladies had lots of questions and were so engaged!

Then, August 9th we visited the Wildlife Leadership Academy Family Field Day to teach trapping to the Conservation Ambassador alumni (ages 14-17) and their families! During the trapping program, we learned about the different types of traps and how they work using our Freepop 3D printed traps. We identified the furbearers of Pennsylvania by their pelt and tracks, and discussed what type of habitat each furbearer fits best in. After learning the basics, we looked at the habitat we were surrounded by, and all took a walk together looking for trails, tracks and sign. We found a coon trail, and all made a set together, alumni volunteering to help with each part of the process.

If you haven't already, please LIKE us on Facebook at PTA NextGen Committee and follow along for updates, sneak-peaks and more!

We are so excited to be involved at these upcoming events:

September 6, 2025: Women's Trapping Program for Women's Intro to the Outdoors Event. Orangeville Sportsman's Club in Orangeville, PA.

September 26-28, 2025: Assisting with PGC/PTA Learn to Trap Weekend at Pymatuning WMA in Hartstown, PA.

It is never too early to start thinking about and planning for next year's Rendezvous, and especially the NextGen events. June 18-20, 2026, the 89th Annual PTA Rendezvous will be held at the Crawford County Fairgrounds by PTA District 1. The PTA NextGen committee is excited to hold our 4th annual Kids Cabin, Kids Mtn Man Race, as well as additional activities on Thursday. We can't wait for all youngsters and parents alike to experience what we are putting together! The more help we have, the better we are able to educate and operate. If you plan to attend District 1's rendezvous in 2026, and want to know how you can make an impact on our Next Generation, please give me a call anytime at (717) 802-7363.

If you are interested, have ideas, have any questions, would like to donate, tell me about your trapping season, or extend your help as a volunteer with the PTA NextGen Committee, don't hesitate to reach out!

Have a safe and plentiful trapping season!

Autumn McEntee
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D1 REPORT

Happy Fall District One.

I would guess that everyone is enjoying some time on the trapline by this time you received this. Just a few reminders: Gun raffle ticket should be available soon. If you need tickets, contact Donna Murphy at 814-382-2561. This is our big fund raiser for the year. so your help is greatly appreciated. We are work on getting things ready for the 2026 rendezvous in Meadville. Thank you to all those that have stepped up to help, anyone wanting to help contact Andrew Hyde at trapperhyde64@gmail.com or 814-573-9024.

Have a great season!!
Andrew
District One Director
814-573-9024
trapperhyde64@gmail.com

D3 REPORT

Howdy all,

I hope some of yinz are putting up some fur by now and for those of you that aren't set out yet, good luck. Well now that the county fairs are over, it's time to get some traps ready! We sold tickets for 4 Henry .22 Octagon Barrel Rifles. We also bought and donated back, where we could, some livestock at the 4H livestock sale. Our annual trapper's school is just around the corner along with our mini convention. Our annual fur sale is January 25th at 9A.M. at the Youngwood Sportsman's Club.

Till next time, tight chains!
John Wilkinson
724-640-2175

D4 REPORT

District 4 ended the summer with a fun-filled trapper trainer weekend, held the last weekend of September. Now I'm sure most trappers across PA are getting ready for trapping season. District 4 is making plans for fur sale in January. Hope everyone starts the season off with tight chains.

Thanks,
Gary Haupt

D5 REPORT

I hope everyone reading this has their traps prepped and ready to get steel in the land and water. I know I have said it before, but you are going to hear it again.

Thank you for all the help this summer! We could not have done it without all of you.

We are starting to prepare for 2026. I would like some feedback about adding a fur handling clinic. I am thinking of mid Jan. 2026. Please reach out to me if this is something you are interested in. I am also currently reaching out to potential fur buyers for our fur sale.

As always until the next time,
Rick Decker

D8 REPORT

Hello Everyone,

I hope all is well and your traps are ready to go, the season will be upon us soon.

I'll go over what district 8 has been up to since last report we attended as vendors at Shippensburg Fair, Maryland Trapper's Convention, and Cvamea tractor show. I'd like to thank the Maryland trappers for having us. All events were beneficial to the district for attending.

I'm writing this on the evening of our Ronnie Zeke Myers memorial trapping school that just concluded. This is one of the most important things we do as a district. This year's school took place at Mt. Holly Fish and Game. We had 84 students that attended and received a wealth of knowledge and instruction from all our instructors. I'd like to thank all the district members and cooks for doing what they do to make all this possible. This is by far the most rewarding thing we do as a district and organization. We had our youngest attendee at the age of 6 and our oldest was 84. Thank you to all!

When you get this in the mail, our 47th annual Newville show will be in the past, but it looks like it will be another good one. I'll have the report on that for the next issue.

Our next meeting will be our shrimp feed on October 19 at Mt Holly Fish and Game. If you're interested in attending this meeting, all district members are free and non-members are \$10 per meal. Please reach out to me with your specification of shrimp or chicken. Each meal is served with scalloped potatoes and coleslaw.

You can reach out to me at email (woyeric9@gmail.com), text, or call 717-552-7413.

Remember, especially with trapping season approaching, please try and interest someone in trapping, it's the least we can do!

Thanks for reading,
Eric Woy

D9 REPORT

Hello from District 9,

I'm Mike Weed from Bradford County. In June I was fortunate enough to be chosen to be our district director. I'd like to thank our previous director and current secretary, Terry Lutz, for doing a great job throughout his tenure. Also, thank you to Ed Price for being our treasurer for several decades. This position will now be held by David Cyr.

The Troy and Hartford Fairs were a success. The fair queens were presented with scholarship donations and were both very grateful. A big thank you to all those who helped at these events. Terry and Willy Lutz, Mike Machmer, Herb Senderling, Mike and Donna Spittle, Ethan Sheets, Tim Moore, Gary Taylor, John Shamro, David Cry, Renee Zine, Kevin O'Neil, and Steve Lynn who all helped at the Troy Fair. Bill Kalinauskis, Ed and Sue Price, Roland Anderson, Larry Barrows, Richard Bohn, Don Hilliard, Jim and Kelly Kulsicavage, Brandon and Faith Miletta, Butch and Janice Mislav, Ray Petrunich, Jordan Oakey, Donna Smoyer, Dominick Stivala, and Donald Wilbur who all helped at the Hartford Fair.

In August at the Leroy Sportsman's Club, we had over thirty kids come through their youth field day with Terry Lutz, Mike Machmer, and myself running the trapping station, a good time was had by all!

Hope everyone's summer was fun and safe!

Until next time,
Mike Weed
District 9 Director
(570) 529-3231

D10 REPORT

Preparations are underway for the 2027 PTA Rendezvous. Future planning meetings are in the works, if members would like to bring these meetings to your county, we need venues to hold them. Any recommendations can be sent to me at 610-759-9203.

After the Fall Convention, our next event is the District #10 Fur Sale followed by a meeting at the Stockertown Rod and Gun Club Jan 17, 2026. Doors open at 8 A.M., sale starts at 9 A.M.

On a side note, I have mixed feelings about the Sunday hunting as a trapper; it was one day we didn't have to wear orange or look over our shoulder while setting traps. Maybe just being greedy, but we all make do.

The season is just around the corner. Hope you are all prepared and ready to go!

Any comments or suggestions, feel free to call me at 610-759-9203.
Thanks and God Bless,
Bob Counterman

D11 REPORT

We held our meeting at Millcreek Sportsmen's Association on Aug. 3rd with 20 members in attendance. We got good reports back from the Lebanon and Schuylkill County Fairs. Thank You again to all of you that give of your time and talent to man the booth at these county fairs. A lot of good gets done interacting with John Public at places like this. Wayne Gemmill reported from the event at Codorus State Park. He said he felt out of place being there, but there was a lot of interest from the attendees in our booth. We also had reports back from the 5 county Youth Field Days that we have always been a part of. I know that you only get a half hour with each group at a Youth Field Day, but it's a chance to present trapping in a positive way to people who don't know anything about who we are and what we do.

As of this writing, only the Lebanon County Trapping School has come and gone. Lancaster will be this coming Saturday. We had 22 students attend at Lebanon and all were interested in learning all they could. Big thanks to Lee Campbell and all the instructors that helped put on that school. Schuylkill and Dauphin are scheduled for September, so I will report on them in next month's column. Blue Mountain Chapter of NWTf again paid for the traps that we handed out at our trapping schools, so a big thank you to them for that. We did vote at our meeting to donate \$500 to District 7 for the state banquet and we decided to buy 10 FTA calendars again this year.

Our next business meeting will be Oct. 12th at Middcreek Wildlife Center at 2 P.M.

Hopefully I'll see you at Middlecreek,
Mike Spittle spittlefam@comcast.net

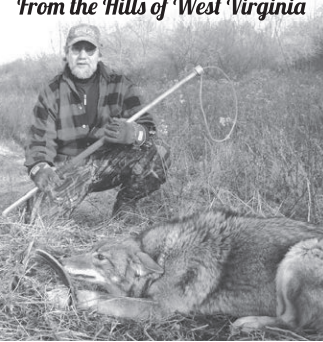
NTA DIRECTOR REPORT

A new season is upon us, and hopefully you are ready to go! If you have been watching nationally, the trappers and hunters out in the western part on the US are getting no relief from the antis. Beaver trappers in Oregon have lost their right to trap beaver on public grounds. The fight is still on in Idaho and Montana over the wolf. Our lawsuit in New Mexico is just sitting on the judge's desk. Colorado has a referendum coming on where the radicals want to take the power away from the state Fish and Game Dept to regulate and manage what they always have. They want that to be controlled by some committee of bleeding hearts and anti-hunters and trappers. We need our numbers to grow as far as membership. It's the least we can do to help the front lines in this battle. I urge you all to join the NTA and if you already are, Thank you, and I ask you to be a sustaining member. If you have never been a member the NTA there is a deal going on now for a first-time member can sign up for 20.00 and receive an NTA patch, 6 issues of the American Trappers, and admission into the Presidents Dinner at the NTA convention for free with your membership. Heck of a deal. Call me with any questions.

Steve Linn
NTA Director
570-912-8273

Patent # 980 492 B2

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NTA Director — Jeremiah Whitlatch 4929 Grieves Run Road Elizabeth, WV 26143 304-916-3329

PRESIDENTS REPORT

Hello Fellow Trappers,
 I hope everyone is well. It's hard to believe that convention season is already here. It seems like yesterday, we were having our annual fur sale.

WVTA will be attending several conventions this year. Our first one will be the NTA National. If you see us at a convention, stop and say Hi. WVTA will hold its annual convention September 19th and 20th, 2025 in Glenville. Also, WVTA is hosting the 2025 NTA Southeastern Regional convention October 10th and 11th, 2025 in Glenville. It is shaping up to be a good show. Come out and support WVTA and NTA. If anyone is interested in helping out, feel free to contact me. We could always use help. Remember, introduce someone new or a child to trapping. They are our future.

Jeremiah Whitlatch
 WVTA President
 304-916-3329

WVTA Membership

\$25 Basic Membership

\$37 Basic Membership with Trapper & Predator Caller

\$39 Basic Membership with Trappers Post

\$51 Basic Membership with both magazines

\$19.50 Junior Membership (age 16 and under) select one magazine

\$500 WVTA Lifetime membership (no magazine)

\$250 Senior Lifetime (age 65 & older, no magazine)

\$5 Supporting Membership

WVTA Upcoming Events

September 19th and 20th, 2025 WVTA Annual Convention Gilmer County Recreation Center Glenville, WV

October 10th and 11th, 2025 WVTA will be hosting the NTA Southeastern Regional Convention Gilmer County Recreation Center Glenville, WV

The WVTA annual convention will be held, September 19th-20th, 2025 at the Gilmer County Recreation Center in Glenville, WV

The WVTA will host the NTA Southeastern Regional Convention, October 10th-11th, 2025 at the Gilmer County Recreation Center in Glenville, WV

For more information, contact Jeremiah Whitlatch 304-916-3329

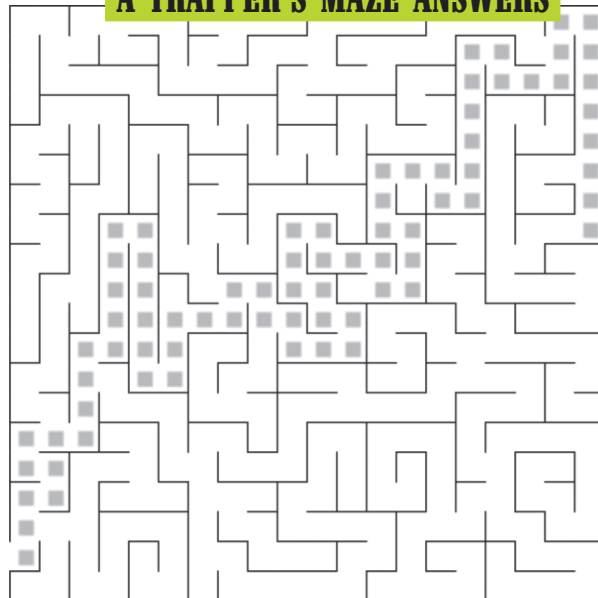
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 Media Committee



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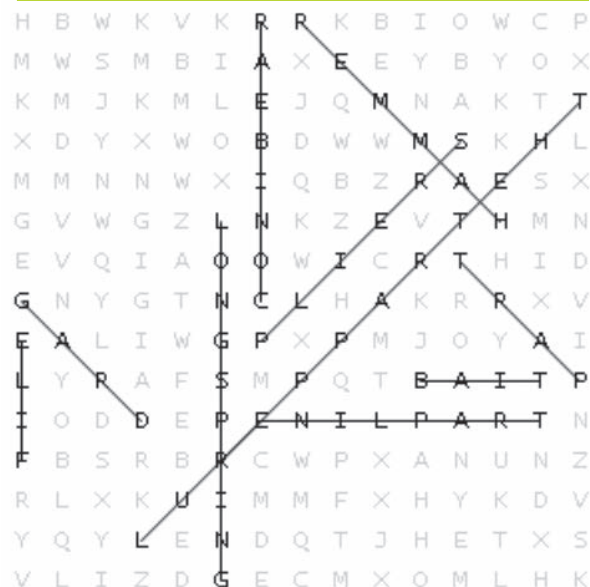
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A TRAPPER'S MAZE ANSWERS



ANSWERS From The Trapper Next Generation on page 53

FIND THE TRAPPER WORDS ANSWERS



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1. The Trapper. 2. ISSN: 105550. 3. Filing date: 10/1/2025. 4. Issue frequency: 8 issues annually. 5. Number of issues published annually: 8. 6. The annual subscription price is \$19.95. 7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: Media 360, LLC, 1990 Godfrey Drive Waupaca, WI 54981. 8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business office of publisher: Media 360 LLC, 1990 Godfrey Drive, Waupaca, WI 54981. 9. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor. Publisher, Brad Rucks, 1990 Godfrey Drive, Waupaca, WI 54981; Editor, Daniel Schmidt 1990 Godfrey Drive, Waupaca, WI 54981; Managing Editor, N/A. 10. Owner: Media 360, LLC, 1990 Godfrey Drive, Waupaca, WI 54981, Brad Rucks, Steve Bartylla, Don Barry, Jr, DDHR LLC., Daniel Schmidt. 11. Known bondholders, mortgages and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent of more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: None. 12. Tax status: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months. 13. Publisher title: The Trapper. 14. Issue date for circulation data below: October 2025. 15. The extent and nature of circulation: A. Total number of copies printed (Net press run). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 15,100. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 14,833. B. Paid circulation. 1. Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 13,441. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 13,245. 2. Mailed in-county paid subscriptions. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0. 3. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 197. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 188. 4. Paid distribution through other classes mailed through the USPS. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 24. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 26. C. Total paid distribution. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 13,663. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 13,459. D. Free or nominal rate distribution (by mail and outside mail). Free or nominal outside-county. 1. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 2. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 1.2. Free or nominal rate in-county copies. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0. 3. Free or nominal rate copies mailed at other Classes through the USPS. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0. 4. Free or nominal rate distribution outside the mail. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 242. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 231. E. Total free or nominal rate distribution. E. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 244. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 232. F. Total free distribution (sum of 15c and 15e). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 13,907. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 13,691. G. Copies not Distributed. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 1,193. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 1,142. H. Total (sum of 15f and 15g). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 15,100. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 14,833. I. Percent paid. Average percent of copies paid for preceding 12 months: 98.2%. Actual percent of copies paid for preceding 12 months: 98.3%. 16. Electronic Copy Circulation: A. Paid Electronic Copies. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 28. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 30. B. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 13,691. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 13,489. C. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 13,935. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 13,721. D. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c x 100). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 98.3%. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 98.3%. I certify that 50% of all distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above nominal price: Yes. Report circulation on PS Form 3526-X worksheet. 17. Publication of statement of ownership will be printed in the November 2025 issue of the publication. 18. Signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager, or owner: Brad Rucks, Publisher. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanction and civil actions.

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TRAPPING FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

BY ISABELLE SANDER

Elmer Oxley skinning a mink while friend Zeke watches and smokes a pipe, Minnesota 1919
WINDIGO



Most folks know that trapping is a time-honored tradition. But what many may not realize is that modern trappers play a vital role in wildlife management and conservation – a role that once belonged to large predators.

Before the arrival of pioneers, North America's ecosystems operated with apex predators at the top of the food chain. Animals like the mountain lion, gray wolf, and black bear helped maintain healthy populations of furbearers and prey species. These predators controlled surplus numbers naturally, keeping populations balanced and ecosystems stable.

Today, those same predators are absent from most regions due to urban expansion, land use changes, and human-wildlife conflict. As their populations declined, the need for new management tools became clear. That's where hunters and trappers stepped in.

WHAT IS A SURPLUS POPULATION?

A surplus population refers to animals that exceed what the habitat can naturally support. Without predators – or regulated harvest – these animals can cause damage to ecosystems, spread disease, or suffer from starvation due to lack of food and space.

SCIENCE SETS THE SEASONS

State wildlife agencies don't guess when it comes to setting trap limits and seasons. They rely on field research, population surveys, and ecological models to determine how many animals can be ethically harvested without harming long-term sustainability.

Trappers now serve as modern population managers, working under the guidance of wildlife biologists to ensure that only surplus animals are harvested each season. Through regulated seasons, trap limits, and species protections, state and federal agencies make sure that trapping supports – not harms – wildlife populations.

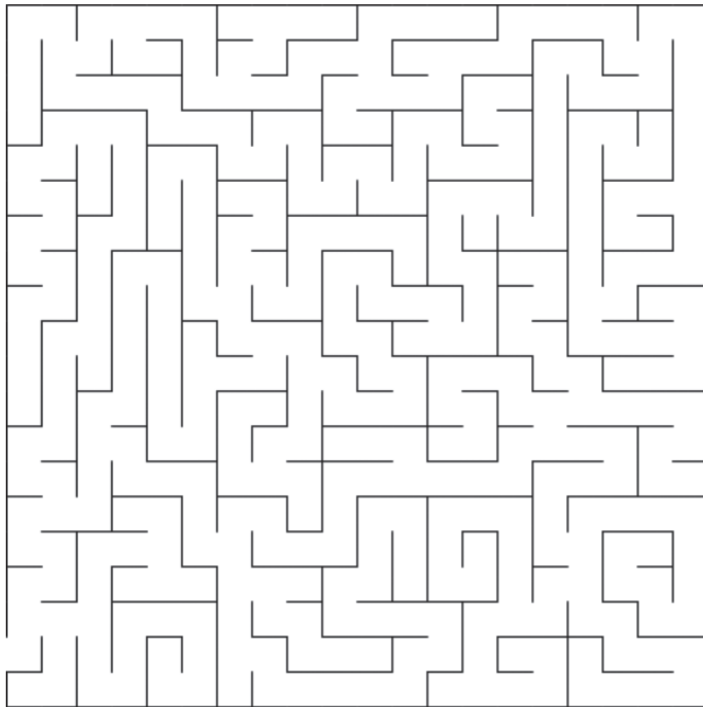
This science-based approach helps prevent issues like overpopulation, disease spread, and resource competition, which can threaten both animal health and habitat quality. It also ensures that future generations will have the same opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and practice responsible trapping.

So the next time someone questions the role of trapping in today's world, remind them: trappers aren't just tradition-keepers – we're active stewards of the land.





A TRAPPER'S MAZE



Look for answers to the maze and word search on page 49.

FIND THE TRAPPER WORDS

H B W K V K R R K B I O W C P
M W S M B I A X E E Y B Y O X
K M J K M L E J Q M N A K T T
X D Y X W O B D W W M S K H L
M M N N W X I Q B Z R A E S X
G V W G Z L N K Z E V T H M N
E V Q I A O O W I C R T H I D
G N Y G T N C L H A K R R X V
E A L I W G P X P M J O Y A I
L Y R A F S M P Q T B A I T P
I O D D E P E N I L P A R T N
F B S R B R C W P X A N U N Z
R L X K U I M M F X H Y K D V
Y Q Y L E N D Q T J H E T X S
V L I Z D G E C M X O M L H K

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CONIBEAR
DRAG
FILE HAMMER
LONGSPRING
LURE
PLIERS
THETRAPPER
TRAP
TRAPLINE



DEAN PEARSON/MINDIGO

PITY THE FOOL

And the fool I pity is me. So if you want to think of this as an exercise in self-pity you may. However I shall endeavor, to inject an element of humor in this tale of self-pity, as that is what I am commissioned to do.

This didn't start out foolish. In fact it was far from it. I had some roads to travel through a logging tract. In the winter back water from the Hatchie River runs across these roads to a varying depth. I had been down this road a hundred times, and I knew at what depth of flood water I could navigate.

One afternoon I started down that road, forded a couple of deep spots and made some sets as I went. I came to a spot I knew could be tricky. The goal post was easy to see. It was a high rise on top of a large culvert that was supposed to drain most of this bottom. When the culvert neared capacity, the slough it serviced did an end run around the culvert and washed over the road. I would need to get out of the UTV and wade that stretch to make sure it wasn't too deep. I lacked the ambition to go any farther that day so I returned to camp.

A short while later a gaggle of young folks pulled up, parked, and unloaded their four wheelers. They were going hunting. They told me where they were going. That's beyond the point at which I left off yesterday. They were gone for a while, and just at dark they came back, loaded up, and left.

Well if they could make that crossing, I could too.

So the next day when I got to the big culvert, I eased my Side-by-Side off into

the current. I steered that buggy down the middle of the road and into side flow. I assumed if those boys had make it across so could I.

'Tis often said that "assume" makes an "ass" out of "u" and "me". Well, I don't know about you, but it was sure enough makin' an ass outa me! That little buggy started to lose traction with the road. The deeper it got, the more buoyant the tires became and they got less grip. I was about to be swept around the culvert and down stream into a big slough.

It doesn't do any good to panic in a situation like this, but I decided to give it a go anyways. They'd never find me if I drifted down stream in that morass. I extolled the deities hoping that at least one of them would help me out.

So I don't know exactly which one to credit when the front tires, grabbed the gravel on the far side of the road. I hauled out on dryland just before I was swept off the road bed. I crawled to the top of the culvert. I had cheated death. I paused to pay homage to all the deities I had implored to get me to where I am today. Not being swept down stream in a flood that is.

There I stood, winner of that battle. But victory was short lived. The fates had delivered me from evil. And now they were laughing their butts off. "Well we got him across," they said. "Now how's he gonna get back?" They laughed. They knew I had to re-cross that torrent to get back home.

Once the gods had shackled their mirth, I again beseeched them to grant me safe passage. "Give it a go." They chuckled amongst themselves. I backed

the machine up, got a running start, and aimed for the upstream side of the crossing to account for drift.

The side-by-side went deeper and deeper. It was up to the level of the seat, water was running down the inside of my hip boots -- and I was sitting down! The muffler was under water, "Glug, glug, glug," it sputtered.

I'm sure the gods were laughing at me again, but the god of momentum carried me to the opposite bank where the UTV surged up out of the water like a breaching whale. Water drained off the seat and out the floor boards like a leaky bath tub.

I was wet from my hips on down. That was scary enough to make a fellow pee his pants. But you wouldn't have been able to tell it, so let's say I didn't. I hurried back to camp to change into some dry clothes and gather my wits about me.

Sometime later, those kids came back to hunt. I flagged them down. "Hey," I said, "Are you really going across that culvert back there?" "Oh yeah," the fellow said. "We shoulda told you, you have to stay way off to the right through the drift pile where the road washed out. I'm glad I had my chest waders on," he said. "I had to jump off to keep my bike from floating away."

Again, to "assume" makes an ass out of u and me. And in this case, it almost got my ass drown.

— Hal Sullivan stays above water, for the most part, in Blue Creek, Ohio.





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COYOTE \$29 ~ 84" OF 3/32", 7X7

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