

TRAPPER'S WORLD

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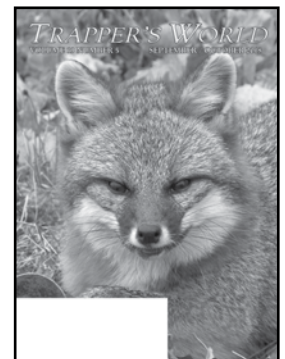
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A prime grey fox caught by Jim Geffert of Night Owl Lures.



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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the September/October 2018 issue of Trapper's World magazine. This is the issue that kicks off our fall. Convention season is mostly over and trapping season starts in some states. It's a trapper's time of year again!

Mississippi Trappers Association is having an interesting convention this year. It will be held at the Pearl, MS Bass Pro Shops September 21-22nd. More information can be found at www.mstrappers.com. Their goal is to not only hold a convention but to also educate the public.

This is a great issue with many seasoned writers contributing. The Young Trapper Spotlight features the second-place winner from our writing contest held this summer. Congratulations Josiah Hoover!

This issue starts a multipart article about federal coyote lure research by Sherm Blom. It is an interesting review of many years of research on the attractiveness of lure ingredients. I think you will enjoy it and maybe even be inspired to test/make lures of your own. It makes me want to play with lure and ingredients again!

This issue has me thinking back on how much I enjoyed gathering and making lure ingredients. It was fun to play with different ingredients and

methods. From sun rendering, burying, aging, and tincturing I always had something stinky to experiment with. Skunks were a great source for raw ingredients.

I would save the fat, essence, and glands from skunks to make lure ingredients from. Plus, I got the hides tanned and sold them for around \$20-\$30. Skunks were my friends. It was exciting to extract essence to see just how much I was going to get. No one who was around me enjoyed this as much as me. Any trapper knows how the smell lingers.

Nothing I ever did seemed to keep me from getting the smell in my hair. It would last weeks even with washing it in different mixtures of this and that. The last skunks I extracted essence from were after I moved into a neighborhood with my husband. Against his wishes I took the essence from a few skunks we caught. It did make the shed smell a little. No one complained other than him, so I thought it was successful.

We went to a local bank so that I could add his name to my account. As we sat down in the little cubical area and started answering questions I thought I could smell skunk. I hoped it was not strong enough to be smelled by the rest of the bank patrons. She asked my husbands occupation and he told her he was a wildlife biologist. We finished

the paperwork and headed out.

Once outside my husband informed me that the rest of the world did indeed smell me. He figures the banker assumed he was the stinky one since he was a wildlife biologist. I thought it was hilarious, he did not. That was the end of me extracting essence. Which is a shame because I hate to waste such a useful and valuable lure ingredient. Maybe I can sneak a few skunks in the shed this trapping season.

In the last editorial I said my daughter was soon to be

born. Well, we were blessed with a happy and healthy little girl. A future partner for Henry and me to take on our little trapline. I want to thank everyone who sent cards and emails to congratulate our family.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Trapper's World. Have a great fall and start to your trapping season. Enjoy the outdoors with the ones you love. Until November

-Tera

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THE FUR MARKET REPORT

By John Epler, Jr.

This is a very dead time in the raw fur business. Anything in raw fur that is sold now especially under the current market conditions is either sold cheap or by luck. The same would also apply to the finished garment business. When the weather is warm and winter seems a long way off very few people think about purchasing a heavy warm coat.

In four months a new harvest

season begins and it is doubtful anyone will know where to price fur for the upcoming season. We can look back to the past season and base prices on what was paid or sold. The problem with that is pricing has been all over the place due to unstable markets and dumb ideas that always emerge in the fur business. Trying to make any sense out of the current market situation is quite challenging.

The recent auctions in Canada

were lackluster in prices and clearances with the exception of the coyote. The coyote did much better in regards to price and clearance than most people expected, throughout the season. If I were to hazard a guess I would think coyotes will remain a strong selling item for the next several seasons. If all our wild fur was doing as well as the coyote we would have quite a market on our hands. The demand is huge and the supply of heavy western coyotes was not sufficient enough to meet the demand. This pushed up the prices of eastern heavies along with more favorable prices for all others sections of coyotes. The damages and low end goods sold at a better price and clearance than we have seen in recent years. There were several new players in the coyote game and this what our markets need. As for the rest of the fur this spring and summer the demand is for the best skins with the average skins mostly unsold. There were not enough skins sold to derive any other meaning to the raw fur business than the lack of demand for anything less than the very best.

I probably say this in every article that I have written in the past few years, but I will say it again. Wait until the fur in your

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area is winter prime and if you have a choice only harvest the best skins. In regards to the raccoon the less that are put on the market the sooner the prices will become more favorable. I realize that after a serious market crash it takes about two full seasons for the general public to understand that the raccoon market is not about to come roaring back anytime soon. It basically took five years after both the 1987 and 1997 crashes for the raccoon market to start its slow climb out of the gutter. Full recovery happened seven to eight years after these crashes. At these current low prices the fresh raccoon skins are being bought up for the most part. This does not help clear to out the stale goods that have been lying around since 2014. Until we clear those old skins out and not have a huge glut on the market the raccoon prices

will remain very low.

Cheap ranch mink and very cheap ranch foxes continue to depress the price of many of our wild fur items. The strength of our dollar also has a negative impact on the price of our wild fur and other commodities as well. Economists are predicting a recession in our near future with predictions ranging from 18 months to two years. If this does occur it will lower the value of the dollar and raise the end price of

our wild fur. The fur and trapping supply business has always done its best during a recessionary time. Looking at the record amount of people employed currently and the amount of cash held by large corporations it is hard to believe were headed to a recession. However it took less than 6 months for the last fur boom to go bust but nearly eighteen months for it be accepted.

Till next time

-John

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THE BODIE ROAD PART 1

By
Jim Comstock

Before getting too far into what is partially a historical narrative, quite different from what I have written in the past, which might leave some to wonder “where is he going with this,” for close to forty years I have put pen to paper in articles dedicated to a wide range of topics based in trapping, with only a few exceptions. In 1985 Judy and I told about fishing for monster King Salmon on Alaska’s Kenai River in Fur Fish Game. Another article was a “how to” on building a .22 rifle by adding a bull barrel for shooting nuisance beaver.

Trapline subjects have included sets, methods, new equipment, making or modifying existing traps and accessories, state hopping, intermittently sharing on the line experiences with the likes of Thorpe and Dawson. Not to completely break with tradition, the following has its origins in California bobcat trapping, some of the best years of our lives. However, this time I intentionally strayed from the norm to relate some captivating stories about colorful people in the west when it truly was the wild west, some very well known, others not so widely known, but

loosely connected to my own family. Initially linked through California, gold, murders and a story told by Bill Cody, this seemed like a good excuse to reveal their stories. The only way anyone gains the notoriety they deserve is by keeping their memories alive. Though comparatively speaking some were perhaps lesser players, they were no doubt quite visible in the day.

Close to an end for us, California bobcat trapping had brought me to one of the most intriguing, high desert ghost towns the west could muster.

Located in central California to the east in the Sierra Nevada mountains this isolated, abandoned, outpost was on top of an open expanse, miles from civilization. Off the beaten path, on a treeless, desolate pretty much dead-end road, none would pass through by chance. In the mid 1800's the lure of striking it rich had paved the way for numerous bars and brothels that popped up in scattered mining towns throughout gold country. I found commonality in this ghost town combined with a story of the richest gold and silver mine the U.S. would ever know. Located near the California, Nevada line in Nevada, some might have heard of the mine with the Comstock name connected to my family. This character was a fourth cousin, owner of the mine situated not all that far from what is left of a once thriving boom town, now comprised of only a couple dozen deteriorating buildings in a dry, dusty, wind blown ghost town.

Moreover, as trappers and outdoorsmen, we all have heard tales about hunting, fishing and trapping that just don't add up, far too many holes and inconsistencies. Unsolved murders of Comstock relatives were added to mysteries in the lust for gold and silver. In another direction, linked by murder, a story of a buffalo hunting competition between two off the best known, able scouts of the 1860's left more than a few not only questioning the accuracy in the details, but more importantly, wondering

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if the supposed hunt had even taken place. Well before learning of the skepticism others had, I had already dismissed the event as fantasy, merely a fabrication of a prominent self promoter. In the end there would be more questions than answers. Due to the fame of the major participant, few writers would have the audacity to question "royalty," not daring to offend, political correctness at its best. But, there is always a chance to take a second look, to investigate more thoroughly, with time for a rewrite to set the record straight in a story

that first surfaced more than one hundred forty years ago.

Realizing our western experience was about to come to end, this was a chance to make one last stand. It was late winter '89-'90. The fur boom had passed, an abrupt end to an incredible eight year run of bobcat and fox trapping for Judy and me in the California Chaparral along hundreds of miles of coastline. We had spot trapped from just north of Santa Barbara to the Mexican border, loving every minute of it. Though we caught coyotes of course, for the most part we avoided them, except

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when asked. Even in the years when prices were up, 'yotes didn't bring a lot, except for one \$45 dog. With fur prices sliding in '89, we were coming to grips with the reality that we would, more than likely, not be trapping California 'cats another year.

Rather than "sell" the grey fox for a piddly \$5, we kept them, got the lot of 77 tanned, then piecemealed them out at conventions in order to squeeze out a few extra bucks. Small, the western greys are a pretty fox, the fur that had payed for most all of our expenses during our time in Southern California, while plentiful 'cats provided the profit. Trapping in warm country at lower elevations,

our 'cats were comparatively flat, with some semi's mixed in that managed to bring \$225 or better for the well spotted, white bellied toms, accented with an occasional rosette.

The season's catch of 'cats usually brought from \$100 to a \$120 average, so we took a big hit when they fell to \$60 on a grade in 1989. In '90 they were only worth \$30, about what the fox brought on the best years, really not worth trapping. We were offered \$30 on our greys just before the bust by one dealer in '89 and \$31 by another with higher 'cat prices to boot, \$142.50 average to be exact, so we had to take it. The dealer tried to sell his fox for \$32 shortly after and

couldn't get it, so he hung on to them, riding them all the way down to \$25, \$16, \$5, all the way down to pretty much nothing, something we hated to see. I can personally relate to that type of thing, having listened to a "financial wizard" who had us invest in the now defunct Radio Shack that also ended up at an impressive zero.

We knew the "perfect" trapline wouldn't last forever, but that didn't make it any easier to accept. With road closures in the national forest, a drought that reduced the brush to stubble, huge brush fires, along with more competition and fewer 'cats after seven years of trapping, low fur prices were just one part of



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the equation, albeit a large part. Nothing was the same as it had been during the first days in the fall of '82 when two greenhorns from the east and south arrived in southern California looking for "gold," and actually found it. In '82 the grass really was greener on the other side figuratively speaking, while fur was literally everywhere, ready for the taking by anyone able to adapt with ambition, energy and a few footholds. If everything had remained the same as it had been on day one, it's doubtful we ever would have left. Except for one last excursion north to Bodie, it was time to call it quits and put our California traplines behind us, though certainly not by choice.

It had taken a couple of weeks to get into gear that first season, having previously never planted any steel in the far west, except in a brief prelude with a few ill-fated traps set in Baker and San Diego that yielded little more than embarrassment. If in the beginning anyone had asked, I would have readily admitted that I didn't know what the hell I was doing other than feeling my way through unfamiliar country. I'm sure glad Judy didn't know, no reason to cast doubt or worry on blissful happiness to dampen the mood.

When we settled down to some real 'cat trapping, we would catch on quickly. Undergoing a short learning curve after landing in Castaic on the southernmost end of the well-known Grapevine just north of Los Angeles, we were put on the right track, as

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I have often mentioned, by one local trapper's single comment, an all encapsulating one liner that turned us from novices to 'cat trappers in an instant. Our haphazard setting was producing fur, but equally as much or more fur was going by us. We knew it. Fred said, "All you can do is set high and low, right?" It was now crystal clear how to attack the landscape and employ methods even the locals didn't use, methods I had used successfully the preceding year in Alabama. No one would have the edge Judy and I would enjoy from that day forward. As the movie line goes, "You've got to have an edge," Josey Wales.

Judy and I scoured the ridges only to find enough 'cat scats to fill baskets. Many

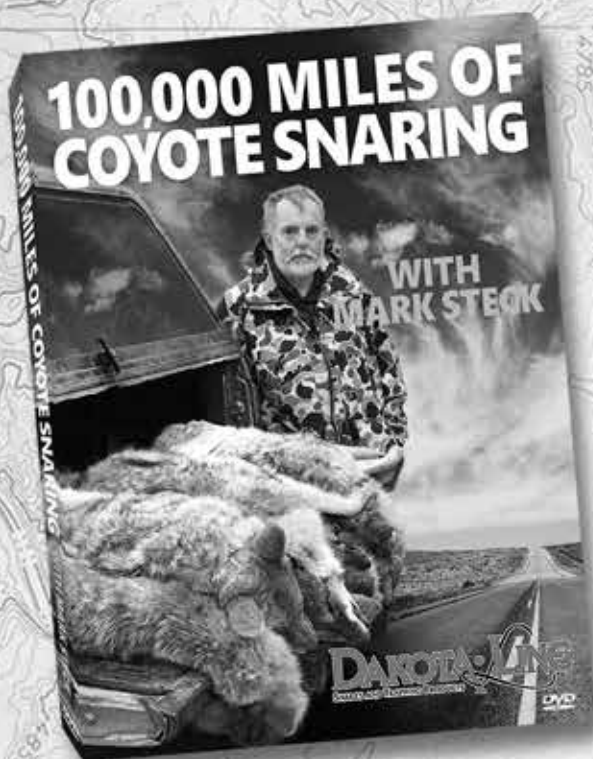
ridges were punctuated with chalky white seemingly ancient droppings, middle aged gray segmented scats and "smoking hot" black and green ones, some still warm I'm sure, with 'cats watching us no doubt. The 'cats had been there for a long time, undisturbed by trappers, while their territories were noticeably small due to the abundance of food, mice, rats, rabbits, you name it. There was no reason to travel long distances when all the food they could eat was close at hand. Sign was easy to find when you knew where to look. Adapting to blind sets made it work like a charm. Once a 'cat was located he was in trouble, not much more difficult than taking beaver once you find a colony and a hard "shiny" run.

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KEY LEARNING POINTS IN THE VIDEO

- Coyote behavior
- Coyote travel ways
- Keying in on the best locations
- Coyote behavior when approaching snares
- Snaring on bare ground verse snow, the huge difference
- Pushing the envelope on exposed snares
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When we found them, we caught them.

Having made a trip with Judy into the Sierra Nevada's, Yosemite, the Bridgeport area earlier that spring, while scouting and sightseeing on our way to a third year to Alaska's Kenai Peninsula to fish for more King Salmon, I decided to make the 330 mile one way trek north to set for 'cats one last time, just because. To digress a bit, actually quite a bit, that was the year local Ford dealer Les Anderson, from Soldotna, Alaska caught the world record 97 pound 4 ounce King while fishing with his wife at Honeymoon Hole early one morning late in May of 1989 on the Kenai River. The word had spread quickly about his giant. We heard the tale the very next day while fishing for lake trout in Teslin Lake, Yukon, a lake we had fished a couple of times on earlier trips. There was speculation that the monster King Salmon might have weighed 100 pounds when first caught, had it not been left in the trunk of the car for most of the day. The interesting part was that Les seemed not to realize just how big the "hog" was. It was only when he showed a friend his catch, who was all but short of breath at the sight of the King, that the fish even got weighed. Had it not gone like it did, it is likely the fish of a lifetime would have been skinned, sliced, chunked and frozen, never recorded as a world record. I believe the mounted fish can be seen at the Soldotna Ford Dealership.

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some high dollar 'cats up in the Sierras, but more than that, I wanted to experience the high country at least once, if only for a few days. At this point Judy had gotten her nursing degree and was working full time in Newhall, so this would be a solo trip for me. Far different from the coastal Chaparral, the Sierras did not present in the same way, a very different terrain, low sage, quite barren in some areas. There were no rolling ridges and washes, just a vast openness in hill sides and brush, minus the obvious trails of which we had grown accustomed in trapping along the coast.

The landscape we had trapped from Alpine on Route 8 east of San Diego up to Santa

Maria above Santa Barbara and points in between west of Oceanside heading over the Ortega Highway to Lake Elsinore, were all similar in nature. We came up with a style of trapping to fit the terrain and then found more terrain to fit our style. Combining the rolling country with water and the right vegetation, usually white sage, was the key to finding 'cats. Much of the time we trapped around 1500 feet, sometimes lower around Fillmore and Santa Paula, but once in a while ventured up to 2,500 to 3,500. Snow came rarely and didn't last long when it did.

I do recall getting 18 inches of wet snow one day at "Grandpa" Ben Gilmours where

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we parked our travel trailer home for several seasons in Hasley Canyon. Much of the snow melted on the ground as it fast as it came, so it didn't pile up to more than 8 or 10 inches. The flat tin roof over Mildred's plants would surely have collapsed had I not shoveled it a couple of times. You can sometimes get away with that kind of non-construction in the west and deep south for a while, but not for minute in the northeast. Though the Gilmours were in their 90's

at the time, I doubt that they had ever seen that much snow.

At any rate, I was on my way up 395 toward Bridgeport, with a plan to camp out in the back of the truck and set a few traps as we had done in the past, but just for a short while. Spoiled by what we had known in southern California, it was a different day having to use lure to bring fur to a set, then hope the wind was right to find a 'cat that was interested, an element of chance of which we were not accustomed. I'm sure this was more like most 'cat lines across America. In the past we had gone to the 'cats, hiked up on the ridges and down in the washes until we found them, setting sign in "gimme sets," which seldom failed. Finding rock outcroppings on the Bodie Road, there was a little sign with places narrow enough to be cinched up tight to put a little more in my favor, just not many of them. Completely new country, with no previous scouting other than

a drive by, combined with low fur prices, there wasn't a lot of incentive to push, but just to enjoy the day, see some new country, while adding another life experience to the repertoire. At least the weather was co-operating as it was most of the time.

It wasn't until after I arrived on site that I began to learn the significance of exactly where I was in this remote area of the far west. This was the historic Bodie Road. Until recent documentaries revealed some of the mysteries of Bodie, most would never have known the town existed. At times we are left to wonder if accounts of the "Wild West" were accurate or instead routinely exaggerated, embellished for benefit of Easterners in the late eighteen hundreds. I guess there is some of each. More than happy to read about gold mines, shootouts and murders, extreme hardships and Indian wars, while living far more mundane lives in the relative comfort and safety of civilization, city dwellers were eager to let the written word take them into the gold country of the Sierras, California, Nevada, minus the worry of getting a bullet in the back. And not to be diminished by any means, there is always danger in a great story that could be stretched as a result of the symbiotic relationship that feeds writers with coins and satisfies the insatiable desire in the reader to know, by filling imaginations with tales about the west, be they fact or fiction.

-Jim

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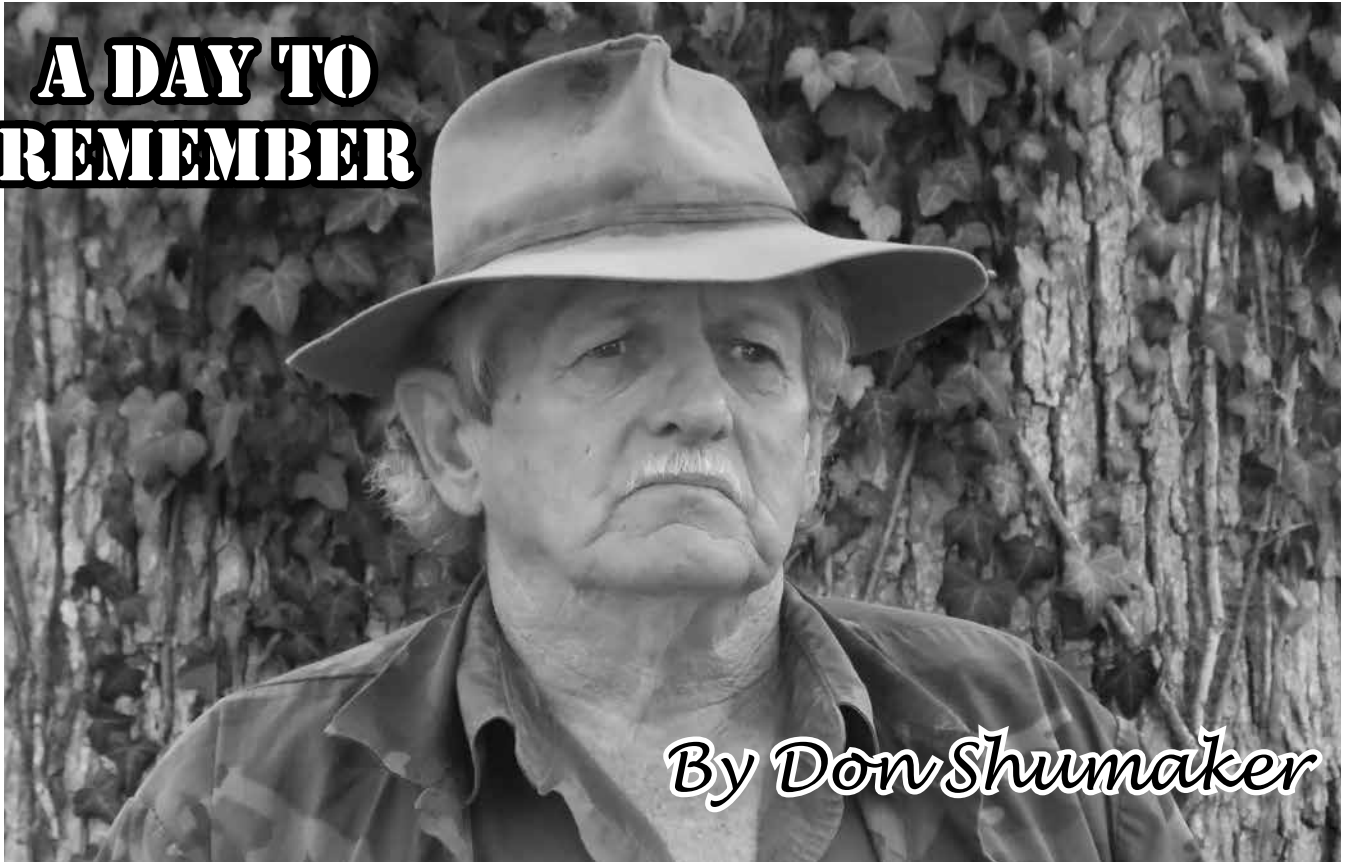
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A DAY TO REMEMBER



By Don Shumaker

The batteries in the old metal Boy Scout flashlight were getting mighty weak as I stumbled across a frozen pasture heading for Charlton's Pond. A reddish tint was appearing in the sky to the east and I would welcome the sun coming up as it was bitter cold. I had 6 or 8 traps set for muskrats around the pond but didn't have any high expectations for catches as I had taken about all of the rats out of this pond having trapped it for about 2 weeks.

I was out of school on Christmas break and was hell bent on getting every trap I owned (about 3 dozen) set and then deer hunt also. I dearly loved deer hunting, coon hunting and squirrel hunting, but trapping literally ruled my very existence and being. My plan was to run

traps early every morning and then hunt the rest of the day. On the warmer nights when the big he-coons would walk I'd take Sam and coon hunt. I was 12 years old that winter and had already trapped for six years having caught my very first animal in a trap (a groundhog) when I was 6 years old on this very farm.

As expected, the traps in the pond produced nothing, as did the 4 sets along the creek that dumped into a smaller pond. My spirits began to sink but then I recalled the 1 mink and 2 coons I had taken out of those 4 sets previously. One of my trapping heroes, E.J. Dailey, always preached that patience, hard work and persistence were necessary virtues for a successful trapper and I wasn't about to

question that man. I liked John Wayne, Micky Mantle and the Lone Ranger, but they were not my true heroes. Grigg, Dailey, Butcher, Arnold, Lynch, Nelson, Mast, Lenon and few others were the men I looked up to.

The second set I checked at the lower pond held a well furred, adult muskrat and my spirits rose. He was caught in a #1 Victor jump trap set at a feed bed. The critter had wrapped around the second stake and drowned as I had planned. None of the other traps in this small pond produced and I only had 2 more traps to check, a couple of mink sets on the creek behind the pond dam.

The first set was where a creek bank had caved in and there was about a 6" opening that gave critters access to the

“cave”, This trap was empty. The second mink set was about 50 yards downstream where a huge sycamore tree grew on the bank’s edge and water had washed out a large space beneath it. I had seen mink tracks twice before trapping season under this old tree in the mud. Lying dead in the shallow water was a big, buck mink! It was the fourth mink I had caught in about 3 weeks of trapping and I was one happy boy. The season before I had caught 3 mink, one of which was caught in the “cave”

behind the pond dam. Look out Dailey and Grigg, this young hillbilly was on a roll!

After remaking the set, I half-walked, half trotted back home (close to a mile), showed Ma my catch, grabbed my little 16-gauge double barrel and headed down the farm road behind our house. Ma gave me 3 or 4 biscuits to stuff into my hunting coat pockets. I had about a dozen traps to check along Gold Mine Creek. After checking the last trap, I’d be about 2 miles from

home and in the vicinity where Pa and other family members would be deer hunting. I was a lucky kid to grow up where I did. Starting at our back yard there was roughly 7,000 acres of nothing but woods, a few fields, old grown up homesteads and no public roads. Logging and farm roads, many of them too rough for vehicular traffic was all there was for access. Numerous creeks and spring fed branches were there along with several ponds and a small lake. It was a paradise for a boy who was totally obsessed with trapping, hunting and fishing.

Nearly 60 years later I can still walk that land and show anyone where I caught minks, coons, muskrats, bobcats and foxes. In later years I caught beavers, otters, coyotes and a bear or two from that area. I know where I killed the biggest buck deer, called in turkeys and some of the old trees where my dogs treed coons are still standing today. I was very blessed to have a father and several uncles who were top notch woodsmen. Pa and Uncle Marshall were mink trappers and I probably knew as much about where to set a mink trap when I was 12 years old as many guys who have trapped for 20 years who didn’t have the opportunity that I was born into. Money wise we were poor people, but we were rich in other blessings and ways.

I checked 2 empty sets along Gold Mine Creek and then cut across overland above the confluence of Gold Mine and Gilliam Creeks. Three

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good mink sets were in place along Gilliam Creek. The first 2 sets were empty but the third held a dark, female mink! The mink was caught in a #1 B&L longspring in a tiny spring run that emptied into Gilliam Creek. I had caught another mink at this location the year before. It was a simple blind set with a few twigs used to narrow it down a bit.

After remaking the set, I washed the sand, silt and mud out of the mink's fur in the larger stream. I shook most of the water out, sat down on a bank and stroked the beautiful, silky fur. I do remember becoming a bit overwhelmed with emotions. This was the first time in my life I had taken 2 mink in one day. I remember thinking that Pa and Uncle Marshall would be mighty proud of me. I always worked hard to prove to them that I could be a real trapper like they were and was worthy of the time they spent teaching me. It saddens me to know that so many young people grow up today and do not have good mentors.

Five mink so far and it was still several days until Christmas! I think I floated on air checking the rest of my sets. What must have been a big coon had gotten into a small #0 jump trap that I had set in a spring seep hole and pulled out – after he had totally demolished a fine mink location. All other traps were empty.

Well before noon I heard a shot up on a ridge bordering the creek and headed in that direction. I hit a logging road and came upon Uncle Marshall gutting a large turkey gobbler. Marshall

killed a lot deer, but he was pure poison on turkeys. "Boy, I'll bet you didn't even catch a coon last night", he said with a big grin on his face.

I unshouldered my Clint Ishman packbasket and pulled out the rat and 2 mink. The old man was never one to show much emotion, but his jaw dropped when he saw my catch.

"Think I'm gonna have to take them traps I gave you back, boy," he said. "There ain't gonna be a mink left in this country!"

Later on, when we got up with Pa, he told Marshall that maybe they should get half of fur money because of their teachings. The three of us skinned the critters out in the woods before we went

to make a deer drive. I was about the proudest boy alive that day.

The wind switched directions before dark that day and it warmed up a bit. After eating supper, doing chores and fleshing and stretching my furs, I headed out to Bryant's old homeplace where a good stand of white oak trees bordered Peyton Creek, figuring a coon might be trying to find a few leftover acorns to fill his belly. Sam hit a hot track, ran it like a champ and treed up an oak tree like a pro that he was. Now I added a prime coon hide to my day's take of fur.

It was a day I'd never forget.

-Don

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10A	Glenn Witchey	Raccoon and Coyote Trapping
11A	Corky Klausing	Snaring
NOON	Jim Cundiff	Southern Beaver
1P	Butch Barhorst	Coyote Trapping
2P	Jeff Dunlap	Mink Trapping
3P	Scott Welch	Trapline Troubleshooting
4P	Dave Ryan / Matt Stabio	Raccoon Trapping
Saturday		
	Presenter	Topic
8A	Ben Boehl	River Trapping
9A	Doug Lee	Colony Trapping
10A	Jason Webster	Predator Trapping
11A	Jeff Robinson	K9 Trapping
NOON	Henry Beecher	Trapping Tips and Tricks
1P	Jacob Barnes	Nuisance Trapping
2P	Clint Locklear	Coyote Trapping
3P	Hal Sullivan	Beaver Trapping
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A REVIEW AND SUMMARY OF FEDERAL COYOTE LURE RESEARCH PART 1

By
Sherm Blom

Although many government and private predator control trappers have conducted their own research, development, and testing of coyote lures since the inception of predator control programs, organized federal coyote lure research was begun during the early 1960's and continued through 2000 by two different federal agencies. One was the Denver Wildlife Research Center (DWRC) in Colorado which operated under the Animal Damage Control (ADC) division of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). In 1985 the ADC division was transferred to Fort Collins, Colorado and renamed the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC). The division name, Animal Damage Control, was also renamed Wildlife Services (WS) during that time. The other agency was the Western Regional Research Center (WRRC) in Albany, California which operated under the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) division of the USDA in cooperation with the University

of California, Davis Campus (UCA-D) which provided graduate students to conduct research projects. Results of both research efforts were published in various scientific journals and in-house reports over the years, and the purpose of this multipart article is to review and summarize all of these reports into one publication. Since I was directly involved in some of these research efforts, I had copies of all those reports, lure formulas, correspondence, etc., but I got rid of all of them when I retired. Therefore, I had to retrieve those reports from other sources in order to write this article. I reviewed each report and tried to sift through and summarize all the pertinent information without the statistical and unnecessary data that would probably not be interesting or understood by most of you readers anyway.

Part 1: Early Lure Ingredient Tests and the Evolution of Volatile Fatty Acid (VFA), Synthetic Fermented Egg (SFE), and Fatty Acid Scent (FAS).

During 1975 Rick Severson, a research technician at the Twin Falls, Idaho field station of the DWRC tested over 100 lure ingredients separately and some in-combination with each other at Logan, Utah field station of the DWRC. Forty-two wild caught male and female coyotes that were kept in kennel pens were used for these tests. Lures were applied to a ½-inch sponge and placed randomly in a test area. Each lure was exposed for 5 minutes to 3 different coyotes and coyotes were rotated during the tests to avoid acclimation to the lure ingredients. After testing, the results of general attractiveness were graded on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the most attractive. Of the following 21 single ingredients listed here, smoked salmon, grease from frying chicken, bacon grease, and real fermented eggs achieved a score of 5. Mink musk rated 4, smoked halibut rated 3 ½, asafetida and musk xylol (white musk) rated 3; muskrat musk, beaver sac oil, African civet musk, zinc valerate, and phenyl

acetic acid rated 2 ½; Tonquin musk (genuine or artificial not specified), rhodium oil, and deer musk (species not specified) rated 2; beaver castor, musk ketone, lovage root (powder, oil, or tincture not specified), and fermented snake oil rated 1 ½; and seal oil rated ½. The rub-rolling response was a definite indication of the overall attractiveness to the lure ingredients during these tests.

Single chemicals such as ammonium valerate, zinc valerate, phenyl acetic acid, musk xylol, musk ambrette, and musk ketone have long been used as

ingredients in coyote lures, but it was not until 1973 that Dr. Peter Savarie, a research scientist at the DWRC, formulated a mixture of chemicals to be used specifically as coyote lure. The lure was a mixture of 6 volatile fatty acids he originally called Coyote Fatty Acids (CFA) which was later called Volatile Fatty Acids (VFA). He got the idea for this formulation from an analysis of the vaginal secretions of rhesus monkeys that had been reported in 1971. He speculated a mixture of these same acids might be attractive to coyotes.

The evolution of

Synthetic Fermented Egg (SFE) resulted from the use of scent station surveys to monitor coyote and other carnivore populations that were developed by Dr. Fred Knowlton at the Logan, Utah field station and Sam Linhart at Denver. The scent stations consisted of a 3-foot circle of sifted dirt or plain sand with the lure placed in the middle of the circle. Fifty scent stations were placed 3/10 of a mile apart on alternating sides of the road for a total survey line of 14.7 miles. Perforated plastic capsules were used as lure holders and the survey lines were run for 5 consecutive days during September. Responses such as tracks, droppings, urination spots, scratching, digging, rub-rolling, and removed and/or chewed capsules were recorded. All signs were swept clean after checking each station and capsules and fresh lure were replaced daily. Initial field tests of this scent station survey method were done in Arizona in 1966 using cotton balls soaked in coyote urine as the lure. Later field tests in Colorado, Texas, and Nevada during 1971 used a commercial Fermented Egg Product (FEP) fly bait as the lure which attracted more carnivore species and therefore was used from then on. The scent station surveys were officially started in September 1972 in 17 western states utilizing 328 survey lines and continued until 1981.

Similar to other fermentation processes used by trappers and lure makers, FEP was subject to batch-to-batch variations which influenced the

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attractiveness and behavioral responses of coyotes and subsequently, the survey results. Therefore, a research effort headed by Roger Bullard, a research chemist at the DWRC, was done to analyze samples of FEP used during 1971-1975 to identify the chemicals and volatiles in it in order to formulate a consistent synthetic lure replacement. From his analysis, 76 volatile chemicals were identified, and 3 distinct chemical fractions were established: fatty acids (77%), bases (13%), and neutrals (10%). The odor of FEP, especially the fatty acids fraction, is similar to several cheeses, especially blue cheese. These acids are also found in the glands and urines of several mammals such as coyote, red fox, Indian mongooses, humans, African lions, weasels, rhesus monkeys, and guinea pigs, just to name a few.

Roger then used a human odor panel of 18 men and women volunteers to compare several mixtures of Synthetic Fermented Egg (SFE) to FEP and match the one that was closest to it in odor. Based on this human panel judges, one formulation was selected for an initial field test. This mixture of SFE was called DRC-6500. Since some of the 70 chemicals in this mixture were expensive, hard to obtain, and difficult and time-consuming to formulate, a simplified mixture of only 7 chemicals was formulated that still represented all the odor profiles of the original DRC-6500 and proved to be 90% as attractive as the original in a field test. This abbreviated SFE was



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Field testing of FEP, VFA, and SFE as well as several other chemical mixtures will be reviewed in part II of this series, but from those field tests, another chemical lure was formulated by Robert Roughton at the Logan, Utah field station of the DWRC during the mid-1970's. This lure was composed of the 10 fatty acids found in SFE (DRC-6500). The lure was named Fatty Acid Scent (FAS) and it eventually replaced SFE as the standard lure used for scent station surveys, even to this day. Concentrated FAS is absorbed into plaster of paris (calcium sulfate) disks that are used as the scent station lure, one disk per station.

The formulas for VFA, abbreviated SFE, and FAS have all been previously published and are included here as follows:

VFA: acetic acid (10%), propionic acid (7%), isobutyric acid (3%), butyric acid (40%), isovaleric acid (30%), isocaproic acid (10%)

SFE: caproic acid (41.8%), butyric acid (35.1%), hexyl amine (7.1%), trimethylamine (25%), aqueous

(7.2%), dimethyl disulfide (0.6%), 2-mercaptoethanol (0.2%), ethyl caproate (8%).

FAS: acetic acid (1.48%), propionic acid (4.42%), isobutyric acid (1.60%), butyric acid (26.70%), isovaleric acid (1.79%), valeric acid (8.14%), isocaproic acid (2.12%), Caproic acid (30.27%), heptanoic acid (12.71%), caprylic acid (10.80%).

SFE is available from most trapping supply dealers who sell lure ingredients. VFA and FAS are available from the USDA Pocatello Supply Depot in both concentrated and diluted forms. They also sell the FAS-scented survey disks. They sell VFA as DRC-6220, Synthetic Monkey Pheromone. They do not accept phone orders, so contact them through their email address: ws.psd@aphis.usda.gov or their Fax number: 208-236-6922 or by mail: USDA Pocatello Supply Depot, 238 E. Dillon St., Pocatello, ID 83201-6623 to obtain quantities sold and prices of these lures.

-Sherm

To be continued in the November/December 2018 issue.

LEGEND

SERIES

Oscar Cronk

An Interview between Bill Falkowski and Oscar Cronk

I can still remember the first time I read the book *They Called Him Wildcat*, the story and legend of V.E. Lynch. His life was everything I wanted mine to be. A trapper, houndsman, and sportsman in the deep rugged, vast Maine wilderness. I read the book cover to cover, and when I was done, I read it again! It was a book I would never forget and to this day, it still remains one of my favorite outdoor books ever written.

While I was only a youngster the first time I read the book, little did I know some forty plus years later, I would get the rare opportunity and privilege to interview the author of this book. Oscar Cronk is one of the true pioneers of the industry that is still around today. The tales that Oscar spun for us, along with the unbelievable set of photos he supplied to us makes this interview one we will not soon forget. A special thanks to Oscar for his generosity, time, and contributions to the trapping industry! Sit back and enjoy this interview with Legendary Trapper Oscar Cronk!

1. What year were you born Oscar, and what state were you living in?

I was born in 1930 in Aroostook County, Maine. I was born in a little town called Haynesville right during the depression.

2. How old were you when you started your outdoor career?

Well, I was probably nine or ten when I started playing

around with trapping.

3. I know you used to dig worms for money, can you elaborate on that?

My worm digging worked real well with my trapping career. I started digging worms in March or April and would dig until about October. The trapping season would come in and I was all through digging worms. Wiscasset, the town where we live, was called the worm capital of the world. There were six or seven shippers and these worms went all over the country. There were two types of worms, a bloodworm and a sandworm. I made good money back then. My brothers and I were digging together. I would start digging when the tide was out, and just before the water would come back in, the worms would sense that, and they would start coming up. Your back was down all the time, and if your hoe wasn't moving you weren't making money. I dug up until 1975 and our big business was built in December of 1971. I couldn't dig anymore. My wife said, "You have to decide if you want to be a worm digger or an outdoor supply dealer". As I got better at it, I came up with a system. I would dig 500 worms and give my back a break and have a candy bar or some crackers. Then I would dig another 500. The most worms I ever dug was 3100 and that's a lot of worms! They were paying \$1.40 for 100 worms the year I got out of the service. When I retired in 1975 I think it was up

to \$2.50 for 100 worms.

4. Did you have any family members that were also outdoor enthusiasts?

They hunted and fished, but they never trapped like I did. All the way back to my grandfather who trapped things like muskrats and weasels as a boy, but he never got into it like I did. What really fascinated me, when I was five years old, and I can remember it as plain as day was an old Indian trapper who would come in with his nephew. They were trapping beaver, and it was cold. Mother would make him a tea or coffee, and he had a .22 revolver on his side. He could see me, I was eyeing that pistol. I had a little toy pistol at the time because I was only five years old. He said to me, "Let's trade pistols, you take mine and I'll take yours". Boy did I think I was something big then. I believe it was a single shot pistol, and from then on, I was fascinated with trapping.

5. How old were you when you started trapping and were you living in Maine at the time?

I went into the service when I was eighteen, but I trapped before that of course. I came back out in 1950 and from then I became a professional trapper. I trapped for money. I went all over the state, and by 1968 I could catch any animal. I was good trapper by then and I was lucky enough to tie in with a guy by the name of Vincent Hinks. He was one of heck of a sportsman, trapper, and guide. I had a lot of questions for



Catch from the remote northern Maine trapline circa 2005

him and I watched what he was doing. I saw him go through a weak spot in the ice one time way up in the St. John Allagash country some of the roughest country in Maine that I trapped for more than thirty years. He showed me exactly what to do when you break through the ice. The same thing happened to me only I had snowshoes on. I was miles from camp and the temperatures were well below zero. If I hadn't learned that trick from old Vince, I could have been in serious trouble.

6. I know you're married, but tell us about your wife Edie and do you have any children?

We don't have any children together. I was married once before. I have daughter and she's 61. My wife Edie is an outdoor gal. She's trapped with me. She trapped with me one winter full time. She would cut all the poles and fencing sticks for my sets and I would be chopping the hole. We were married back in 1960 so we've been married quite a long time. She's a good

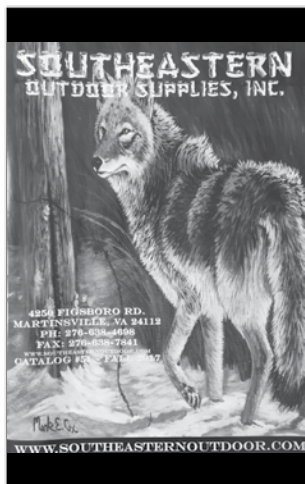
woman...a tough woman that's for sure.

7. How old were you when you started to get interested in hunting with hounds?

I was twenty-one I think. I had a hound but I didn't know anything about training them. I think it was two or three years later, and I bought one of the best hounds I've ever had. I wouldn't have bought him, but the guy who had him got caught drinking and driving and a combination of things got him to sell the hound to me. Back then in 54' you could buy a good dog for a hundred dollars. I paid three-hundred for that one, but he was well worth it, a thousand probably. He was a Bluetick, and boy did he have a good bloodline.

8. What is your favorite breed of hound?

I really fancy Blueticks, but I always tell people it's not the breed of dog, it's the dog itself or what he or she can do that really makes the dog. I had a Walker Bluetick cross, and he treed every cat, they never got



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away from him. I never shot a cat on the ground with him. He put them up every time. He was a semi-silent trailer. He wouldn't say a word until he was just about on top of the cat, and then he'd open up and scare them half to death and put them right up the tree.

9. What breeds of hounds have you hunted with?

I have hunted with just about every breed. I have one hound today, and he's a cross. His father was Beagle and Plott. The mother was a Bluetick, so he has some really good blood.

10. What or who got you

Oscar Cronk carried this heavy load five miles through six inches of snow. A third pack is resting on the bumper of the 1935 Pontiac. Ora Stewart loaded me up and I went two and a half miles before resting on a stump. I didn't dare take it off my shoulders because I wouldn't be able to get it back on alone. (Fall of 1951)



interested in the lure making business?

Ed Howe lived about twenty miles from Wiscasset, and I used to buy all my trapping supplies from him as a kid. In 1938 he bought V.E Wildcat Lynch's formulas. Ed sold them from 1938 up until 1961. He sold me the formulas and that got me started, but I didn't know anything about making lures. You really need to know the strength of the ingredients you're putting together. Walter Arnold the legend who had been in the business since 1918 left the settled country and had a camp way up north. I wrote him a letter telling him what I had done, and I went up to see him. He put the question to me and asked if I wanted to buy his business. I had no idea I would buy his business, but I did, and bought all his formulas, and lure ingredients. He had a big notebook with all kinds of information in it. Even if you have formulas, you really don't know what you're doing until two or three years into it, you get the hang of it. I started making my own lures after that.

11. Tell us, how was Walter Arnold to work with? What influence if any did he have on the style of lures you make?

Well, he had a lot to do with it. I knew what he used for preservatives and for a base, and I used the same things he used. I experimented a bit. I looked at what he had and I would try something a little bit different. Every once in a while, you'd hit

it. He had a lure called XXX. I added a few things to it, and it's what I now call Allagash Fur Call. I call it that, because that's the area that I trapped for years. Tough, cold, hard conditions. When you get a lure that can stand up to those types of conditions, you've really done something. It's one of my best sellers.

12. What year did you write your first book?

I wrote the Lynch book back in 1980. My next two books were trapping books. One was on coon methods and the other on muskrat methods. I found that after I wrote the Lynch book, it appealed not just to trappers, but also to hunters and outdoorsmen in general. It was a great book and did very well.

13. I know you have several books; tell us a little bit about each of them.

The first book was on coon, and at the time, coon were bringing good money back then somewhere in the forty to forty-five-dollar range. I had hunted them with hounds for years and trapped them in large numbers. I sat down, outlined my chapters, and began writing. I did the same thing with the muskrat book. I wrote the fourth book on well-known trapper Pete Rickard. I covered his entire life and it also was a good book. The Lynch book was most captivating mainly due to his lifestyle. I lived and did many of the same things he did, and when you can do that, it makes the passion you put into a



Oscar and his female bluetick Fly, she killed this cat by herself.

book that much stronger.

14. I know you have a wide range of lures and animal scents covering a wide variety of species. Is there one specific lure you are most proud of?

I would say the Allagash Fur Call but the Musky Musk Call lure for mink is really a good one. There are very few lures that will actually attract a mink, but they will come to this one!

15. Did you do a lot of trapper's conventions?

I went all over the state for quite awhile. I made a lot of great friends.

16. I know your wife Edie is your partner in the business,

tell us the secret to making a husband and wife business a success!

Well, we don't say this is your job, or this is my job. Working together is the key. Many times, there are jobs we both can do, but one of us is busy, so the other one does it.

17. Tell us about your Maine trapline? How big is it, do you still do it, and when did you start it?

Of course, we had the business, so I had to be around to make the lures and do the advertising. I was glad my wife could just pick up on the business when I would go trapping. At one time we had six or seven people working for us. We had a mail

order business and were sending catalogs all over the world. She was the general manager and ran the business. When I was longlining, I was using 250-300 traps. Location and habits are the keys to success in trapping. I was a great blind setter for mink, but I found that I wasted a lot of time looking for that perfect blind set. After I learned the habits of the mink, I started using bait and lures, and my mink catch went up. The more traps you have out, the more animals you'll catch. Longlining takes dedication and hard work. Weather can never be a factor when you're doing it. You have to go out no matter what. I always kept a log book of my sets, because when you have 250-300 sets, there's just no way to remember all of them. Keep

it simple, put in long hours, and put out a lot of traps. I did mainly water trapping, but when I went North, then I had a mixed bag line consisting of bobcat, fox, coyote, fisher, and marten. When I was beaver trapping, it was pretty thick country, so I couldn't use a snowmobile. I used snowshoes. I trapped with Vincent Hincks and a game warden once told me, he was the most efficient trapper he'd ever seen. When you're longlining, you can't waste time and along the way, you find little tricks that really save you time.

18. What is your best year trapping as far as numbers go?

I think one year I took 58 marten and like before, I had no preparation. I went in cold, and

just started trapping.

19. What is your best year hunting with hounds?

I never really had big numbers of animals with hounds because I was always trapping, but my biggest year was nine bobcats, and I've had years where I gotten 150 coon. It's all about how much time you have. If you can only do it part time, you will never have really large numbers.

20. What is your favorite animal to trap?

If I had to pick one, it would be the mink. That animal is the one I decided that I really wanted to learn how to trap well. Back in the 40's, mink were bringing thirty-five to forty dollars. I learned how to blind set mink

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from an old guy who was an expert blind setter. I learned how to blind set, and years later, I learned their habits, and started using bait and lures, and my catch went up.

21. I know you were president of the Maine Trappers Association, can you tell us about your time in that position?

I went into the Maine Trappers back in 1963. I took it over in 1964. When I went in, there were a hundred members I think, but only a handful of those members actually trapped. I retired after 14 years, and when I left, there were over 1200 members.

22. What year were you inducted into the Maine Trappers Hall of Fame?

September 6th, 1997, I'm also in the Trappers Hall Of Fame and this is nationwide. I was inducted back in 2016.

23. What does the future hold

for Cronk's Lures? Do you have any plans to retire?

Well, I'm 88 I suppose I should be thinking about it pretty soon. I'd rather not sell my lures if they were going to cheapen them. If they are going to cut ingredients to make them cheaper, I'm not going to do it. They are good lures, they are expensive to make, and I'm really proud of them.

24. Do you have one specific achievement that you are most proud of?

Well, two things actually, the first one is taking our state trappers association from a handful of real trappers to 1200 trappers fourteen years later is something to be proud of. Secondly being a member of the statewide organization called the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine or SAM for short. I know to of two times that if I hadn't been there, the organization would have went under.

25. If you could pinpoint one thing that was responsible for your success in the outdoor world Oscar, what would it be?

Well, I think being honest, telling it the way it is, and working hard. Our lures are responsible for a lot of our success. We are in stores like Cabela's, and L.L. Bean. Our lures are everywhere!

26. What do you think the future of trapping and hound hunting hold for the next generation?

I think the future belongs to the hunters and the trappers. The future of guns is the NRA. If we didn't have the NRA to fight for us, we wouldn't have the right to bear arms, and it shocks me at how many hunters and trappers are not members. I always tell people, "It's a good thing a few of us belong to the NRA, because if we didn't, you wouldn't have your guns".

-Bill & Oscar

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Young Trapper Spotlight

Youth Writing Contest 2nd Place Winner

Josiah Hoover

Trapping has been my favorite hobby since I was eight years old. Now, six years later I still look forward to every season with last season being the most enjoyable one of all. I start trapping around the middle of November. My two favorite sets are “the dirt hole set” and Mark Zagger style “pipe dream” set.

We have about thirty foot traps, mostly 1.5 Dukes. We also have a few dog proof coon traps and No. 2 Duke’s for coyotes. I use a dozen different lures with my favorites being Carman’s Canine Call, Renno’s Stealth Paw, and Eliminator.

On November 17, 2017 my younger brother Jonathan and I set the traps. We had boiled the traps the day before, so we were all ready to roll. We trap at six different farms all within one mile of our place. The first checking we were up at 4:30 and caught eight opossums, one coon, and two skunks. It was a little disappointing to see all those opossums grinning up at me from some of my best sets, but I made sure they paid with their hide. My disappointment did not last long as soon we where catching a fox nearly every other day for a few days. Our best catch was on December 12: one fox and one coyote. The coyote weighed thirty-seven pounds and was a male. I caught a female not far

from that set two days later.

I did not set any coon traps because of the low market and they are not my favorite animal to flesh. I did catch a fair amount that wandered in my fox sets.

I made a “skunk injector” so I could kill my skunks without them spraying. Then I tried collecting the essence. I would say it was a 50% success.

One night Jonathan and I decided to go deer spotting. We headed out to the back field with our Gater and spotlight. The stars were out but the deer were not. We had one more field to spot, the middle L.P., when we saw movement in the tall grass. A skunk! I had picked up a few skunks by the tail before, but Jonathan wanted to give it a try. So we hopped off the gator, turned it off, but didn’t turn the lights off. While I flashed the spotlight in the confused skunks face, Jonathan sneaked up, grabbed the tail, and jerked it up. We decided to take it home so we could collect its essence for trapping lure. While I held the skunk out over the back of the gater, Jonathan tried starting it but the battery had drained. So, Jonathan would cross than I would hand the skunk over to Jonathan so I would cross. When we got home, the bewildered skunk still did not seem to know what to think.

While I was holding it, Jonathan tried to tie it with some baler twine. He accidentally left one end of the string dangle down and the skunk gave that string a quick jerk with its front feet and, you guessed it! Right square in my face with plenty of extra force at close range! If you ever had a mixture of gas, hot pepper, and over ripe fox urine squirted right in your face, you know how it felt. If a skunk ever smiled, that one did. It waddled off with a smile on it’s face thinking, “thanks for the ride!” After I scrubbed my head in tomato juice I didn’t smell too bad.

This was the first year I did all my fur handling. I learned from reading Keith Winkler’s book “Raw Fur Handling at its Best” and I can recommend that book to anybody. I stretch my furs on bass wood boards. I am getting a friend of mine to tan them for me.

I ended the season with these animals; seven fox, two coyotes, twenty opossums, five skunks, and ten raccoons. I also trap groundhogs during the summer and over the last few years caught about 500.

Like everyone else, my favorite part about trapping is to outwit a nice red fox. Hope you all break a record next season like I’m hoping to!

-Josiah Hoover, Age 14

Trapper's World Classic

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS-PRIVATE LIFE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BOBCAT

By John Ehn

I have trapped, snared, and shot most of the wild animals in the U.S. and in good old fashion way of practical experience I learned about them. During this same time, over 30 years, I have been an eager and constant reader, studying everything I could find about animals native to the U.S. and ways of taking them. Of course, actually working on these animals right where they live gives me first hand information on where they live, what they are, what they do, and how they do it. This seeing it with my own eyes showed me some things that I never saw described clearly in print, and some that I have never read about at all. Being particularly interested in what concerns cats, I spent much time on them. I found that all writers of cat talks, be they short or tall, writing long or short talks of short tail cats, bobcats, lynx cats, or wild cats seem to differ a lot on just what the cats are, what they do and if they really cut similar cat capers in distant places.

The trapper in New England know how the meows meander and what they do along his trapline trails there, but the trouble is that the only way he

has of knowing how cats are scratching in Calif., Fla., or some far away pussy pastures is by reading what trappers from such places write about them. Legend has it that cats, long and short tailed alike, have nine lives, all of this and more, too, has been written up by cat catchers, most of them having had experience with his home cats only. Maybe it's all for the best that cat chasers scattered all over Canada and the U.S. can't get together and have

a cat convention. We might fight like the cats themselves, because trappers can't agree on many subjects relative to cats and their relatives. I mean relatives of the cats not the trappers. This cat controversy rages around questions like: "Do cats kill deer?" and "Is a bobcat the same as a lynx cat?" Also, "Is a lynx cat similar to a Canada lynx?" and so on.

Well, I have caught these cats in Michigan, Wisconsin,



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Georgia, Florida, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, California, Old Mexico, and various other places. And I'll tell you what I found out about them. To begin with, the big Canada lynx resembles other short tailed wood cats some; but this longer legged, larger species had ear tassels and feet at least twice as big as those on bobcats. The fur is worth several times as much as any other cat fur and besides the Canada lynx doesn't exist at all over most of the U.S. Any in the U.S. would be in areas along the U.S.-Canada boundary. Reports of lynx being taken in the U.S. by professional trappers who would be sure to know the difference between lynx and bobcats are few and far between. A few other cat-killers find out what kind of bush cat they have when they sell the skin. Then many found out "fine lynx skins" are at once classified for what they actually are, usually plain bobcat fur. So in the U.S., Canadian lynx are pretty much out of the picture.

Except for mountain lions, any long tailed kittens are easily eliminated. Other long tailed cats brought into camp are apt to be some brand of house cat gone wild; likely a cat in whose veins flow blended bloods of many nocturnal adventures, for cats are great mixers. I have caught some strange looking long tailed wild cats in my traps, often many miles from any human habitation. And I have traveled long distances to look at "queer cats" caught by other trappers, always hoping to find a house cat cross breed with a bobcat. But I



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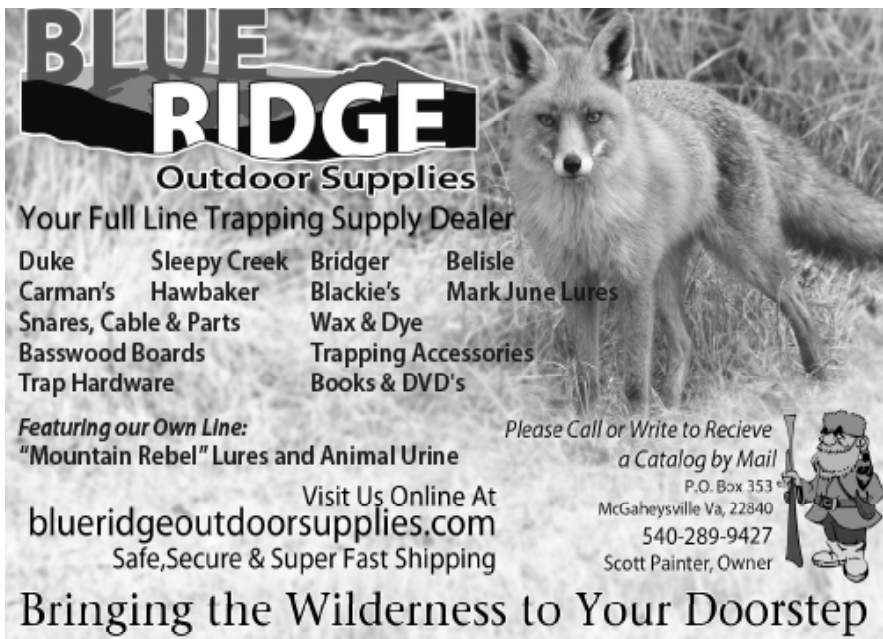
never did. They were all house cats. Some fuzzy faced Persian and mongrels were enormous sized for house cats, and rolling fat showed that they knew how to get meat to eat.

One of these predatory part Persian giants was killing lambs. I saw no reason why he couldn't he was bigger than the lambs. Pound for pound, cats will kill anything. The definite indication of past Persian influence in absolutely wild house cats reminds me of a poem that will never be very popular with the proud owners of perfumed Persian pets who can't believe it could happen. But according to part of the poem, "In later days when the kittens came to the cat of pedigreed Persian fame, they weren't Persian at all. They were black and tan, and she told them their daddy was a traveling man." Well, it could be and I always say that a little high class poetry never hurt anyone, including trappers of the short tailed cats running wild in the U.S. the bobcats, wild cats, and lynx cats.

Yes, believe it or don't,

they are all the same breed of cats, differing in size, texture of fur and color, much like rabbits, squirrels, deer and other animals of the specie differ scattered over the vast U.S. Cats don't have to be grown thousands of miles apart to be quite a lot different from each other either. I have taken cats right on the same trapline that didn't look alike any more than Michigan, Florida, and California cats. Most bobcats are mottled or spotted, but a few are just plain shades of yellow and grey with hardly any spots at all. The ear tassels aren't very big or long on any of them. About an inch in diameter at the tassel base on the tip of the cats ear and two inches in length is about the limit. Most ear tassels are much smaller than this.

Cats are uniform in one respect: They are about the most evenly tempered animal I ever saw, mad all the time. Bobcats on an average don't have as big families as house cats. Many litters are from one to five kittens. But they do increase much faster in the southwest than in colder countries. Seems likely



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that the mild climate favors the cat population and also rodents, a main bobcat food which is plentiful in the southwest.

I never found many cats in Michigan or Wisconsin in entire counties scarcely any. No concentration of cats anywhere. Forty to fifty in an entire season was a high catch; and this when I was running long trapline of over

six hundred traps. Compare this to the 76 bobcats I trapped in a single month in Calif. The best fine furred cats just don't grow everywhere. Areas that have a combination of silky furred mamma cats and their gentlemen friends living on easy to get food in a climate cold enough to encourage heavy underfur are limited. But these best areas

produce skunks that sell for real money. Up to \$16.00 each for top Calif. Cats-season of 1942-43. For Calif. weather ranges all the way from hot to almost as cold as any found in the U.S.

Do bobcat kill deer? Well, some bobcats don't kill any deer simply because there aren't any deer in the area where the live. However, they would kill deer if there were any there you can bet on that! I have found some heavy concentrations of cats in places where there were no deer at all. But there was plenty of cat feed such as rodents, rabbits and some birds. But where deer and cats live on the same ground, cats always kill some deer. In places where the winters are mild and there is little or no snow fall the deer do not yard up in thickets, but remain spread over their range the entire year. In such deer country, the cats kill mostly fawns and sick or feeble old deer. Fawns are easy prey for bobcats, and this is likely one of the reasons why there are no deer in thousands of square miles of range suitable for them. And some of these places adjoining areas where deer do exist right now. I have never yet seen any deer at all in areas where I found lots of bobcats. Many deer can live where there are only a few bobcats, but a few deer just can't live and increase where there are a lot of bobcats.

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where deer yard in winter. Easy to get cat food, such as the Kangaroo rats, prairie dogs, gophers, ground squirrels, and many other rodents that are so common in the west and southwest, don't exist there at all. These rodents are mostly night prowlers and so are the cats. They are out at the same time, making it easier for the cats to get them. The only rodents that live in the north are mice, moles, and squirrels and no great concentrations of these anywhere. Squirrels are few and hard for the cats to get. Chipmunks live mostly on the ground and in fallen logs. But all these animals are day travelers when the cats aren't around very much and can't see very good anyway. In winter, wood mice, moles, and chipmunks live mostly beneath the snow. The tree squirrels live near their stores of food in hollow trees, coming out but little in severe cold weather and so the main cat food in the winter is rabbits and deer.

During the short summer, the cats also kill many birds. Bobcats, like wild house cats are natural born bird hunters. Sharp tailed grouse, prairie chicken, partridge, and many other kinds of northern birds nest on the ground. Mother birds on the nest and hovering their young, are easy cat food. It is the habit of these birds to walk around feeding in the cool of the evening just before dark. Some of them including sharp tailed grouse and prairie chickens spend the night right on the ground where darkness overtakes them, huddled together for warmth in the grass or leaves.

This leaves a fresh bird trail for the bobcats to follow when they come out to hunt for their day begins as the birds day ends. At the end of the trail the cat finds the bird, befuddled with sleep, cold and hampered by the dew, wet grass, and vegetation they have bedded down in. They are soft, easy prey for the cats. Some ground birds, ducks, sand pipers, snipe, etc., go south in the winter, but partridge, grouse, and prairie chicken remain. These burrow into the snow on the ground and are still handy for the cats to bet at. I spent most of my life in the

open and often see the scattered fur and feathers where these wood tragedies has happened.

For these reasons the bobcats never get very plentiful in the north. Food isn't easy to get at all times, especially during the long cold winters, litters of young are smaller on an average than in the south and southwest (usually from one to four kits) and to make it yet tougher on the cats, they have a price on their heads in the way of bounties in most northern states. Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Maine, and any place that has

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bounty on coyotes also take cats. In winter the trapper is glad to get the cat skin and in the summer, trappers kill them because they are so difficult to release if he doesn't know how. Mouths of raccoon, badger, beaver, otter, coyotes and such animals are dangerous, but they can't hurt a fellow much with their feet and so they can be released from the traps or taken captive a lot easier than bobcats. Bobcats can bite as good as any of these animals and they also have a set of claws on

each foot that can cut and slash a man like a handful of small knives.

However, after years of capturing animals for exhibition for gas stations, breeders, shows, wild life exhibition at Michigan state fair, etc., I have developed a system of handling them that I have written up in a book form and is now on the market. I capture bear, lions, wolves, coyotes, bobcats and smaller animals and put them in my cages without tying their mouth or feet

at all.

Here is something I found out myself about bobcats that I have never seen in print and furthermore, I have never heard that anyone else knew it except myself at the time I will now write about, which was the winter of 1934. One of the biggest deer yards in Michigan is at Cusine, southeast of Munising on Lake Superior. In December and January of 1934, deer were being found dead in the yard. No marks found on them and no one knew what caused them to die. In a big deer yard where hundreds of deer are concentrated in a comparatively small area of thick swamp, some die of many causes. Old age and various deer ailments, old gun shot wounds, and even starvation when the supply of brouse that can be reached from the rails runs short but all contribute to the mortality rate. Usually the caretaker is an expert on deer and their troubles and will have a pretty good idea of the cause of death.

I was a Michigan State predatory animal hunter at the time and stationed at Basswood in Iron Co. John Rintala, one of the very best predatory animal trappers I ever had the pleasure of working with, already had traps and snares set for wolves, coyotes and bobcats in and around the Cusine deer yard. I started work with him there in February 1934. Two days before I arrived, John had found a small deer dead right on his snow shoe trail with no marks to indicate what killed it. A bobcat track was in the snow alongside

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the trail leading away from the dead deer. John suspected the cat might have had something to do with the deers demise, but he was unable to find even one drop of blood; he was unable to determine just how the cat could have killed the deer. He finally decided that the cat had come up his snow shoe trail where passing deer had trampled out the cat track, sniffed at the dead deer, and then plunged off the trail into the swamp. We went to the deer but in two days that had gone by since John had first found it, the yard caretaker and state specialist on deer diseases had also found it. These two men had split the deer's face and chest, probably examining it and taking samples of lungs and nose tissue for laboratory analysis to determine if nose or lung parasites or disease had killed the deer.

I was sure the cat had killed the deer, and at once skinned the back of the deers head and its shoulders to find the cat signs. I found what I was looking for alright for there in the top corners of its skull where bites that had gone right thru into the brain, and also single claw puncture on one shoulder. In the years I have trapped around deer yards and elsewhere, I have found many deer killed by cats which had not eaten a single bite of meat off them. I set traps there, but the cat rarely comes back, so I believe they killed the deer just for fun, much like a house cat will kill rodents and rabbits and not eat them. Once a wild house cat came into our chicken house at night and killed 44 chickens

while I was sleeping some distance away. I finally heard the uproar and killed him in the act. He was having fun in his cattish way.

I cite this single deer of the many I have seen killed by bobcats to stress how extremely difficult it is to know what deer are killed by cats. But here is how they do it. It has been a common belief that the cats jump on the deer from trees, but I have seen only a little evidence of this. More often they sneak up and jump on the deer when they are lying down and kill the deer in the following manner. Clinging as only a cat can cling, with the cat's front feet on and around the deer's head and throat and his hind feet a straddle of the deer's front shoulders. The cat bites the deer in the top corners of the skull or in the back of the

neck. In winter, when the snow is deep, the deer killed were mostly fawns of the previous spring, not yet a year old. If the cat is a big one and the deer small, the cat often kills the deer at once right where the attack was made. Larger deer scramble to their feet and race madly away carrying the cat a short distance before the cat can get in a killing bite. I have seen the signs so plainly in the snow, that I know exactly what happened. Deer yards are mostly heavy brush, and I saw signs where some of the larger deer had run thru thick brush and underhanging limbs which raked the cat off. In these cases the deer had got away, maybe to die later if severe bites had been inflicted.

-John Ehn

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ONE METHOD FOR MAKING WAXED DIRT

By Tom Parr

There are several ways to make no freeze dirt for trap bedding: solar, using a heat lamp or using the oven are examples. The method that I am suggesting in this article uses the sun (solar) and I am not saying that it is a better way, but it works good for me.

The most important ingredient is a hot sunny day (I do stress sunny) in the high 80's or 90's, I often say – about the only thing a 90 degree day is good for is to make no freeze dirt! The drawback to this method is the weather needs to co-operate and for the last few years July /

will need are:

1. Black plastic oil drain pans from your local auto supply store, (I use 10 of these which will make approximately 20 quart bags of no freeze dirt).
2. Dirt sifter -I found a dual screen sifter that fits on top of a 5gallon bucket (In photo above) Got it at a trapping convention many years ago but don't know the name nor who made it, sorry.
3. Small shovel
4. Rubber trapping gloves
5. 10lb. bag of Flake Wax. (can be purchased at several trapping

August have been the months that the conditions are right, at least in my part of the country (Ohio).

The items you



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supply businesses)

6. Cup to scoop the wax

7. Box of Quart size Ziploc double zipper freezer bags.

Gather up a quantity of good dirt that is found in the area you are trapping. I gather my dirt at a convenient time and keep the dirt pile covered with a tarp and it is ready whenever the temperature and sun is available. Another way would be to go to the area where you have the right type of dirt, with the 10 plastic oil pans (or whatever number you need), a small shovel and your dirt sifter, fill each pan with about 2 ½ inches of sifted dirt (don't fill to top as it may not melt the wax throughout) When the right day arrives I have everything ready and by noon the sun is directly overhead and the melting begins. Add approximately one cup (8 to 10 oz.) of flake wax to each pan and with a gloved hand stir the dirt and wax thoroughly and continue this every hour throughout the afternoon.

By late afternoon the white wax flakes have melted into the dirt, which has now become slightly darker in color. Now you are ready to fill each Ziploc bag approximately two thirds full using a large spoon, scoop, etc.. Note- leave the bags open overnight in a cool area (make sure there are no heavy odors in room that the dirt can absorb) If you seal while hot it can mold, trust me, I have done it!

Before I seal the cooled bag, I place a pan cover (I like the Barker rubber pan covers) in the



The dirt setting out in the sun to melt in the wax.

bag. Now I have the trap bedding dirt and pan cover adequate for one set ready to go. When in use and after bedding this dirt under and over the trap I will usually sift a very light covering of dirt from around the set over the darken wax dirt to blend it in better and you are set to go.

Many trappers place the finished waxed dirt into a large bucket and simply use what is needed at a set from the bucket. No problem with that, but the

reason I use the quart Ziploc bags is that I have enough dirt/pan cover for one set and it is all placed in my trap bag with trap, hammer, etc. and I don't have to carry the bucket with me.

-Tom

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When I first dabbled with the basics of this lure, my goal was to create an all natural coyote food call lure for late season work on paranoid, pressured, trap shy coyotes. Once I accomplished that I kept it under my hat as an advantage in my personal arsenal of coyote medicine with the exception of handing out a few samples to close friends and men who I knew were very capable trappers. Word soon spread and demand grew to the point where I needed to either shut everyone off or go full bore and put it on the market. I decided the latter.

The base of this lure is a blend of fox and coyote stomachs and contents aged five years in just the right conditions, which was a popular bait with some of the old time canine trappers years ago. However, this is just a start of what the make up of this fine lure consists of. I added a host of other natural musks and food ingredients plus a somewhat unorthodox yet natural ingredient that really triggers some serious digging from foxes and coyotes. Very edible to canines prompting them to lick, chew, and dig. Although a food based lure, it also has a glandular side as well as a strong curiosity element making it effective at practically any type of set, anywhere, anytime. The closest thing to an unparalleled coyote attractor I have ever used, with a strong attraction to foxes as well as being a proven performer on bobcats. My personal #1 go to coyote lure that is sure to become the same for many other trappers across the country. A heavy paste lure that is good all season.



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DOG PROOF TRAPPING SIMPLIFIED

By Shon Ingram

Dog proof trapping is the newest type of technique in the trapping world. Its design was incorporated many years ago but within the last ten years, many trap companies have stepped into the making and selling of dog proof traps. All have the same basic design, with a tube and a trigger system at the bottom that closes a ring around the coons arm when he sticks his paw into the trap for a goody. Some traps feature a pull trigger while others have both a push and pull design. Manufacturers of the dog proof include Duke, Freedom Brand, PCS, Featherlight and others.

Just like any other trap, location is key. Don't let the simple design of the DP trap fool you. You can't just randomly stake some traps into the ground and hope to have dozens of coon the next morning. You have to set this trap where the coon are, whether it be the location of feeding, denning or points of travel. The main areas that you should focus on is trails, waterways and dry land, specifically high ridges where boar coon will travel. Also during the breeding season setting on two track roads can be an advantage. Remember that a coon is opportunistic. They, like any animal, will travel the path of least resistance. During the breeding season, boar coon will travel long distances to breed females. Traveling a roadway makes sense, just like it would to me or you. A DP trap is not going


to pull a coon off a given course so you have to put it right under his nose. Being that coon are inquisitive and gluttons for food, they will investigate the smell coming from the tube and there you have him.

There are numerous ways to anchor a dog proof trap. One of my preferred methods is placing them on a cable and securing it to a tree. Simply loop the cable around the tree and attach to the trap with a quick link. Another way is with the earth anchor, but you need to make sure the anchor is set well into the ground and will not pull out. Other methods include using rebar stakes pounded into the ground. As I get older I prefer cabling rather than pounding stakes or anchors. The key to all these methods is the make sure they are secure. A coon is a very strong animal. I have seen them literally shred a tree trying to get loose from a trap.

Coon buckets are a pretty easy way to get the coon to areas you want them to be in large numbers. Again, and I know I keep harping on this, but it has to be on location. You can't just put a bait bucket in the middle of nowhere and hope to have coons there the next week. You have to set them up on trails between denning areas and water or on other travel ways. There are many baits that you can use. Some people use corn. I have found that floating catfish food works the best. Sometimes I will

mix the two together. The key is to have the buckets in place and working for many weeks before you begin trapping the area. Then place your DP's on the trails going to the buckets. You do not want to just surround the coon bucket with DP's as your location will go dead once the animals encounter others trapped where they are feeding. Also putting a camera on the site helps to identify how many animals you may have visiting before setting your traps on location. The type of coon bucket that I use consist of a 5 gallon bucket with a hole cut into the lowest point of the side of the bucket. A short piece of PVC is glued into the hole so that the coon can reach in and get the bait. Some people have used deer feeders but in my area they seem to attract more bear than coon. Another suggestion is to make sure that your bucket is attached securely to a tree with straps or bungee cords. Otherwise you will have buckets and bait scattered everywhere. Finally check your local baiting laws to make sure baiting is legal for trapping season. If it coincides with deer season, I wouldn't suggest hunting near the bait locations.

Bait and lure are a major consideration when using the dog proof trap. Remember that bait is something that an animal wants to eat. Lure is something that draws the animal to the location or close enough that he can smell the bait. When using dog proofs I suggest that you use a bait and lure combination. For example, I will use English Mountain Lures Mini Bear Crunch in the tube



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and then smear Smoky Lust on the rim. The coon is being drawn closer to the trap by the scent of the lure and then when he gets there he smells the different scents that make up the bait. In the tube his arm goes. You can be as simple as you want with baits. Some people use fish, peanut butter, marshmallows, etc but to quote my friend and mentor Ron Jones you must apply the 80/20 rule. You will only catch

the 80% young and dumb coons on store bought bait. It's those big 4x boars and sows that you will have to use the commercial lure and bait combinations on to catch those 20% of coon. Which would you rather have? One key point I must mention. When placing the bait in the DP tube, place it under the trigger. If using a liquid bait or lure in the tube, place a cotton ball or sheep wool under the trigger and saturate that with the liquid. How much bait you put in the tube is a matter of personal preference. I tend to put about half full because I want the coon to stay there and work the set. Others say just a little will do the trick. That's for you to decide. I would also encourage you to purchase coon caps to keep mice and small critters out of your bait. These plastic caps fit in the hole on the top of the trap and can be bought relatively cheap. Some trappers use golf balls or even simple tinfoil for the same purpose.


Maintenance and cleaning of a DP trap is relatively simple. Every year before season, use some cooking grade silicon spray

to lubricate your trap springs and mechanisms. WD 40 works as well but I would let them sit out in the air and sun for a week before using. After each use on the trapline, make sure the tubes are cleaned out of leftover bait and lure. Over time this can gum up and cause the trigger to not fire as smoothly. At the end of each season, I take my traps to the car wash and pressure wash them to get dirt and other debris out of the traps and springs. Once dried I repaint with spray paint and they are good as new. Some people will use speed dip or dye but I find that this is overkill. Also speed dip seems to gum up the springs if you don't thin it out enough.

DP trapping is a fun endeavor for old and new trappers alike. Not only are they affordable, but it's a great way to stack up coon and is very species specific. You will catch opossum occasionally and it's not unheard of to catch a red fox in a trap. Find a particular brand and stick with one that you like and serves you well. Above all else, enjoy your time in the field and better yet take someone with you and teach them the art of trapping.

I am a trapper and lure maker in East TN where I live with two dogs, four cats, and a woman that can whip my butt any day of the week. When I'm not trapping I serve my community as a firefighter and EMT. My company is English Mountain Lures and can be found at www.dogprooftrapper.com.

-Shon



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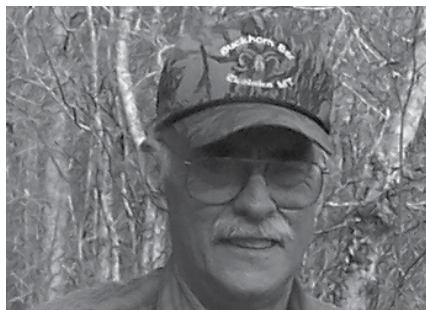
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A Moment with Slim Pedersen

I recently gave a talk at the local Soil Conservation Service office where they were essentially asking me questions about my years of predator Control work here in Carter County. One of the questions was “what was the most unusual thing I experienced?”

I had managed to get a family of coyotes to howl back at me, and then through field glasses I saw the pups in a rough landslide of large sandstone rocks. By staying in a low creek of tall sagebrush I worked my way fairly close without being detected. The pups were rough housing, chasing each other through the many holes in the rocks, while I watched waiting for the adults to show.

At this point in the story I went on to explain that what made this experience so unusual is because coyotes have very strong ties to each other, and adults will readily give up their own life to protect their pups, and it is very normal for healthy coyotes to bring food to crippled coyotes, as well as make attempts to protect the injured coyote.

While lying there, watching the pups scamper through the rockslide, most of my attention was taken up looking at the sagebrush surrounding the

rockslide, attempting to locate the adults, whom I hoped had not seen me make my stealthy approach.

The rocks composing the jumble were mostly large, roughly, square shaped with sharp edged corners so there were many large gaps and holes throughout the maze. Their pups were having a good time zipping in a hole then coming out on top of another large rock on the other side as they chased each other about.

My attention had been on the sagebrush area, so I did not actually see how it happened when a pup suddenly began to squeal loudly. It had one hind leg caught in a large V where two sharp cornered rocks met. It was hanging upside down, unable to touch anything close.

The female coyote was the first to rush to the pup. She was standing under it looking up, confused, when the male coyote ran out of the sagebrush, and bumped her over with his shoulder. He then stood about as tall as he could reach, bracing himself with his front feet against the large flat sided rock, and smelled the pups nose. That only made the pup begin to squeal even more frantically. The male then lurched up and grabbed ahold of

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the pup and attempted to pull it down. His efforts only pulled the pup's rear leg deeper onto the sharp cornered V of the large rocks. Frustrated, he used all four of his feet to brace himself to pull even harder and began shaking his head side to side. He eventually pulled the rear leg off of the pup at the hips. He then laid the dead pup on the ground and started to walk away when the female coyote rushed to the dead pup and began to lick on it. I shot the male coyote as he walked away.

At this point in the story, I shut up. The room became super quiet as the panel stared at me. I let the silence remain as long as I thought I dared to, then said that I wanted to let the silence remain so everyone would have some idea of just how I felt at that point, realizing I had just witnessed an unusual violent display of nature, and then realizing that I too had been part of the violent display.

-Slim

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The Product Spotlight with Mike Marchewka

E.J. Dailey The last Adirondack Trapper 1889-1973 By Scot H. Dahms

Yes, Mr. Dahms has written another fine book about trappers of the past. In this case, the well know trapper E.J. Dailey. Now I think I'm like most modern trappers of today. I grew up reading stories of Mr. Dailey and other fur trappers of that time. I dreamed of what it would be like to trap for a living. I was enthralled with Mr. Dailey's adventures running traplines in the New York Adirondack territories. Mr. Dailey obviously was intelligent as he wrote

articles for the trapping magazines of that time. He also authored several books and also did the "Question Box" for Fur- Fish- Game magazine. He manufactured trapping lures that he used on his 'line and sold to the public.

What I didn't realize was how much he wanted trappers to become more organized and have their own trapping association. As usual, the author has done a marvelous job detailing the timeline of the many different

trapping adventures and writings of Mr. Dailey. Frankly, I came away with a deeper respect and appreciation of Mr. Dailey. I also understood the importance of his work to not only continue to the effort to organize trappers but to also educate the public and sportsmen of what trappers do for the environment. You will enjoy this book.

This book can be purchased by sending a money order, cashier's check or certified check for \$36.95 (\$30.00 for the book plus 6.95 for shipping) to: Scot Dahms 2270 W. Willow Lane Peru. Ind. 46970.

Or buy on EBAY just search "E.J. Dailey The Last Adirondack Trapper" in vintage traps or for user "scotthetrapper."

-Mike

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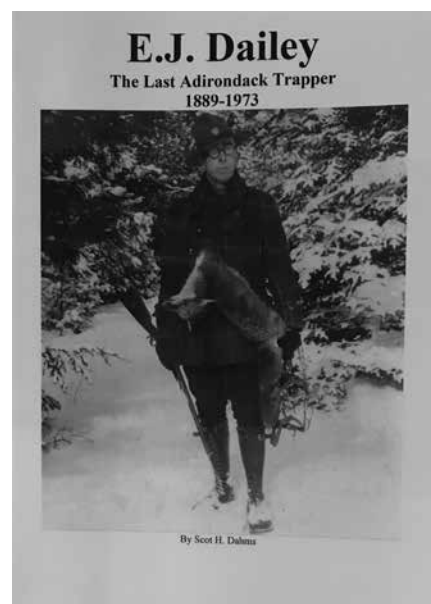
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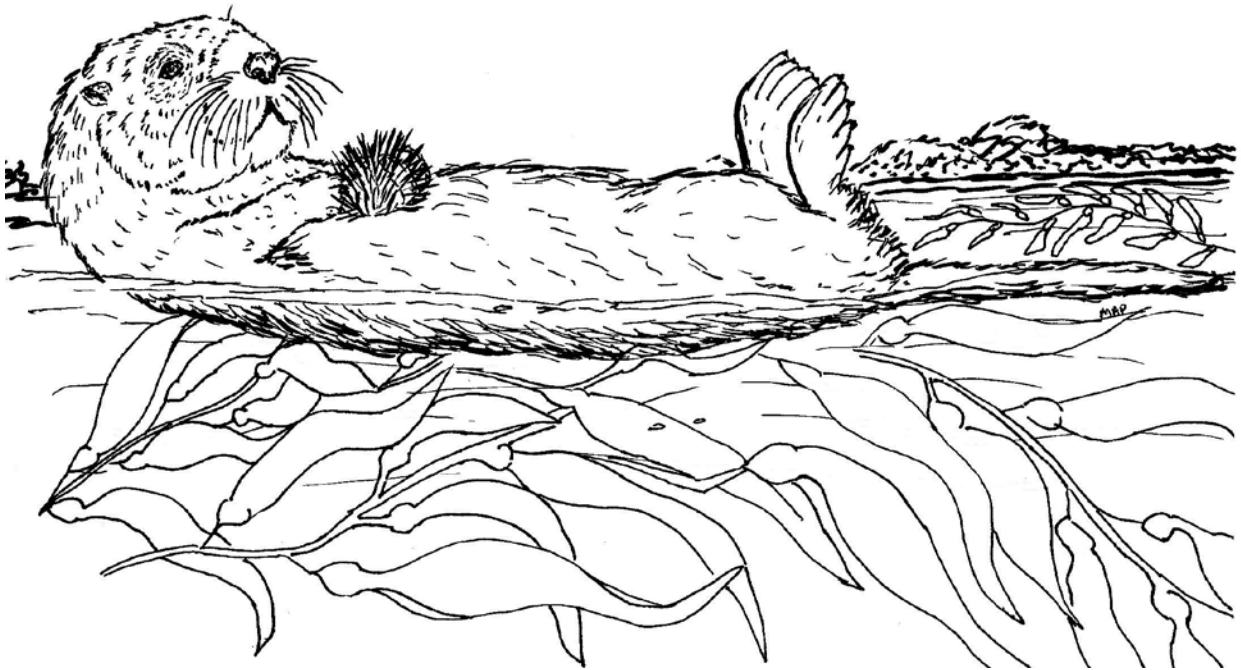
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2. They have dense fur with about 1 million hairs per square inch.
3. One of the few animals that use tools. They use rocks to harvest food and crack shells to eat.
4. Sea otter can weigh 30-80 pounds.
5. They give birth to 4 pups in dry land dens.

Facts

- * Sea otter rarely leave the water. Sometimes spending their entire lives in water. Mother otter give birth to one pup while in the water.
- * When they are not hunting, sea otters spend most of their time floating on their back.
- * Sea otter were hunted to almost extinction for their very valuable fur. Russians were the main hunters of sea otter. They are now protected except for hunting by Alaskan natives.

Common Traps for Sea Otter

- * Sea Otter were mostly hunted for their fur but are now captured for research and also when there is an oil spill. Otter can not float and keep themselves warm when covered in oil.
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Answers: 1-F 2-T 3-T 4-T 5-F

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Top Left: David Dawdy with a nice coyote catch.

Top Right: Caleb, Cadie, and Collin with a KY coyote before school.

Bottom Right: James Fulton with two nice reds.

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SURVIVAL ON THE TRAPLINE

With Cody Assmann

In part 1 of this 2 part series, we took a look at primitive navigation techniques. We highlighted the importance of mentally recording landmarks, and staying cool when you first feel “lost”. We also discussed using stick shadows, the North Star, and subtle clues from the land itself to determine direction. All of these methods have been used by past explorers and can still be helpful today. With that being the case, these days we can use a few modern navigation techniques and a little technology to help stay on course.

Simple Technology

Maps-One of the biggest advantages we have today over past explorers is access to

high quality maps. Historical explorers had to develop mental maps as they discovered new territory. Today, we can simply go online and purchase a high quality topographic map. We can even create custom destination specific maps of any area. A Google search of “create custom topo maps” returns over 3 million hits. If you don’t have a good mental map of an area, be sure to buy a good map.

Compass- A compass is another key component of any outdoor kit, especially if your trap line is off the beaten path. Although a compass can’t get you back to the truck like a GPS, it can help you stay orientated when a blizzard or fog moves in. When you combine a map

and compass with the following 3 techniques you can have confidence navigating in any weather conditions.

Techniques

Handrails- Perhaps the best place navigation techniques is with handrails. Handrails are landmarks or features you can keep to one side that go in the general direction you want to travel. For example: when I hunt in the prairie there are few landmarks to navigate with. When I enter my favorite hunting area I generally follow a trail road for the first mile or so. As I drift into the hills I hunt, I can use that trail road as a handrail by always keeping it on my east side. If I ever feel like I am getting lost, I can simply travel east until I once again see the road. By keeping that feature to one side, I can use it to return to where I came from. Good handrails include trails, roads, creeks, ridges, or other similar landmarks.

Backstops- Another good technique for navigation is to use backstops. Backstops are features that tell you if you’ve gone too far. For example; in my favorite hunting area I also know the pockets I like to hunt are south of a stand of cottonwoods. On the prairie these trees stick out like a sore thumb. If I travel far enough north and I can see the trees, I know I have gone too far. In your area it could be anything from a road, swamp, creek, or fence. On the prairie fences are another great backstop. In fact, legend has it that during a blizzard cowboys would travel



in one direction until they hit a fence. Once hitting the fence they would follow the fence line. Eventually they hit a boot sitting on top of a fence post. That boot would be pointed in the direction of the ranch house, and thus guide the cowboy safely out of the blizzard.

Baselines- The final basic technique is to use baselines. Baselines are similar to backstops in that they tell you when to stop. The difference is that a good baseline can tell you what direction you need to travel once you encounter it. Here is another example from my prairie hunting. From my parking area I leave north along the trail road. South of the parking area there is a barbed wire fence that runs east and west for many miles. I understand that during my wanderings if I head south I will eventually hit that fence. Once I hit that fence, it tells me to stop and turn east. By doing so I can use it as a handrail to find the parking lot in any conditions.

By using some basic technology like a compass and good map you can increase your confidence as a navigator. Combine that with knowledge of handrails, backstops, and baselines, and you can develop a skill set you can use to find your way out of a bad situation. Like any wilderness skill, these take practice. Take some time to experiment with these techniques before they are something you have to use. Until next time, enjoy the outdoors.

-Cody

TRAPPER'S CALENDAR

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PA Sept 8th-East Butler
PTA District 2 Fall Expo
Contact Paul 724-919-3862

WV Sept 14-15- Glenville
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Contact John 304-641-7908

PA Sept 15- Newville
District 8 Sportsman's Show
Contact George 717-732-8099

MS Sept 21-22nd- Pearl
Trappers Convention Bass Pro
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Contact Chip 662-515-6802

PA Sept 21st- Nazareth
District 10 Trapping Convention
Contact Bob 610-759-9203

VA September 23- Rileyville
VA Trappers District 5 Picnic
Contact Bryan 540-435-4849

ID Sept 29- Mountain Home

FBU/ITA Banquet
Contact Rusty 208-870-3217

January

PA January 19th-
Stockertown
Live Bid Fur Auction
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The Last Set with John Logan

I I stopped the other evening at a bridge, on my way home for the night, and looked over the edge just to check for mink and coon tracks and maybe a little muskrat activity. I've always been enthralled with animal tracks and sign since I was a little boy and that part of me has never changed. Even if I am somewhere I may never be again, I can't resist the urge to do a little scouting. I'm not alone in being wired that way. Many trappers and outdoorsmen have that inclination, and many people, even people who enjoy the outdoor sporting pursuits, do not. Bill Nelson once wrote that "the average trapper is a damn poor observer". If Bill wrote that fifty or sixty years ago, I'd like to see what he would have to say today.

Deer and turkey hunters use battery powered cameras to scout for them. I have even seen some that send the photos to an account so you don't even have to leave your house. They even promote that as a benefit! I'm not completely ignorant and I do know that if you are hunting mature deer, that the less you are in the woods and fields around your hunting area, the better. I also know that being in nature; squirrel hunting, digging medicinal roots, and scouting makes you a better woodsman and by extension a hunter. Many from the group of young people

that are being introduced to hunting today aren't learning to be hunters. They are simply learning how to shoot an animal and those are two different things. There will be lots of people that get their hackles up over this, but the proliferation of youth seasons that allow six and eight year old children to go sit in little sheds and pull triggers to kill big game animals only makes it worse. Like any worthwhile apprenticeship there needs to be a progression in learning and that is done for a reason.

I can remember spending time learning to identify doe tracks from buck. Looking for scrapes and rubs and trying to piece together why they were made here and not there. Before that I was learning the different trees so I knew where to spend my time squirrel hunting. You learned which cover held rabbits and birds and which ones to simply pass up. This was all basic knowledge that was as important as learning to pull a trigger. Pulling triggers isn't hunting, it is just shooting and there is a difference.

I have been around trappers that can't distinguish a coyote track from a fox track and that confuse feral cat tracks for mink tracks. It is becoming rarer to hear a trapper mention scat and examining it to figure out what an animal is feeding on. Canine trappers can't find

dispersal locations because they don't understand animal movement. Beaver colonies are set up that have been abandoned.

Now before I appear to be too grumpy about all this (though I do realize I can get that way) there is nothing wrong with someone that goes afield when time allows and sets a few traps or carries a gun and doesn't worry about any of this. They are just doing it because they enjoy the activity and could care less one way or the other if they have much success. And to this I might add, good for them. We need more people who do things just because they enjoy it. I would also recommend that you take another step or two deeper into that pursuit. Learn to recognize some tree types other than pine trees and other, try to figure out not just where an animal travels, but why, learn a few native wildflowers that are growing during turkey season, try to recognize six or twelve or twenty birds by their sound alone. Work on being a better shot, and how to walk quieter in the woods. Pay attention to the wind. Don't slam your truck doors. Keep your knives sharp and learn to handle fur in a way that makes it more marketable and shows respect to the animal that you took it from. Don't just trap; learn to be a trapper.

-JL