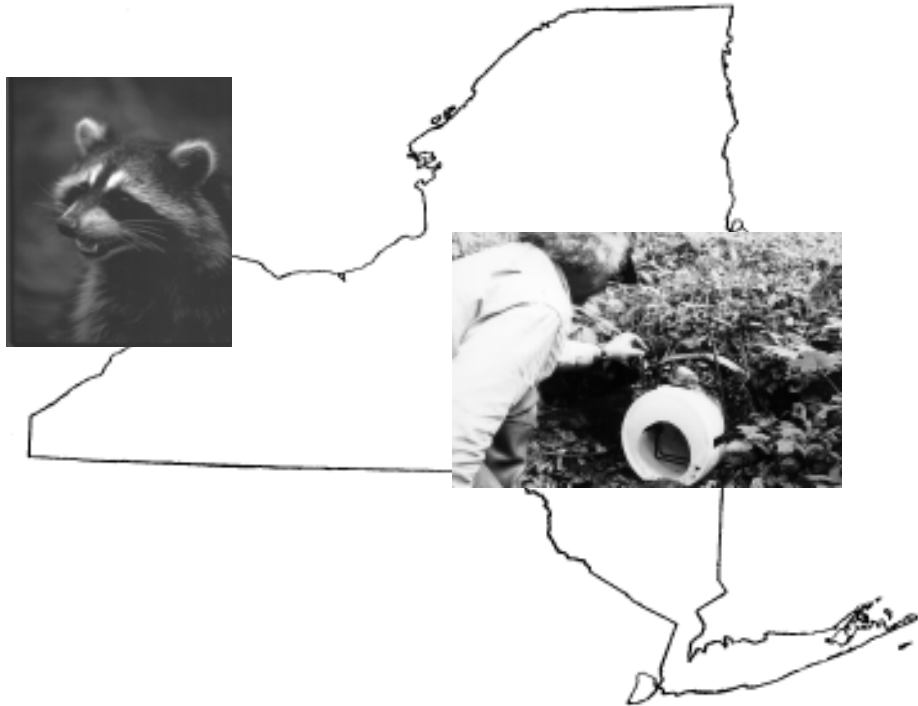


# Trapping in the 21st Century



## Dear Reader:

Trappers in New York have a long and proud heritage. After all, New York State was explored and settled largely due to the fur trade. New York State has an abundance of furbearing animals whose populations are thriving and secure. For nearly ten thousand New Yorkers, trapping remains a vitally important activity, affecting both their life style and livelihood.

People trap for many reasons, including enjoyment of the outdoors, supplementing personal income, controlling nuisance wildlife, and contributing to New York's wildlife management program.

Trappers must be trained and certified via New York's Trapper Education Program and they are subject to dozens of laws and regulations affecting how, when, and where traps are set.

The future of trapping, however, is not assured. The future rests with the actions of today's (and tomorrow's) trappers. This booklet has been produced to help the modern trapper learn and use methods that are responsible, ethical, and humane. The New York State Trappers Association and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation strongly believe that trappers must use state-of-the-art trapping techniques meeting this high standard.

Some people believe that trapping is irresponsible and cruel. When Trappers use the best methods available, however, as described in this publication, they are being responsible and humane. Because public perceptions play such an important role in the future of an activity like trapping, each person who sets a trap is helping to determine whether trapping will continue.

Trappers should read this book carefully and use the techniques described. Be responsible because your future as a trapper will be determined by your actions.

—Gerald Leggieri

President, New York State Trappers Association

—Gerald A. Barnhart

Director, New York State Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources

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## Introduction

Trappers should reflect on our past, as we prepare to enter the 21st Century. Many thought the trapping tradition and life style would never last this long. But, trapping today is still very viable. We need to be dynamic and adaptable, just as the earliest trappers were. But, more than anything else, we all need to **think carefully about what we are doing and use common sense. We must be aware of the possible consequences and conflicts that may result from our actions.**

## Learning From Our Heritage

History shows us that trapping has always been dynamic. The history of trapping and New York's role in that history is long and colorful. Trapping in North America started centuries ago with Native Americans using snares, pit traps, and deadfalls. Europeans brought new devices made of metal.

Around 1500, North American fur was being sent to Europe. The "Beaver Era" started by 1550 and lasted for about 300 years. Dutch traders built two key outposts on the Hudson River. Fort Orange (present day Albany) was built in 1624 and in 1626, New Amsterdam was established in a place the Native Americans called Menahanwi (now Manhattan). The Hudson Bay Company, the oldest commercial enterprise in North America, was granted its charter in 1670. During the 1700s, there were fierce rivalries between the French and the English for control of the fur trade.

In 1808, the leading fur dealer in America, John Jacob Astor, obtained his Charter for the American Fur Co. from New York. In 1821, the first attempts at conservation of beaver were put in place by George Simpson who was in charge of Hudson Bay Company of North America. He established open and closed seasons for beaver, placed a ban on kits and summer

beaver and attempted to redirect harvest pressure. This is the basic premise of season setting that we are familiar with today.

Between 1825-1840 "the rendezvous system" became the method of collecting fur from trappers in the West. It was adopted by William Ashley as a cost cutting alternative to building new outposts. Our current fur auctions and conventions came from this idea. Around 1830 the price of beaver fell because of competition from silk hat manufacturers, and by 1840 the "Beaver Era" was over.

Increased human populations and land settlement caused many wildlife populations to decline, including many furbearers such as beaver, otter, fisher and marten. Wildlife was no longer highly valued. Most furbearers were actually considered vermin. As late as 1918, the then Conservation Commission in New York State had equipped all game protectors with 25-20 caliber Winchester carbines "to be used for killing of vermin." The words "enlist in the campaign against vermin" were on every hunting license issued in 1919. Twenty one different species were included as vermin, everything from red squirrels to fisher, foxes and otter.

Fortunately, the "Conservation Movement" was born during the mid 1800's and was included in the national policy of President Theodore Roosevelt's administration. The principals of wildlife management were also being developed by Aldo Leopold. By the 1930's, we moved out of the age of "vermin control." Sportsmen and women and fledgling wildlife agencies began to embrace the philosophy of "wise use."

Wildlife habitat is still being converted into housing developments and shopping malls. But, New York also has 4,400,000 acres protected in public ownership with 65,000 acres being added in just the last three years. Through research and good scientific management, all of our furbearer populations are now healthy.

Trappers, while often considered by some to be static and out of date, have always been dynamic and have met the new changing times. This has always been necessary for trapping to continue. Today, being selective is our current challenge.

## The Current Challenge

More and more people are using public and privately owned lands that make up wildlife habitat. With an increasing suburban and urban human population, we have seen a loss in an outdoor ethic and the understanding that we all share in responsibilities to the land and to each other. And where there are people, there are cats and dogs. Pet ownership is largely uncontrolled and the few laws regulating it are often haphazardly or poorly enforced. Free roaming cats and dogs often are unwelcome. However, too many cats and dogs does not justify sloppy, non-selective trapping. We are increasingly required to be more responsible, more selective. We are allowed the privilege of being fur trappers. Trappers are affected by many laws that are strictly enforced, making it one of the most highly regulated outdoor activities.

These increased pressures on the land come from a variety of users, many of whom know nothing about trapping. You may have read in New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) publications that, **“You may be the only trapper these people ever know.”** This is a good point to think about and remember. Many people are either neutral or indifferent about regulated trapping. **By our actions and words, we have the ability to create a positive or negative feeling towards trappers and trapping.**

We all know things have changed over the years. Being adaptable to change is part of our challenge in the 21st Century. The furbearers are there, the markets are there. The management authority to regulate trapping will remain in the hands of DEC Wildlife

Managers if each of us thinks about what we are doing and acts responsibly. New York has some of the finest trappers who use state of the art equipment and techniques which have been refined over approximately 500 years. We can and must face the increasing pressures and meet the demands to be more selective in our trapping pursuits. **Highly selective traps and techniques are available now and more are constantly being developed and refined.** Currently, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies with assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture and states including New York are conducting research to develop Best Management Practices (BMP's) for trapping. The research or recommended BMP's may offer different or additional possibilities for selective trapping. This booklet is an effort to discuss and demonstrate some highly selective techniques and to maintain our high level of responsible, selective trapping in New York State.

## What is Selective Trapping and Why be Selective?

Selective trapping is catching only those animals you want to catch. The creative combination of skills, techniques, equipment, and knowledge are the tools leading to the efficient and humane harvest of fur with the least number of unintentional captures of other animals. As trappers, we want to capture furbearers during their open season. We do not want to capture domestic animals, protected or unprotected wildlife except those furbearers with an open season in our area. Being a selective trapper, is something all of us should strive to become. The essence of, and reward for trapping is attaining the knowledge and skill to catch the animals you are targeting, while avoiding all other animals. Skills should constantly be developed and improved. Research leading to improvements

in trapping equipment is ongoing. Techniques are being developed and refined. We should seek out this information. Selective trappers have an ongoing curiosity about traps and furbearers, and also about those animals they do not want to catch. This knowledge base is an important part of selective trapping. As an example, the behavior of birds, especially migratory birds in the fall and spring is another reason for being selective. Migratory birds include songbirds, waterfowl, wading birds and birds of prey. These birds follow major flyways or migration corridors that pass over much of New York State.

It is important to remember that birds of prey (including hawks and owls) and songbirds are **completely protected by both State and Federal Law**.

Birds of prey, especially bald eagles can be anywhere but are attracted to shoreline areas of Lake Champlain, Lake George, the Hudson and Delaware River Corridors, the Sacandaga Reservoir, the St. Lawrence River, the Finger Lakes Region and New York City's reservoir system. Birds of prey usually do not cross large bodies of water when migrating during the fall and spring. Instead, they tend to follow the shorelines. This gives them opportunities to hunt and places to rest.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has been successful in its restoration efforts to reintroduce some of New York's threatened and endangered birds of prey. The populations of species such as peregrine falcons, bald eagles and ospreys are increasing. Bald Eagles now use important wintering areas found on some of New York's large bodies of water, especially in the Catskills and along the St. Lawrence River.

These management efforts have overwhelming support by the public including hunters, anglers and trappers. By being selective, we can eliminate any negative instances which might conflict with this popular and positive management effort.

A responsible trapper is always thinking about what is going on. **If you find that your sets are not as selective as they should be, figure out why. Then either change your methods or stop making those sets until you do figure out what is causing the problem.**

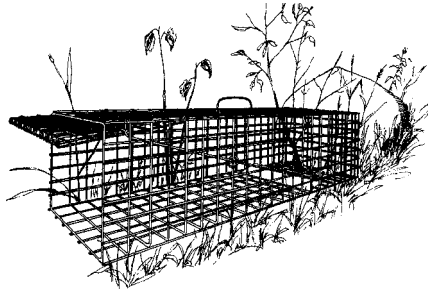
We need to be careful how we use different sets. By being selective, we increase our efficiency at capturing the furbearers we seek, while avoiding the capture of other wildlife and pets. This increases our ability to catch our target species. However, **the most important reason to be selective is because it is the right thing to do. We should always be trying to improve. It is our responsibility as trappers.** This sense of responsibility is what helps to develop and maintain a positive public image, thus fostering acceptance or tolerance of trappers and trapping.

## How to be Selective

Many traps have recently been developed for a specific target species. Most of these have been developed for raccoon. These traps include EGG Traps™, Duffer Traps, Black Hole Traps, and Coon Cuffs and all are advertised in national trapping publications. These traps are an excellent choice for raccoon trapping.

### Box traps

Box Traps (see Figure 1) have experienced a tremendous increase in use by nuisance and fur trappers. Box traps can easily be built at home or custom built at local shops, or purchased at a variety of different stores. There are currently dozens of manufacturers of box traps listed in national trapping publications. While these traps are more expensive than other devices, they will last a lifetime with proper care. They are probably one of the most acceptable types of trap to the general public including landowners.

**Figure 1 Box trap****Responsible Use of Bodygripping Traps on Land**

Modern bodygripping traps have been used in New York State for over 40 years. Since these traps generally kill the target furbearer quickly and humanely, they are popular with trappers and many non-trappers. However, there are concerns about these traps catching and killing other wildlife and pets. Trappers in New York first addressed this concern by working with DEC in 1975 to legally restrict the size of bodygripping traps used on land to no more than 7½" in size. The 7-7½" size trap is very effective for many furbearers, but there is still a reduced potential of catching non-target animals such as cats and dogs. Trappers also worked with DEC to describe the limited, careful setting of bodygripping traps in New York's mandatory Trapper Training Program. Trapping techniques described in this booklet will help you further reduce the potential for catching other wildlife or domestic animals.

Since the mid '70's there have been new developments such as "greenways" and bicycle and hiking trails, most of which are used heavily by people and their pets. Some of these areas may be areas you trapped in the past. This is where it is important to be adaptable and use good sense. **Take a new look at your trapline. These high use areas may no longer be good places to make your sets the way you always have.** It might be time to relocate your trapline

in a new, less used area. Or, if you want to continue to trap there, use different devices such as box traps.

**Understanding the Problem**

How do bodygripping traps work? When the trigger is tripped on a set bodygripping trap, the springs are released, rotating the upper jaws out and down and the lower jaws out and up. The animal tripping the trap is struck from above and below as the jaws close. Ideally, the jaws close with sufficient force to kill the furbearer or to render it unconscious and quickly kill it by preventing the animal from breathing. The best location for the jaws of today's bodygripping trap to strike most furbearers would be across the top and bottom of the neck or chest (see *Figure 2*). Catches across the side of the furbearer should be avoided. In some instances, the animal is double struck, when it is caught by all four jaws (see *Figure 3*). This is a disadvantage for most furbearers. A double strike can reduce the clamping force available to kill the animal by 50%, which will unfortunately increase the time required for the trap to kill the furbearer.

**Figure 2 220 on Raccoon***(showing proper hold)***Figure 3 220 on Raccoon***(showing improper hold)*

Bodygripping traps larger than 7½" were prohibited on land in NYS in 1975 because these larger traps would strike a dog behind its ears and kill it. Smaller bodygripping traps are more effective for furbearers like raccoon or fisher and are less likely to catch and kill a dog.

Although 220's can legally be set on land, it is not always the best choice as will be mentioned later. **Never use a trap larger than necessary.** Smaller, correct size traps are cheaper and lighter to carry (perhaps enabling you to make more sets) and will do a better job of humanely killing the intended furbearer.

To be selective, the next and perhaps the most important consideration for the trapper is how the bodygripping trap is set. As trappers, we need to match the size of the trap with the method of deployment to be the most selective. A 220 in a properly notched container or box (see Figures 4,5,6 and 7) may be selective and effective for raccoon but the same 220 in a box with shallow notches will be far less selective and effective. In some sets, the 220 may be the proper choice and in other sets the 160 may be a better choice. Remember, some locations are not suitable for any bodygripping trap and sometimes it may be more prudent to find another set location. **The type of trap, set location, the mechanics of the trap, how the set is made, whether bait is used and what kind, all influence whether a dog springing the trap will be caught or not.** Think carefully about what you are doing and the choices you are making. Based on the best information available today, the following are the recommended sets for bodygripping traps set on land.

#### **Optimum methods for setting bodygripping traps on land.**

**Baited Sets:** All mid-sized bodygripping traps used at sets with bait should be completely enclosed in a container. The container could be a wooden box or cubby,

plastic bucket or wire cage. The container should have notches on the side to accommodate the springs of the trap. These notches should be a minimum of 8" long. The containers should have an entrance no more than 7" high when the set is completed. The trap should be positioned with the trigger on top, centered and forward towards the entrance. The springs should be positioned at the midpoint of the notches and securely staked. For best results, a selective bait should be at least 6" behind the trap.

Although that may seem confusing, figures 5, 6 and 7 will illustrate 3 easy to make sets that meet all of the above recommendations for selective trapping on land with mid-sized bodygripping traps and bait.

**Figure 4 Proper notches**



← Trap position in middle of notch

← 8" →

It should be obvious that keeping the height of the entrance of the cubby to no more than 7" will help increase the selectivity of your set. It's best to block the top of the entrance because that will be the most effective in discouraging dogs from your trap. However, it is important to realize that **the combination of deep notches and reduced entry** is needed to make baited bodygripping traps set on land selective.

## Comparison of Deep Notches vs. Shallow Notches

*Deep notches 8" or more for 220 or 160*

**U** Allows trap to spring without hitting container (bucket, box or cage)

- trap doesn't lose power, therefore more power is left to quickly kill the catch
- trap is not pushed towards the animal and catches

**X** the target furbearer in the best position (across the neck or chest) resulting in a quick, humane death, or

**X** a dog across the nose which allows the dog to slip out of the trap without permanent injury

**U** Allows target furbearers to enter the container, aligning its body with the trap before it springs, assuring a quick, humane death

### Proper depth of notches

at least 8" for 220 and 160's  
6" for 120

With the trap positioned in the middle or midpoint of the notch (see figure 4).

*Shallow notches 7" or less*

**U** Trap hits container as it springs

- this causes the trap to lose power thus less power is left to kill catch
- trap is pushed towards animal and catches

**X** the target furbearer too far back (across the stomach or across the neck and stomach) resulting in a slow death

**X** or dog behind the ears where it cannot slip out of the trap, but the trap can block its airway choking it to death

**U** Allows target furbearers to spring trap from the side (not properly aligned with the trap) resulting in a poor hold or an empty trap and a trapwise raccoon

## Plastic bucket set

Either a round or square bucket can be used provided it has a lid and is big enough to hold a 220 or a 160 bodygripping trap.

### Figure 5 Plastic bucket set (round or square)



*Buckets can be painted to better match the surroundings*

To prepare the bucket: 2 notches are cut from the top or front of the bucket opposite each other, 1" wide and at least 8" deep to accommodate the springs of the trap. An entrance hole no greater than 7" is cut in the lid, off centered near the lip of the lid. If you wish, two 1/2" holes may be drilled opposite each other near the bottom of the bucket to allow the bucket to be secured in place with a rerod stake.

To prepare this set: securely anchor the end of the trap chain; place a selective bait and lure in the bottom of the bucket; set trap leaving safety latches on; slip trap into the bucket; attach lid with the opening away from the top of the trigger of the trap; position bucket with opening on bottom; move the trap springs to the middle of the notch and secure with stakes; unhook the safety latches, camouflaged as desired; and the set is finished.

Remember that the plastic lids may become lost or may deteriorate and become brittle and break over time. Plan ahead and have extra lids prepared or

prepare 1"x1" wire mesh replacement covers with an entry hole of no more than 7" high.

### Wooden Cubby Set

Cubbies can be constructed with a wide variety of materials. Wooden cubbies can be constructed from everything from logs to ¼" plywood. You can use whatever is most readily available as long as the inner measurements, notches and restricted entrance height meet the following recommendations.

For a 220, the inside of the box or cubby should be 8½" high and 9" wide. The notches should be 1" high and at least 8" long and the height of the entrance should be no more than 7" high.

For a 160, the inside of the box or cubby should be 7½" high and 7½" wide. As with the 220, the notches should also be 1" high and at least 8" long and the height of the entrance should be no more than 7".

Bodygripping traps can vary significantly in size between manufacturers or even between series or types in a company, so it is important to make one cubby and test your traps to see how they fit and if necessary make adjustments in the dimensions of other cubbies.

**Figure 6 A Wooden Cubby**



As mentioned earlier, you can use a variety of materials to assemble a cubby. In this example you need:

2 pieces of wood ¾" x 10" x 24"  
 2 pieces of wood ¾" x 9" x 24"  
 one piece of wood ¾" x 3" x 10½" (wood can be plywood or a planed board) and  
 one 10" x 10½" of ½" hardware cloth or 1"x1" welded wire are needed to build the cubby.

A notch or channel 1" x 8" or longer is cut from one end, along the center of each of the 10" boards. The two 9" boards are used for the top and bottom of the cubby and the two 10" boards are used for the sides. The sides must overlap the top and bottom and the notches must be at the same end of the cubby. Assemble with thin box nails or screws, being careful not to split the wood. The 3" board is nailed across the top of the front of the cubby (the end with the two notches on the side) and the hardware cloth or welded wire is attached across the back of the cubby using U nails or poultry staples.

To prepare this set: securely anchor the end of the trap chain; position the cubby; place selective bait and lure in the back of the cubby; set the trap leaving the safety latches on; tilt the trap under the 3" board and slide the trap down the notches; straighten and position the trap midway on the notches secure with stakes; unhook safety latches; camouflage as desired and the set is finished.

### Wire Cubby

Wire cubbies can be constructed from 14 gauge 1" x 1" or 16 gauge ½" x ½" welded wire. They may be made solid or collapsible. The following is a list of materials needed to construct a collapsible wire cubby for different sized traps.

For a 220, you need:

two pieces of welded wire 9"x24"  
 2 pieces 8"x24"  
 one piece 2"x8"  
 one piece 8" x 10" and connectors to attach the pieces together such as J clips, quick clips or small



hog rings.

**For a 160, you need:**

2 pieces of welded wire 8"x24"  
2 pieces 7"x24"  
1 piece 1"x7"  
1 piece 7"x9" and connectors

**For a 120, you need:**

4 pieces of welded wire 6"x18"  
one piece 6"x7"  
and connectors

**Figure 7 Uncovered and covered wire cubby**



To assemble the collapsible wire cubby, you must first cut the notches for the trap springs. Use the two widest of the 4 long pieces of welded wire. (Select any two for the 120 cubby because they are all the same size.) From one end, cut 1" x 8" notches down the center of each of these two pieces (6" is long enough for the 120). Connect all four long pieces along their longest side, alternating notched piece, unnotched, notched and unnotched with the notched ends both on the same side of the cubby. Don't over tighten the connectors as we want these joints to fold back and forth. Lay the piece that is square or almost square (the end) inside these four connected pieces on the end without notches and connect the narrow side of this end piece to the edge of an unnotched piece. This unnotched piece will now be the top. Connect the last small piece to this top piece so that it hangs down across the front opening (the end with the notches). Omit this last step for the 120. File off any sharp points and the collapsible wire cubby is finished.

To prepare this set: securely anchor the end of the trap chain; open cubby; secure back end with wire; position cubby at set; place a selective bait and lure in the back of the cubby; set trap leaving safety latches hooked; slide trap into notches; position at midpoint of notches and secure with stakes; wire front piece over entrance (reducing height of entrance to 7" is not needed for the 120) unhook safety latches; camouflage as desired and the set is finished.

**The Running Pole or Tree Set**

The last baited, bodygripping trap set we will discuss is the running pole or tree set. The square bucket, wooden or wire cubbies previously described can easily be used in a tree or on a pole and they would be very selective. If a bodygripping trap is set in a running pole or tree without one of these containers;

- a) It should be at least 48" above the ground.
- b) The angle of the tree or pole should be at least 45° (that would require a pole of about 6' long for both *a* and *b*).
- c) The bait should be covered.
- d) The springs should be upward with a stick running through them. If a bird is able to see the bait and visits the set it will perch on this stick rather than the trap.

In pole or tree sets where the jaws nearest the bait is stationary, the smaller 160 is better than the 220 for coon and fisher. The 120 is the best choice for marten. Remember the trapped animal may not be suspended in any set, so add additional chain or wire to allow the animal to reach the ground.

**Figure 8** Running pole set**Recommendations for all baited, bodygripping traps set on land:**

**The best** set locations are away from buildings, roads, walkways, greenways or any place with high use by people or domestic animals.

**Always try to use** selective baits and lures such as honey, fruit or nut baits, peanut butter, molasses, liquid smoke or marshmallows for raccoon. Most lure makers make special baits and lures selective for furbearers but not attractive to cats and dogs.

**Avoid** using meat or fish baits where cats and dogs may be found.

**Avoid** using any part of game (head, feet, internal organs, skin or feathers) where hunting dogs may be found.

**Always** anchor traps securely enough to hold the largest possible catch alive.

**Unbaited or blind land sets with bodygripping traps**

The ability to set a trap and catch a target furbearer without the aid of bait or lure has a special appeal to many trappers. Some would consider such an ability as an indicator of the highest level of trapping knowledge. In reality, blind land sets are often the least selective set resulting in the largest number of accidental catches. Since these sets are generally not selective, they are not recommended for beginners. However, since raccoon trail sets and culvert sets are already quite popular with experienced trappers we will discuss ways to make these two sets more selective.

**Protected raccoon trail set**

To prepare this protector, you need:  
 one piece of 1" x 1" or 1" x 2" welded wire  
 26" x 18" for a 220 or  
 23" x 18" for a 160

The finished protector will be a three sided cage that is 18" long.

**Figure 9** Protected raccoon trail set*Uncovered**Covered*

For the 220, fold the 26" x 18" piece at a right angle forming a 9" x 18" side. Fold again after 8 more inches forming the 8" x 18" top and another 9" x 18" side.

For the 160, fold the 23" x 18" piece at a right angle forming a 8" x 18" side. Fold again after 7 more inches forming the 7" x 18" top and another 8" x 18" side.

From one end of this three sided cage, cut 1" notches 13" deep in the approximate center of the sides. Remove any sharp points or edges and the protective cage is finished.

To prepare this set: use this set only along active raccoon trails where you believe that there are very few if any other animals using the trail. Securely anchor the end of the trap chain; place the protective cage over the trail; set trap leaving the safety hooks latched; slide the trap springs down the notches to the middle or midpoint of the protective cage with the triggers up and secure the trap with stakes; unhook the safety latches; pile sticks, brush, grass over the trap. The end of the cage with the notches may need to be reinforced with stakes. Finished set should provide a tunnel for the raccoon but a barrier that a dog would jump over or go around. The entrances through the tunnel may be shortened or lowered with sticks. The trigger being on top will help prevent the capture of smaller animals such as rabbits and squirrels.

### **Two way bucket set in culvert**

Culverts are used by a wide variety of animals especially dry culverts. The only way to be selective at these locations is to use a round bucket similar to the round bucket set. (See *Figure 5*) but with an additional 7" hole cut in the bottom of the bucket. The trap is set in the bucket as described before, but without bait. The trap is securely anchored and then the small end or bottom of the bucket is set directly in the culvert with both holes (in bottom and in lid) aligned and at the bottom of the culvert with the springs and notches on the side of the bucket. (See

*Figure 10*). The bucket is only set partially in the culvert, the notches and springs must remain away from the culvert. The rest of the culvert is temporarily blocked with sticks, brush and leaves (this material must be removed when the set is removed).

### **Figure 10 Two way bucket set in culvert**



Obviously this set wouldn't be advisable in all culverts. This would be unacceptable to highway maintenance crews, so avoid trying to use this set along major roads. Two way buckets can also be set in active raccoon trails. As mentioned before, avoid using this or any bodygripping trap on land near buildings or any area highly used by people or pets.

### **Optimum Methods For Use of Footholds on Land**

(also see NYS trapper training manual)

#### **Trap Selection:**

- Use a trap no larger than necessary.
- Use a trap no stronger than necessary.
- Use smooth and broad, padded, or laminated jaws.
- Tighten pan tension to avoid smaller wildlife.
- Use the shortest chain possible, with shock springs and extra swivels.
- If possible, have chain attached in the center of the trap.

As mentioned earlier, box traps, EGG Traps™, Duffer Traps, Black Hole Traps and Coon Cuffs are excellent traps for raccoon trapping.

**Trap Placement and anchoring:**

- Keep traps close to bait or scent for fox and raccoon.
- A trap farther from the bait is more likely to catch dogs.
- Securely anchor the trap to hold largest possible catch (which would include a large dog or coyote)
- Avoid using drags

**Set locations:** Areas to avoid-

**Urban and Suburban Areas** - These are usually high use areas by people and often have the greatest concentration of pets.

**Raccoon dens** - These are areas frequented by dogs in general and especially the dogs of coon hunters.

**Never** remake a set where a hawk, owl, eagle, heron or an unknown animal has killed and eaten an animal in your trap. You will usually find signs of “white wash” (bird droppings) and some times tracks, a feather, or just the lack of any furbearer sign.

**Birds** sometimes attempt to dust on traps covered with sifted soil especially in pastures and sodded areas. There are several things you can do to eliminate this problem. Tighten the pan tension, don't sift such fine soil over the set, cover the set with a layer of sifted grass, make a better dusting site for birds nearby or move the set.

**Additional recommendations:**

**Always** try to use selective lures and baits.

**Avoid** using any part of game, meat or fish, especially where cats and dogs may be found.

**Plan ahead** and always carry a catchpole.

**Avoid** using exposed bait, carcasses, fur, feathers or gut pile, especially in the open where they might be seen by birds of prey and in areas where bobcat trapping is not allowed.

**Selective Water Trapping**

Usually this is the most selective type of trapping, but seasons for our four aquatic or semi-aquatic furbearers are not always open or concurrent. This is a problem during beaver season extensions and during times or in areas not open to otter trapping. Otter travel widely especially in spring. This is especially true in Western New York due to the ongoing otter restoration efforts. These animals are in new and unfamiliar areas and may roam even further than normal. Scout your trapping areas well, especially if you are near an otter release site. If you need more information about the location of otter release sites, contact your nearest Regional Wildlife Office.

**Optimum Methods for beaver trapping and avoiding otter & muskrats:**

**The most selective set for beaver and not otter is an under ice, baited set.** For more information, this set is described in the NYS Trapper Training manual.

**The most selective trap for beaver and not muskrat or otter is the 330 with a trigger as shown in Figure 11 and Figure 12.**

**Figure 11 Modified trigger** *shortened twisted and to the side*      **Figure 12 The Kulish Trigger** *adjustable tension trigger*



### **Additional suggestions for reducing the chance of accidentally capturing an otter or muskrat.**

- Use deeper trap locations under dive sticks.
- When trapping for beaver get done as soon as possible and pull traps before otter move into the beaver flow.
- Avoid setting traps in bank holes.
- Learn what otter sign such as toilets, crossovers and rolling sites look like. Always watch for their sign, if possible avoid trapping when & where the otter are present. With snow on the ground it is very easy for otter to travel overland because of their sliding ability. **Otter can range widely and pop up almost anywhere, anytime, sometimes even in very small remote ponds.**
- Avoid trapping spillways, crossovers, and other natural funnels.
- Have access to a catch pole in order to release any otter caught in a foothold trap and be careful. Notify DEC of any accidental otter captures.
- To catch beaver in open water, use castor mound sets away from sites likely to be used by otter.
- Use early style 330's or traps without a Canadian Bend in the jaws or without tightly closing jaws.

### **Optimum Methods for trapping muskrat & mink and avoiding otter & beaver**

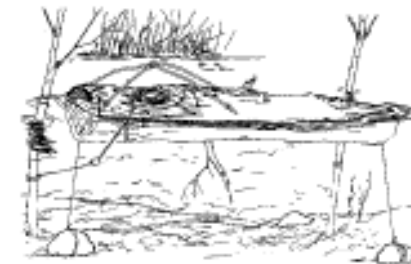
- Use only 110, 120 and small footholds.
- Anchor foothold traps in water deep enough to drown muskrats & mink, but not deep enough to drown otter or beaver.
- Have or have access to a catch pole to release any otter or beaver accidentally captured.
- Use natural baits for muskrats rather than scents made from beaver or otter glands.
- Learn what beaver and otter sign such as toilets, crossovers, scent marks and rolling areas, look

- like. Always watch for their sign and if possible avoid trapping when and where they are present especially the otter.
- Avoid other natural funnels, channels, spillways and large bank holes.
  - Anchor all traps to hold **any** live animal that might be caught.

### **Avoiding Birds**

- To avoid wading birds, use an appropriate sized bodygripping trap, or small foothold trap. Anchor all traps to hold **any** live animal that might be caught.
- Put protective hoops over float sets. Floating logs are used as loafing sites by waterfowl. By putting crossed hoops over your set, waterfowl will be discouraged from using that site (*see Figure 13*). Birds of prey are also attracted to these sites. If your catch has been eaten, remove the set.

**Figure 13 Log float set covered with hoops**



### **Releasing other wildlife and pets**

These animals may not be what you wanted to catch, but treat them with respect.

**Birds:** Use an empty packbasket, coat or an old blanket to cover the bird for release - be especially cautious around the talons and beaks of all birds of prey, herons and egrets.

Seek treatment if the bird is injured or cannot fly after being released.

**All other:** Be careful - watch out for the animal's teeth and claws.

Use a catchpole, but do not pull too tight, especially with cats.

Remember any cat or dog, no matter how wild they seem in the trap, may be someone's frightened but cherished pet. Seek treatment if the animal appears injured.

If you catch an animal other than a legal furbearer do not remake the set. This set is likely to attract and catch another unintentional animal. **Always be prepared to take responsibility for your actions.**

## In Summary

**Remember, selective trapping is the right thing to do. It is a part of our responsibility as trappers. It also means developing and maintaining a positive public image which could enhance the tolerance and acceptance of trappers and trapping.** Common sense and continued learning are the important components that lead to becoming a selective and responsible trapper. The importance of being a selective trapper cannot be over emphasized, especially as we enter the next century.

For more information on trapping techniques, request a free copy of the *Trapper Training Manual* from the nearest regional office of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. This informational booklet was brought to you by the combined efforts and resources of the New York State Trappers Association and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. It is a part of our ongoing efforts to maintain and improve trapping.

## Acknowledgments

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## About the Author

Angie Berchielli is both a wildlife biologist and a trapper. She received her Bachelor's degree from Cornell University in wildlife Management/Environmental Education. She was actively involved in field research on the ecology of foxes in Central New York. This experience led to pioneering studies on the performance of innovative trap designs, and Angie helped with the analysis and publication of the findings. She is an active member of the New York State Trapper's Association (NYSTA), and has served as their consulting wildlife biologist. Her work with NYSTA has included membership on the Joint Trapping Initiative Committee, as well as liaison with the Department of Environmental Conservation on the development of Best Management Practices for traps. She has a keen interest in New York's trapper education program, both as an instructor and reviewer of New York's trapper education manual. As an active trapper herself, she has harvested at least one of every furbearer found in New York. She also is an avid and successful big game hunter. She has participated in several furbearer restoration projects, involving fisher and otter in New York, pine marten in Vermont, and fisher in Pennsylvania. Angie is very interested in environmental education outreach efforts. She has worked for the National Wildlife Federation as a regional executive which focused on environmental outreach. She currently serves on the planning committee for the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program. This publication is a reflection of Angie's lifelong commitment to sound wildlife conservation and stewardship.

Gordon Batcheller  
Biologist 2 (Wildlife)  
NYSDEC

## What has the New York State Trappers Association Done for Trappers?

The New York State Trapper's Association has:

- Promoted the conservation and wise use of our furbearers and other wildlife.
- Worked with New York's budget process to obtain \$40,000 for the restoration of otter in Western New York.
- Contributed funds to New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry for the experimental release of lynx in the Adirondacks.
- Defended trappers' interests during the Rockland and Suffolk County lawsuits.
- Paid to have a lobbyist in Albany to represent and protect trappers' interests for the last twenty years.
- Worked with all political parties and many different interest groups on behalf of trappers.
- Sent significant financial support to the National Trappers Association to work against the European Economic Community ban against trapping.
- Formed the Joint Trapping Initiative (JTI) committee with NYS DEC to maintain and improve trapping in New York and will be very involved in the BMP process.
- Worked closely with NYSDEC in educational outreach programs such as the: Trapper Training Courses, The Advanced Trapper Training Seminars and this booklet (Trapping in the 21st Century).
- Offers the Trappers' Liability Insurance Program through The United Insurance Agency, in Niagara Falls. It is available to all members and is especially useful for those doing nuisance wildlife work.

One very simple but important way that **you can help** to keep trapping strong in this state of close to 17 million people is by **becoming a member** of the New York State Trapper’s Association.

Join in our campaign of having no less than half of all licensed trappers be members of NYSTA. **5000 by the year 2000!** Just fill in the form below.

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Full membership gives you voting privileges, and a subscription to the *Trapper and Predator Caller*. It also gives strength to NYSTA to maintain trapping in New York.

**Thank You!**

### The use of these selective trapping techniques in New York State is supported by the following groups:

The New York State Trappers Association & its affiliates

New York Houndsmen Conservation Association Inc.

Three Rivers Coon Hunters Association

American Wildlife Research Foundation

New York River Otter Project, Inc.

Camp Fire Club of America

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