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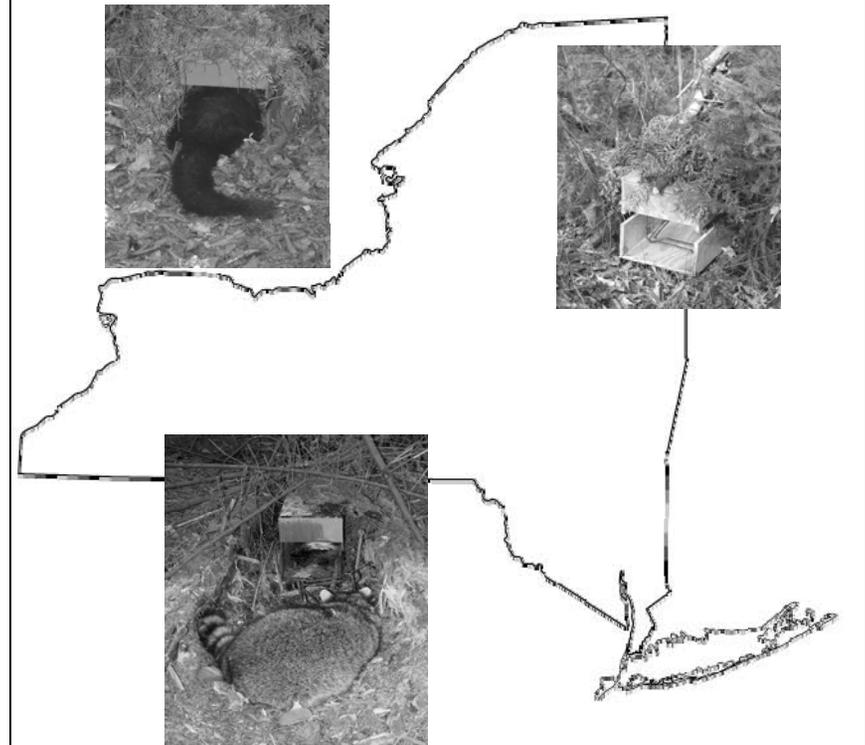
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# Trapping in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



**2010 updated edition**

**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 – Past President  
New York State Trappers Association.

--Gerald A. Barnhart - Retired  
Director, New York State Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources

**Acknowledgments:**

This booklet was compiled by Angie Berchielli. This text is based upon the experience of numerous trappers and biologists to whom the author is greatly indebted. The Wisconsin Trappers Association and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources have taken the lead in recommending selective trapping methods for bodygripping traps on land. Rick Tischaefer was especially helpful. The author would like to thank Gerry Barnhart, Gordon Batcheller, Andrew MacDuff, Lou Berchielli, Mark Brown, Bob Gotie, Marie Kautz, Drusila Pagan, and Scott Smith of NYSDEC and Tracy Gingrich, Diane Mann-Klager, Sherry Morgan, Paul O'Neil, John Organ and David Stilwell of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for their technical review and comments. The author would also like to thank Robert Budliger of the NYSDEC, Director of Environmental Education (retired), and Dennis Money of the New York River Otter Project, Inc. The author would like to thank all the NYSTA trappers, especially Henry Buell, Doug Lansburg, Gerry Leggieri, John Rockwood, Wayne Jones, Dave Miller, Pete Smith and Al West. Drawings were by Mike Stickney of NYSDEC (retired) with permission from NYSDEC and photographs were by the author.

## **Notes**

### **Introduction**

Now that we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, trappers should reflect on our past. 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, placing 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 added from just 1985 to



One very simple, but important way that ***you can help*** keep NYSTA strong to continue to defend trapping in this state of close to 19 million people is by ***becoming a member*** of the New York State Trapper's Association.

### ***Application for Membership***

New

Renewal

Name (please print)

Street-R.F.D.-

Box

Town, City & State

County \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_ \*

\*This is becoming more important as an efficient and timely way to communicate with the membership.

### **Memberships:**

Basic \$15/yr. Over 16 yrs off age, includes newsletter, no magazine

Junior \$15/yr. Under 16 yrs. of age, newsletter and magazine included

General \$25/yr. over 16 years of age, newsletter and magazine included

Family \$30/yr. two family members; one copy of newsletter & magazine

Lifetime \$750 includes newsletter and magazine, \$300 without magazine

Additional donation \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_ \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_ \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_

\$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ **Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Send this application and dues to:**

**NYSTA, 12320 Pople Road, Cato, New York 13033**

Full membership gives you voting privileges, The **TRAP-LINES Newsletter**, a subscription to the **Trapper's Post** and affords NYSTA the strength to maintain and promote trapping and outdoor activities in New York.

***Thank You!***

## ***Web Sites of interest***

### **Organizations:**

- New York State Trappers Association: [www.nystrappers.org](http://www.nystrappers.org)
- National Trappers Association: [www.nationaltrappers.com](http://www.nationaltrappers.com)
- Fur Takers of America: [www.furtakersofamerica.com](http://www.furtakersofamerica.com)
- Furbearers Unlimited: [www.furbearers.org](http://www.furbearers.org)
- The Wildlife Society: <http://joomla.wildlife.org/documents/positionstatements/09-trapping.pdf>

### **Agencies:**

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation: [www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)
- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (Best Management Practices and Fur Resources Committee): [www.furbearermgmt.org/index.html](http://www.furbearermgmt.org/index.html)
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: [www.fws.gov/](http://www.fws.gov/)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services: [www.aphis.usda.gov/us/index/html](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/us/index/html)

### **Auction Houses:**

- Fur Harvesters Auction Inc. of North Bay: [www.furharvesters.com](http://www.furharvesters.com)
- North American Fur Auction: [www.nafa.ca](http://www.nafa.ca)

### **Magazines :**

- Trappers Post: [www.trapperspost.com](http://www.trapperspost.com)
- Trapper & Predator Caller: [www.trapperpredatorcalls.com](http://www.trapperpredatorcalls.com)
- Fur-Fish-Game: [www.furfishgame.com](http://www.furfishgame.com)

### **Forums:**

- <http://nytrappers.proboards.com>
- [www.Trapperman.com](http://www.Trapperman.com)

1988. 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, actually have always been dynamic and have successfully adjusted to new and ever-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 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. 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. Most people are either neutral or indifferent about regulated trapping and first impressions are lasting impressions. ***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. The 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 has conducted research to develop Best Management Practices (BMP's) for trapping. This research and recommended BMP's may offer 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 or wildlife, except those furbearers with an open season in our area. Being a selective trapper is something all of us should strive to become.

- Have the Joint Trapping Initiative (JTI) committee work with NYS DEC Furbearer Management Team on all issues relative to trappers and trapping in New York;
- Work closely with NYSDEC in educational outreach programs such as the: Trapper Training Courses, The Advanced Trapper Training Seminars and this booklet (***Trapping in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***);
- Offer scholarships to students attending college;
- Offer a joint scholarship with the New York Chapter of The Wildlife Society for a college student in the natural resources field to attend the Outdoor Field Course offered by the NE Section of TWS;
- Work jointly with the US Sportsmen's Alliance to promote trapping as part of the USSA Trailblazer Events held throughout New York State.
- Hold an Annual Spring Membership Conference.
- Hold an annual Fall Convention with vendors, demos, Trapper Training class, and business meeting.
- Be innovative, recently creating an annual "Youth Trapper Camp" in cooperation with the NYSDEC.

***NYSTA has defended trapping for over 70 years and will continue to promote and defend trapping into the future.***

***What has the New York State Trapper's Association Done for you?***

***The New York State Trapper's Association has:***

- 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 study of Furbearers including the experimental release of lynx in the Adirondacks;
- Defended trappers' interests during the Rockland and Suffolk County lawsuits;
- Sent significant financial support to the National Trappers Association to work against the European Economic Community ban against trapping;
- Helped fund professional International wildlife conferences.

***NYSTA has and continues to:***

- ***Promote the conservation and wise use of our Furbearers and other wildlife;***
- Employ a legislative liaison to represent us in Albany and protect trappers' interests since the late 1970's;
- Employ a full time Executive Director;
- Work with all political parties and many different interest groups on behalf of trappers;

*Continued.....*

The essence of, and reward in 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 on going. Techniques are 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, knowing the behavior of birds, especially migratory birds in the fall and spring is another tool 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 (especially areas around Montezuma and Iroquois National Wildlife Refuges) 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 an acceptance of or tolerance to trappers and trapping.

### **How to be selective**

Many species specific traps have recently been developed for raccoon which are considered by many to be dog-proof. These traps include Egg Traps™, Lil' Grizz Get'rz, CSP Bandit Busters, Coon Daggers, Duke DP Coon traps, Grizz Grenades, Trapmaster Coon Catchers, Duffer Traps, and Coon Cuffs. These traps are all excellent choices for raccoon trapping and are advertised in national trapping publications.

- 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!***

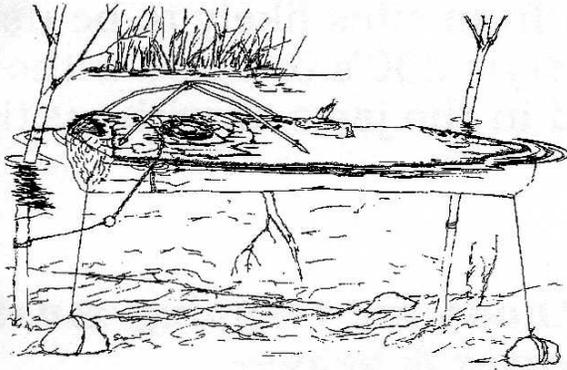
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### **In Summary**

***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 acceptance of or tolerance to 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 this new 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.

**Figure 12** Log float set covered with hoops

Credit: NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

### **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 animals:** Be careful!

- Watch out for the animal's teeth and claws. Use a catchpole, but do not pull too tight, especially with cats (wild or domestic).
- 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.

### **Box and Cage Traps**

Box and Cage 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. There are currently dozens of manufacturers of cage 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 type of trap to the general public including landowners.

**Figure 1** Cage Trap

Credit: NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

### **Responsible Use of Bodygripping Traps on Land**

Modern bodygripping traps have been used in New York State for over 50 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 7½ x 7½" (220) size trap is very effective

for many furbearers, but they must be used ethically to reduce the potential of catching non-target animals such as cats and dogs.

Trappers also worked with the NYSDEC in 2007 to develop new regulations to make using bodygripping traps 7½" and smaller on land more selective. As a result, bodygripping traps 5½" to 7½" not set in the water and used with any bait, lure or any attractant may only be used in:

- 1) a cubby with any opening restricted to no more than 6" high, 8" notches and with the trap recessed at least 4"; or
- 2) a cubby with any opening no more than 10" high or wide and with the trap recessed at least 18"; or
- 3) a vertical, single entrance cubby, no more than 6" above the ground and with the trap recessed at least 4"; or
- 4) a tree or on a pole at least 48" above the ground.

NYSDEC Regulations currently state that bodygripping traps set on land ***shall not be within 100 feet of a public trail except on Wildlife Management Areas.*** NYSDEC defines these public trails as "***designated, marked and maintained paths or ways designed for non-motorized recreational use on lands where the public has lawful access.***"

Trappers have 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 1970'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

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

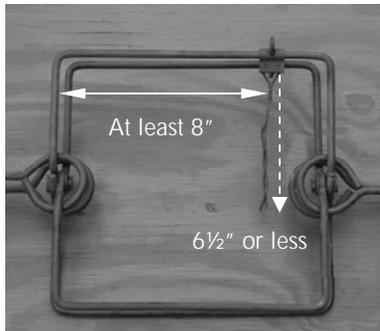
- Use only 4½" to 5½" bodygripping and small footholds.
- Anchor foothold traps in water deep enough to drown muskrats and mink, but not deep enough to drown otter or beaver.
- Have or have access to a catch pole to release any otter or beaver accidentally captured.
- Use natural baits for muskrats rather than scents made from beaver or otter glands
- Learn to identify beaver and otter sign such as cuttings, toilets, crossovers, and rolling areas. 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.

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### ***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 12***).

***Birds of prey are also attracted to these sites. If your catch has been eaten, remove the set.***

**Figure 10 Modified trigger**

**Trigger must be shortened to 6½" or less, and twisted or joined. There must be an 8" space between the inside edge of one side of the trap and the trigger.**

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

- When trapping for beaver, catch them as soon as possible and pull your traps before otter move back into the beaver flow.
- Avoid setting traps in bank holes.
- Learn to identify otter sign such as toilets, crossovers and rolling sites. Always watch for their sign, and if possible avoid trapping when and where the otter are present. With snow on the ground it is very easy for otter to travel over land because of their sliding ability. ***Otter range widely and can 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 tightly closing jaws, Canadian Bend, additional strike bars or overlapping jaws.

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 to a new area with less public use, if you want to continue to trap there, use different devices such as cage or species specific traps (see page 8).

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### **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 furbearer tripping the trap is struck from above and below as the jaws close. The jaws close with sufficient force to quickly dispatch the furbearer. The best location for the jaws of today's bodygripping trap to strike 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***). Although this type of hold is also lethal, it often takes a few moments longer for the animal to expire. By following the suggestions in this booklet regarding the placement and use of bodygripping traps you are assured of dispatching your target animals in a quick, humane manner.

Bodygripping traps larger than 7½" were prohibited on land in NYS in 1975 because these larger traps could 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.

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



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



Although 220's in a restricted entry cubby 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 more efficient job of humanely capturing the intended furbearer.

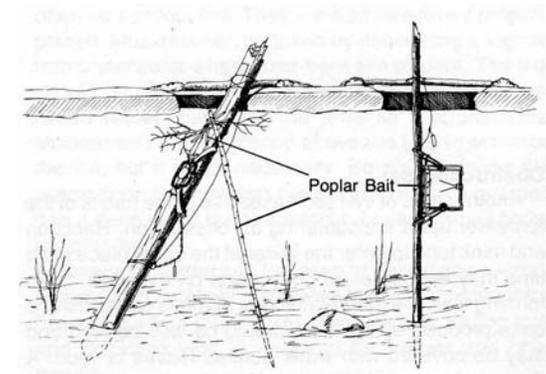
To be selective, the next and perhaps the most important consideration for the trapper is how the bodygripping trap is set. As trappers, we need to match the size of the trap with the method of deployment to be the most selective. In some sets, the 220 may be the

concern in Central and Western New York due to restoration efforts. Scout your trapping areas well and avoid areas with signs of otter.

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

*The most selective set for beaver and not otter is an under ice, baited set. See Figure 9. (For more information, this set is described in the NYS Trapper Training manual.)*

*Figure 9*



Credit: NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

*The most selective trap for beaver and not muskrat or otter is the 330 with a trigger as shown in Figure 10.*

*These modified triggers are mandatory on any bodygripping trap larger than 9" any time the otter season is closed.*

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 sometimes 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:***

- ***Never*** set traps anywhere near any ***exposed:*** meat, animal carcass, or part of an animal carcass. ***This is now mandated*** by NYS DEC. Please see the regulations regarding the use and definitions of exposed carcasses or bait.
- ***Always*** try to use selective lures and baits.
- ***Avoid*** using any meat, fish or parts of game animals, especially where cats and dogs may be found.
- ***Avoid*** using exposed bait, 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.
- ***Plan ahead*** and ***always*** carry a catchpole.

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### ***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. Otters are a special

proper choice and in other sets the 160 (generally 6" x 6") 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.***

***(See also the NYS Hunting and Trapping Guide and the NYS Trapper Training Manual)***

#### ***Baited Sets:***

All mid-sized bodygripping traps (5½" to 7½") used at sets with bait must be completely enclosed in a restricted entry container or placed 4 or more feet off the ground. The container can be a wooden box or cubby, plastic bucket or wire cage. One option has notches on the side to accommodate the springs of the trap. These notches must be a minimum of 8" deep. The containers must have an entrance no more than 6" high when the set is completed. The trap should be positioned with the trigger centered on an upper jaw with no part of the trap within 4" of an entrance. (See Figure 4) For best results a selective bait should be at least 6" behind the trap.

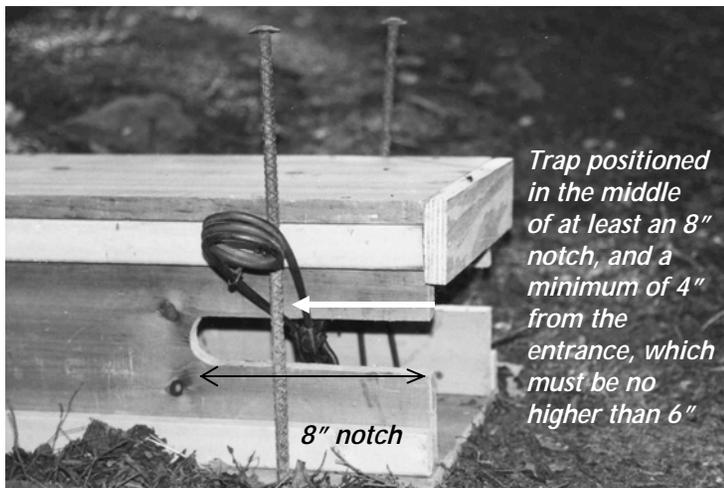
Cubbies may also be built from natural materials such as logs, rocks and sticks. As with the other cubbies, the height of the entrance cannot legally exceed 6". Since it is often impossible to make notches in cubbies made of natural materials, instead traps must be recessed at least 8" from the entrance.

***Some other containers are also legal. See the NYS Hunting and Trapping Guide.***

Although that may seem confusing, figures 5, 6, and 7 will illustrate three easy to make sets that meet all of the above recommendations for selective trapping on land with mid-sized bodygripping traps (5½" to 7½") and bait.

**Figure 4** Proper notches

It should be obvious that keeping the height of



the entrance of the cubby to no more than 6" 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,

### **Optimum Methods For Use of Footholds on Land** (also see *NYS Hunting and Trapping Guide* and *the NYS Trapper Training Manual*)

#### ***Trap Selection:***

- Use a trap no larger or stronger than necessary.
- Use foothold traps with either: smooth, broad, plain jaws (sometimes called "closed jaws"); offset jaws; padded; or laminated jaws.
- Tighten pan tension to avoid smaller wildlife.
- Use the shortest chain possible, with extra swivels and shock springs.
- If possible, have chain attached in the center of the trap.

As mentioned earlier, box traps, Egg Traps™, Lil' Grizz Get'rz, CSP Bandit Busters, Coon Daggers, Duke DP Coon traps, Duffer Traps, Grizz Grenades, Trapmaster Coon Catchers 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,

**Recommendations for all baited,  
Bodygripping traps set on land:**

**The best** set locations are away from buildings, roads, public trails, 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.

**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 for beginners and can result in accidental catches. For that reason, blind sets are not recommended for beginners.

As mentioned earlier no bodygripping trap may be set on land within 100 feet of a public trail except on Wildlife Management Areas. Otherwise, the use of bodygripping traps smaller than 5 ½" is not restricted. Bodygripping traps 5½" to 6" may be set without bait or an attractant if no part of any jaw (bodygripping surface) is more than 8" above the ground.

it is important to realize that the **mandated combination of deep notches and reduced entry** is needed to make **baited** bodygripping traps set on land selective.

The mandatory bucket and cubby requirements (6" maximum height, minimum 8" notches and the trap being recessed a minimum of 4") provide many advantages.

As a target furbearer enters the container it becomes aligned with the trap resulting in a quicker more humane kill. An animal can't spring the trap from the side resulting in a poor hold or an empty trap. The trap springs without losing energy by striking the container. These factors result in a quicker, more humane death. Most dogs visiting the restricted entry container will not spring the trap. If they spring the trap it would probably bounce off the animal's paw or nose leaving it potentially sore but otherwise unharmed. The trap could not launch off of the container like it could on a bucket or cubby with shallow or no notches, potentially catching the animal behind the ears, blocking its airway and causing its death.

***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.

***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. A entrance hole no greater than 6" is cut in the lid, off centered near the lip of the lid. If you wish, two ½" 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.

**Figure 5 Plastic bucket set (round or square)**  
*(Buckets can be painted to better match the surroundings)*



**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, straighten and position the trap midway in the notches (**trap must be at least 4" inside the bucket**), 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 6" high.

### **Wooden Cubby Set**

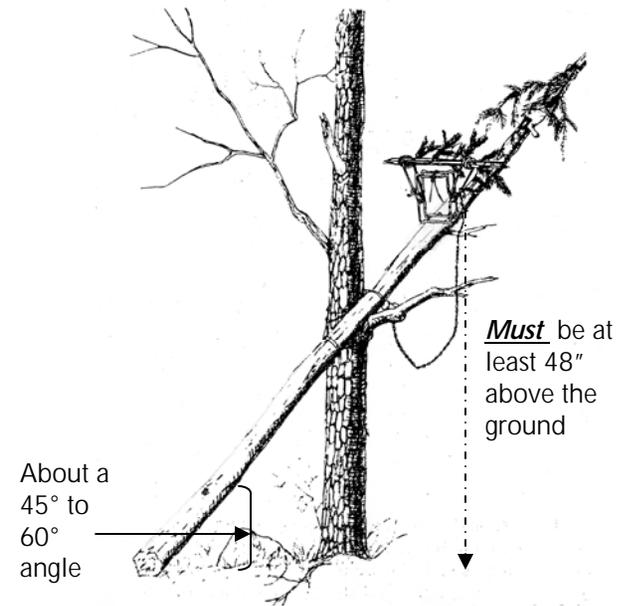
Cubbies can be constructed with a wide variety of materials including everything from logs to plywood. You can use whatever is most readily available as long as the inner measurements, notches and restricted entrance height meet the following recommendations for this option:

**For a 220**, the inside of the box or cubby should be about 8½" high and 9" wide. The notches should be 1" high, must be at least 8" long and the height of the entrance must be no more than 6".

**visible from above**, and 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 trap jaw nearest the bait is stationary, the smaller 160 is better than the 220 for raccoon and fisher. The 120 is the best choice for marten. Remember the trapped animal may not be suspended in any set, so firmly anchor one jaw to the tree or add additional chain, wire or cable to allow the animal to reach the ground after being caught.

**Figure 8 Running pole set**



Credit: NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

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 the other end of this top piece so that it hangs down across the front opening (the end with the notches to restrict the opening to no more than 6" in height). 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, secure with stakes, wire front piece over entrance (reducing height of entrance to 6" is not needed for the 120), unhook safety latches, camouflage as desired and the set is finished.

The bucket, wooden and wire cubby sets just described could have 2 entrances. ***All entrances would have to be no more than 6" high and traps would have to be at least 4" from any entrance.***

### ***The running pole or tree set***

The last baited, bodygripping trap set we will discuss is the running pole or tree set. With the restricted entry, 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 on a running pole or tree without one of these containers ***it must be at least 48" above the ground.*** The angle of the tree or pole should be at least 45° (that would require a pole of about 6' long). The bait should be covered, ***so as not to be***

***For a 160,*** the inside of the box or cubby should be about 7½" high and 7½" wide. As with the 220, the notches should also be 1" high, must be at least 8" long and the height of the entrance must be no more than 6".

Bodygripping traps can vary significantly in size between manufacturers or even between series or types within 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 to construct a wooden cubby for a 160, you need:

- \*two pieces of exterior grade ½" plywood 9" x 24"
  - \*two pieces of exterior grade ½" plywood 8" x 24"
  - \*one piece of exterior grade ½" plywood 2½" x 9"
- Dimensional lumber may also be used, but it may need to be thicker and wider than shown here.
- \*one piece of 10" x10" of ½" hardware cloth or 1"x1" welded wire.

A notch or channel 1" x 8" or longer is cut from one end, along the center of each of the 8" boards. The two 9" boards are used for the top and bottom of the cubby and the two 8" boards are used for the sides. The top and bottom overlap the sides 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 2½" board is nailed across the top of the front of the cubby (the end with the two notches on the side) to restrict the opening to no more than 6" in height. 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's 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 2½" board and slide the trap down the notches, straighten and position the trap midway on the notches, (trap must be at least 4" inside cubby) 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" wide x 24" long
- \*two pieces 8" wide x 24" long
- \*one piece 3" x 8"
- \*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:**

- \*two pieces of welded wire 8"x24"
- \*two pieces 7" x 24 "
- \*one piece 2"x7"
- \*one piece 7"x9" and connectors

#### **For a 120, (4½"x 4½") you need:**

- \*Four 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. Connect all four long pieces along their longest side, alternating notched piece, unnotched, notched and unnotched with the notched ends both on the same end 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