

Trapping

By Daniel Roussel

The experienced trapper,

The following information was provided to me by an experienced trapper who is about 70 years old. He started trapping at 10 to make a little pocket money. He also did it because he enjoyed walking in the woods and feeling close to nature. Nowadays that trapper practices his trade only as a pastime. Each year he hunts about seven or eight foxes with traps and about a dozen foxes with snares, not counting other animals he catches such as the beaver, the weasel, the mink ...

The trapping season

Trapping is done late in the fall and lasts only about a month and a half.

How is fox trapping done?

Before setting up my traps and snares which I use to catch foxes, I must take great care. A fox is a very cunning animal. I thoroughly clean my traps and snares to remove all odors. I use birch bark, cedar and spruce branches as disinfectant. I bring water to boil in a pan and I immerse those branches along with the snares in the water. When I take the snares out of the water, there is no human odor on them. I use mostly # 2 snares. In winter, to hide the snare so that it is not seen by the fox, I whiten it by soaking it in a lime solution.

The baits

When there is no snow, I set my traps near the fox holes and cover them with moss or soil. When winter is near and the first snow falls, I hurry to catch a few skunks. I use cages with an aluminum wall to prevent the skunk from climbing and spraying me. Then I bring the cages to a brook or a river where I drown the skunks. Afterwards, I place them in the holes where I have put my traps and I cover them with some moss. With the first heavy snowfall, the woods are a bit damp and the skunk's odor attracts the fox. I also use hare, partridge and even old meat as bait.

How to trap with a snare

I choose a location of narrow, well- traveled trails, where foxes pass. Then, I set my snares eight to nine inches (20 cm) above the ground and open them about seven or eight inches (18-20 cm) in diameter. In winter, I set the snares on fresh tracks because foxes often come back on the same trails.

How to prepare the hides

After having caught an animal, or more, and if they are frozen, I bring them home to the basement to let them thaw. When they are unfrozen, I take them to the workshop where I keep my tools and I start pulling off the skin. When I am finished, I remove the fat to increase value of the hides. Then, I place them on a mould

for about three to four days to allow them to dry.

The tools

The tools that I use for trapping are a hatchet and a knife. As to the skinning tools, I use a very sharp knife along with a dull six inch (15 cm) aluminum blade, which I use for skinning . I also use a wooden tool to free the tail.