

Introduction

The ability to pick up a couple of dead sticks from the ground, and with a sharp knife and a little know-how produce a practical and workable release for a snare or trap is a valuable exercise in improvisation and inventiveness. As far as is known this the first time a collection of improvised releases and with this snares and traps has ever been published. Some of these are potential man-killers, developed by soldiers in jungle warfare to protect themselves. The knowledge of these possible man-killers must be treated with as much respect as a loaded firearm.

They are included because they could be lifesavers for man stranded in hostile country.

The snares and traps shown are far more humane than the vicious steel-jawed devices which clamp onto a wild creature's leg, inflicting severe pain, creating panic in the captured animal, and hold it prisoner until it finally dies from pain, hunger or exhaustion.

Conservationists may condemn releasing the knowledge of how to make the mechanics for these snares and traps, implying that this will inevitably mean the destruction of local wild life.

This is not correct, in practice the opposite is the truth.

None of the traps are killers. The wild animal is caught alive and unharmed. Most people, after examining the captive, feel that it is too interesting to destroy (unless it is itself a destroyer), and will release it unharmed. More often than not the snares and deadfall, which are humane killers, will be used to capture the "pest" creatures, dogs and cats which have gone wild and are the biggest killers of local bird life, rabbits, foxes, and other "vermin" animals. These are the "scavengers" which are the real destroyers upsetting the balance of nature in a locality.

Two cardinal rules are: never set a trap which might injure anyone without first putting up warning signs in the area, and never leave a trap or snare set, and then forget about it. Some wild creature may be caught in it, and if it is a trap, suffer hunger needlessly.

The following traps and snares are but a few of the many which you can improvise with a little ingenuity. The releases and principles are comparatively few in number, but the variations are infinite. When making your trap or snare, make it sufficiently strong to hold the animal when it is caught. You must put good workmanship into traps or they are likely to be ineffective. It is far better to spend an extra hour in work to make the trap secure and strong, rather than try and save an hour by thinking that a flimsy erection will suffice.

Knowing the animal which you are hoping to trap will enable you to decide whether to set the release 'fine' or whether to set it 'tough,' so that the animal will have to tug and worry the bait, and thereby become bold and unsuspecting.

Included in these traps are a few which could be exceedingly dangerous to man. These are given because they are very little known, and could possibly be of great value to explorers or others. Several of these man-killers were devised during the War in the Pacific by men who were adrift in the jungle and used these 'automatic sentries' to make their camps safe from attack by hostile natives or enemy forces.

Some of the traps are illegal in certain countries, and the trapper should acquaint himself with the local game and trapping laws.

The type of trap you must make depends largely upon the animal for which it is being set, and the local conditions. Only experience can guide you in deciding which trap or snare will serve you best.

simple snare



Left: Snare set over rabbit burrow. Right: Snare set in path, held in position with twigs.

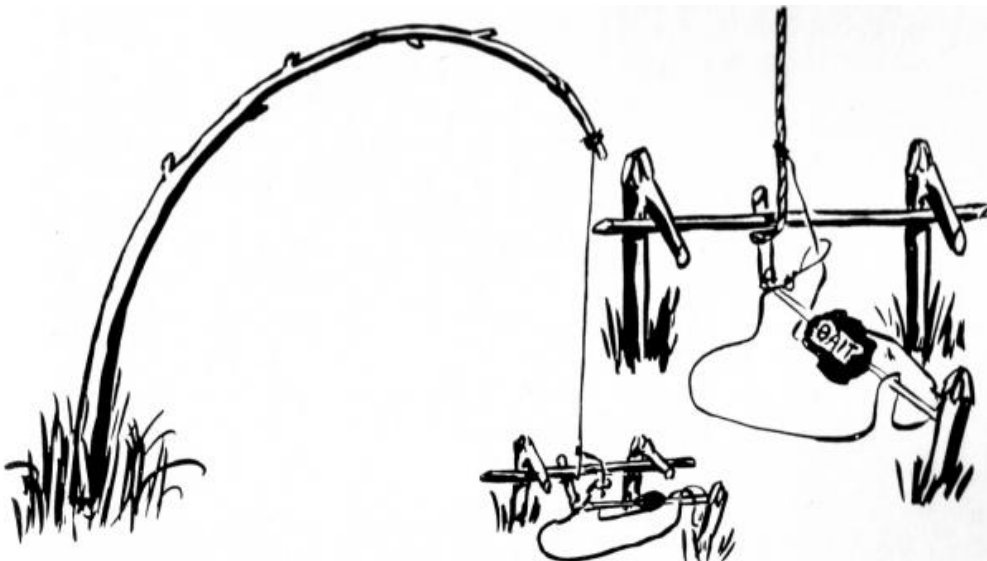
This is merely a running noose set either in the entrance to a burrow or other hiding place of the animal, or else set across one of its paths. The noose should be of some strong material; fine brass wire (picture wire) is probably about the best. The brass is stiff enough to bend easily into shape, the noose will stand by itself, and being very thin it will probably not be seen by the animal, and yet it is strong enough to hold the snared creature captive. One end must be very securely fastened to a peg or other reliable anchor.

If fine wire is not available for noose snares, cord can be used, or if this not available it can be spun, plaited, or twisted from local fibrous material.

Generally when cord is being used it will be necessary to hold the noose spread open. Very thin twigs can be used for this purpose. They should be set lightly in the ground, and have just enough strength to hold the noose open. Remember that the snared animal has sharp teeth and therefore the ability to chew its way out of the snare if given time. Wire obviously is difficult for the animal to bite, but with cord there is no difficulty, and an animal can release itself in a few minutes if it does not panic and struggle forward into the noose, as so often happens. When you set the noose snare it must be visited regularly at short intervals.

.ground snares

Toggle And Bait Stick Release



Select a site where there is a springy sapling. Lop the sapling of its branches and top. Bend the sapling over, and make a mark on the ground under the head of the bent sapling. This is the place where you will set the sticks for the snare. Cut two hooked stakes. These should be sharpened at the point, and bevelled at the head so they will drive easily into the ground. They must be straight and strong, and preferably cut from dead wood. The hooks should be about two to three inches above ground level. Between the two hooks, and about

12" [30 cm] in front of them an anchor peg is driven into the ground. Three straight sticks for the release are selected. One must be long enough to go between the two forks and lie under them. The other is only about 3" [7.5 cm] long and is the toggle stick, and the third, which is about 12" [30 cm] long, is the bait stick. A stout cord is tied to the head of the lopped sapling, and the sapling itself is bent so that the head is over the two hooked stakes. Where the cord from the head of the sapling touches the cross stick, the toggle stick is tied securely, and above it another cord is tied and formed into a running noose.

The toggle stick is passed in front of the stick between the two hooked sticks, and under, so that the cord lies hard against the front side cross stick.

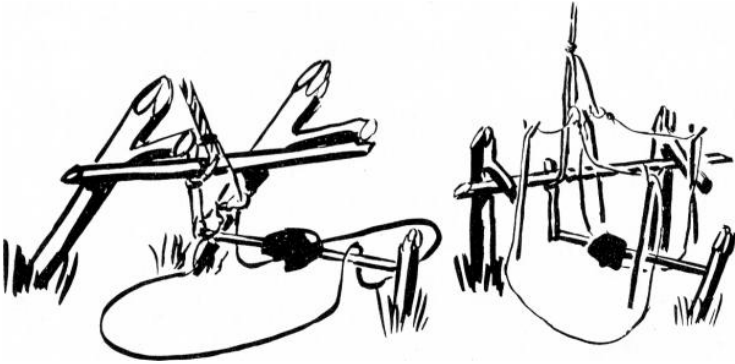
The lower end of the toggle stick presses against the bait stick, which in turn presses against the anchor peg. The noose is laid over the bait stick.

When the animal touches the bait stick, it frees the toggle stick, and the upward spring of the sapling, acting swiftly, draws the noose round the captive bird or animal.

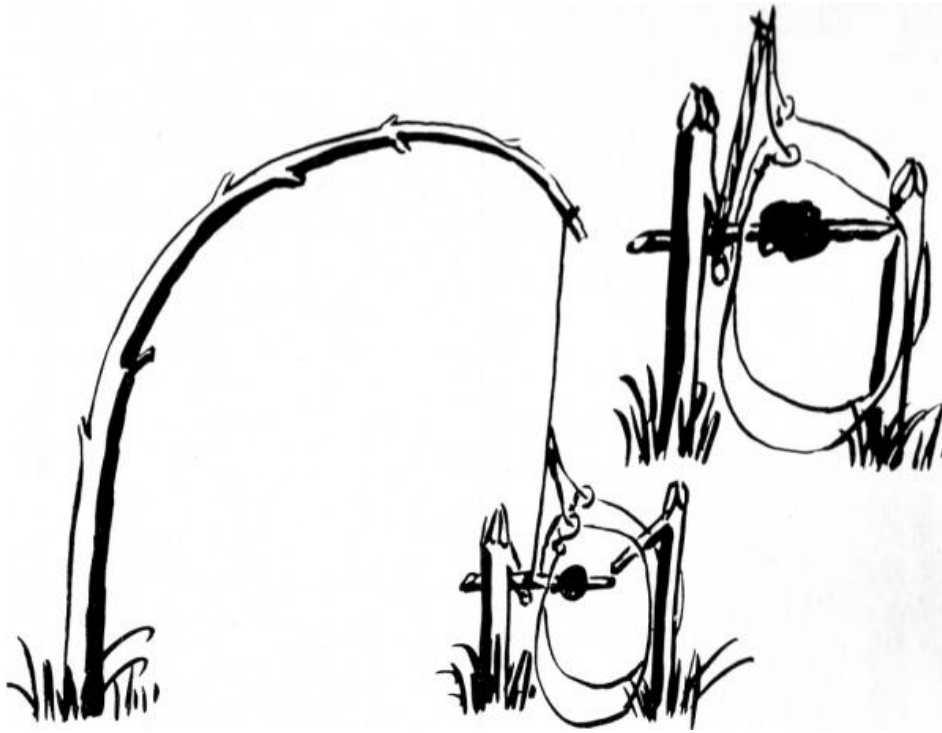
This snare should not be left set for more than twelve hours at a time. If the sapling is kept bent for too long it will lose its springiness, and render the snare ineffective.

An alternative release may be effected by using two forks driven in at such an angle that the cross stick is pulled against the lower side of the fork.

The setting of the noose may be varied for certain types of ground feeding creatures so that the noose, instead of lying flat on the ground, over the bait stick, is held vertically so that the animal or bird must put its head through the noose to reach the bait.



Toggled Bait Stick

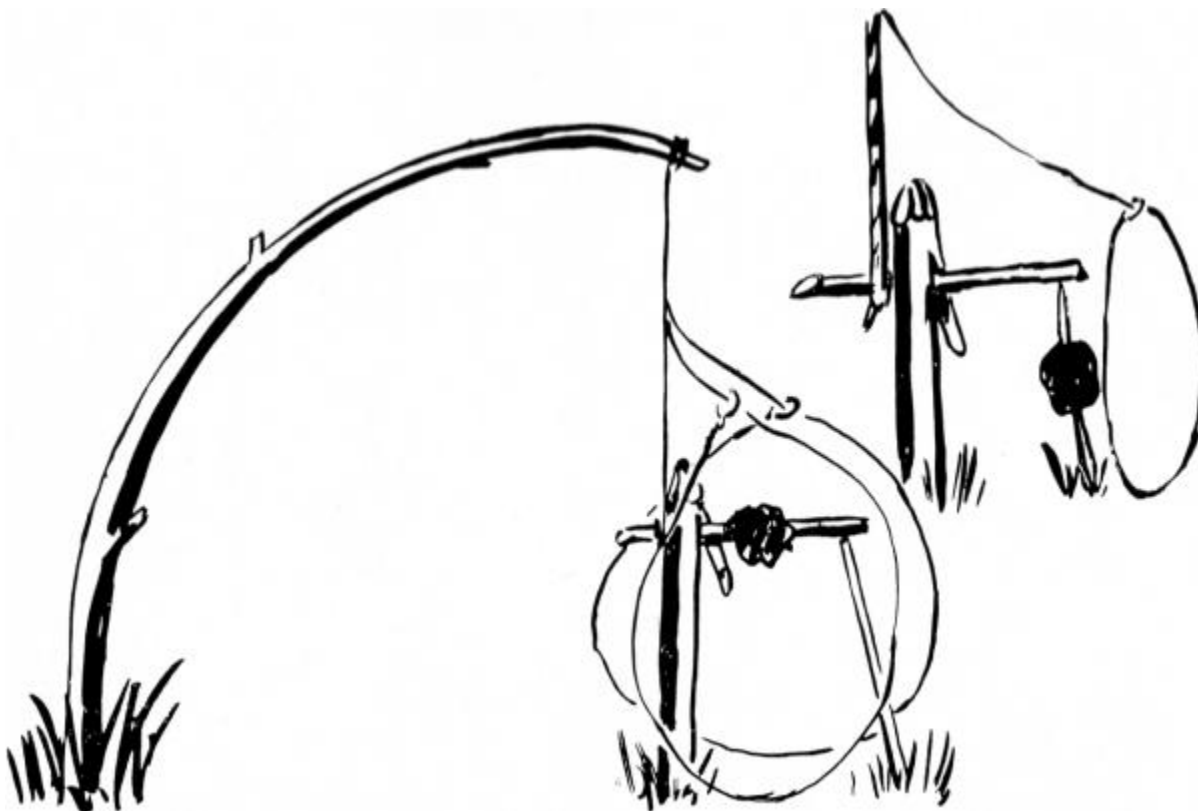


In this snare a springy sapling is lopped of its top and branches. Two strong hooked stakes are cut, and one with a shorter hook is driven into the ground directly beneath where the head of the sapling comes when it is bent over. At right angles to the hook of this stake, the other hooked stake is driven into the ground. It should be about 12" [30 cm] distant. The cord for the snare is tied to the head of the sapling, and the noose made in another cord tied just above the free end. The free end is tied to the bait stick, which held beneath the fork of one stake, is pulled upwards against the prong of the hook of the other stake. Setting can be varied in sensitivity by narrowing down the edge of the hook against which the bait

stick is pulled. Noose, or nooses should be vertical and spread a few inches away from the bait, so that the animal must put its head or forequarters inside the noose to reach the bait.

This snare should be released after about twelve hours of setting to restore the springiness to the sapling.

Reversed Toggle Bait Stick Release



A whippy sapling, trimmed of its top and branches to reduce the weight, is bent over, and directly beneath its head a very stout hooked stake is driven into the ground.

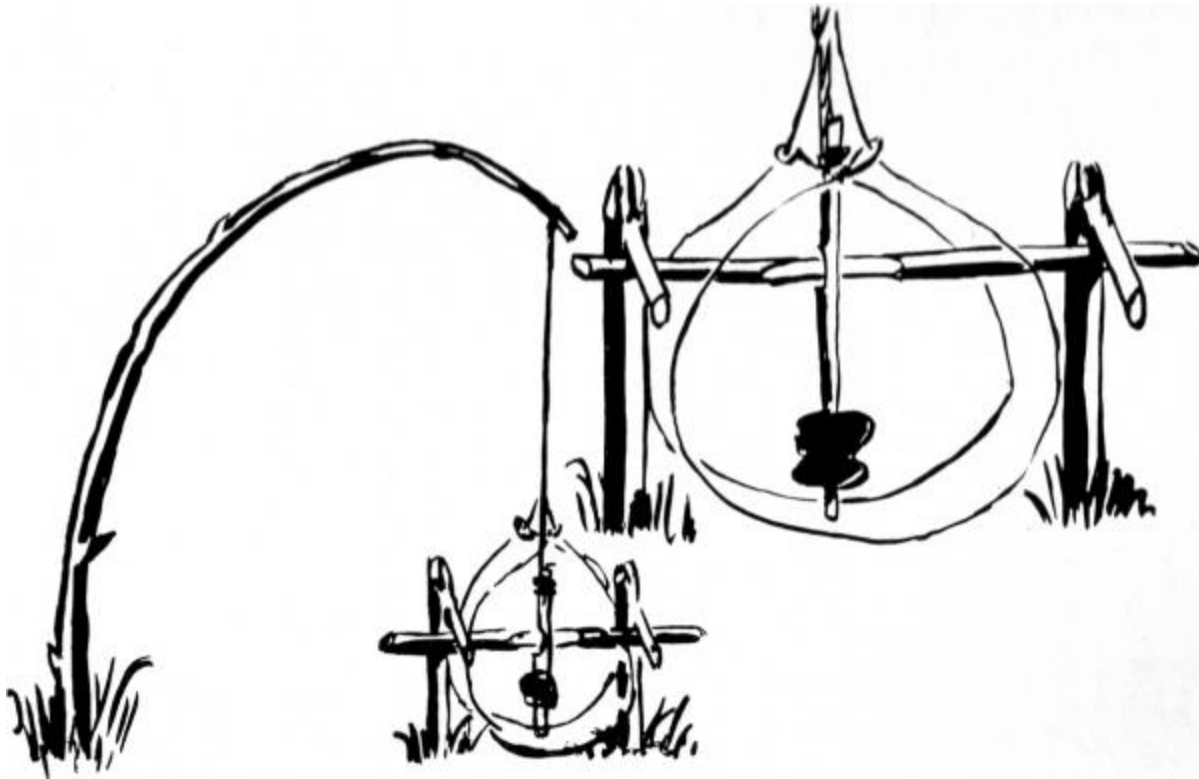
A strong cord is tied to the head of the sapling, and the other end of the cord is tied 1" [2.5 cm] or so from one end of a toggle stick some 8" to 10" [20 to 25 cm] long. This long end of the toggle stick is passed under the fork of the hooked stick (see

sketch). The bait may either be placed on this toggle stick, or alternatively on the stick which it presses to the ground.

A noose is tied to the cord above the tie of the toggle stick, and brought forward, and held in position by thin twigs (not shown) so that it is a few inches in front of the bait stick. If the toggle stick is used to carry the bait it is advisable to put out two nooses, one on either side of the bait.

Care must be taken to see that the long end of the toggle stick is short enough to pass freely under the hooked stick. If the toggle stick is too long it will simply smack down on the ground and jam the release. It must be short enough to swing completely free under the hook.

Stepped Bait Stick Release



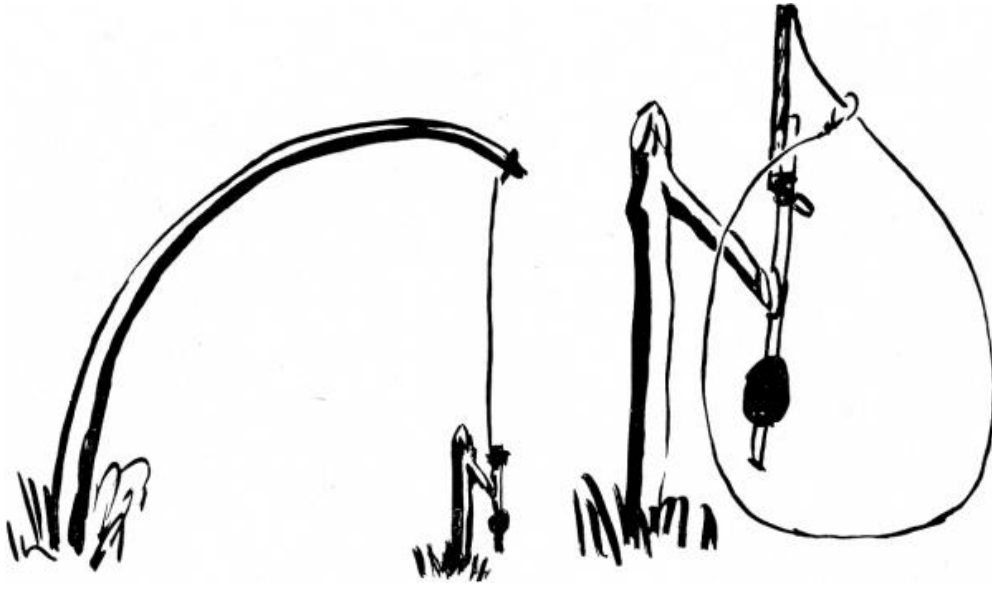
A whippy sapling is trimmed of its branches and head, and bent over. Note the point on the ground which will be directly under the head when the snare is set.

Two strong hooked stakes are driven into the ground about 9" [23 cm] apart. A cross stick is roughly squared in the centre and placed beneath the two hooks with one of its squared faces directly facing the ground. The bait stick is

cut with a cleanly cut faced step, the bottom of the step is on the lower end of the cut. To the top end of the stick the cord from the sapling is tied securely (a clove hitch or stopper hitch is good for this purpose).

One, or better still, two, nooses are run out from the main cord, and held vertically a few inches from the baited end of the stick by thin twigs (not shown). An animal touching the bait disturbs the seated faces, and releases the stepped bait stick which holds the bent sapling. Sensitivity of the release is effected by the 'grip' of the seated face of the bait stick.

Nicked Bait Stick Release



spread a few inches in front of the baited stick.

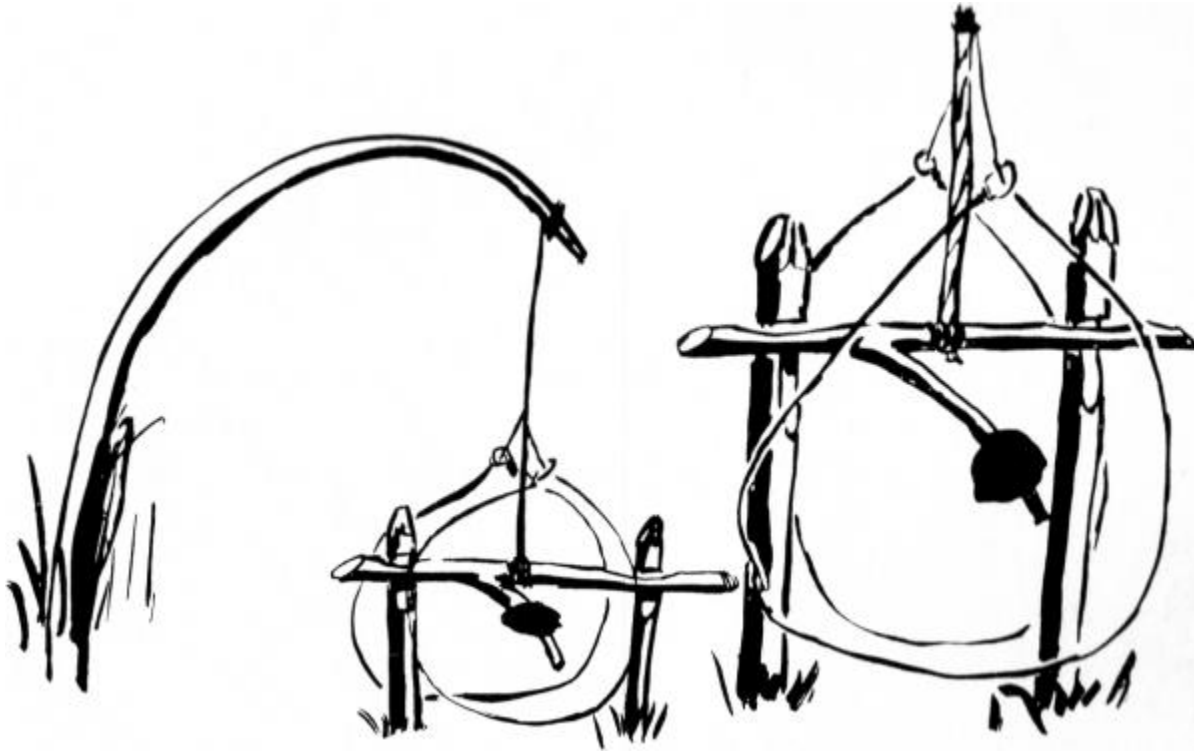
A whippy sapling, lopped of top and branches, has a stout cord tied to its head. The sapling is bent over, and directly beneath the lopped head, a strong hooked stick is driven into the ground. The end of the hooked side is sharpened to a chisel point.

The bait stick is cut with a square nick so that this will engage the chisel edge of the hook. The cord from the head of the sapling is tied to the top end of the nicked bait stick, and the bait is secured on the lower end.

From this cord the noose is tied, and

Fine setting is obtained by making the nick shallow, or for a stubborn release cut the nick deeply.

Crossbar Bait Snare

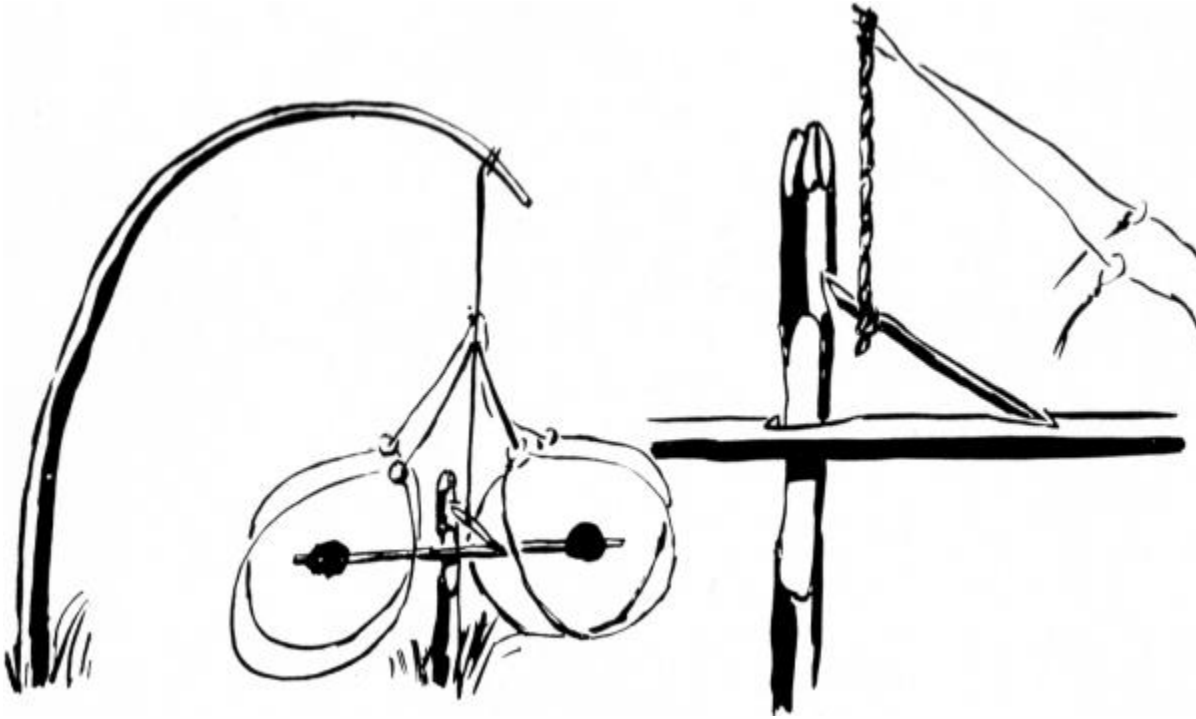


bent over so that it comes directly above the head of the two stakes driven into the ground. A cord from the head of the sapling is tied to the centre of the cross bar. The side branch is baited, and two nooses are spread either side of the baited crossbar.

Two stout straight stakes are cut. On the upper end of each a nick is cut, with the straight step on the top end of the stake. The cross bar is now cut, with a side branch so that the end of the side branch is a few inches away from the cross bar. The side farthest away from the side branch is squared on top and sides to fit the squared faces of the stakes. A whippy sapling, lopped of its branches and top, is

Depth of cuts into the two stakes affects the degree of sensitivity of release.

Double-ended Figure Four Snare



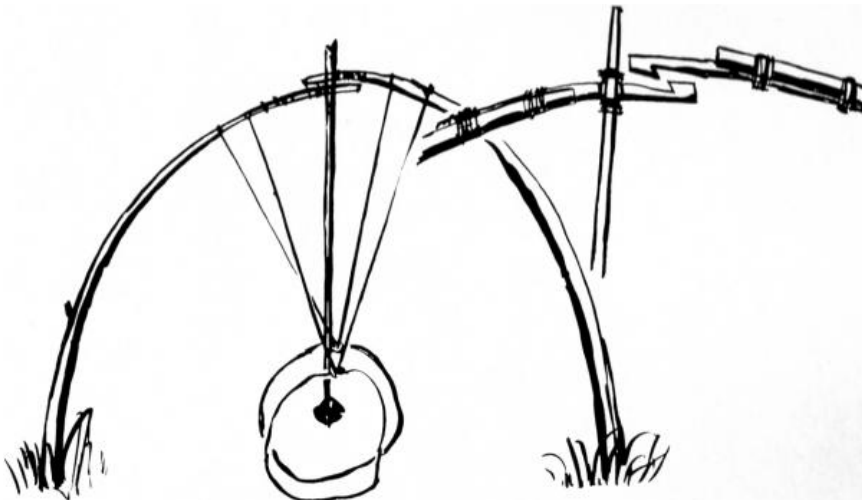
A whippy sapling, trimmed of its branches and head, is bent over and the site directly beneath the head marked on the ground. Before releasing the sapling a stout cord is tied to the head. The three sticks for the release are now cut. One of these is a stake. It must be sharpened at the point, and bevelled at the head. About 8" [20 cm] from the head two sides are squared off at right angles to

each other, and about 3" [7.5 cm] below the head an undercut nick is made in one of the sides opposite to one of the squared sides.

The crossbar bait stick is now cut. This may be 2' [60 cm] long. In the centre it is nicked or cut to provide a squared step less than ¼" deep. On the end farthest from this step, and at right angles to it, an undercut nick is made. The toggle release stick is now cut. One end is sharpened to a chisel edge, and put in the undercut nick in the stake. The crossbar is placed with its step against the squared edge of the stake, and the undercut nick facing to the top. Mark on the toggle stick where the end should be cut to sit in the upper nick of the crossbar, and sharpen the toggle stick to a chisel point. Tie the free end of the cord from the sapling head to the toggle stick, and then tie on cord for four nooses, and set same in position with forked twigs.

A Double Spring Snare

Two saplings are trimmed and bent towards each other. At their heads two interlocking sticks are tied. These sticks are cut so that they step into each other. The bait stick is lashed to one of these, and four cords for the nooses (two onto each sapling head) are lashed.

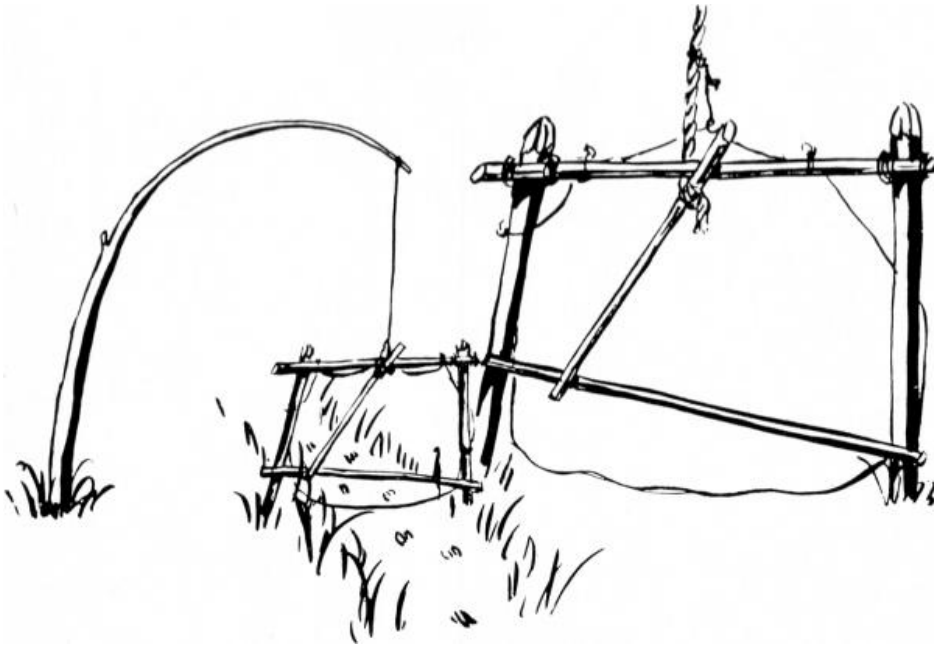


The snare is set bending the two saplings over, locking the two sticks together, and then setting the nooses, two on each side of the bait, and a few inches distant.

When the animal disturbs the bait, it twists the interlocking sticks, and so releases the two saplings. In springing apart they pull the nooses against each other, and hold the captured animal securely.

Track Spring Snare

A site is selected on an animal trail where a tall sapling is available a few feet to one side of the track. The sapling is lopped of its branches and top, and a stout cord is tied to the head. Where the bent sapling crosses the trail tall stout pegs are driven well into the ground on either side of the track. To the tops of these stakes a cross bar is securely lashed. There may be occasions when convenient trees will serve instead of stakes.

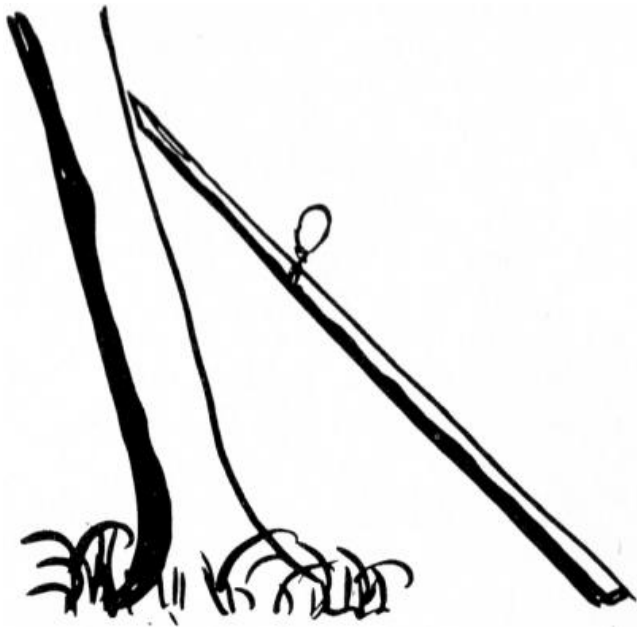


A stout cord or rope is tied to the head of the sapling and a few feet along the cord a thin strong stick is tied. This stick should nearly reach from the crossbar to the ground. The cord from the sapling is tied a few inches below one end. This end is placed under the crossbar, and the lower end which will now pull forward strongly with the pressure of the bent sapling's spring, is laid against a thin cross-stick. The noose of the snare is

lightly tied to the top crossbar and the stakes to keep it spread open. Release is effected when the animal touches either the bottom stick, knocking it down, or the toggle stick with the cord. Either action will release the holding down of the sapling, and it will spring upright, tightening the noose around the animal's neck.

.tree snares

Simple Noose For Tree Climbing Animals



This snare is prohibited in many areas, and should not be used unless absolutely necessary, and only where its use is permitted.

A site is selected by examining a tree which shows the claw marks of tree climbing animals on its bark. The 'lean' of the tree is carefully examined, and on the upper side of the 'lean' a stout straight pole 8' to 10' [2.4 to 3 m] long, and at least 3" or 4" [7.5 or 10 cm] thick is placed to make a 'path' for the animal from the ground to well up the tree trunk. The animal will use this pole to climb the tree on its nightly excursions. Onto the upper end of the pole set a simple wire noose, fastened securely to the pole itself.

The animal in climbing or descending the pole will put its head or paw into the noose, and so ensnare itself.

Note: A point of interest is that most tree living animals will descend a tree if the base of the tree is consistently beaten with a heavy instrument such as the back of an axe or a heavy club. Nocturnal animals will descend a tree in broad daylight, but the blows must be continued and fairly heavy. It is probable that the animal feels the shock through the tree and, obeying an impulse to quit before the tree falls, leaves its hiding place. This is an excellent method of getting night feeding animals into daylight for photographing.

Noose Snare Sticks For Small Birds

This is a prohibited snare, illegal in many districts. It should not be used except to catch pests.



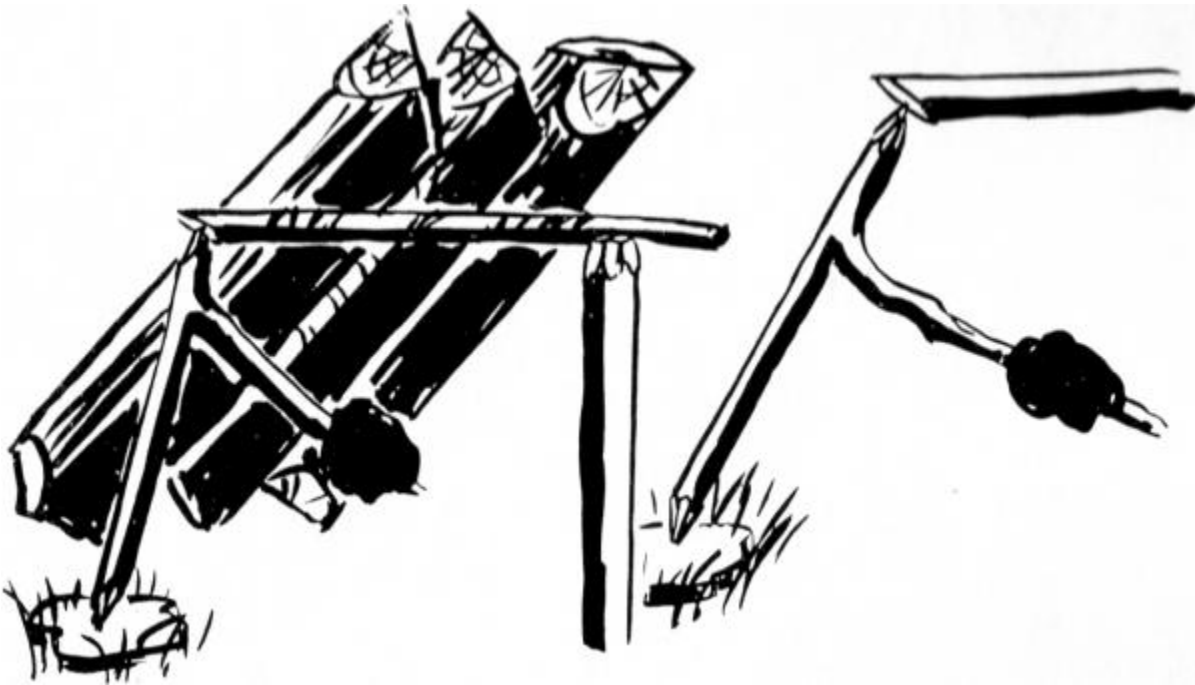
A straight stick 3' to 4' [90 to 120 cm] long is selected. Onto this many fine nooses, each between ½" and 1" in size, of horse hair are tied securely and the stick is then tied with the nooses uppermost to a shrub or small tree which is a favourite resting place for small birds. They alight on the stick, and their feet become entangled in the snares. One or two birds so caught will call others to them, and in a short time seven or eight birds will be all snared on the noose stick.

A straight stick 3' to 4' [90 to 120 cm] long is selected. Onto this many fine nooses, each

This type of snare stick is condemned for general use. It has a place for the orchardist to clear starling and fruit eaters from his orchard, but it should not be used to snare small birds such as finches and wrens for the purpose of putting them into captivity. If you see such a stick, obviously set for such a purpose, take it and destroy it. You will be doing the birds a good turn by this action.

.logfalls

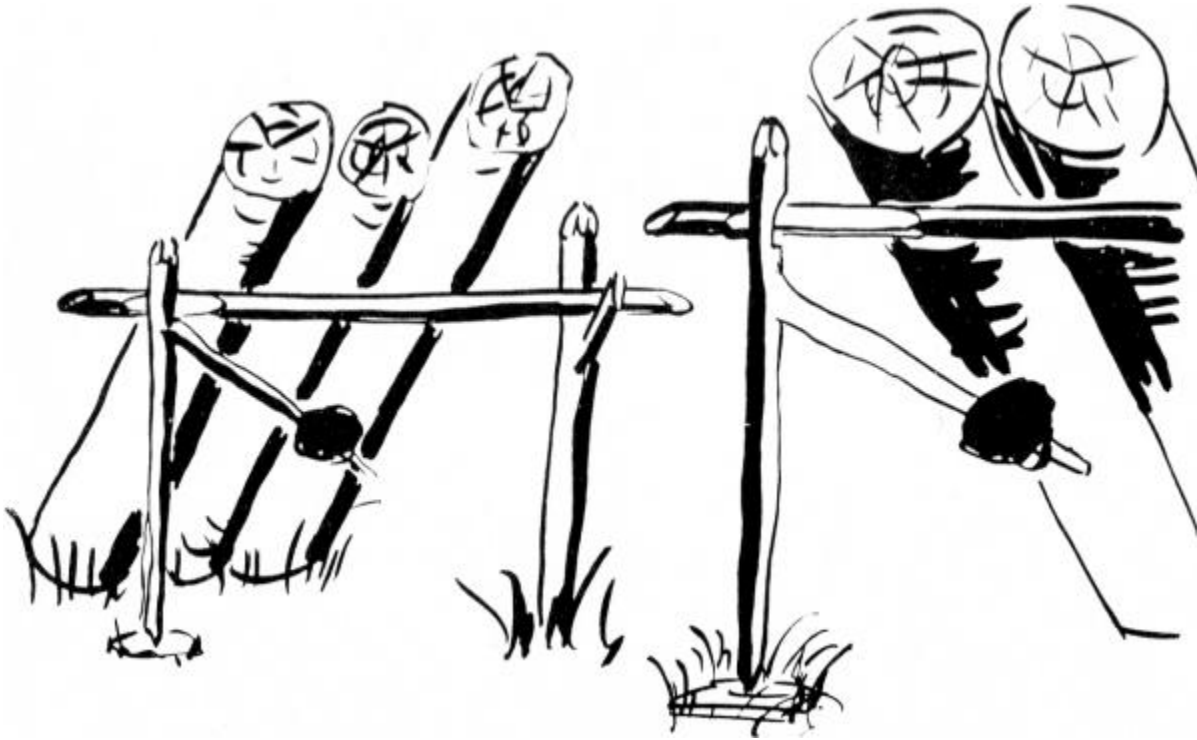
Slip Release Of Bait Stick



This log fall is suitable for ground living animals, and depends for its action upon the turning or twisting of a forked bait stick, one end of which is sharpened to a point which in turn supports the smoothly cut face of the cross bar on which the logs are lying. Select a site where the animals feed. Cut your bait stick with a widely forked prong. The lower end should be

roughly sharpened, and the top end brought to a sharp point. A stout stake is sharpened and bevelled at the head so that it is nearly flat. This stake is driven securely into the ground. The two or three heavy logs for the fall are selected and trimmed so they will lie together on the cross bar. The cross bar is cut with a squared side at one end, and the other end is trimmed off with a smoothly inclined face. The squared side is laid on the top of the bevelled stake. The logs are laid on the cross bar, and the sharpened point of the bait stick is put under the inclined cut on the end of the cross bar at such an angle that it will slip off if the bait stick is twisted. The lower end of the bait stick rests on a chip of bark or a smooth flat stone so that it will not sink into the ground. Sensitivity is adjusted by the angle of the bait stick on the cut at the end of the cross bar.

Squared Face Release Of Bait Stick



The general construction of this logfall release is similar to the slip release. A stout stake is sharpened and driven into the ground as for the preceding trap. The cross bar, except for two squared sides in place of the smoothly cut inclined end is exactly the same. The bait stick is forked and at the upper end a square seated cut is made to take the squared side of the

cross bar, so that when the weight of the logs is resting on the cross bar the squared side is securely resting on the square cut at the top end of the bait stick. When the prong with the bait is disturbed the bait stick is twisted, and the crossbar unseated so that the logs fall on the animal beneath, either breaking its back instantly or crushing its head so that death is immediate.