

Survival Trapping

Making Do With What You Have On Hand

By: Buckshot

Trapping or snaring is a simple process. Your goal is to hold, contain, or kill the intended target species. Without real traps or snares, you have to use your head. The better your understanding of wildlife, the better trapper you will be.

I have a friend who just started trapping and she told me she used to think you just put traps anywhere in the woods and the animals would be caught! This is a very important statement if you are a beginner. To understand trapping, you have to understand what real estate agents say all the time - "Location, location, location."

To become an expert trapper, you must study every piece of written material on the target animals. I am not just talking about trapping books and videos, but wildlife studies. We have 50 states and all 50 states have done some form of wildlife study every few years. These studies will teach you a lot. For example, an Iowa raccoon study found that the average raccoon family of two adults and four pups live their entire life in a 160-acre area. The Canadian beaver study found that you can trap two beavers per den every year, and not hurt the population. The Texas coyote study found out that you have to trap 70% plus of all the coyotes in a given area to hurt the population. These same studies also found out that if the population was really trapped down, the surviving families will have more pups in their litters. This is a natural rule called "Nature will always fill a void."

Have you seen the movie with Alec Baldwin and Anthony Hopkins called "The Edge"? I think that is what it was called, anyway. This is the movie where they are stranded up in Alaska. They make that little cage trap out of sticks and twine to catch the squirrel. Then they catch a squirrel. The funny part was the squirrel the movie shows getting caught in the trap doesn't even live in Alaska! I have seen animals in traps, and I laughed my head off when I saw that part! A trapped squirrel would have jumped and pushed at the cage. That cage, having no weight on it would have fallen open, and the squirrel would have escaped. Don't rely on Hollywood to teach you any survival skills!

Pine Sap and Birch Bark Trap. We will now discuss some different emergency trapping techniques. One of my favorites from my "10 Homemade Traps" video is a century old way of trapping birds. For centuries, the Indians knew that trapping fed them better than hunting, and they developed this trap.

You use a smooth, easy-to-form type of bark, like Birch or any pliable, soft, inner bark. Form a cone like an ice cream cone, and tie strips of inner bark around the cone to keep it together. Score a pine tree by cutting off a 4 x 4 inch square in the bark, until you can see the inner bark. The sticky sap will flow out. Take a stick and get a good glob of sap, then smear it onto the inside of your cone. Using whatever the birds - like grouse or pheasants - are feeding on (berries,

corn, etc...), make a small trail leading into the cone, and fill the inner cone with the bait. The bird will eat the bait and follow the trail right into the cone! Once they stick their head in, the pinesap will stick to their feathers. The bird is now blind. But, just like a bird in a cage that you place a cover over, these trapped birds will lay down, thinking it is night time, and go to sleep. It is very important to make sure no light can be seen inside the cone.

Approach the trapped bird slowly and quietly. Once you grab the bird, hold on tight, because it is going to freak out! Quickly grab it and wring it's neck.

Stovepipe Bird Trap. The stovepipe game bird trap is so simple, it makes me laugh every time I think about it. The principle behind it is that birds can't back up. Have you ever seen a bird walk backwards? Neither have I!

A friend told me about it when I was in high school. There was a farm inside the village limits loaded with pheasants! I used to train my dogs there. The pheasants were just too tempting for me, so I had to try it. So, I made a trap, baited it with corn, and the next day, sure enough, there were fresh pheasant tracks going right into the pipe!

Man! This is great, I thought! I lifted the pipe, expecting the weight of a bird, only to be disappointed upon finding it empty. Mice must have stolen the bait, I thought. After two more days of tracks going into the pipe and no pheasants, I figured it out. I was using an 8-inch pipe, and the birds could turn around. I went back to the junkyard, found some 6-inch pipe, and the next day, the pheasant was waiting!

Of course, I had to try it on the grouse, and found that a 4-inch pipe works for them. My guess for quail would be the 2- or 3-inch pipe. Just don't do what a friend of mind did. He made one out of a real short pipe, about 10 inches long, and the big rooster pheasants tail was sticking out the end! He was in some park, and as he was walking out to his car, the police saw the pheasant tail, and he got busted. Some people have no sense of humor! The bad thing was, now the cops knew what the trap was, so the rest of us had to quit for a while.

Materials needed:

1. (1) 6-inch diameter, 24-inch long stove pipe
2. piece of chicken wire, about 12-inches square
3. some duct tape

That's it. You take the chicken wire, form it around one end of the pipe, and duct tape the overlay nice and tight around the pipe. Place a trail of corn going into the pipe, and a pile or cob in the back. This has to be the easiest trap to make, and man does it work! Be careful when you pull the pheasants out. They are a feisty bird, and you had better have a good hold on them. Otherwise, they will fly off.

A friend of mine did this in the garage, lost the bird, got the dog, and he said that after 15 minutes of him trying to knock the bird down so the dog could grab it, the garage was a wreck! The dog ripped the bird up, and his wife was a little mad. Women!!!

A Cruel Raccoon Trap. First off, I have never used this type of trap, ever! But, I had a friend in high school that used it. I saw the caught animal in it. However, if it comes down to your survival or the raccoon, then it's your choice.

Drill a 1-inch diameter hole, 4 inches deep, into the root of a big, thick, main tree. If you don't have a drill, you can burn a hole down with hot coals. Hammer four nails into the hole, angled downwards, on all four sides, so that they stick about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way into the hole. Bait, like a piece of fish, is shoved down the hole. The raccoon will stick his paw down, and when he pulls up, his leg will be pulled into the nails. This will hold him until you check your traps. This is a very ugly, inhumane trap.

A Pit Trap. This is a neat trap. A friend in England told this me about this one, on catching pheasants. You take a coke bottle, or a small shovel, and dig a hole 6 inches in diameter, 10- to 12 inches deep. Make a trail of corn leading to the hole, and cover the bottom with corn. The pheasant, or grouse, will come up and reach down to get the corn. Then, they fall into the hole. Their wings are stuck at their sides, and their feet are hanging up in the air! You just pull them up by the feet, and wring the neck.

A Barrel Trap. This one is so simple to make, it is funny. Any type of barrel or smooth garbage can will work. Possums and raccoons climb all over the place to get food. So, to take advantage of this trait, all you need is a barrel.

Place the barrel next to a picnic table. Fill $\frac{1}{3}$ with water. Place an 18-inch board over the edge of the picnic table so that it hangs about in the middle (or slightly less) of the barrel/garbage can. Place the bait just before dark so that the birds don't eat it. The animals walk out on the board, and their weight causes them to drop into the barrel/garbage can. The water weights down the fur so that the animal can't jump out. You can modify this concept to any size animal. I have used it with a 3-pound coffee can to trap mice, and with a 5-gallon bucket to trap squirrels. You can dig a pit and place them level with the ground. Just use your head, and it works great!

Fish Trapping. One of the oldest methods of catching fish is used in small creeks and streams. You find a shallow spot next to a deep hole. At night, the fish come out to feed, and will swim in the shallows. To take advantage of this, you can narrow down the opening into a "V". Behind the "V" is a solid wall of rocks. The fish will swim in and get caught or confused, and lay in the trap until daylight. When you go to check the trap, approach quietly from the front. Place a large rock, or rocks, blocking the hole in the "V". This is to keep any from escaping.

Netting is the best way to catch the fish in the containment area. If you don't have a net, make a spear. Clubbing fish is a waste of time in the water. All that happens is you get very wet, and the fish could get so scared they will jump over the back wall to escape. Yes, I found that one out first-hand.

Remove the oxygen from the water. This can be done with black walnuts. During the summer, when the black walnuts are green in color and starting to ripen, you can strip off the green part from the nut. Grind or pound this into a fine powder. Sprinkle a couple of pounds of this mixture

in a hole, and walk downstream. The powder removes the oxygen from the water, and the fish float up to the top. Collect in a net, or by hand.

If you are serious about trapping, get real equipment, and real snares. Real traps and snares will always catch more critters than these homemade traps. Deer and hog snares will feed you a long time per catch.

Trapping is a skill that takes practice. You have to learn to walk into the woods and recognize what type of animal lives there. Then you need to learn where they travel for food, water, and shelter. I recommend reading "Buckshot's Modern Trapping Guide", or watching the videos "Beginner's Trapping" and "Survival Snaring". These will give you the basics of modern trapping. A complete, all-around trapping kit, carrying enough traps and snares for most animals in America, can be found at Buckshot's Camp.