

TRAPPING IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Have you ever had to deal with skunks living under your porch or squirrels in your attic? How about raccoons raiding your garbage night after night or mice setting up house in your walls? If you have, you are like the millions of people who, although they love wildlife, also want to protect their property and families from the potential problems that arise from such wildlife encounters. In many cases, people facing these dilemmas have turned to trapping as a means to help solve their problem.

Throughout North America, we are blessed with abundant and healthy wildlife populations. Over the years, the balance between people and wildlife has changed dramatically and we have come to rely increasingly on the expertise of wildlife professionals to help manage and

maintain wildlife populations. For example, sometimes wildlife can overpopulate to the point where their own habitat can no longer sustain them adequately and they become harmful to other wildlife, people and even to themselves. One of the many methods used to restore this balance is trapping.

Regulated trapping has proved to be one of the best ways to manage wildlife, specifically animals like beavers, coyotes and raccoons. According to a recent report by the prestigious Berryman Institute at Utah State University, wildlife professionals stated that raccoon populations in the Northeastern United States would increase over 100 percent over the next 10 years if trapping were prohibited.



WORKING TO IMPROVE TRAPPING.

We all care about the welfare of animals. Many conservationists who are deeply concerned about the environment, natural resources and animal welfare have been working to improve and modernize the technology of trapping. In 1996, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies began a program to develop Best Management Practices for trapping as a way to improve the welfare of captured animals and to improve the technology behind traps themselves. This is one of the most ambitious research projects in the history of the conservation movement.

Currently, trap testing programs are underway in both the U.S. and Canada that have already yielded preliminary recommendations and changes in trap technology. The effort involves experts from all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services Division, as well as wildlife veterinarians, biologists and experts in the field of trapping.

Thus far, the results in the development of Best Management Practices have been impressive. The United States, Canada, Russia and the European Union have all agreed to further the progress of trapping and animal welfare worldwide by developing international humane standards. Through a Letter of Understanding with the E.U. and a commitment to implement BMPs throughout the U.S., our nation has proved that it is dedicated to responsible wildlife management and animal welfare. As new technology becomes available, humane trapping practices will continually be updated and revised.

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Illustrations from original photos by Tom Tietz



DID YOU KNOW...?

- Trapping is strictly regulated and enforced by each state's department of fish and wildlife, which is staffed by professional wildlife biologists and conservation officers.
- Only abundant species of wildlife can be legally trapped. Since the inception of modern wildlife management in the 1940s, no animal populations in the U.S. have become endangered or extinct from regulated trapping.
- Each state restricts what species can be trapped and what kinds of traps can be used.
- Only licensed trappers are allowed to participate during a trapping season, which lasts only a few months of the year—seldom during spring or summer when animals are busy caring for their young.
- Trapping is also used to relocate wildlife to areas where they once lived but may no longer be found. For example, the restoration of wolves to Montana and river otters to Missouri was made possible through the use of trapping.
- Regulated trapping is an important way for biologists to collect important ecological information about wildlife, especially wildlife diseases like rabies and Lyme disease that can also affect people.
- Threatened and endangered species also benefit from regulated trapping. Sea turtles, whooping cranes, black footed ferrets and other rare species are protected from predation and habitat damage caused by fox, nutria and coyote.
- Regulated trapping is supported by all 50 state wildlife agencies, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, U.S. Department of Agriculture, The Wildlife Society, Wildlife Management Institute, Utah State University's Berryman Institute and many other conservation organizations that recognize the important role trapping plays in wildlife management.