

Wisconsin

Cooperative Trapper Education Program



STUDENT MANUAL



Additional Publications

The following publications are to be used as supplements to the Trapper Education Manual:



Body-grip Traps Brochure



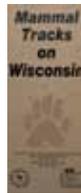
Diseases of WI Furbearers



Cable Restraint Brochure



Furbearer Management



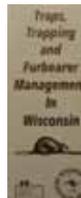
Mammal Tracks on Wisconsin



Trapping in the 21st Century



NTA Trapping Handbook



Trapping and Furbearer Mgmt



WI Trapping Regulations



Trapping and Furbearer Mgmt



Cable Restraint Booklet



Fur Handling DVD

Avoidance Brochures/Booklets



Marten Avoidance



Otter Avoidance



Lynx Avoidance

Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program Student Manual

This education program is the result of hours of dedication and commitment from individuals in the wildlife profession, and is truly a cooperative effort between citizens of Wisconsin as well as federal and state agency personnel. The primary theme was an interest and desire that future generations enjoy the same furbearer trapping opportunities we have today. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the Wisconsin Trappers Association (WTA) through the Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program (WCTEP) are charged with execution of this effort.

Our gratitude extends to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and North Dakota Game and Fish Department for providing the blueprint to this manual; and the WTA, WDNR and Wisconsin citizens for acknowledging the importance of regulated, science-based furbearer trapping by providing the resources and financial support for the program. Individuals deserving such recognition include:

John Irwin, Former Wisconsin Trappers Association (WTA) President

Scott McAuley, Former WTA President

John Olson, Furbearer Specialist, WDNR

Shawn Rossler, Assistant Furbearer Specialist, WDNR

Virgil Schroeder, Current WTA President

Nicke Shumaker, Former WTA-WCTEP Statewide Coordinator

Rick Tischaefter, North Dakota Fur Hunters & Trappers Association (NDFHTA)

Mike Widner, WTA-WCTEP Correspondence Coordinator

Bill Vander Zouwen, Ecology Section Chief, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)

In addition, we express our sincere appreciation to Pat Beringer, Dennis Brady, Dan Carroll, Joe Dragon, John Gillen, Lesa Kardash, Jolene Kuehn, Junior Prudlick and Scott Loomans for their dedication and countless volunteer hours committed to this program. It is that volunteer spirit and quality leadership that serves to ensure future generations have the same furbearer trapping opportunities we have today.

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Cover photo: Scott Nielsen

Second Edition

Wisconsin Trapper Education Manual

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Preface

In 1982, the Wisconsin Trappers Association (WTA) in cooperation with the Wisconsin DNR, began a statewide program of voluntary trapper education. That program recognized that many inexperienced trappers were sincerely interested in trapping responsibly, but they lacked any available source of direct information. Due in part to the successes of the volunteer program and the importance to keep all new trappers informed of current regulations and techniques, trapper education became mandatory for all first time trappers in 1992. The program was revised and designated as The Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program (WCTEP).

The WCTEP has a proud history of providing quality trapping resources and education to new and experienced trappers alike. This manual is intended to provide the information needed to responsibly trap furbearers in Wisconsin. A discussion of basic techniques and how to avoid common mistakes is found in this manual. There is no excuse for the avoidable abuses resulting from lack of knowledge by inexperienced and irresponsible trappers which serve to inflame public opinion against all trappers.

Trapping is not for everyone and persons who trap, or who are considering trapping, must be willing to accept the responsibilities that come with it. This manual will not make an “expert” out of anyone -- and it is not intended to do so. Expertise in trapping comes only with years of experience and long hours of thoughtful observation and study. This manual will provide an introduction to the biology and management of Wisconsin furbearers, and to the basics of using that resource responsibly and safely. It is not intended to encourage or discourage anyone who might want to trap.

This manual is a blend of the original WCTEP trapper education manual and an Association of Fish and Wildlife trapper education manual template. The intent is to provide an updated manual that retains the roots of the Wisconsin program while providing content that shares general similarities with trapper education programs throughout the United States. This manual is intended for use in conjunction with the WTA/DNR Trapper Education programs. In addition to classroom sessions, these programs typically include equipment demonstrations and practical field experience under the supervision of qualified instructors. Although this manual can be used alone as a reference or self-instruction book, it will be of most value when used in combination with the education course.

Students who have successfully completed the WCTEP course will:

1. Have a greater knowledge and appreciation for wildlife and our natural resources.
2. Be aware of the history and heritage of the fur trade.
3. Have a basic understanding of the biology and management of Wisconsin furbearers.
4. Be familiar with trapping and wildlife regulations and their purpose.
5. Know how to behave ethically in the outdoors.
6. Understand how to properly prepare, maintain, and use trapping equipment.
7. Know the basics of trapping Wisconsin furbearers responsibly and effectively.
8. Understand how to properly prepare, care for, and use or market, fur pelts to realize the greatest benefit.
9. Understand the basics of outdoor safety and survival.

NOTE: The WCTEP would not be what it is today without the forethought of past WTA members or the dedication and unselfish nature of current WTA instructors and members, conservation wardens, and wildlife biologists. Take the time to thank your instructors.

UNIT I

Photo Credit: Junior Prudlick

Chapter 1

Introduction to Trapper Education



Chris Tischaerer

First muskrat.

Trapping benefits society.

Trapping is highly regulated, and science-based.

Trapping is a highly engaging, year-round activity.

Objective - *Students demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of trapping and trapper education in today's society.*

Introduction

Trapping is part of our North American heritage. First-time trappers in many states and Canadian provinces must complete a trapper education program covering skills, regulations, and the role of regulated trapping in scientific wildlife management. Trapper education programs teach basic techniques with a strong focus on the responsible treatment of animals, legal methods, safety, selectivity, and ethical trapper behavior.

This revised Trapper Education Program was developed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, volunteer representatives from the Wisconsin Trappers Association and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The Association is comprised of and represents professionals from fish and wildlife agencies of states, provinces and federal governments of the United States and Canada. The program was developed to:

- Protect the health, safety, and welfare of people, wildlife, and domestic animals.
- Support wildlife **conservation** programs that sustain species and **ecosystems** for the benefit of future generations.
- Increase the benefits society currently receives from regulated trapping activities.

Trapping: A Serious Commitment

Trapping is a highly regulated, science-based activity because the public is concerned about wildlife conservation and the welfare of wild animals. Regulations are designed to help manage furbearing animals using safe and selective equipment and techniques.

Trapping takes time and dedication. Trappers spend time studying wildlife, scouting, preparing traps, working with landowners, setting traps, running trap lines and preparing pelts. When trapping season starts, trappers must check their traps routinely until they are removed.

Society, trappers, and non-trappers alike will not accept illegal or unethical behavior. This course can teach you the basics. You must be willing to spend the time and effort to learn and trap responsibly.

Values of Furbearers and Why We Trap

Fur products and trapping are of **cultural** and economic importance. Furbearers are used and managed as valuable, renewable, natural resources.

Values associated with furbearers:

- **Economic** - Positive values include furs, meat and by-products such as perfume and fishing and trapping lures. Examples of negative values include crop depredation, property damage and flooded roads.
- **Ecological** - Furbearers have a positive value as predators and prey in functioning **ecosystems**. Excessive numbers of furbearers can have negative values if they harm habitats or prey on endangered animals.
- **Cultural** - Trapping is valued by many people as part of their cultural heritage. Trapping involves outdoor skills, knowledge and respect for wildlife, and family activities. Some people look to nature or the land to provide vegetables, firewood, venison and furbearers. Trapping provides these people with needed food and clothing.
- **Biological** - Furbearers have positive values that help us understand human health and the effects of environmental pollutants. Negative biological values include human exposure to disease and parasites.
- **Aesthetic** - Furbearers have many positive aesthetic values for fur and wildlife watching.

Benefits of Regulated Trapping

Responsible trappers provide these benefits to society:

- **Disease Control** - Reducing local populations helps limit the spread of diseases among animals and people.
- **Habitat Protection** - When furbearers overpopulate they can destroy **habitat**. For example, the harvest of nutria in Louisiana, an exotic animal, helps protect 3.6 million acres of coastal wetlands.
- **Endangered Species Protection** - **Foot-hold traps** help protect many rare and endangered species from predators. Examples of animals that have benefited include the desert tortoise, sea turtles, whooping cranes, black-footed ferrets, and piping plovers.
- **Property Protection** - Farmers and other landowners benefit when trappers remove excess furbearers that threaten property and crops.



Marty Beard

Fur handling is rewarding work for all ages.

Illegal or unethical behavior is not acceptable. Show respect for wildlife, people and property.

Farmers who have crop damage will often give you permission to trap.



John Olson

Zack Wilson and Devin Olson. Iron County early 1980's

Trapping is a way of life for many people.



FWS Photo

Whooping Crane. Wetland habitats are home to hundreds of species of wildlife.

When voters restricted trapping in Massachusetts in 1996, landowner beaver complaints doubled.

The ability to participate in activities like hunting and trapping is a privilege in most states, a right in others.

A US Fish and Wildlife Service survey revealed 487 wildlife management programs that involved trapping on 281 National Wildlife Refuges.



FWS Photo

- **Wildlife Restoration** - Trappers use foot-hold traps to humanely capture species such as river otter in states where they are plentiful so they can be released in other states to re-establish populations. Over 4,000 river otter have been trapped and released in 18 different states, restoring a valuable native species.
- **Wildlife Research** - Foot-hold traps and **cable devices** are critical for catching elusive species such as wolves, coyote, and fox. Wildlife biologists depend on traps and trappers to help study many species of wildlife.
- **Helping Maintain Balance** - Trappers assist in controlling mid-sized predators where large predators no longer occur or are rare. Thus helping maintain balance in a wide variety of ecosystems.

Trapping: Privilege vs Right

In most states, trapping is a privilege available to all citizens who choose to follow regulations and behave responsibly. In Wisconsin, regulated trapping is a constitutional right, but trappers who violate laws can lose their privilege to trap. If trappers as a group do not behave responsibly, citizens could decide to take away this right and stop all trapping.

State and National Trappers Associations

Trappers have formed state and national organizations to help address issues related to trapping and furbearer management. Two national groups include the National Trappers Association and the Fur Takers of America.

The National Trappers Association (NTA) has the following purpose statement:

- To promote sound **conservation**, legislation, and administrative procedures.
- To save and faithfully defend from waste the natural resources of the United States.
- To promote sound environmental education programs.
- To promote a continued annual fur harvest using the best tools presently available for that purpose.

The Fur Takers of America (FTA) has the following purpose:

- To promote interest in and accumulate and disseminate knowledge concerning the trapping of fur bearing animals among persons interested therein.

You can find out more about the NTA and FTA at their Web sites:

- <http://www.nationaltrappers.com/>
- <http://www.furtakersofamerica.com/>

The Web sites also link to state trapping associations, online bulletin boards, and other helpful organizations.

Wisconsin Trappers Association:

- <http://www.wistrap.org/>

Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program:

- <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/trap/>

There are many benefits to membership in trapping organizations. You will learn new techniques to become more successful, be invited to meetings and other activities, gain a greater understanding of wildlife management, and learn about issues affecting trapping.

Wisconsin DNR's Policy on Trapping

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources supports the regulated use of wildlife for human benefits, including hunting and trapping where legal harvests do not reduce subsequent population levels of these renewable wildlife resources or where population reduction of certain species is a deliberate objective.

The Department supports regulated trapping and efforts to address societal concerns through appropriate education, research, enforcement and regulatory programs. Such programs shall be designed to increase awareness and acceptance of regulated trapping by seeking to enhance animal welfare while maintaining wildlife management capabilities and other benefits associated with this activity.

For more information visit the Wisconsin DNR website:

- <http://dnr.wi.gov/>

Confidential information concerning violations can be reported by calling:

- 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367)

Organized trappers, hunters, and anglers have supported fish and wildlife conservation programs for more than 100 years.

Membership in state and national trapping organizations will help you become a more successful and responsible trapper.

Online bulletin boards for trappers are a good way to learn new techniques and solve problems. Post a question, and get answers from friendly, experienced trappers.

Trapping technology and techniques have shown continuous improvement for nearly 200 years

Chapter 1 Review – Introduction to Trapper Education

Objective - Students demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of trapping and trapper education in today's society.

Recognize that the decision to become a trapper represents a serious commitment of time and dedication to responsible behavior.

1. When trapping season starts, trappers must check their traps _____ until all are removed.
2. List three positive values of furbearers including ecological, biological, cultural, aesthetic and economic values.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
3. List three negative values or problems caused by furbearers
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
4. List two products that come from furbearers.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
5. Trapping is valued by many people as part of their _____ heritage. Trapping provides people with food and _____.
6. Furbearers help us understand _____ health.
7. List a minimum of four benefits that regulated trapping provides to society.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____

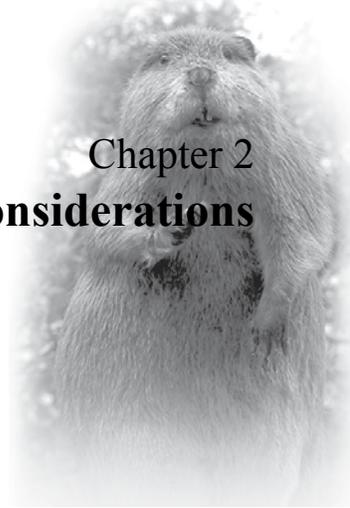
Trapping is an individual privilege in most states, and a individual right in others.

8. Name two state or national trapper associations that provide materials and continuing education for trappers.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____



Chapter 2

Historical Considerations



Objective - *Students use knowledge of history, public attitudes about wildlife, and the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation to understand regulated trapping as a legitimate activity.*

History of the Fur Trade in North America and Wisconsin

North America's fur trade began during the 1500s when Europeans explored the eastern coast. Samuel De Champlain, a French explorer, established the first North American fur trading post at Quebec in 1608. In exchange for pelts, Native Americans received metal tools, weapons, cloth, decorative objects, metal, and glass.

For many years, the beaver was the most desired animal. Its soft underhairs were compressed into a felt-like fabric for men's hats and the skins themselves were used for lining overcoats. These were desirable items in Europe, a nation that had overharvested its furbearing animals to near **extinction** by the early 1600s.

As a result, the fur trade became North America's primary business. Many wars and battles were fought over the fur trade. During the 1600s, the Iroquois Nation frequently battled other native tribes in Canada and the Ohio Valley to gain control over land where furbearers lived. This period of time is known today as the Beaver Wars.

At first, almost all trappers were Native American; Europeans could only travel to what is now present day Wisconsin with Native American permission. That is how in 1634 Jean Nicolet made the first visit on record by a European to what is now Wisconsin with the purpose of trading fur.

During this time period, the French government issued licenses to companies or individuals giving them exclusive rights to trade in specific regions. European traders continued moving into the Wisconsin region and soon had a strong hold on the fur trade. The establishment of additional French trade centers, such as Prairie du Chien and Madeline Island (WI), was necessary to accommodate the increased flow of pelts and trade goods.



FWS Photo

Alaskan trapper cabin.

Fun to Know

Beaver felt hats were prized possessions among European men during the 1700's and early 1800s. They were expensive to make. The beaver were captured in North America and furs were shipped a long distance to reach Europe. The manufacturing process was complex.



Beaver.

Dennis Garrison



Silvertip Productions

Two kinds of beaver were used to make felt hats. At first, “coat beaver” were preferred. These were furs that had been worn by Native Americans until the guard hairs wore off.

“Parchment beaver” were prime pelts, but for a long time they had to be shipped to Russia for processing to remove the guard hairs. Eventually French and English hat makers discovered the Russian secrets and began to use parchment beaver for all their felt hats. The final blow to the early fur trade came when silk hats gained popularity in Europe.

Beaver felt is commonly used to make high-quality cowboy hats.

As a result of the French and Indian War (1760), the British government took over the Wisconsin region from the French and continued the fur trade along the same lines. Large fur-trading operations like the North West Company began to take shape, although many small independent outfits were established to accommodate the needs of trappers and to compete in the business. Fortunes were made and lost in the business of buying and trading furs.

After the War of 1812, the American Fur Company, owned by John Jacob Astor, took over much of the Wisconsin trade. But the fur trade declined over time, reaching a low about 1850. **Habitat** destruction and unregulated killing made furbearers scarce. Europeans were favoring silk over beaver felt, and Native American fur suppliers had declined due to disease, warfare, and displacement from their homelands. At that point, smaller firms continued the fur business in Wisconsin by funneling furs to larger markets in Canada, Europe, and Asia.

During several centuries of fur trading, there was no effort to conserve wildlife or protect **habitat**. Everyone competed for the same wildlife resource. Beaver and otter were eliminated from much of the country. The government did not regulate seasons or methods that could be used to take wildlife. Furbearers of all kinds were shot, speared, snared, or killed using **deadfalls**. Ponds were sometimes drained so all beaver could be captured.

Steel traps did not play a major role in the development of the fur trade or the widespread decline of beaver, otter, and other furbearers. Metal-jawed **Foot-hold traps** were not mass produced or widely available until after 1823.

Although the beaver was the most sought after and most valued animal, other species were also taken. Other Wisconsin furbearer species of value included wolves, fisher, coyote, red fox, badger, American marten, river otter, raccoon, mink, bobcat and muskrat.

Widespread habitat destruction played a key role in changes in animal populations. By the late 1800s, millions of acres of wetlands were drained, forests were cleared for farms, and prairies were plowed under. Streams and rivers ran heavy with silt, sewage, and industrial waste. In the East, nearly all species of fish and wildlife were in decline.

Changes in the abundance and harvests of fur species have occurred throughout the history of the fur trade and undoubtedly will continue in the future. Change occurs from fluctuations in animal populations, demand, value, continued habitat loss and other economic factors. Unfortunately, very little information is available regarding fur harvests and returns received during much of Wisconsin’s early fur history.

Two main factors influence the economic value of a furbearer species: 1) the abundance of the animal; and 2) the monetary return received for the animal. Both factors are variable and change from year to year. The harvest of some species such as skunk, fox, raccoon, and coyote tend to follow the return received for the animal. If returns are high, the harvests are above average. The harvests of other species such as mink, muskrat, weasel, and beaver are quite consistent even though the return may vary. As a general rule, the economic value of any year's harvest will be a product of the number of trappers, the demand for a certain species, and the abundance of the species.

Aside from any monetary return, regulated trapping is important in Wisconsin. Over 20,000 people purchase licenses to trap furbearers annually in Wisconsin. People trap for a variety of reasons. Some reasons include learning about the characteristics and habitats of the animals themselves, outdoor physical activity, the challenges associated with fair chase, a respect and love for nature and wildlife, protecting personal property, and maintaining a connection with the land. Regulated trapping remains an important activity and cultural lifestyle for many people in Wisconsin.

Fish and Wildlife are Public Resources

In North America, wildlife is a public resource owned by no individual or corporation. State and federal wildlife agencies manage wildlife for the benefit of all people. Public values and attitudes about wildlife determine how it can be used. Since the first European contact, people's attitudes about wildlife have changed.

People sometimes have conflicting attitudes about the way wildlife should be used or managed. The most serious conflicts are among people who have different views about killing wildlife. However, even people who hold similar views may disagree on how animals such as furbearers should be managed.

Attitudes and Values

The values people place on wildlife underlie their attitudes about when and how animals may be used. People who use wildlife for subsistence may revere animals even though they harvest wildlife for food and clothing. People who misuse or try to exterminate wildlife do not value animals at all until they are dead.

Conservationists place the highest values on preserving habitats, ecosystems, and sustainable wildlife populations. Conservationists accept regulated harvests of surplus animals as appropriate.

Grand Squirrel Hunt - Franklin Co., Ohio 1880 Newspaper Story

"The hunt was conducted agreeably to the instructions in our last paper. On counting the scalps it appeared that 19,660 scalps were produced. It is impossible to say what numbers in all were killed, as a great many of the hunters did not come in. We think we can safely challenge any other county in the State to kill squirrels with us."



FWS Photo

Market "Hunters"

Before wildlife was protected by seasons and **bag limits**, market "hunters" killed millions of animals a year to supply food to restaurants and grocery stores. Market "hunters" had a strict "utilitarian" attitude toward wildlife. They were not "hunters" according to today's meaning of the word.



FWS Photo

Sport Hunters

The term “sport hunter” arose in the United States during the mid-1800s to distinguish those who practiced “fair chase” hunting techniques from commercial “market hunters.” Sport hunters placed limits on themselves and their hunting methods in order to test their skills and give animals a reasonable opportunity to escape. The code of the sportsman arose to define proper conduct for hunters.



USFWS Service

Great Hinkley Hunt.

On December 24, 1818, 600 armed men encircled Hinkley Township in northeastern Ohio. They marched toward a central point and shot 300 deer, 21 bears, 17 wolves, plus hundreds of turkey, fox, and raccoons. This was an effort to exterminate all the wildlife.

Strict protectionists value individual animals. They tend to oppose hunting and trapping out of concern for individual animals. Some protectionists have a mistaken belief that hunting and trapping will threaten the entire population.

Animal rights activists believe all animals have the same rights as humans. They oppose any human use of animals, domestic or wild, and may value an animal’s life as much as a human life.

Subsistence Attitude

Prior to European influence wildlife was a source of food, clothing, and tools for Native Americans. They had few crops to grow, and no livestock. The lives of plants and wild animals were spiritually and culturally connected to the lives of native people. Today, only a few people totally depend on wildlife for subsistence.

Utilitarian Attitude

European settlers and Native Americans alike viewed wildlife as a common resource. No one owned wildlife until they killed it. Some people made their living by killing animals for fur, meat, or feathers. At the time there were no government agencies to manage and protect wildlife.

Extermination Attitude

When people started farming in the wilderness, wildlife became a nuisance. Bears, wolves, and mountain lions were a threat to people or livestock. Deer, raccoon, and squirrels damaged crops. Farmers shot wildlife, or paid others to do it. Government agencies paid bounties on many animals.

During the 1800’s former military officers sometimes organized “armies” to conduct “wars of extermination” on wild animals. Communities held events to see who could kill the most wildlife on a given day or weekend. Widespread events could result in tens of thousands of animals being killed in a single day.

Conservation Attitude

By the mid-1800’s many people no longer depended on wildlife for survival. Some began to enjoy hunting, fishing, and camping as leisure activities.

Habitat destruction, market hunting, and extermination efforts were reducing animal populations. As wildlife became scarce, **conservation** became a concern for hunters. Conservationists wanted to save critical habitats and remaining wildlife populations. There was no scientific knowledge about wildlife management. It took decades to create natural resource agencies and funding sources. Leaders such as President Theodore Roosevelt, a hunter, created public support for wildlife and a conservation ethic.

Today, wildlife conservation programs are based upon sustainable use. Individual animals may be used in accordance with laws, while habitats and animal populations are preserved. Many people, including hunters and trappers, are conservationists who care about wildlife while recognizing that regulated use is beneficial to society and the resource.

Preservation Attitude

Many people value wildlife but they fail to see the positive connection between hunting and trapping, and sustainable populations. Preservationists may oppose hunting and trapping in the belief it endangers animals. However, many preservationists are open-minded, and willing to examine facts about wildlife management.

Animal Rights Attitude

A small but highly vocal group of Americans believe in **animal rights**. The primary concern of Animal Rights advocates is the moral obligation of people. They believe animals have the same rights as humans and therefore oppose any human use of animals including hunting, trapping, farming practices, research on animals, rodeos, circuses, horse races, and other animal-related activities. Some animal rights proponents even oppose owning animals as pets.

Apathetic Attitude

A high percentage of the American public is growing up with little connection to the land. Few of these people think about wildlife on a daily basis, and most have no personal experience that would help shape their attitude. If they encounter wildlife doing damage to their property, they may want it exterminated or removed. If someone shows them pictures of animals in traps and claims it is cruel, they may oppose trapping or vote to make it illegal. An **apathetic** person's attitude can be easily changed, but they may not spend much time considering the issues.

Animal Welfare vs. Animal Rights

Most Americans, including those who trap, care about animal welfare. A small number of people hold **animal rights** beliefs. A person concerned with animal welfare wants to minimize pain and suffering when animals are trapped, or used any other way. A person who believes in animal rights believes animals have a right not to be trapped at all.

Most trappers are concerned with animal welfare. Those who are not are unlikely to be accepted by other trappers.



Bobcat.

Bill Arneson



Beaver lodge - habitat FWS Photo

Beaver populations, if managed carefully, can provide immense benefits to natural ecosystems, while minimizing nuisance and damage problems.



Red Fox

FWS Photo

Some people oppose any use of animals, including human consumption of meat, fish, eggs, and milk.

Tragedy of the Commons

The “Tragedy of the Commons” relates to common resources that are available to all. In this situation, the greediest will gain the most, for a time. Restrictions on use of common resources are necessary to prevent overuse by individuals that could result in the loss of these resources to society.

Wildlife agencies are concerned about sustainable long-term populations and individual animal welfare. Many trapping regulations are enacted to improve animal welfare. Agencies regulate types of traps that may be used, where they may be set, seasons, and how often traps must be checked. Trapper education programs play a role in animal welfare, too.

One of the most important efforts to improve animal welfare is known as the **Best Management Practices** project. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has spent years working with wildlife agencies, trappers, veterinarians, universities, and other groups to develop Best Management Practices. This project is ongoing, and provides information used in this Trapper Education Manual.

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

The United States and Canada have the most successful system of wildlife management the world has ever known. Conservationists, especially hunters and trappers, supported the development of The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. This model is defined by seven principles:

1. Wildlife as a Public Trust Resource

Legally, wildlife is a public resource, held in trust by the government, and managed by fish and wildlife agencies. State wildlife agencies are responsible for most wildlife management and regulation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has authority over migratory birds and federally **endangered species**. The Service works cooperatively with the states and other nations.

2. Elimination of Markets for Wildlife

The elimination of market hunting of most wildlife for meat, feathers, or other uses was critical in halting what would have been a “tragedy of the commons.” Using regulated trapping, furbearer populations will sustain a commercial market and provide significant benefits to society.

3. Allocation of Wildlife by Law

Public privileges to use wildlife and have a say in its management are guaranteed by law. Hunting and trapping privileges are not restricted to wealthy landowners or granted as special considerations. Individuals can lose their privileges if they violate laws pertaining to the legal harvest of wildlife.

4. Wildlife May Be Killed Only for a Legitimate Purpose

Killing wildlife for frivolous reasons is prohibited by law. If society is going to sanction the killing of wildlife it must be for a legitimate purpose such as using the animal or its parts for food, clothing, medicine, self-defense, or property protection.

5. Wildlife Is Considered an International Resource

The Migratory Bird Treaty of 1916 between the United States and Canada was the world's first significant international treaty for the management of wildlife. Today, waterfowl, songbirds, and other migratory wildlife benefit from international management and regulation.

6. Science is the Proper Tool for Discharge of Wildlife Policy

Science has been the primary basis for wildlife restoration and management, and the formation of the wildlife profession. North Americans used wildlife science as a basis for managing wildlife decades ahead of everyone else in the world.

7. Democracy of Hunting and Trapping

In North America, everyone has the opportunity to participate in regulated hunting and trapping. President Theodore Roosevelt wrote about the societal gains to be made by keeping land available for hunting for all people. This is very different from a model that existed for centuries in Europe, where wealthy people owned wildlife and the land, and only the wealthy could fish and hunt. In North America, wildlife is owned by the public, and responsible citizens have equal opportunities to participate in regulated hunting or trapping.

Hunters and trappers provide the funding for wildlife management programs and the purchase of critical habitats. When they join together with a common purpose, hunters and trappers are a political force speaking out in favor of wildlife **conservation**.

Thanks to conservation-minded hunters and trappers, species such as elk, deer, geese, wild turkeys, wood ducks, beaver, bald eagles, and river otter are more numerous today than they were in 1900. Hunters, trappers, and other conservationists were the first people to place a value on living wildlife. As a result, wildlife is now managed as a public resource to be conserved for the benefit of all.



Muskrat

WI DNR

Chapter 2 Review - Historical Considerations

Objective - Students use knowledge of history, public attitudes about wildlife, and the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation to understand regulated trapping as a legitimate activity.

Students become aware of the fur trade's role in the exploration and settlement of North America.

1. Jean Nicolet came to Wisconsin with the purpose of _____ .
2. The _____ was the most desirable animal during the beginning of the fur trade.
3. _____ traps were not mass produced or widely available until after 1823.

Students recognize that fish and wildlife resources are publicly owned, and managed according to society's laws, values and attitudes

4. State and federal wildlife agencies are entrusted with the _____ of wildlife for the benefit of all people.
5. _____ place the highest values on preserving habitats, ecosystems, and suitable populations of wildlife.

Students identify key components of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

6. _____ has been the primary basis for wildlife restoration and management.
7. _____ and _____ provide the funding for wildlife management programs
8. In North America, wildlife is a _____ resource owned by _____ individual or corporation.

Chapter 3

Responsible Trapping



FWS Photo

Legal Obligations

Trappers, hunters, and anglers must know the regulations and follow them to help conserve resources, and to be accepted in the conservation community.

Trappers and fur hunters must always take the high road. Obeying the law is always the minimum standard of conduct.

Objective - *Students demonstrate an awareness of their responsibilities to landowners, wildlife, other outdoor users, and the public.*

Introduction

Trappers and hunters have a **legal** responsibility to follow regulations. Trappers and hunters have a **moral** obligation to make good decisions when their actions might affect wildlife, landowners, other outdoor users or the public. Ethical trappers and hunters consistently make decisions that result in the greatest good for wildlife, the environment and people.

Legal and Social Obligations

Trapping and hunting is a constitutional right in Wisconsin, but on private lands is still a privilege based on your responsible, ethical actions. Trappers who violated laws can lose their privilege to trap. Society expects trappers and hunters to behave in certain ways if they want to participate. That is why we have regulations for seasons, traps, sets, permission to trap and public safety. Those who fail to follow regulations face possible fines, jail time and the loss of licenses. Illegal trappers also face disapproval from other trappers and outdoor users. If you want to be accepted by other trappers, you must know the regulations and follow them.

Responsible Trapping

Laws cannot define what is right or wrong for you in every situation. You must use judgment based on your knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience to decide what is right or wrong. You can learn from your family or a trusted mentor. In time, you will understand how to make good decisions on your own.

Your relationships with other people, and your social acceptance as a trapper, develop as people come to know how you behave. When you behave in ways that are good for animal welfare, landowners, other outdoor users and the public, you will be an ethical trapper.

Ethics

Ethics is a term you should know. Many trappers, hunters and anglers discuss ethics. Ethics is not a science. Ethics deals with right or wrong in human behavior.

Good behavior in one situation may not be good in another. As an example, if beavers have entered an area where they are causing damage you may choose to capture as many as you can. If beavers are scarce on another property, you should capture only a few of the animals.

Code of Trapping Ethics

The following points are keys to trapping in a responsible and ethical manner.

1. Respect private property. Always ask permission before trapping on private property. Do not tamper with the property of others on public or private land.
2. Know selective and humane trapping systems and use them appropriately.
3. Check traps according to current state regulations for the specific trap type, size, and set.
4. Be aware of others using the outdoors and do not interfere with their activities.
5. Assist property owners with wildlife damage problems.
6. Avoid areas or sets likely to result in the capture of domestic animals.
7. Be a conservationist. Make an effort to not overharvest.
8. Promptly report wildlife problems such as disease, pollution, or habitat destruction.
9. Identify and record all trap locations accurately. Pick up all traps promptly when you have finished trapping.
10. Utilize furbearer carcasses for human, domestic animal, or wildlife food whenever possible.
11. Dispose of unused carcasses properly.
12. Provide educational assistance to new trappers.
13. Support strict enforcement of laws relating to wildlife and wildlife habitat.
14. Respect the rights and feelings of others, even if you disagree with them.
15. Cooperate with wildlife management agencies.



Silvertip Productions

Behave as though there is a video camera crew with you afield, with the video being shown on national television that evening. Will you be proud of what they see?



FWS Photo



FWS Photo

A history of cooperation.

Ethics

Ethics concerns right and wrong in human behavior. Although it involves the application of human reason, it is not a science.

Definition of Responsible

- Liable to be required to give account, as of one's actions or of the discharge of a duty or trust.
- Involving personal accountability or ability to act without guidance or superior authority.

Responsible Behavior and Wildlife

Trappers have an obligation to show respectful behavior toward all wildlife. Both those that they are attempting to harvest, and those that they are not. Even though as trappers, you are killing an animal, you must show respect for the animal both while it is alive and after you have dispatched it.

- Know and use selective and humane trapping systems
- Check traps according to regulations
- Make an effort not to overharvest
- Utilize as much of a harvested animal as possible
- Dispatch humanely
- Use methods that allow the release of non-target species

Responsible Behavior and the Public

Trappers must demonstrate respect toward all other people if they expect to be treated with respect in return. Many people do not understand that wildlife is abundant or that trapping benefits wildlife and people. Your attitudes and behavior will affect people in a positive or a negative way. You should:

- Be able to explain trapping as a highly regulated activity that provides positive benefits to society.
- Be a public advocate for animal welfare and wildlife management.
- Use discretion when transporting animals.

Responsible Behavior and Other Trappers

Trappers must cooperate with each other to ensure the continued use of trapping as an accepted wildlife management technique.

- Join state and/or national trapping organizations so you can learn from others and share your knowledge.
- Report illegal trapping activity – one individual's conduct affects everyone's conduct.

Responsible Behavior and Other Outdoor Users

Millions of North American citizens participate in outdoor activities. Responsible trapping is compatible with other activities at most times and places. To avoid potential conflicts with other outdoor users you should:

- Ask landowners who else might be using their property during trapping season. Communicate with them to find out when and what they might be doing.
- Avoid land trapping on public or private property when hunters may be out in numbers, especially those using dogs.
- Wear hunter-orange clothing during hunting season so others can clearly identify you as a person.
- Support responsible hunting when hunters need your help.
- Be a responsible steward for all wildlife and habitats.

Respect for Natural Resources

Trappers and hunters should recognize positive and negative values of furbearers and habitat in the environment:

- Avoid excessive destruction of living vegetation to make sets.
- Don't drive vehicles off the road where you may destroy natural vegetation.
- Practice low impact camping.
- Support the reintroduction of species to areas they once inhabited.

Trapping Scenarios...What Would You Do?

Group discussions are an excellent way to develop your understanding of **ethics** and responsibilities. Think about each of the people in the following scenarios and the attitudes they may have about furbearers and trapping.

- What would you do in this situation?**
- If you could talk to the people, what would you say?**
- What might change their feelings?**
- If everyone in your community had the same attitudes about wildlife, what might happen as a result?**

Trappers, hunters, and anglers work with resource agencies in many ways.



Silvertip Productions

Trappers must demonstrate responsible behavior.

State and national trapping organizations benefit individual trappers, trappers as a group, and society by promoting conservation and responsible behavior.



USFWS Photo

Respect others who use the outdoors, such as birdwatchers.



FWS Photo

Responsible trappers respect other people who enjoy using the outdoors

Scenario 1 – Your older cousin invites you to go trapping. Along the way, you come to a fence posted with “No Trespassing” signs. As he starts to cross the fence, you ask him “Do we have permission to go there?” He responds, “The owner doesn’t care, and besides, he never comes back here; now come on, let’s go.”

Scenario 2 – It is Winter Vacation from school. You have put out a trap line with more than three dozen sets. One afternoon a friend calls and asks you to spend the night and go to an all-day party the next day. It sounds like fun and you really want to go.

Scenario 3 – A friend introduces you to a Mr. Smith who is complaining about problems with raccoons on his new 500-acre farm. He gives you permission to trap. On the third day of the season at a remote part of the farm you are confronted by a fox trapper who accuses you of trespassing on property where he claims sole permission to trap. You tell him you have permission from Mr. Smith, but he claims the property is owned by the Jones family, who moved to the city several years ago.

Scenario 4 – You are checking your land sets on public land where you haven’t seen anyone else since trapping season opened. Suddenly, you hear several gunshots and turn to see a group of about a dozen hunters in a wide line walking across the field in your direction. As you watch, you can hear the sound of dog bells and beepers coming closer. They are going to pass through an area where you have several foot-hold traps and cable restraints set for coyotes.

Scenario 5 – You are trapping on private land where you know the landowner is generous about giving permission to hunters and trappers. You find a muskrat in one of your body-grip traps at a den site. A man and a young girl approach you and accuse you of stealing fur from their traps. You haven’t stolen anything, and you haven’t seen anyone else’s traps on the property since the season opened. How would you respond?

Scenario 6 – It is the second day of trapping season. Before school, you checked your traps and found several muskrat, a mink, and two raccoon. After school you return home and begin the process of skinning and fleshing your fur when three friends show up. One of them is offended to find out that you are a trapper. You don’t know what the other two think because they are unusually quiet. What would you say to your friend?

Scenario 7 – It is six weeks before the trapping season opens. You show up at a farm to do some scouting where you have permission to trap. The landowner complains about deer damaging his crops. He comes out of the

house with two rifles and says he wants to go along while you scout and have you help him kill several deer. If you turn him down, he may not let you trap on his property anymore. You know that there are too many deer in the area, but deer season is not open and the state wildlife agency is the one in charge of deer depredation.

Scenario 8 – You are out checking your fox traps on a private farm. As you approach a set, you find a fox in someone else’s trap set about 30 feet upwind of one of your dirt-hole sets. You can see well in all directions and no one else is around. You’ve worked hard to do everything right, and you feel like that fox would have been yours if the other trapper had stayed away.

Scenario 9: You stop at a roadside stand where a farmer sells fruits and vegetables. You overhear a customer say “Why is your sweet corn so expensive this year?” The farmer says “Raccoons have eaten nearly half my corn. I never saw so much damage.”

Scenario 10: Your family has trapped on several properties in your neighborhood for many years. One property with two large ponds was sold. A month before trapping season opens you stop by to introduce yourself. A young child waves at you as you pull in the drive. As you get out of the car you notice a bumper sticker on the car in front of you. It says “Real Men Don’t Eat Meat.” The front door opens and a young man steps out to check on the child.

Scenario 11: You take your dog to the vet for annual shots. While you are waiting a woman rushes in crying and holding a badly injured cat. She tells the receptionist her cat is dying after being attacked by a coyote.

Being an Advocate for Trapping

If you asked 100 strangers whether trapping was OK, most would say no. It’s not because they dislike you. It’s not because they oppose the use of animal products – nearly all of them eat meat, drink milk or wear leather shoes.

So why are they so quick to respond? More often than not, it’s because they know very little about regulated trapping – their response is based on the belief that killing animals is wrong unless it somehow benefits society and is done responsibly. You won’t change this philosophy. In fact, you probably agree with it as strongly as anyone.

What you can change is peoples’ awareness of the benefits, oversight and responsibilities that come with trapping. People are less likely to oppose trapping if they recognize that it’s highly regulated, doesn’t endanger animals and benefits society.



Dan Enloe

Behave responsibly even when no one is watching



Dan Enloe

This trapper has earned the respect of landowners. As a result, he has access to thousands of acres of private land for trapping.

Why should you care? The future of trapping depends on it. Help to maintain regulated trapping by taking every opportunity to let people know:

Trapping Does NOT Cause Wildlife to Become Endangered

- All animals that are trapped in Wisconsin are abundant.
- In North America, every **endangered species** is protected by laws that prohibit or restrict hunting and trapping.
- Trapping removes part of a surplus that's produced each year – it doesn't harm the population's future.

Trapping is Highly Regulated

- Regulations are enforced by trained game wardens.
- Most harvest seasons are set in the fall and winter to coincide with the time of year that pelts are most valuable and to avoid the time period when young are raised.
- Regulated trapping is endorsed by trained wildlife professionals who care about the welfare of wildlife.

Trapping Provides Many Benefits to Society

- Trapping can help to keep wildlife from becoming overpopulated.
- Trapping can reduce or prevent damage to crops and other property.
- License fees are used to manage all of Wisconsin's wildlife.
- Trapping can help to reduce the potential for wildlife diseases.
- Trapping can be an important tool for saving endangered species.
- Trapping provides opportunities for outdoor activity and helps our society remain connected with our natural resources.



Junior Prudlick

Trapping instructors passing it on.

Above all, be polite and truthful.



Dan Enloe

Adventure awaits!

What could you do?

What should you do?

What would you do?

Tips for Being an Effective Advocate

Begin by memorizing the main messages (those in bold). Use them whenever the opportunity arises. Fill in the supporting messages as you gain experience.

KEY MESSAGES

- 1) Regulated trapping does not cause wildlife to become threatened or endangered.**
- 2) Trapping is managed through scientifically-based regulations, strictly enforced by Wisconsin Conservation Wardens.**
- 3) The Wisconsin DNR continually reviews and develops rules, regulations, education programs, and capture methods that consider animal welfare.**
- 4) Regulated trapping provides many benefits to society.**
- 5) Most of the animal can be used - the fur to make clothes and the rest of the animal for food and other useful products.**

Assume a fog, not a brick wall, when it comes to peoples' attitudes about trapping. Most will listen if you're sincere and stick to the facts. You're hoping they'll recognize that trapping is a necessary and appropriate activity that should be allowed to continue – even if they don't support it fully. Join local, state and national trapping organizations to stay informed on improvements and threats to trapping. Write legislators when the need arises.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin Trappers Association recognizes that regulated fur hunting and trapping is the most versatile, safe, effective, and efficient tool for capturing individual animals without impairing the survival of furbearer populations or damaging the environment. Trapping and hunting provides an outdoor lifestyle for many Wisconsin citizens through use of an abundant natural resource and provides an effective means of harvesting, managing and studying furbearers; controlling damage caused by furbearers; and, at times, reduces the spread of harmful disease. The WDNR and WTA also recognize that trapping concerns segments of the public who oppose trapping, the use of trapping devices or consumptive use of animals.



Just because it is legal, does not mean you should make the set!



Always be responsible sportsmen and sportswomen.

Chapter 3 Review – Responsible Trapping

Objective - Students demonstrate an awareness of their responsibilities to landowners, wildlife, other outdoor users and the public.

Know that there are legal and social obligations in addition to trapping regulations.

1. In Wisconsin, trapping is a _____, but those who violate laws may lose their _____ to trap.
2. Obeying the _____ is always the minimum standard of conduct.

Know that responsible trapping involves many decisions that cannot be defined by law.

3. When you behave in ways that are good for animal welfare, landowners, other outdoor users and the public, you will be an _____ trapper.

Know that ethics is a system of principles for good conduct.

4. Ethics involves _____ or _____ in human behavior.
5. List two specific ways trappers can demonstrate responsible behavior concerning wildlife.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
6. List three specific ways trappers can demonstrate responsible behavior to the public.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
7. List two specific ways trappers can demonstrate responsible behavior to other trappers.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
8. List three Key Messages of regulated trapping.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
9. List three ways trappers can care for and respect natural resources while pursuing and taking furbearers.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____



Wisconsin's Furbearer Resource

Wisconsin is blessed with a rich and diverse furbearer resource. Because of Wisconsin's geographic position, the state has furbearers that represent both northern and southern climates, and prairies, agriculture and forests.

The Following Furbearers can be Found and Legally Trapped in Wisconsin.

Beaver

Castor canadensis; Order: Rodentia; Family: Castoridae

Description:

The beaver is the largest native rodent found in North America, with adults commonly weighing 40-50 lbs, but sometimes reaching 80+ lbs. They have sharp teeth, capable of cutting down large trees, and are capable of altering their habitat by building dams and lodges.

The second claw on each hind foot is split lengthwise and is used like a comb for grooming and to coat the fur with oil from its large oil glands. The fur varies from pale brown to almost black, is very dense and, when groomed with oil, water will not soak through for several hours. Both sexes have large **castor** glands beneath the skin on the lower belly.

The beaver is highly adapted for aquatic life. The tail is very large, scaled, and horizontally flattened, resembling a paddle; the tail can be used as a rudder or slapped loudly on the water to sound an alarm. Beaver swim by propelling themselves with their hind feet and with their front feet folded back against their body, and with only their head exposed above the surface of the water. The nostrils and ears of the beaver are constructed with valves to keep water out when submerging underwater.

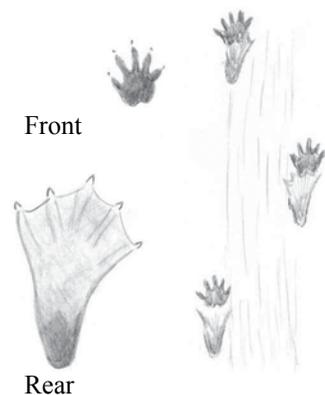
Biology:

Beaver usually live as a family group. The colony usually consists of the adult pair, their young of the year (kits), and the young of the previous year (yearlings). Breeding occurs in the den in late January or February, and averages of five kits are born in May or June after a **gestation period** of 110 days.



Beaver.

FWS



Beaver tracks.

Front
2" width by 2" length

Rear
4" width by 6" length

Normally, only one female per colony usually gives birth, although multiple females can give birth in the same year. In the spring, before the young are born, the two-year-old beaver are normally forced from the colony to disperse and establish their own colony. It is these dispersers that can be captured quite easily using scent mounds set in the early spring along larger streams. This movement continues into early summer.

Common sets for beaver:

- Scent-mound
- Open-water
- Under-Ice Bait
- Runway
- Channel
- Cable snare

Beaver are one of a few animals capable of manipulating their environment, and are an important part of the **ecosystem**. Their dams create fish and wild-life habitat, reduce erosion and improve water quality. Conversely, the animal sometimes damages valuable trees and crops or causes flooding that affect farmlands, wild rice beds, roads, and residential areas.

They build dams on streams and small flowages to create a pond with a stable water level. The dam is constructed of sticks and mud, mixed with a few rocks if available. The upstream, or pond side, is smoothly plastered with mud. Contrary to popular belief, the beaver does not use its tail as a trowel to apply mud to the dam. All members of the family, except kits, help keep the dam in repair.

A lodge varies in size from 6 to 40 feet in diameter depending on the number of beaver in the colony, built of sticks, tree limbs and mud, and contains a nest chamber which has its entrance underwater. Burrows are often dug into the banks of the pond and used as resting areas. Some older male beaver, referred to as “bachelors”, live alone and do not have a dam. When suitable banks are present, such as on large rivers or drainage ditches, beaver will construct a bank den instead. The entrance to the den is underwater and the tunnel leading to it may be 12-15 feet long.

Recommended traps and trapping systems:

- #330 body-grip
- #3 foot-hold
- #4 foot-hold
- #5 foot-hold
- #14 foot-hold
- Cable snares

In the spring and summer, beaver feed mainly on small twigs and aquatic plants such as water lily, cattail roots, sedges, and on corn stalks or other terrestrial plants found near the waters edge. Beginning in late August, tree and brush cutting activity increases dramatically, and a food pile, or **cache**, is constructed near the lodge by anchoring branches, shrubs and small trees in the bottom of the pond. This activity peaks at the time of leaf fall. This cache, which usually consists of aspen, alder, willow, and birch, provides the green bark which serves as the late fall and winter food supply.

Beaver are very territorial and force away any beaver which does not belong to the colony. The adults mark their territory by creating scent mounds, or “castor mounds”, on the bank or dam and depositing their scent, or castor, on these mounds.

Habitat:

Beaver range throughout most of the United States except for Florida, Nevada and southern California. Beaver are common in Wisconsin, especially along streams and rivers, and are less common in the prairie pothole region. Habitats include rivers, streams, marshes, lakes and ponds as long as the water is deep enough to meet their needs. Otter, bear, lynx, bobcat, wolves and coyote prey on beaver. In good habitat a beaver's **home range** will cover up to 0.6 miles of a stream or river. If food is scarce they may travel as far as 650 feet from the water.

There are two diseases that beaver can spread to humans. Tularemia is a bacterial disease, and can be transmitted from infected beaver by coming in contact with blood, tissue or water. Human symptoms include headache, chills, vomiting, fever, aches and pain. Giardiasis, a parasitic disease, enters the water when beaver that have the parasite defecate. It causes acute diarrhea and abdominal pain in humans. Drinking contaminated water is the most common means of transmission.

Sign:

Beaver cuttings and construction activities are the most obvious signs of their presence. The large, webbed hind foot track is also quite distinctive and can be found along the dam or at the base of slides or runways where the animals enter or leave the water to fell trees and drag brush.

Trapping Techniques:

Open water techniques generally are blind sets in runways or channels, or utilize castor scent or bait. Foot-hold traps, body-grip traps and cable snares can all be used when open water trapping. Foot-hold traps used in open water trapping must utilize drowning/submersion wires, sliding locks, or a weight. For drowning wires, anchor the bottom of the wire in at least 3 feet of water with a large rock, a sack full of rocks, or similar heavy object, or fasten the drowning wire to a long dead pole and jab it firmly into the mud. Use plenty of weight to anchor the drowning wire. Do not underestimate the strength of a beaver. A 40 lb. beaver is quite capable of dragging a 15-20 lb. weight out of 3 feet of water.

Body-grip traps are used in open water situations where adequate water is not available for drowning. Trap-shy beaver are less likely to be captured using the body-grip trap. It is also more difficult to "hide" these traps from other trappers.

Cable snares can be used as blind sets in channels or runways only if at least one-half of the cable snare is located underwater at all times.

Lures and baits:

- Commercial lures
- Castor mixed w/ mineral spirits
- Popple (fresh cut)
- Willow
- Birch

Trapping under the ice usually utilizes bait or are blind sets made in den entrances or channels. A foot-hold, body-grip, or cable snare can all be used under the ice with techniques similar to those used in open water trapping. Most under-ice sets are made on a pole under the ice and are baited with fresh aspen. Please refer to chapter 11 for examples and illustrations of common sets.

Muskrat

Ondatra zibethicus; Order: Rodentia; Family: Cricetidae

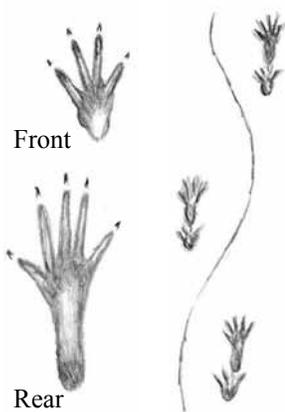
Description:

Muskrats are small rodents with dense glossy brown fur and a hairless tail, weighing 1-4 pounds. Total length varies from 19-25 inches. Muskrats are nocturnal and can swim forward and backward with the aid of partially-webbed hind feet. The head, rump, and tail of the muskrat are exposed above the water surface while swimming. The muskrat's small front feet are used for holding vegetation. Males have prominent musk glands beneath the skin on their lower abdomen that swell in the spring and produce a yellowish musky-smelling fluid.



Muskrat.

FWS



Muskrat tracks.

Front
1" width by 1" length

Rear
1" width by 2.5" length

Biology:

Muskrats are sexually mature at six months of age and very prolific. They may breed from April to September in the northern U.S., and year-round in the southern U.S., producing 1-5 litters a year with 1-11 young per litter. The **gestation period** is about 30 days and young muskrats are on their own in three to four weeks. Young muskrats typically establish territories 10-60 yards from their mother's den. Other times they travel several miles to find suitable habitat that is not occupied by another muskrat.

Muskrats construct a den either in the bank or in a lodge which they build in the water. When the den is on land, the muskrat may dig several chambers, with the burrow entrance below the water level. In periods of low water, it digs a tunnel or trench to provide access from the den to deep water. The greatest lodge building activity is in late summer and fall. Lodges are built from mud and aquatic plants such as cattail or bulrush. A lodge is usually two or three feet high and four to six feet across. There is normally one dry nest chamber dug out near the center of the house with two underwater entrances or "plunge holes".

Sometimes several nest chambers will be constructed in a single, large lodge. In forested areas, muskrats do not normally build their own lodge, but construct a den in the side of an active beaver lodge. This den is a separate chamber from the one used by the beaver.

Feeding platforms may resemble small lodges, but actually are loose rafts of vegetation where muskrats can crawl out of the water and feed. In winter, muskrats often construct “push-ups” which are hollow frozen shells of submergent vegetation constructed over a hole in the ice. These have no connection with the bottom substrate and are usually constructed near the lodges.

During the fall, there is some overland movement of muskrats, primarily due to the drying up of shallow ponds. Lack of water forces muskrat to look for larger wetlands which still contain water.

The large-scale movement in the spring, just after ice-out, is related to the onset of breeding activity. At this time, muskrats establish territories which they defend by fighting off other muskrats. Fighting may also occur if food is scarce or population levels are very high, but most of the year, there is little fighting and a number of muskrats share the same den.

Muskrats have small home ranges, seldom traveling more than 200 feet from their den. They are creatures of habit and use the same trails, feeding platforms, and toilet stations over and over. They are primarily vegetarians, eating the roots, shoots, stems, leaves, tubers and bulbs of aquatic plants and other plants near the water’s edge. The muskrat’s diet may also be supplemented with clams, snails, crawfish, fish, frogs, and even the carcasses of other muskrats. In forested areas, muskrat will eat the bark of pencil-sized twigs obtained from beaver food **caches** in winter.

Habitat:

Habitats include marshes, lakes, ponds, streams, and ditches where they feed on aquatic plants such as cattails, rushes and water lilies. The water must be deep enough not to freeze to the bottom (usually at least 2-3 feet). Mink, otter, fox, coyote, hawks and owls eat muskrats.

Muskrats are found throughout most of North America except for the arctic, most of California, Texas, Florida, and the Southwest. Muskrats are common in Wisconsin, especially where there is permanent water available. Maintaining and improving habitat are the most important conservation measures. Muskrats have benefited from programs that involve planting and maintaining grass and trees along streams and rivers. Some other practices that benefit this species include conservation tillage, managed grazing, wetland restoration and regulations that protect water quality.

Sign:

Muskrat sign is most often found near water. In marshes, their presence is most commonly indicated by the occurrence of lodges. Evidence of feeding,

Sets for muskrat:

- Feedbed
- Trail
- Bank Hole
- Channel
- Runway
- Floating

Recommended traps for muskrat:

- #110 body-grip
- #120 body-grip
- #150 body-grip
- #1 1/2 foot-hold
- #1 guarded foot-hold
- #1 1/2 guarded foot-hold
- Colony

Lures and baits for muskrat:

- Commercial lures
- Apple slices
- Carrots
- Potato
- Corn

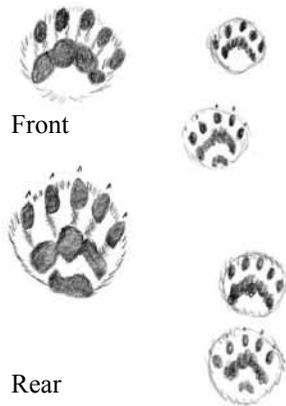
Mustelids - members of the weasel family including:

- weasels
- river otter
- fisher
- American marten
- badger
- mink



River Otter.

FWS



River Otter tracks.

Front and Rear
2.25" width by 2" length

Sets for River Otter:

- Slide or Trail Set
- Channel Set
- Toilet Set

such as pieces of plants floating in the water, and the presence of runs and channels through vegetation are indications of muskrat activity. The small “hand-like” prints of front feet, elongated hind feet, and a drag mark of its tail between the tracks is distinctive. Their small brown pellet-like droppings are about one-half inch long and often found in feeding areas and surrounding logs or rocks protruding from the water.

Trapping Techniques:

Foot-hold traps for muskrat should be staked in deep water and the heavier and more durable #1 ½ foot-holds should be used to make the set. The weight of the trap is sufficient enough to submerge a muskrat so no slide wire and lock is necessary in deep water. If there is too much vegetation that a trapped muskrat may become entangled, or if the water is too shallow, then a guarded foot-hold trap (stop-loss) or body-grip trap should be used. Colony traps or #110 body-grip or #150 can be used in muskrat runs (see current trapping regulations for specific rules).

River Otter

Lontra canadensis; Order: Carnivora; Family: Mustelidae

Description:

Otter are large semi-aquatic members of the weasel family; they are long, slender, short-haired furbearers known to be playful and intelligent. The fur is a rich, glossy, shade of brown and lighter on the cheeks, throat and belly. Males grow to 48 inches and 25 pounds while females are 4-6 inches shorter and weigh 19 pounds or less. Both sexes have anal musk glands that release when the animal is frightened. The musk is less pungent than other **mustelids**. Otters have webbed toes, non-retractable claws and are excellent swimmers. They have valves in their nose and ears that close when they are underwater.

Biology:

Adult otter begin mating at two years of age and may mate for life. After mating in late spring or early summer, an average of 2-3 young are born the following spring in April or May, following a period of **delayed implantation**. The den may be an abandoned beaver lodge, bank hole, or hollow log. The young stay with the parents until the next spring.

Otter are very adept at catching small fish and minnows, with rough fish comprising most of the otter’s diet. Crayfish, frogs, turtles, muskrats, and small reptiles are also eaten. Otter will repeatedly mark the same area with their scat as a way to establish a territory. These areas are commonly referred to as “latrines” or “toilets” and often occur at beaver dams.

Otter have large territories which may cover many miles (5-50 linear miles) of shoreline or stream course. They also travel overland from one water body or stream to another. Their territories are marked on twisted tufts of grass with scent secreted from their anal glands.

Habitat:

Otter range over Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, Great Lakes states, the Mississippi River Valley, to the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal states. River otter are common in Wisconsin, inhabiting nearly any wetland area, primarily rivers, small streams, lakes, and beaver ponds. They prefer areas away from human disturbances.

Sign:

Otter sign in snow is often distinctive, alternately running and sliding leaving a “dot-dash” pattern. The tracks are generally paired, but may be separated at slow gaits. Otter sign along streams and shorelines is often concentrated at “hauling out” places where matted and twisted grass and droppings will be found. Otter sign is also often concentrated on beaver lodges and dams.

Trapping Techniques:

Otter are strong, wary, and trap shy. Traps should be placed in water and concealed. Channel or beaver “run” sets result in many incidental otter catches. **To lower the number of incidental catches in Wisconsin, it is illegal to set a trap, cable restraint, or cable snare closer than 15 feet from any beaver dam.**

NOTE: The otter is also one of the three furbearers that require a special tag in order for it to be trapped. Once trapped it must be tagged immediately and then registered with the DNR where a CITES tag is also attached.

Mink

Neovison vison; Order: *Carnivora*; Family: *Mustelidae*

Description:

Mink are small nocturnal **carnivores** with short dense fur shaded chocolate to nearly black with small patches of white on the chin, throat or belly. Some have light fur and they are known as **cotton mink**. Males measure 20-30 inches with weights over 3 pounds, while females are smaller at 16-21 inches and 1.5-2 pounds. Mink have glands in the anal area that can release a powerful, unpleasant smelling musk. They are quick on land, skilled swimmers and tree climbers.

Recommended traps:

- #220 body-grip
- #280 body-grip
- #330 body-grip
- #3 foot-hold traps
- #4 foot-hold
- #14 foot-hold

Lures and baits:

- Otter musk
- Beaver castor
- Fresh beaver meat
- Fresh whole fish

CITES - Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (regulates trade of endangered species and look-alike species between countries)



Craig Bihrlé



Front



Rear



Mink tracks.

Front/Rear
1.5" width by 1.25" length

Sets for mink:

- Blind Set
- Spring Set
- Pocket Set
- Channel Set

Recommended traps:

- #120 body-grip trap
- #150 body-grip
- #155 body-grip
- #11 double long spring
- #1 coil spring
- #1 1/2 coil spring
- #1 1/2 jump
- #1 1/2 long spring

Lures and bait for mink

- Commercial lures
- Fish oil
- Fresh muskrat
- Fish bait

Biology:

Mink breed in February, but because of **delayed implantation**, the fertilized egg does not attach to the uterine wall and begin developing until the weather is favorable to the litter's survival later in the spring. After a 31-day gestation, 5-6 young are born in dens made in debris piles, hollow logs, abandoned muskrat houses, or burrows. The female and young remain together until late summer when the young begin to disperse. The female remains close to her den and hunts a territory she can cover in two or three days. The male's home range is much larger (25 sq. miles), and a particular area maybe covered once every week or two. Males are very territorial and will not tolerate other male mink in their area, particularly during the breeding season. They may even kill young mink in a den.

Mink eat muskrats, fish, frogs, salamanders, snakes, waterfowl and eggs, and also prey on small mammals such as mice and rabbits. They are efficient hunters and frequently **cache** surplus food in their dens. Mink are mainly nocturnal, but frequently move about during the day. They are almost equally at home on land or in the water. While hunting, they inspect every hole, brush pile, hollow log, or other food producing cover along their route of travel. They are creatures of habit, and visit the same places on each trip through an area.

Habitat:

Mink are widely distributed across the United States except for the Southwest and Florida. Mink are shoreline dwellers and are common in Wisconsin. Maintaining and improving habitat are the most important conservation measures. The mink has benefited from programs that involve planting and maintaining grass and trees along streams and rivers. Other important practices that benefit this species include conservation tillage, managed grazing, wetland restoration and regulations that protect water quality.

Sign:

Mink generally leave paired tracks at 12-23 inch intervals, although they may also assume an open gait with all 4 feet separated. Mink may occasionally toboggan on snow or dive under it for short distances. In soft mud, they leave a distinctive round cat-like track with five toes and toenail marks. Mink scats are larger than those of weasels and are usually dark and long.

Trapping Techniques:

Almost all sets for mink are made near water. Common sets include pocket sets in the banks where foot-hold traps and submersion devices are used or trail and blind sets where body-grip traps are used.

Weasel

Mustela frenata (long-tailed weasel), *Mustela erminea* (short-tailed weasel, aka ermine); *Mustela nivalis* (least weasel) Order: Carnivora; Family: Mustelidae

Description:

Three species of weasel occur in Wisconsin; the long-tailed, the short-tailed and the least weasel, but only the long-tailed and short-tailed weasels are of value in the fur trade. Weasels are small furbearers with short fur, generally light brown above and cream-colored on the throat and belly, with black-tipped tails. In northern areas their coats change to white in the winter. Adult long-tailed weasels (*M. frenata*) measure 13-18 inches including a 4.5-6.5-inch tail. Short-tailed weasels are about 13 inches long and have tails 4 inches long or less. In all three species, the male is larger than the female. Weasels are primarily nocturnal.

Biology:

Both sexes use a single den in hollow stumps, tree roots, rock piles, or under old buildings. Dens are lined with grasses and fur from prey animals. Weasels breed in July with **delayed implantation** (embryo does not develop until late winter or early spring, several months after breeding), producing one litter with an average of six young born in April or May. Females mate at 3-4 months, males during their second year of life.

Weasels eat mice, voles, chipmunks, rabbits, birds, eggs and poultry. Like the closely related mink and fisher, weasels are efficient killers. Their sharp canine teeth pierce the skulls of prey. Where prey is abundant, weasels may kill more than they can eat, caching excess prey items. Weasels are eaten by fox, mink, coyote, bobcat, hawks and owls.

Habitat:

Long-tailed weasels are widely distributed in the United States, except for the Southwest, while short-tailed weasels are in most of the far northern states. Although the species can be found throughout the state, long-tailed and least weasels are more common in southern Wisconsin, while the short-tailed weasel is most common in the northern two-thirds of the state. Habitats include mountains, farmland, forests, and prairies near water. Weasels generally stay within a half-mile of their den.

Sign:

Weasel tracks are usually paired and the tracks will be spaced about a foot apart. In deep snow the spacing will often be irregular alternating long and short, and sometimes weasels will travel under the snow for short distances. Scats are long, slender, and dark brown or black.



Weasel.

FWS



Front



Rear



Weasel tracks.

Front/Rear-
0.5" width by 0.75" length

Recommended traps for weasels:

- #110 body-grip
- #120 body-grip
- # 1 1/2 longspring trap
- Rat snap trap

Lures and baits for weasels:

- Fresh, bloody baits
- Chicken meat
- Rabbit meat
- Fresh muskrat
- Weasel musk

Ermine - any of several weasels whose coats become white in winter with black on the tip of the tail. Usually referring to the short-tailed weasel (*Mustela erminea*).



Fisher. eyewire.com



Fisher tracks.
Front/Rear
2.5" width by 2" length

Carrion - dead and putrefying flesh.

Sets for fisher:

- Cubbies
- Leaning Pole Sets
- Dirt hole

Recommended traps or trapping systems:

- #220 body-grip trap
- #1 1/2 foot-hold
- #1 3/4 foot-hold
- #2 foot-hold

Trapping Techniques:

In Wisconsin weasels are unprotected and may be trapped year-round by persons possessing a trapping license. Weasels are most commonly caught in enclosed cubbies or “weasel boxes”.

Fisher

Martes pennanti; Order: *Carnivora*; Family: *Mustelidae*

Description:

Fisher, a member of the weasel family, have long slender bodies that range in color from gray brown to dark brown to nearly black with a long, tapering, bushy tail. Fisher may have white spots on their chest, at the base of each front leg and/or near the groin. Males weigh 7-18 pounds, and females 4-6 pounds. Adult males measure 35-47 inches in length, with females shorter at 29-37 inches. The animal has two anal scent glands that produce a foul-smelling liquid. Fisher primarily are nocturnal, traveling mostly on the ground. However, they are also agile tree climbers and sometimes swim.

Biology:

Fisher breed in March or April, with adult females breeding shortly after giving birth. The fertilized eggs exhibit **delayed implantation** and do not start developing until January or February of the following year. One to five kits are born in April in a hollow tree, log or rock cavity. The young leave the female in early fall to find their own home territory.

Fisher are extremely agile and active predators. Excellent tree climbers, they can out climb red squirrels. They prey upon snowshoe hare, mice, squirrels, porcupine, and also feed upon **carrion**, particularly that of deer. Although they have a reputation for preying on porcupine, snowshoe hare and other small mammals are much more important in their diets in Wisconsin. Fisher will also eat insects and berries.

Fisher travel widely with a home range of 50-150 square miles, more if food is scarce. Males have a larger home range than females. Individual animals frequently use well defined hunting trails. When feeding on large food items such as a deer carcass, fisher may confine their activities to the immediate vicinity of the food source for a period of several days. Fisher are solitary, except during the breeding season and when young are with the females. The fisher gives off a foul musk odor when disturbed.

Habitat:

Fisher are found throughout Wisconsin, but more common in the central and northern regions. Fisher prefer large areas of continuous forest, particularly

older timber stands. They are adaptable and can live in a variety of forest types, but they avoid open areas. They prefer the edges of conifer stands when these are adjacent to stands of deciduous trees. Hollow trees, rock crevices, slash piles, abandoned beaver lodges in dry ponds, and old porcupine dens are preferred denning sites.

Sign:

The walking stride of a fisher is about 13 inches for males and about 9 inches for females. When jumping or bounding, fisher generally average over 24 inches per jump and they may lope with all four feet separated or bound with front and hind feet nearly superimposed. The droppings may contain the remains of berries or fruits in the summer. Sometimes fisher scat will contain porcupine quills.

Trapping Techniques:

Fisher are most commonly caught in body-grip traps set up in cubbies. However, it is becoming more common to catch fisher in foot-hold traps at dirthole sets in open areas near forest edges as they are becoming more adaptive and abundant in numbers further south in the state.

NOTE: A special permit is also required to trap a fisher. Upon harvesting the animal must then be registered with the DNR and a special tag attached. Parts of the carcass may also have to be surrendered to the DNR for further research and studies.

Striped Skunk

Mephitis mephitis; Order: Carnivora; Family: Mephitidae

Description:

A member of the weasel family, striped skunks are small, heavy-bodied, black animals with two white stripes on the back that meet and form a white cap on the head. Skunks measure 20-30 inches and weigh 3.5-10 pounds. They are well known for their ability to spray a strong smelling, yellowish, oily fluid for protection. Primarily nocturnal, skunks have poor eyesight, keen hearing and a strong sense of smell. Skunks are capable of swimming, but they are poor climbers.

Biology:

Mating occurs in late February or March and, after a **gestation period** of about 63 days, an average of six young are born in May. Striped skunks can be observed wandering around at any time of the day, but tend to be most active at night. They are omnivorous and prefer mice, insects, and their larvae, fruits and berries, carrion, frogs, and eggs. They are effective predators on the eggs and young of ground nesting birds.

Lures and baits for fisher:

- Commercial lures
- Skunk essence
- Beaver castor
- Fresh beaver meat

Recommended traps for skunk:

- #120 body-grip
- #160 body-grip
- live trap

Lures and baits for skunk:

- Commercial lures
- Skunk essence
- eggs



Skunk.

Craig Bihrlé



Skunk tracks.

Front
1" width by 1" length

Rear
1" width 1.5" length



Raccoon.

FWS Photo



Front



Rear



Raccoon tracks.

Front

1.5" length by 2" width

Rear

1.5" width by 3" length

Foray - to search for food or spoils eventually returning to a core area.

Sets for raccoon:

- Pocket
- Spring Run
- Cubby
- Dirt Hole
- Slanted Pole
- Cage Trap

Recommended traps or trapping systems for raccoon:

- #160 body-grip
- #220 body-grip
- # 1 1/2 coilspring
- #11 longspring
- #2 longspring
- Enclosed trigger traps
- Cage traps at least 10" x 12" x 32"

In early winter skunks den up and become inactive, but they do not actually hibernate. Mid-winter warm spells bring them out for hunting **forays**. Several skunks (sometimes 8-10) often occupy the same den in winter, especially the females. Males den up later in the winter than the females, and normally den by themselves.

Habitat:

Although striped skunks can be found statewide, they are most abundant in semi-open country with a mixture of small woodlots, brush patches, pastures, cropland, fence rows, brush piles, old buildings, and farm yards. Owls, coyote, bobcat, fox, badger, lynx, fisher, and mountain lion will prey on skunks.

Trapping Techniques:

In Wisconsin skunks are unprotected and may be trapped year-round by persons possessing a trapping license. Striped skunks are usually not a target animal to be trapped. Most skunks are a nuisance in urban and suburban areas and are live-trapped using cage traps then humanely **dispatched**. On the trapline most skunks are caught just by wandering upon your set looking for something to eat. Skunks are known to carry rabies, a deadly disease to all mammals, including humans.

Raccoon

Procyon lotor; Order: *Carnivora*; Family: *Procyonidae*

Description:

Raccoon are medium-sized adaptable furbearers with a masked face and ringed tail. Average weights are 9-20 pounds, but they are larger in the north where weights up to 45 pounds have been reported. Fur color varies from dirty blonde with darker **guard hairs** to reddish and darker colors. The hind legs are longer than the front legs, creating a hunched appearance when running.

Biology:

Female raccoon breed their first year, males at two years of age. Breeding occurs from February to April with a **gestation period** of about nine weeks. An average of two-six young are born in a hollow tree, log or other protected den. The young remain with the female until fall and may den with her through the winter.

Home ranges vary by habitat from 15 acres in urban environments to 12,000 acres in prairies. Raccoon go into a partial hibernation in winter, either alone or in groups, but they are active during warm spells and thaws. Raccoon den in hollow trees, ground burrows, brush piles, muskrat houses, barns, buildings,

clumps of cattails, haystacks, and rock crevices. They are efficient omnivores, eating fish, crayfish, mussels, fruits, grains, small animals, birds and muskrats. Coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, owls, eagles and fishers prey on raccoons.

Habitat:

Raccoon are highly adaptable animals and are common throughout Wisconsin and are widely distributed across the United States where they use varied habitats from streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands to forests, prairies, farmland and urban areas. Although they are good swimmers, raccoon usually stay in shallow water.

Sign:

The raccoon has a very distinctive and easily identifiable track. Often, only the front of the rear foot pad and the long, slender toes will show and the heel will not be visible except in soft mud, sand or snow. The scat is cylindrical and usually has little or no taper and may occasionally be found on limbs, logs, or stumps.

Trapping Techniques:

Raccoon are caught in many types of traps depending on the habitat. If trapping near water, a foot-hold with a submersion or drowning device is usually used. On dryland, several foot-hold types can be used, including enclosed trigger traps which target raccoon specifically. Enclosed trigger traps help to avoid incidental catches. Body-grip traps, used in cubby sets are also very common on dryland. Several sizes of body-grip traps can be used for raccoon, and the specific rules and regulations need to be followed when making cubbies and placing traps. Cage traps are also used for raccoon mainly when nuisance trapping (allowing for easier relocation).

Opossum

Didelphius virginiana; Order: *Didelphimorphia*; Family: *Didelphidae*

Description:

The opossum is the only marsupial (mammals in which the females have a pouch) in North America. They have a fur-lined pouch, pointed snout, and a prehensile, flesh-colored or whitish tail. The fur is grayish-white. Males average 6-7 pounds, up to 14 pounds, while females are smaller. Total lengths range up to 36 inches. Opossums are nocturnal and known for the habit of “playing dead” when threatened. They are strong climbers and swimmers.

Lures and baits:

- Commercial lures
- Homemade lures
- Fish
- Chicken
- Anise oil
- Fish oil
- Honey
- Apples
- Pastries



Opossum.

FWS



Front

Rear

Opossum tracks.

Front

1.5” width by 1.5” inches length

Rear

1.5” width by 3” length

Sets for opossum:

- Cubby
- Live trap

Traps or trapping systems for opossum:

- #120 body-grip
- #160 body-grip
- #220 body-grip
- Cage traps 9"x9"x30" or larger.

Lures and bait:

Almost any strong-smelling food lure or bait will attract opossum.



Bobcat.

FWS Photo



Bobcat tracks.

Front/Rear
1.75" width by 2" length

Biology:

Most breeding occurs in February with litters of 5-13 young. The young are born after only 13 days, but move to the pouch where they stay for 60 days. Some young will ride on the mother's back by clinging to the fur, while others remain in the pouch. The young become independent at about 4 months of age and are sexually mature at 6-8 months.

Opossum are omnivorous, eating nearly any plant, animal, insect or carrion. They are often attracted to road sides where they feed on road-killed animals including other opossum. Coyote, fox, raccoon, bobcat, eagles, snakes, hawks and owls prey on opossums.

Habitat:

Opossum have a loosely defined territory. Some confine their movements to 10-40 acres while others travel constantly covering over 200 acres. They are primarily nocturnal and spend the day in a hollow tree or log, brush pile, squirrel nest, abandoned burrow or another dry, safe place. Opossum are common in southern and central Wisconsin, although they occasionally are found in other parts of the state. The susceptibility of their ears, nose, and tail to frostbite limits them from moving farther north. Having a relatively small brain, dominated by the olfactory (smell) regions, they are easily attracted by sweet or foul odors.

Sign:

Opossum tracks are distinctive, especially the widely angled "big toe" of the hind foot. Opossum droppings though, are not distinctive and vary according to the type of food eaten.

Trapping Techniques:

In Wisconsin, opossum are unprotected and may be trapped year-round by persons possessing a trapping license. The opossum is not targeted by many trappers, but commonly caught in many land sets. Most opossum are caught while they are searching for food.

Bobcat

Lynx rufus; Order: Carnivora; Family: Felidae

Description:

An adult bobcat stands about 20-30 inches at the shoulder and in Wisconsin weigh, 15-50 lbs. Short black tufts, up to an inch long, are found on the eartips. Extending from the ears to the chin is a white, black, and gray ruff. The bobcat's fur is light fawn to rust brown in summer, and generally gray in winter. The bobcat is named for its short, "bobtail", which varies in length, but usually measures around 6 inches. The tip of the bobcat's tail is black above and white

below whereas that of a lynx is entirely black. The bobcat also has shorter, more slender legs and much smaller feet than a lynx.

Biology:

Bobcat breed primarily in February and March, although they can breed anytime. They have a **gestation period** of about 50 days and most young are born in May. Two-four kittens are born in an abandoned den of another animal, a windfall with tangled roots or branches, or even under the foundation of a vacant building. The young stay with the female until some time during the winter, when they disperse to find their own territories.

Bobcat are very secretive, and are active mainly at night. They have large home ranges, often exceeding 8-10 square miles, with the female home range being smaller. A male bobcat's home range will overlap several female home ranges. Bobcat normally hunt alone while crossing and recrossing their territories.

Their main foods are snowshoe hare, deer, mice, small birds, and porcupine. Bobcat occasionally kill white-tailed deer (fawns and adults). They are opportunistic, but are entirely carnivorous and do not like rotten or tainted food. When food is plentiful, bobcats may gorge themselves and then not feed again for days. Coyote, eagles, fisher, wolves, and mountain lions kill, and in some cases feed upon bobcat.

Habitat:

Bobcat range throughout most of the United States and occupy dense forests, mountains, prairies, farmlands, deserts, and wetlands. In Wisconsin, bobcats are common in the northern half of the state, and found less frequently in the remainder of the state. Bobcat prefer heavy brush areas in and around large lowland conifer stands, such as cedar, black spruce, or tamarack. Maintaining and managing forested habitats are important conservation measures.

Sign:

The bobcat track is rounder than a coyote or fox with no claw marks. Also, if a clear track can be located, bobcats have three distinct lobes on the rear edge of the foot pad. Scat is similar to those of coyotes, but tend to be more segmented and less tapering. Often times the scat is partially or wholly covered with grass or leaves, and scratch marks are visible around them.

Trapping Techniques:

Bobcat are more dependent on their sense of sight and less dependent on smell than canines. Therefore, sets for bobcat can be made more effective if you give them a visual attractor in addition to the lure/bait. This is usually done by hanging a pie tin, a cd, or a piece of flagging from a tree branch.

Sets for bobcats:

- Cubby
- Dirt-Hole

Recommended traps:

- #1 3/4 foot-hold
- #2 foot-hold
- #3 foot-hold
- #220 body-grip (with restrictions see Chapter 8)

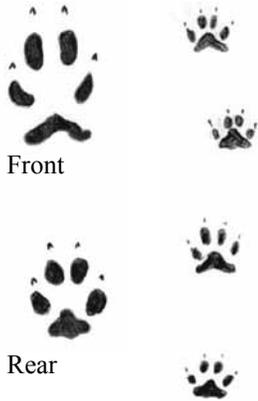
Lures and baits for bobcat:

- Commercial lures
- Beaver castor
- Skunk essence
- Catnip oil
- Fish oil

CITES - Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (regulates trade of endangered species and look-alike species between countries)



Red Fox.



Red fox tracks.

Front
2" width by 2.5" length

Rear
2" width by 2" length

Sets for red or gray fox:

- Dirt-hole
- Scent-Post
- Flat Set
- Trail Set

Other items like a bird wing, a strip of fur, or a feather can also be used but are considered “sight exposed bait” and in Wisconsin, must be placed at least 25 feet from the trap.

Note: A special permit is required to trap a bobcat. Once harvested it must also be registered with the DNR and be tagged with a special CITES tag. Parts of the carcass may also be required to be surrendered to the DNR for further research and studies on the species.

Red Fox

Vulpes vulpes; Order: Carnivora; Family: Canidae

Description:

Red fox are small, shy, and adaptable with a capacity for learning from experience. They weigh 10-14 pounds. Lengths range from 35-41 inches with a 14-17 inch bushy tail tipped in white. Commonly red on top, gray to white lower, with black on the ears, lower legs and feet. Other color phases include black, silver, and a cross between red and silver; these genetic variations may occur in the same litter. Red fox primarily are nocturnal and have the ability to hear low frequencies that let them detect small prey underground.

Biology:

Red fox reproduce in their first year. Breeding occurs in January to early March, resulting in one litter of 1-10 kits. The **gestation period** is 53 days. Red fox use maternity dens to raise their young. The dens often are old woodchuck or badger diggings on slopes with good visibility.

The pups stay with the adults until early fall, when **dispersal** begins. This “fall shuffle” is used to the advantage by trappers who catch many of these dispersers. This **dispersal** period usually begins in October and it may continue through most of the winter. Some fox never disperse, and others disperse later in the winter or as adults.

The red fox, like most predators, is an opportunist which is quick to take advantage of any food available. Small mammals such as mice, rabbits, and ground squirrels comprise the bulk of the red fox’s diet. A fox will often **cache** uneaten food under litter or bury it in a hole to be eaten later.

Red fox tend to be solitary animals, and always hunt alone. They do not normally use a den except when raising their young. During winter, a red fox will curl up on the snow using its tail to cover its nose and feet.

Habitat:

The red fox is extremely adaptable and thrives under a variety of conditions. It is common throughout Wisconsin and is abundant in both the forest and farmland zones. Habitats include mixed cultivated fields, woodlots, and brushland. The home range is generally 2-3 square miles, but varies with habitat and prey. Coyotes are known to kill red fox, and trappers often note lower red fox populations when coyote numbers are high. However, coyote and red fox can coincide if there is sufficient habitat for both species.

Sign:

Red fox tracks are usually more or less in a straight line and the hind foot is narrower and more pointed than the larger front foot. The heel pad is narrow and, particularly in winter, little of the heel pad will show through the thick hair which covers the foot. Red fox scat is variable and is similar to those of the other canids, although noticeably smaller than most coyote scat.

Trapping Techniques:

Almost all sets for fox are made using foot-hold traps or the cable restraint. Fox tend to take the easiest path of travel. Vacant pastures and breaks in fields are very good areas to place foot-hold sets. Cable restraints work well in grassy or wooded areas on deer trails where the cable restraint can be placed right over the trail.

Gray Fox

Urocyon cinereoargenteus; Order: Carnivora; Family: Canidae

Description:

Gray fox are small nocturnal canines that are more aggressive than the red fox. Gray fox are slightly smaller than red fox usually weighing 8-11 pounds, and measure 31-44 inches with a 12-15-inch black-tipped tail. The **pelage** has a coarser texture than red fox, and is colored by alternate bands of black and white on the **guard hairs**. Fur is gray above and red on the lower sides, chest, and back. Gray fox climb trees for food or shelter and **cache** their food. They are considered to be easier to trap than the red fox.

Biology:

Breeding occurs from January to early May, resulting in one litter averaging 3-4 pups. Gray fox use dens more than the red fox. Dens usually are natural cavities marked with snagged hair and scattered bones. The young disperse in late summer and fall.

Although the gray fox has a diet similar to that of a red fox, it eats more plant material. Unlike the red fox, it readily climbs trees when pursued. The gray

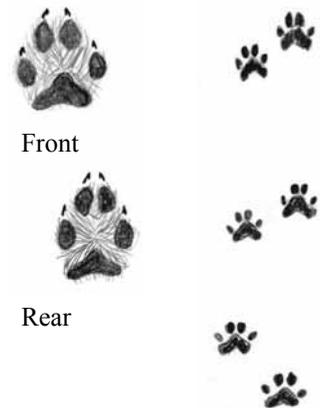
Recommended traps for red or gray fox:

- Foot-hold #1 1/2
- Foot-hold # 1 3/4
- Foot-hold #2
- Cable restraint



Gray Fox.

FWS Photo



Gray fox tracks.

Front
2" width by 2.5" length

Rear
1.5" width by 2" length

Pelage - the hairy covering of a mammal.

Cache - to hide, place or store something for the purpose of concealing and preserving.

Lures and baits for red or gray fox:

- Commercial lures
- Fox urine
- Tainted meat bait
- Skunk musk



Coyote.



Front



Rear

Coyote tracks.

Front
3" width by 3.5" length

Rear
2.5" width by 2" length

fox is shy and seldom seen and usually is most active at night. During the day it rests in dense thickets. The home range of the gray is one square mile or less.

Habitat:

Gray fox are found in eastern states, the southern third of western states and along the West Coast in varied habitats with a preference for more wooded areas. Gray fox primarily inhabit deciduous forest areas of southern Wisconsin, although they may be found in almost any area of the state. They prefer denser, brushy cover, and avoid open forest areas. Gray fox and red fox are rather intolerant of one another, but since their specific habitat preferences often separate them spatially, they often occupy the same general areas. There are no records of the two species crossbreeding. Bobcats, domestic dogs and coyotes prey on gray fox.

Sign:

The gray fox track is smaller and rounder than that of the red fox and, except for the claw marks, might be mistaken for that of a bobcat. Scat is similar to scat of the red fox.

Trapping Techniques:

The same tactics used for red fox will work for gray fox, the only difference being that the sets must be in or near woody cover which is the gray's preferred habitat.

Coyote

Canis latrans; Order Carnovora; Family: Canidae

Description:

Coyote are medium to large canines normally mottled with gray, but sometimes brown, reddish or black. Average weights of coyote in the west are 25-30 pounds, but the animals are larger in the eastern United States, with some weighing as much as 60 pounds. Coyote are intelligent and adaptable, living in a wide variety of habitats including urban and suburban areas. Coyote are abundant and they have become less wary of humans in recent years. Attacks on people and pets have been documented in North America.

Biology:

Coyote breed in late January and February, with a **gestation period** of 63 days. An average of 5-7 pups are born in April or early May in a den dug into loose soil or enlarged from one dug by another animal. The pups stay with the adults until autumn or mid-winter, when they disperse to find their own home territory.

Deer (most often in the form of carrion), cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, and mice are the coyote's favorite food. But coyote are very opportunistic and will eat whatever food is available, such as fruits or berries in late summer, and occasionally domestic animals like sheep or poultry.

Coyote tend to be solitary animals or live in small packs during certain times of the year. They are most active during the evening and before dawn and can move long distances (2-5 miles) in a single night. Adult males have large territories (15-25 miles) in which they travel, whereas adult females occupy areas from 6-10 miles. Adult coyote have few predators, but include: dogs, wolves, mountain lion, and eagles.

Habitat:

Coyote are widely distributed throughout the United States. In Wisconsin they are common throughout and usually live in transitional lands, which are a combination of farm land and forest but they can survive well in open prairie or dense forest as well. Coyote prefer to hunt in grassy fields or along the edges of fields for mice and spend the daytime in forested areas. They are also very curious and will not hesitate to go and check something out that has caught its attention in the middle of a field.

Sign:

Coyote tracks are oval in shape and the toenail marks, when present, tend to hook inward. They can usually be distinguished from dog tracks which are rounder and have deeper nail marks and point outward. Like all members of the dog family, the coyote's front foot is larger than the hind foot. Coyote scat is quite variable but is usually large, strongly tapering and contains hair, bone or seeds. Coyote use a variety of barks, yips and howls to communicate, which can be heard from a distance on a calm night. They also mark areas with urine or gland secretions much like domestic dogs.

Trapping Techniques:

Almost all sets for coyote are made using foot-hold traps or the cable restraint. Coyote tend to take the easiest path of travel. Vacant pastures and breaks in fields are very good areas to place foot-hold traps. Cable restraints work well in grassy or wooded areas on deer trails where the cable restraint can be placed right over the trail.

Recommended traps for coyote:

- # 1 3/4 foot-hold
- #2 foot-hold
- #3 foot-hold
- Cable restraints

Lures and baits for coyote:

- Commercial lures
- Coyote urine
- Tainted meat baits
- Gland lures
- Skunk essence



Gray Wolf.

USFWS Photo



Front



Rear



Wolf tracks.

Front
4.5" width by 5" length

Rear
4" width by 4.5" length

Reporting Incidentals:
Endangered and state protected species may be trapped incidentally. Call the WDNR hotline for assistance with removing these species from your trap. (1-800-847-9367)

Gray Wolf

Canis lupus; Order: *Carnivora*; Family: *Canidae*

Description:

The gray wolf is the largest wild canine, reaching adult weights of 57-107 pounds (females average around 60 lbs. and males near 80 lbs. in Wisconsin). Colors range from white to black, with most wolves in Wisconsin being a gray color. Wolves normally carry their tails straight out, while the smaller coyote holds the tail at a downward angle. Domestic dogs' tails often times will curve up.

Biology:

The wolf pack is a family group consisting of a pair of breeding adults and their young of one or more years. Wolves are sexually mature at two years, and breed during late January to February. Usually, only one female in a pack breeds each year. After a nine-week **gestation period**, 5-6 pups are born in an underground den. In early summer the pups are moved to open areas or "rendezvous sites", where the pack congregates. By fall, they are large enough to hunt with the pack. Young wolves may leave the pack when they become sexually mature in their second winter.

Individual packs defend territories of 50-120 square miles, and the size depends on factors such as prey density, habitat suitability, and total wolf population. Pack members usually restrict their hunting and feeding activities to the pack territory. Wolves eat a variety of large and small mammals, but white-tailed deer are their primary food source. Beaver are often taken in the spring and summer, while deer are taken year around. Gray wolves normally eat about four pounds of food a day, but can go long periods between meals.

Habitat:

Wolves prefer the forest regions of northern and central Wisconsin, but are adaptable to other habitat types. Their greatest densities occur in areas of the state where deer populations are high and human populations are low.

Sign:

Wolf tracks are similar to those of a large dog and are more than twice the size of the average coyote track. Wolf scat is similar to those left by coyotes, but generally larger.

History:

In 1960, wolves were considered extinct in Wisconsin, but with protections listed under the Endangered Species Act (1973) and state statutes, populations have naturally recovered from animals dispersing from Minnesota. Wolves

were removed from the Endangered Species Act in January 2012, which handed wolf management responsibilities over to state agencies. Wolves may be caught accidentally in canine or bobcat sets. Wolves are now able to be trapped with a special permit during a limited, regulated season.

Furbearer Present in Wisconsin, but Currently No Trapping Season

American Black Bear

Ursus americanus; Order *Carnivora*; Family *Ursidae*

Description:

Black bear measure 3-6.5 feet in length. Males usually weigh an average of 130-300 pounds, with some exceeding 600 pounds. Females are smaller, weighing about 90-150 pounds. Black and brown are the two major color phases.

Biology:

Females usually breed every other year, beginning when they are 3-4 years old. Breeding takes place during the summer and 2-4 cubs are born in winter dens. Cubs remain with their mother until they are about a year-and-a-half old.

Habitat:

American black bear are the most abundant and widespread of the three bear species found in North America, occurring in 42 of the continental United States and 11 Canadian provinces. They are common in the forested regions of central and northern Wisconsin, but are also found in southern parts of the state. General habitat requirements include relatively remote landscapes with dense vegetation and abundant food sources. Black bear are omnivorous, meaning they feed on both plants and animals. Throughout the seasons, bear eat berries, acorns, insect larvae and ants, eggs, birds, small mammals, fawns and carrion.

Black bear are considered a big game animal in Wisconsin. There is a hunting season, but no trapping season at the time this manual was last reprinted.

Protected or Endangered Furbearers Present in Wisconsin

Badger

Taxidea taxus; Order: *Carnivora*; Family: *Mustelidae*

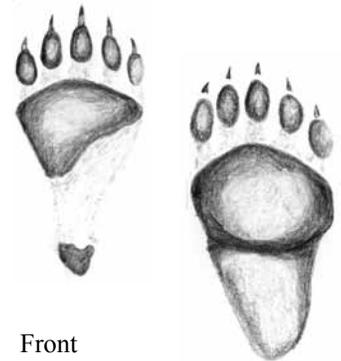
Description:

Badger, a member of the weasel family, are wide, flat carnivores with a grizzled gray appearance and a distinctive white stripe from their nose, over their head and ending between their shoulders. Average adults weigh 12-16 pounds,



American Black Bear.

USFWS Photo



Bear tracks.

Rear

Front

4" width by 4.5" length

Rear

3.5" width by 7" length

Gestation Period: the time in which a fetus develops, beginning with fertilization and ending at birth.

but may increase to 20 or more pounds in the fall. Badger are well known for their digging ability and fierce disposition. Badger use multiple elaborate dens with tunnels from 6-15 feet deep and as much as 30 feet to an elevated main chamber. Badger use bedding material and have a separate toilet chamber.

Biology:

Badger breed in August or September. After a delay of about five months, implantation of the embryos occurs. Following a five to six week development period, an average of three young are born sometime from March to June in a den 2-6 feet below ground. The young stay with the female until fall, when they disperse.

Badger catch prey such as ground squirrels, pocket gophers, and mice by digging them out of their dens. The badger digs a burrow, uses it for a time, and then moves on and digs another one. These burrows, and the accompanying mound of dirt, are quite often a problem in hayfields and pastures, but if they are located along fence rows or field edges, they are valuable because many of them are used as dens by other animals such as rabbits and fox.

Badger are active mainly at night, spending the daytime underground. Badger do not actually hibernate, but they do spend most of the winter sleeping underground, occasionally coming out on especially warm days.

Habitat:

Badger primarily occur in the western and north central states with some eastward expansion. Badger are common in Wisconsin and are most abundant in the prairie regions. Although they do not spray like a skunk, badger will release a strong musk odor from a pair of anal scent glands when disturbed. Establishing and maintaining grassland habitats are the most important conservation measures for this species.

Sign:

The most obvious indication that badgers are present is the occurrence of tunnels, dug in open areas and fields, with a large mound of dirt in front of them. Often badger will excavate several shallow tunnels at the same site when digging out a gopher, and this series of tunnels and mounds of dirt may cover an area the size of a car. Badger tracks are sometimes mistaken for coyote tracks, but can be distinguished by the five toes and the claw marks of the front feet, which are well in front of the toe marks. Badger normally cover their droppings or leave them underground.

The badger is the state animal of Wisconsin, and is a protected species. Regulated trapping is not allowed at this time.



Badger.



Front



Rear

Badger tracks.

Front
2" width by 1.5" length

Rear
1.75" width by 2" length

American Marten

Martes americana; Order: Carnivora; Family: Mustelidae

Description:

American marten, a tree climbing member of the weasel family, are small woodland mammals varying from light to dark brown with a bushy tail and orange throat. They weigh from 1-3.5 pounds, with males larger than females. Marten are active in the early morning, late afternoon, at night and on cloudy days. They can climb trees, but spend most of their time on the ground foraging for rodents. When traveling on the ground, they seldom actually touch the ground, but hop from areas of cover (stumps, fallen logs, coarse woody debris).

Biology:

American marten breed in mid-summer (July-August). After a period of **delayed implantation** and about one month of pregnancy, 3-4 young are born from March to May. A tree den is preferred. Both sexes breed during their second year of life. Their home range is as small as one square mile but the range varies with sex, food availability, and habitat. Marten den in hollow trees, fallen logs, rocks, squirrel nests, and woodpecker holes. Food includes red-backed voles, other rodents, red squirrels and birds. Fisher and owls prey on marten.

Habitat:

American marten range from New England to the northern Great Lake states, the Rocky Mountains, and the northern West Coast living in coniferous forests with numerous dead trees and debris. In Wisconsin, American marten are found in the forests of the extreme northern parts of the state. They prefer large areas of mature to old growth upland conifer and northern hardwood forest, especially where large amounts of fallen timber are present.

Sign:

American marten tracks may be confused with those of a large mink or small fisher. The walking stride of marten is usually 6-9 inches, but the paired tracks of bounding marten may be from 1-4 feet apart. Marten scat is about the same size as mink and similar in shape to weasel and mink. In summer, berries and fruits may be present in marten scat, but generally not in those of mink.

Endangered Species:

American marten are a state endangered species. Marten are sometimes caught accidentally in fisher, fox, bobcat, or coyote sets. Special trapping regulations are imposed in areas with known marten populations and trappers are encouraged to use avoidance techniques as well. Contact the nearest DNR office for assistance in releasing them or to report incidental trap deaths.



American Marten.

USFWS Photo.



Front



Rear



Marten tracks.

Front/Rear

1.5" width by 1.25" length

Canada Lynx

Lynx canadensis; Order: Carnivora; Family: Felidae

Description:

The Canada lynx is on the **U.S. Endangered Species List** and classified as **threatened**. Canada lynx are light gray, with scattered brown to black hair, cinnamon colored underparts and short tails. Its most identifiable features are the long, feather-like ear tufts, the very large feet and the entirely black tipped tail. The lynx has longer legs and a lankier body than the bobcat, making it appear larger, though it stands only about 24 inches at the shoulder. Males are larger than females, and the animals weigh from 11-40 pounds.

Biology:

Lynx live in coniferous forests, bogs, and swamps. During the day, Canada lynx rest in cover. They climb trees and often leap down onto prey including snowshoe hares, birds and voles. They will also eat larger dead animals, and occasionally deer, caribou or sheep. They pose little threat to humans or domestic animals. Wolves and mountain lions kill and in some cases feed on Canada lynx. They breed in March or April, producing one litter of 3-4 young. When snowshoe hare populations are low, lynx become very scarce.

Habitat:

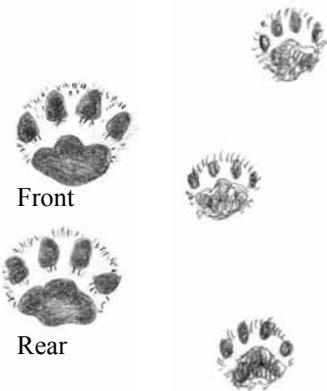
The animal always has been rare in the lower 48 because its primary prey, the snowshoe hare, mostly is found in Canada and Alaska at densities that will sustain lynx. While rare, Canada lynx may disperse to Wisconsin when prey populations, especially snowshoe hares, decline in Canada. Canada lynx are found in Alaska and the northern states, in parts of the Rocky Mountains and New England.

Sign:

Although lynx tracks are similar to those of bobcat, their feet are significantly larger and there is more hair around and between the toes. This gives a “snowshoe effect” and prevents lynx from sinking so deeply into the snow and also results in the toe marks being indistinct. For such a long-legged animal, the lynx has a relatively short stride with alternating tracks spaced about 8-10 inches apart. Lynx scat is similar to those of bobcat.



Canada lynx.



Canada lynx tracks.

Front/Rear

3.25" width by 3.25" length

Mountain Lion

Puma concolor; Order Carnivora; Family Felidae

Description:

Mountain lion are solitary, nocturnal carnivores found mainly in the western United States. They measure 6-8 feet long from the nose to the tip of the tail, and have a tawny-colored body with a lighter underbelly, a long, black-tipped tail, and black-tipped ears. Male lions usually weigh 120-180 pounds, and females weigh 80-110 pounds. Mountain lion kittens have dark facial markings and are heavily spotted. Spots fade as the animals age.

Biology:

Mountain lion feed mainly on deer and elk, but smaller prey, like porcupines and rabbits, can be important to young lions developing hunting skills and to nourish adults between kills of larger prey. Lions are ambush hunters. Lions attacks with a rush of speed and kills with a powerful bite below the base of the skull, breaking the neck of its victim or a bite to the throat causing suffocation. Lions often drag their kill to a concealed place to feed, and bury their kills with dirt, leaves, or snow between feedings.

Individual lions have territories varying in size from 50 to more than 300 square miles. Females with young kittens use the smallest areas, and adult males use the largest. Adult male mountain lion actively defend their territories from other male lions. Males mark territory boundaries with piles of dirt and twigs, called scrapes, signaling to other lions that the area is occupied. Breeding takes place throughout the year. Females typically have litters of 2-4 kittens about every other year and raise the kittens without the help of the male. Young disperse when they are 13-18 months old. Females typically remain near where they were born, but males sometimes wander hundreds of miles before establishing their own territories.

Habitat:

Throughout the western United States, mountain lion habitat is characterized by vast areas of rugged country with dense vegetation. Lions need vegetative cover and topography (rock outcrops, boulder piles, steep slopes) to successfully stalk and ambush their prey, and provide security while feeding, resting and caring for young.

In 2008, Wisconsin DNR biologists confirmed the first cougar in Wisconsin since 1910, near the town of Milton, WI. Since that sighting, several cougars have been confirmed in the state. Genetic material collected (hair, blood, urine) suggests these animals are dispersing from established populations in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Cougar sightings will likely continue if western habitats remain saturated.



Mountain Lion.



Mountain lion tracks.
Front-3.5 inches width
3 inches length
Rear-3 inches width
3 inches length

Chapter 4 Review – Furbearers

Identify the furbearers in the following pictures. Under each, list whether it is found in “wetland”, “upland” or “All” habitats, and whether it is a “carnivore”, “herbivore”, or an “omnivore”.

1



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

2



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

3



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

4



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

5



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

6



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

7



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

8



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

9



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

10



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

11



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

12



Animal: _____
Habitat: _____
Type of Food: _____

Identify the following tracks.

13



14



Silvertip Productions

15



Silvertip Productions

16



Silvertip Productions

17



Silvertip Productions

18



Silvertip Productions

Know Your Wisconsin Furbearers



FWS Photo

Raccoon



FWS Photo

Coyote

20. Name the four furbearers that require a special permit and require registration by the Wisconsin DNR after harvest.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

21. What does CITES stand for and what does it regulate?



Chapter 5 Furbearer Management

Objective - Students use knowledge of furbearer management principles, practices and issues to explain current management programs in their state.

Introduction

Wildlife management is a science. Wildlife biologists are professionals. Biologists apply the basic principles of ecology to maintain and manage wildlife. Many biologists are as highly trained as physicians, lawyers, or college professors.

Some wildlife biologists specialize in the management of furbearers and their habitats. Furbearer biologists monitor animal populations, habitat, and diseases that may affect furbearers or cause human health problems. They develop management goals and create plans to meet those goals.

Furbearer biologists set regulations to protect or restore **threatened** and **endangered species**, allow for the harvest of surplus animals, or reduce overabundant furbearer populations. They also work to educate landowners and the general public about furbearers and the need for regulated trapping. Without education, it is difficult to have public support for management programs.

Few people truly understand wildlife management. Along with biologists, experienced trappers are among the people most knowledgeable about wildlife. This is because trappers must study wildlife, wildlife behavior, and habitats to be successful.

As people learn more about wildlife, they usually care about it more. When caring leads to actions that conserve wildlife for future generations, the person has become a conservationist. This chapter will introduce you to the principles of furbearer management. Through further study and experience, you can develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become a conservationist.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)

State wildlife agencies have the authority and responsibility to manage furbearer resources and regulate trapping for their citizens. The Wisconsin



Jason Hawley

Biologist with wolf.

Responsible trappers learn about wildlife and take action to conserve it for future generations.



FWS Photo

Volunteers worked to build wood duck nest boxes at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge.



USDA Photo

Trees, like wildlife, are renewable.

State agencies have the legislative authority to manage wildlife on behalf of the public.

Department of Natural Resources manages Wisconsin's furbearer resources for the benefit of all citizens of the state. The Department recognizes that furbearers have a variety of ecological, **cultural**, economic and **aesthetic** values, and that these values can be positive or negative. Also, since values are determined by people, not nature, the same furbearer can have a wide range of values depending on the time, the place, and who is being affected by it.

In order to responsibly manage furbearers, the Department monitors populations and harvests, sets regulations, maintains habitats, and enforces laws related to furbearers.

Seasons

Trapping and hunting seasons are based on furbearer populations. Seasons are not permitted if they are deemed detrimental to the survival of the species. Once biological requirements are met, further decisions are based primarily on the concerns of people who use, value, or are affected by the resource. Opportunity, fur primeness, damage problems, landowner concerns, nonharvest values, disease and other factors all enter into these decisions and opportunities. No furbearer species has ever become endangered or threatened as a result of regulated trapping.

Surveys

Harvest and fur value surveys are conducted for all harvestable furbearer species in Wisconsin. For species that are more sensitive, harvest figures are determined through pelt registration. For those species, carcasses are collected from trappers and hunters, and information on location, sex ratios, age and productivity are used to assess the health of the population. A number of special surveys may also be used to evaluate particular areas of concern.

Habitat

Although furbearers often are not the highest priority in many habitat management programs, the fact remains that furbearing animals are primary beneficiaries of many of these practices. This is particularly true of wetland areas, which are prime habitat for muskrat, mink, beaver, raccoon, fox, and other furbearers. In fact, furbearers often do so well in these areas that conflicts develop with management for other species such as waterfowl. Forest management practices also influence furbearer populations, with some species favoring early successional stages of vegetation, and others favoring later stages.

Enforcement

Hundreds of trained conservation officers in Wisconsin enforce laws and regulations relating to furbearers. Of course, they have many other duties in addition to furbearer regulations, but they are always interested in, and concerned about situations where violations are occurring. It is important,

however, for trappers and hunters to police their own ranks and to help enforcement officers by reporting violations. People who take furbearers illegally are stealing from all citizens of the state.

Conservation and Trap Line Management

Furbearer regulations are established for the entire state, or for large regions of Wisconsin depending on the species. Conditions vary within such large areas, therefore, it is up to trappers to practice **conservation** on their own trap line, and capture only a portion of the surplus. This sounds simple, but actually is quite complicated because in many areas a number of trappers and hunters are competing for the same resource. Fortunately, trapping and hunting tend to be self limiting for many species. The time and effort required to take these animals exceeds the benefit long before they are reduced to critically low levels. For other species which are not so resilient, regulations have to be more restrictive.

On private lands where trappers have exclusive or near exclusive trapping privileges, individual trap line management is much more feasible. In these areas the trapper can manage not only the harvest, but in many cases the habitat as well. By doing so, the trapper can be assured of having a relatively high sustained harvest year after year.

Regulated trapping provides many benefits for society. For example, they help keep wildlife populations in balance with the environment or at acceptable levels, reduce property damage, support broader conservation programs and obtain many products for human use. While all of these are good reasons for people to support regulated trapping, the future of these practices also depends on their perceptions of trappers and their actions afield. Always think about the **Code of Trapping Ethics** covered in Chapter 3.

Furbearer trapping is highly regulated and laws are enforced by trained conservation officers. Laws that pertain to furbearer trapping help to:

1. Protect species from becoming threatened or endangered.
2. Improve animal welfare.
3. Prevent nontarget catches.
4. Limit furbearer trapping to the time of the year when furs are marketable and young no longer depend on adult animals.
5. Monitor harvest levels by using mandatory registration for some species, and harvest questionnaires for others.
6. Support habitat conservation and wildlife studies through license sales and other fees.
7. Protect landowners' rights and interests by requiring written permission before setting capture devices.



FWS Photo

Biologist tracking wildlife.



Nicke Shumaker

Millions of Americans hunt and trap.

Habitat destruction leads to long term declines in wildlife populations.

Extirpated means that a species no longer exists in a range where it once lived. It does not mean that a species is extinct.



USDA Photo

Working together, biologists and trappers have restored river otter populations to much of their former range.



FWS Photos

Oil is a non-renewable resource.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources monitors wildlife populations and adjusts season dates and **bag limits** accordingly. Annual trapping pamphlets contain information and regulations applicable to the year's activities. Pamphlets may be obtained from license vendors or by contacting:

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707
Phone: 608-266-8204 / (web: <http://dnr.wi.gov/>)

Confidential information concerning violations can be reported by calling TIP WDNR (800)847-9367

Renewable vs. Non-renewable Resources

Natural resources fall into one of two categories: renewable and non-renewable. Renewable resources are living things with the capacity to regenerate or repopulate. Plants and animals are renewable resources. For example, when trees are cut down, new trees can grow there again from seeds. Similarly, when some wild animals are harvested by people or die due to disease, predation, or starvation, the remaining animals have young and the population increases. Trees and animals are resources that can be renewed as long as the habitat is available.

Non-renewable resources are non-living items that are **finite** and do not regenerate themselves. Coal, oil and natural gas are examples of non-renewable resources.

Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife habitat is made up of food, water, cover, and space. Each species of wild animal needs certain kinds of food and cover. Each species also needs a certain amount of habitat to provide for its needs.

The quality and quantity of habitat in an area affects the number of species present, and the population level of each species.

Each species of wild animal is associated with a certain kind of habitat. Wetlands, forests, grasslands, and farmlands are common types of habitat used by furbearers.

Arrangement is an important characteristic of habitat. When habitat types are mixed, the area will generally support more species and higher wildlife populations.

Sustainable Management of Wildlife Resources

Native wildlife populations are natural resources - biological wealth - that should be sustained and managed for the benefit of present and future generations of people.

Wildlife biologists focus on protecting, preserving, and improving habitats and **ecosystems**. It is important to understand that biologists also focus on maintaining sustainable populations of wildlife, not individual animals.

Most species of wildlife, including furbearers, have short life spans. Over the long term, individual animals do not endure, but populations do.

Sustainable management of furbearer populations depends upon these two key concepts:

- An understanding and focus on habitat.
- An understanding and focus on the furbearer population.

Requirements to Allow Harvest of Furbearers

Biologists generally look for three requirements before allowing the harvest of wild animals:

- The species is not threatened or endangered.
- The harvest techniques are acceptable, and populations are sustainable.
- Killing the animals serves a practical purpose.

Factors Affecting Wildlife Populations

Furbearer populations change over time. Populations are highest after the young are born each year. Some animals die due to weather, food supplies, diseases, and predation, so the number of animals declines until more are born the following year. Animal populations also change over longer periods of time, usually due to changes in the quantity and quality of habitat.

Many wild animals, including furbearers, can quickly repopulate an area of suitable habitat. River otter provide one example. In many states, river otter were extirpated long ago due to habitat destruction, water pollution and unregulated killing. In recent years, some river otter habitat has been restored. Biologists and trappers captured river otter in states where the populations were high, and released a few in the restored areas. Within a short time, the otter populations expanded to fill the available habitat.

Extinction means a species is no longer found anywhere. Passenger pigeons, for example, are extinct.

Finite - having a definite limit. Once it's gone, it's gone!

Wildlife agencies and supporters have restored many species that were once extirpated from entire states. River otter, fisher, and beaver are furbearers that were extirpated from many states and later restored.

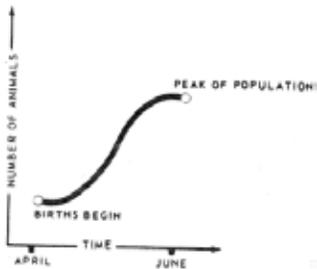


USDA Photo

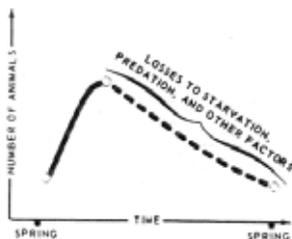
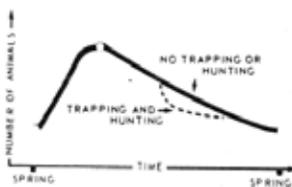
A tree nearly felled by a beaver.

Major Factors that Affect Wildlife Populations

- Changes in habitat
- Carrying capacity
- Limiting Factors such as food, weather, & predation



Wildlife populations are usually highest in the spring after young have been born.



The number of animals a given area can support throughout the year is known as its **biological carrying capacity**. Limiting factors determine what the biological carrying capacity will be. Food is a common limiting factor. Water, shelter, space, disease, and predation are other types of limiting factors biologists must monitor.

Over the course of many years furbearer populations may decline a lot more than normal due to catastrophic events. Examples include habitat destruction such as forest fires, extreme weather such as blizzards, and diseases such as rabies. If a few animals survive, the population is capable of recovering when conditions return to normal. During these times, biologists may restrict harvest and take other actions to help the animals or the habitat.

Management Goals: Compensatory vs. Additive Mortality

Biologists consider several factors when setting management goals for each furbearer species. Two of these factors include the biological carrying capacity of the habitat, and the **cultural carrying capacity**. **Biological carrying capacity** refers to the number of animals the habitat can support. **Cultural carrying capacity** refers to the number of animals that society will accept, which may be a lower level than the biological carrying capacity.

Under normal conditions furbearers produce a surplus of young. Wildlife managers can set seasons, **bag limits** and trapping methods to allow part of the annual surplus to be harvested (harvestable surplus). Biologists manage for **compensatory mortality** by substituting regulated trapping for other mortality factors that would otherwise reduce the population. When managing for compensatory mortality, trapping does not affect the overall population that survives until spring. If trapping did not occur, a similar number of animals would be lost due to limiting factors, such as a lack of food or shelter or disease. The population level is determined by the biological carrying capacity of the habitat.

While some furbearer populations can change dramatically, most populations become stable when their population reaches the biological carrying capacity. In some areas high furbearer populations can cause major problems to people. Beaver dams, for example, may flood farm fields and roads, or interfere with city water supply systems. When furbearer populations cause too many problems, biologists may decide to reduce the numbers below the area's biological carrying capacity. In this case, biologists are managing for **additive mortality** to bring the population down to its cultural carrying capacity.

Regulated Trapping as a Management Tool

Regulated trapping is an important part of wildlife management programs. The regulated use of the furbearer resource is not only acceptable but in some cases has significant benefits. When furbearer populations cause conflicts with people, or with other wildlife species and habitats, biologists may adjust trapping regulations to increase the harvest and reduce the population. **Regulated trapping is the most efficient and practical means available to reduce furbearer populations, does so at no cost to the public, and has local economic benefits.**

Regulated trapping helps manage wildlife and habitats. Trapping is used to protect many rare and **endangered species** of plants and animals, wetland habitats, and personal property. Regulated trapping is also used for localized disease control, wildlife research, and wildlife restoration.

In 1997 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) reported trapping was used on 487 management projects at 281 National Wildlife Refuges.

The case of the piping plover, a beach nesting bird along our Great Lake shorelines, is a good example. The piping plover is a threatened shorebird protected by the United States and Canada. Fox, raccoon, mink, and striped skunk prey on piping plovers when they nest. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service use trapping in and around piping plover habitat to reduce local populations of these predators. Some of the other rare species protected by trapping programs include pink lady slippers, pitcher plants, the desert tortoise, sea turtles, Attwater's prairie chickens, brown pelicans, least terns, and black-footed ferrets. Trapping has been a tool used in protecting and managing federally endangered whooping cranes here in Wisconsin.

Major Issues Related to Furbearer Management

Three major issues affect the conservation and management of furbearers:

- Human population growth, which degrades and destroys habitat.
- Public intolerance of furbearers.
- Opposition to any use of wildlife by animal rights groups.

Human population growth causes the loss of furbearer habitat. The range of some furbearer populations has already been reduced. Habitat destruction has eliminated the possibility of restoring some furbearing species to areas they once inhabited. Unlike habitat destruction, regulated trapping is a sustainable use of furbearers. Regulated trapping does not threaten the continued existence of furbearer populations.



USDA Photo

Predator trapping has helped the endangered, common tern recover from near extinction in Wisconsin.



USFWS

Wildlife biologists face challenges:

- *Expanding human populations.*
- *Public intolerance for furbearers in populated areas.*
- *Opposition to sound management by animal rights groups.*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a Wildlife Services Program to manage damage, minimize wildlife threats to public health, resolve conflicts with wildlife in urban areas, protect property, protect endangered species, and preserve natural resources. Trapping is an essential tool used by Wildlife Services employees.



USFWS

While fishing is popular nationwide, some activists oppose it, along with trapping and hunting.



Excise taxes are collected on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment to support wildlife management programs.

Public intolerance of furbearers is another issue. As wildlife habitat continues to be split up by development, biologists are faced with new challenges. Examples include coyote killing pets, beaver cutting landscape trees or flooding roadways, raccoons invading homes, and human health threats from diseases such as rabies. These problems are highly publicized and they make some people want to lower or eliminate furbearer populations. As a result, nuisance animal trapping has become a growing industry. This concerns biologists because it shows increasing numbers of people view furbearers as problems that should be destroyed. This is a reactive response to problems, whereas regulated trapping activity is proactive and trappers value these resources.

Animal rights activists reflect a different view, which differs from values of using animals for food, clothing, and other purposes. Activists want to eliminate all trapping and stop managing furbearers. If animal rights activists are successful, people will have fewer options for solving furbearer problems. Additionally, people could not use furbearers.

Funding Furbearer Management Programs

Hunters and trappers provide most of the money for wildlife management programs. The two major sources of funding include:

- Hunting and trapping license revenues.
- **Excise taxes** on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment.

Hunting and trapping licenses are sold by states and provide direct revenue for furbearer management. **Excise taxes** on equipment are distributed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Division of Federal Assistance in Wildlife Restoration Act. Wildlife Restoration dollars, sometimes more than \$200 million a year, are distributed to all 50 states, territories, and Puerto Rico for approved programs that involve wildlife research, management, land purchases, and education. Part of the Wisconsin trapping license revenue is earmarked to trapper education.

Chapter 5 Review- Furbearer Management

Objective - Students use knowledge of furbearer management principles, practices, and issues to explain current management programs in their state.

Identify the government agency with the authority to manage furbearer resources and regulate trapping in your state.

1. Name the agency that regulates trapping in your state.

Explain the difference between a renewable and a nonrenewable resource.

2. Name two renewable resources.

a. _____
b. _____

3. Name two nonrenewable resources.

a. _____
b. _____

Identify the components of habitat and name three types of habitats used by furbearers.

4. Name four components (parts) of habitat.

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
d. _____

5. Name three types of habitat used by furbearers.

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

Name three principles that are applied in the harvest of wild animals in North America.

6. Complete these statements.

a. The species is not _____.
b. The harvest techniques are _____.
c. The killing of these animals serves a _____.

Identify the major factors that affect wildlife populations.

7. Food supplies can be a limiting factor for wildlife. Name two more limiting factors.

a. _____
b. _____

Explain the difference between managing furbearers for compensatory mortality and additive mortality.

8. When furbearers over populate and cause problems, biologists may need to reduce the population. This means the biologists must manage for _____ mortality.

Identify regulated trapping as the most efficient and practical means available to accomplish regular furbearer population reductions.

9. Regulated trapping is the most practical means available to reduce furbearer populations and it does so at _____ to the public.

Identify situations where trapping is used to directly manage wildlife.

10. Regulated trapping is used to protect endangered species, wetland habitats, and personal property.

Name _____

three other uses for regulated trapping.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Explain the three issues related to furbearer management.

11. Name the three major issues related to furbearer management.

- a. Human _____ growth.
- b. Public _____ of furbearers.
- c. Opposition from _____ groups.

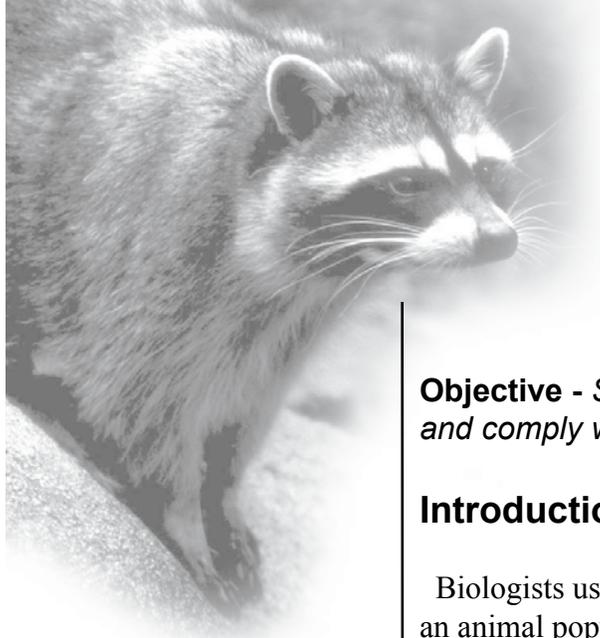
Explain two funding sources for furbearer management programs

12. Name two major sources of funding for furbearer management:

- a. _____ and _____ revenues.
- b. Excise taxes on firearms, _____, and _____ equipment.

Chapter 6

Trapping Regulations



Legal traps vary from state to state. Trapping regulations are modified each year in Wisconsin. Season dates and new laws require trappers and hunters to be vigilant.

Wildlife officers have an important job. Officers strictly enforce trapping regulations. They may also help teach trapper education courses and assist on nuisance animal complaints.

Flexible trapping regulations allow biologist to use trapping as a tool of wildlife management.



Myranda Lin

Objective - *Students demonstrate the ability to understand, support, and comply with trapping regulations.*

Introduction

Biologists use trapping regulations to manage and conserve wildlife. When an animal population is low or endangered, regulations can be used to protect the species. When an animal population is high, biologists can allow more harvest, using the principle of **additive mortality**. If the population of a species is high enough to cause problems biologists may lengthen the season, raise **bag limits**, or allow additional methods of harvest so the population can be lowered to an acceptable level.

Trapping regulations are also used to enhance human health and safety; protect habitat, property, and domestic animals. Regulations require the use of selective trapping methods and meet public expectations for animal welfare.

Wisconsin has a process for setting regulations that allows for public participation at spring meetings in all counties. Trappers, landowners, organizations, and government agencies can participate in the regulation setting process.

As a responsible trapper, you must follow all regulations. If you disagree with a regulation you should participate in the regulation setting process. The Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) has 5 representatives from each of our 72 counties. Learn who in your area is on the Congress and work through them and your local wildlife biologist. Plan on attending your county WCC Spring Hearing in early April.

Wisconsin has law enforcement officers dedicated to enforcement of hunting and trapping regulations. They are known as conservation officers or conservation wardens. Responsible trappers work with their local conservation warden and help develop mutual respect for the role each serves in wildlife conservation. When landowners have furbearer control problems, conservation wardens often refer them to responsible trappers they know and trust.

Sources for Current Trapping Regulations

The Wisconsin DNR publishes brochures that explain current hunting and trapping regulations. Since trapping regulations may change each year you need to obtain a new copy of the regulations when you renew your trapping license. The most common place to find the brochures is at the location where you purchase your license. You may also obtain the regulations by writing or calling the WDNR Call Center at: 1-888-936-7463. In addition, Wisconsin publishes hunting and trapping regulations on their web site: dnr.wi.gov, keyword “regulations”

Process for Setting or Changing Trapping Regulations

The Wisconsin DNR is responsible for publishing the trapping regulations. The Wisconsin State Statutes and Wisconsin Administrative Code is the authority for these regulations.

The governor appoints an advisory board to receive public comment on issues related to Wisconsin’s natural resources. Advisory board members represent a geographic district within the boundaries of the state with monthly meetings held. The meetings provide the opportunity to discuss and request actions relative to furbearer management and trapping.

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress plays a very important role in the management of Wisconsin’s furbearer resource. The WCC is the only “advisory body” in the state where citizens of Wisconsin elect delegates to represent their interests in natural resources, both local and statewide, who work with the Natural Resources Board and the DNR to effectively manage Wisconsin’s natural resources. Many trapping regulations are developed by the WCC and brought to annual spring hearing meetings for approval.

Any Wisconsin citizen that has a reasonable idea for improving a regulation can contact their local Wisconsin Conservation Congress delegate. The WCC will assist in formulating a resolution outlining the proposed change to be presented in their county at the WDNR/WCC spring hearings. If the local assembly approves, the resolution is voted on by the entire state delegation at the WCC annual meeting. It will then be sent to the appropriate committee to be discussed and analyzed before being passed on to the Executive Committee for review. After successfully passing each step in the WCC, the Natural Resources Board will consider the resolution and advise the WDNR. The WDNR will then present the proposed regulation to Wisconsin citizens for approval through public hearings and public meetings. It is lengthy process, but Wisconsin is unique and fortunate that it’s concerned and informed citizens have a voice in our regulation making process. More information can be found at: dnr.wi.gov, keyword “conservation congress”.

It is your responsibility to know the trapping regulations. Ignorance of the law is no excuse if you are charged with a trapping violation.



WI Trapping Regulations.



Nicke Shumaker

Trappers work with wildlife agencies to improve regulations.



Ohio DOW Photo

A 330 body-grip trap set for beaver. To be set legally in Wisconsin, trapping regulations require this trap be at least half underwater.

When furbearers are too low, biologists can shorten seasons or take other steps to allow the population to increase.

Wisconsin requires trappers to use tag traps with specific identification information.

Conditions Influencing Change in Trapping Regulations

- Furbearer populations rise or fall.
- Trapping technology improves.
- The number of trappers rises or falls.
- Habitat changes.
- Nuisance animal problems increase.
- Public attitudes change.
- Rare or endangered species need protection from furbearers.

Legal Restrictions for Trapping Nuisance Animals

Chapter 12.10 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code provides information regarding the rules and penalties related to nuisance wildlife control. These rules are summarized in a “Nuisance Wildlife Guidelines” handout, which needs to be reviewed before conducting any animal damage control work or removing nuisance wildlife. The handout can be found on the Wisconsin DNR website.

Know and Understand the Trapping Regulations

Violations of Wisconsin’s hunting and trapping regulations can be criminal offenses. Conservation wardens and judges recognize the difference between an unintentional violation and willful intentions to poach animals out of season or by illegal means. Ignorance of trapping laws is not an excuse. Upon conviction of a trapping violation, a judge may impose fines or jail time. Trappers convicted of serious violations may also have traps, firearms and even vehicles confiscated by the court. Judges can also revoke licenses and suspend privileges to trap in the future.

Reporting Wildlife Violations

As a trapper, you may learn about trapping violations that need to be stopped. Never confront a violator or get directly involved without a conservation warden present. Instead, observe the situation and quickly report it to your local Conservation Warden. Provide descriptions of the violators, vehicles, license plate numbers, locations, dates, and times.

Most states have established programs to stop poaching with toll-free telephone numbers to call when you need to report a violation. These programs go by names such as “TIP” which stands for “Turn In a Poacher.” Many states provide rewards for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of violators. Callers can remain anonymous.

The Wisconsin TIP-WDNR line is: 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367)

Chapter 6 Review - Trapping Regulations

Objective - Students demonstrate the ability to understand, support and comply with trapping regulations.

Identify two specific places to obtain current trapping regulations.

1. Name two places to find Wisconsin's trapping regulations.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
2. Any Wisconsin citizen can propose changes to DNR regulations by working with their local _____ delegate to draft a _____.

Explain conditions that could lead to changes in trapping regulations.

3. Name at least three reasons wildlife agencies might change trapping regulations.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
4. The phone number to report violations or poachers is _____.
5. Wisconsin trapping regulations and laws are strictly enforced by trained _____.

Explain the process for reporting wildlife violations.

6. Never _____ a violator.
7. Safely observe the situation and report it to a _____.
8. Provide descriptions of the violators, vehicles, locations, dates, times, and _____.