

Snaring Raccoons
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by Joshua Legg

In order to have a successful snaring season you have to understand both the animal and its habits before just going out and running a snare line. It's as simple as "Trail Networks".

To understand trail networking you have to look at what raccoons need to survive; food, shelter, and water. Trails are the raccoon's way of getting quickly between these three. Throughout the season trails change due to harvested crops, or a creek that has dried up. When an area goes dead due to any reason that has changed the animal's path of travel or food supply, just stop and look for food, shelter, water and the connection between them. Before the cornfields were harvested they provided both food and overhead cover for the raccoon. Now that these fields are gone raccoons will go further out of their way to obtain overhead cover.

A little preseason scouting could save you a lot of time later on. Have a plan for when the crops come off. When scouting in September, keep these great starters in mind; drainage ditches, ponds, creeks, old buildings, woods, culvert pipes, and bridges. Making written notes are a must, because more times than not they are more reliable than mental ones.

With this knowledge, equipment becomes the next topic of importance. The tools you will need are a 5-gallon bucket, cable cutters, 1-ft. stakes, hammer, 14-gauge wire, wire snips, and support wire (hangers). Make sure the stakes you use are dry, because after you've driven them in, they will swell due to moisture, making it much harder to pull them out. I make my snares three and feet long with 5/64 cable and Greggerson L-4 locks. I prefer the Greggerson locks over washer locks simply because I feel the raccoon can get behind washer locks and loosen them. As far as swivels, I've had very good luck with salt water fishing swivels. They are lighter, more compact, and cheaper than box swivels. A piece of tube should also be added between the lock and the swivel to provide a spot for the support wire to go through to hold up the snare. A drowner can also be used if the situation arises. I let my snares simmer in a mixture of water and baking soda for 10 minutes to make the cable a dull gray color. A light mist of brown paint can also be added, but I advise to go lightly due to the lock possibly getting hung up.

There is really only one type of set you can make with snares, and that is the basic trail set. This set is simply made by placing the snare in the animal's path, and restricting the animal to the middle of the path. First, stake your snare off to either side of the trail. One time I made the mistake of wiring off to a tree base and found a raccoon the next day 20 feet up in the tree.

Grass piles and sticks are used to restrict the animal to the center of the trail. Grass piles 5 inches or higher placed on both sides of the snare work extremely well. Make sure that the raccoon has no choice but to walk into your snare loop. If sticks are used make sure they are no bigger than a pencil in size. If you try to restrict the animal too much it may refuse a snare. The height between the ground and the bottom of the loop should measure 4 to 5 inches. I simply place my fist under the snare and adjust it so the bottom of the loop is even with the top of my fist. Directly under the bottom loop place a pencil-sized stick so there is 1/8 inch at the most between the top of the stick and the bottom of the loop.

The width of the loop opening should be 5 inches. I choose to use a smaller loop than most people, because I have great results with neck and shoulder catches. Catching a raccoon around the waist works, but causes some fur damage and a purple or brown line on the pelt after it is stretched out.

Often times the loop is in a tear dropped shape from being folded, so form it with your hand so it is circular after setting. The wind can also cause problems by vibrating your snare partially closed causing you to miss animals. To prevent this, bend your support wire so the lock is level or slightly higher than level when set (See picture). Double check your set to make sure the snare is in the middle of the trail, and that no blades of grass or other debris could cause the animal to move away from the center of the snare loop.

After catching a raccoon the remake is fast and simple. You can do one of two things; first, you can simply pull the old snare and place a new one in a different part of the trail, or you can rake debris into two piles and place a new snare between the two piles. I prefer to rake the catch circle into two piles, because the grass you need for the piles is already shredded up and easy to create piles with. If the catch circle is muddy or excessively torn up I will move the snare to a different part of the trail. I would suggest to be open to both ways, because they both have their places. Keep in mind that fox also run the same trails as raccoon. A 5/64 snare will easily hold any fox that comes along. Most fox will be missed due to the height and width of the snare set for raccoon.

Over all, snares are a bonus on your trapline. Not only are snares fast, easy, lightweight, cheap, and highly productive, but they also work in the worst of weather. When water freezes up, my line becomes 95% snares due to how easy they are to maintain and set. Hopefully this information helps out those who are thinking about running a snare line. I encourage anyone who has never tried snares before to give them a try. The advantages are endless! Good Luck! ### Joshua Legg, 823 SR 300, Gibsonburg, OH 43431

Editor's Note: Joshua is from Northwest Ohio and is 17 years of age. This is his first time writing an article for the Buckeye Trapper. I think you will agree with me when I say his article is interesting, informative, and well written. Thanks Josh!