

BT Basics - Frog Gigging
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Hello trappers! Well as I sit here writing this column at the beginning of November there are a couple snowflakes falling. The forecast says it's supposed to warm up in the next few days but I think it's going to be a little cooler than last year's opener. That sure does make it nice. I don't know about you, but I don't care too much to be out setting traps all day sweating. But again, I'd rather be setting traps than not!

Now, I know this is primarily a trapping magazine, but like it or not, trapping season does have to come to an end each year for most of us. Unless you are into the nuisance trapping business, you are going to have to find something else to occupy your time. I see a lot of people talk about fishing, mushroom hunting, root digging, etc. So there are a lot of good things out there. What I would like to share with you in this column is a little bit about frog gigging.

The first thing I have found doing this is that you can do an awful lot of good scouting for the upcoming trapping season. For the first couple of years I have been doing this all by foot just wading the shorelines. When doing it this way, you can really get an eye opener seeing the many things that you just walk by most of the time. Spending a night out listening and seeing the nightlife is just plain enjoyable. Also I find it good exercise to keep my body in decent shape between the trapping seasons, as well as harvesting some good food!

The first thing you should know is that there is a season for frogs and you do need a fishing license. This year it started at 6:00 p.m., the second Friday in June. It will then run until April 30th, 2011. It is also important to know that only bullfrogs and green frogs can be harvested and not more than 10 frogs may be taken or possessed at any time. If you are not sure what these frogs look like, see if somebody in your area frog gigs and can help you out. A trip to the library to look through an identification guide can also give you some good insight. Also, frogs may not be shot except with a longbow and arrow.

Just as trapping, it is important to get to know the habits and locations of good frog areas. Getting out and walking a shoreline of a pond or swamp just after dark with a headlight on will give you a good idea if a location is worth trying. As you walk, you may see frogs jumping into the water. Try to walk slowly and see if you can catch the glimmer of their small eyes before they jump. You have to be slow and patient because they can be quick! Also listen as you walk along for the vocalizations that the different species of frogs make. I will explain this a little later.

When you find an area that you would like to hunt, you are going to need a couple pieces of equipment. One thing I can say is that you don't have to break the bank to get started. First you are going to have to decide how you are going to get to the frogs. As I said earlier, I like to wade. If you go that route, you are going to need a pair of waders or maybe just some old tennis shoes and a pair of shorts, but don't rule out a canoe or small boat if that's what works for you. Either way you go, it will get you to the frogs. If you are going to be spending a lot of time on the water, don't forget to put a lifejacket on. Dealing with slippery banks and boats can be quite dangerous. Whatever way you decide to go, just make sure it allows for a quiet and stealthy approach. The next item you are going to need is a headlight or flashlight. I like the headlight the best because it allows both hands to be free. One thing to make sure of is to have spare batteries! It's no fun getting out onto the water and having your battery go dead.

Now, for what I feel is the most important piece of equipment, the gig. I use a Cumings brand adjustable frog gig pole topped with a five prong tip. I like the five prong tip as it provides more of a kill area. Again, just like the spare batteries, keep an extra tip on hand as you never know if you may hit a rock or bend it in another way. The last thing you are going to need is something to put your frogs into. I run my belt through the handle of a plastic coffee can and carry it on my side. After I gig a frog, I open the lid of the coffee can and remove the frog off the gig. Carefully place it in the coffee can making sure the lid snaps shut tight. Be very careful when you do this, as the frogs are still quite lively! For this reason it's also a very good idea to reach down and take hold of the frog before pulling your gig from the mud to insure that it doesn't escape.

The procedure I like to follow goes a little like this: Enter the water at a safe point and slowly walk out from the shoreline to the depth your boots will allow. As you walk the shoreline keep your light trained on the bank and look for the shine of the frog's eyes. Frogs will get up under overhanging vegetation so you have to look hard sometimes for them. You can also locate frogs by wading to their vocals. In my area I find mostly the green frog and they make a vocal sound like someone plucking a banjo. Bullfrogs tend to have more of a constant rolling croak vocal that sounds like it is saying, "jug o'rum." Once you have located a frog, slowly extend your gig as close as you can to the frog without spooking it and with a quick jab forward, pin it against the bank or pond bottom. If all works out, you have yourself a frog! Reach down, grab the frog, pull the gig out of the bank or pond bottom, remove the frog from the gig and place it in your frog container, and go get another one!

Once I have my frogs at home it's time to get them ready for the freezer or cooking. For the most part, you are going to get the most meat from the legs. However, on bigger frogs you can get some meat up into the frogs back. What I do is just cut the legs at the socket where they fit into the pelvis. Once you cut them off take a pair of needle nose pliers or a pair of strong fingers, and pull the skin down the legs to where the foot connects to the leg. Cut and remove both the foot and leg skin. After I have my frogs dressed, I like to rinse them in cold water and place them in a bowl of saltwater for the night. I like to freeze the rest of the frog parts and use them for bait during the trapping season.

When it comes to cooking them I follow the procedure I would for frying chicken. I start by mixing together in a bowl enough milk, egg, salt, pepper, and other assorted spices to completely cover the frogs. I then pour out some flour, or one of the many brands of cooking mixes on the market, onto a paper plate and roll the legs around in the mixture to completely cover them. I then place them in a skillet of hot melted butter, or some type of oil such as peanut oil, and fry them until they are golden brown. It doesn't take to long for them to be cooked, so be sure not to overcook them. Now, enjoy!

As I said when I began, as much as we hate it, trapping season does have to end for the year at some point. However we can make the time between go a little faster by keeping ourselves occupied. Give frog gigging a try and I will bet you will look just as