

**Trapping on a Shoestring**  
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**by Clyde Pidcock "The Ole Trapper"**

This article is for the "New Trapper" and for the "Young Trapper" who doesn't have a lot of money to start out with.

First, new traps are expensive. The young person with little money is about priced out. I know the feeling, for I was poor when I was a kid and it was really hard to get started. If I were a young person getting started today, I would watch the garage sales and flea markets. Explain to the seller that you are trying to get started in trapping, also watch for auction sales.

Your county or state trapping meets will sometimes provide good bargains. A lot of old trappers, like myself, are usually willing to help get new young trappers started.

Today a lot of mothers and fathers are strapped for money and can't afford money for traps, so go out and get a part time job in the summer and save up for winter trapping supplies. Maybe you can pick up some traps that need repairs and maybe dad is handy (so ask for help).

Don't be brainwashed by people trying to sell you a lot of junk you don't need. You need a pair of hip boots, but while you don't have much cash, buy a cheap pair until you catch and sell some fur, then buy better ones.

If you are water trapping, a pack basket is worthless. Save your money. If you are land trapping, a pack basket might be a little handy, but again, they cost money that you could use to buy traps. Instead, go to the feed store and buy some grain sacks for about fifty cents apiece.

Trapping has become so commercialized that you may feel that you just "have to have" artificial frogs and crawfish to put on your trap pans. AGAIN, save your money. For about thirty-five years I ran a bait and tackle store in the summer and trapped in the winter. I found that most of the artificial bait for catching fish didn't catch many fish, but they did catch fishermen. So a lot of things that are advertised in trapping magazines, don't catch animals, just trappers!

Don't worry about something to put your trapping wire on, just put it in your pocket. But, wire is a must if you are a water trapper; and I have been most of seventy years. Try to pick up a hatchet at the flea market. They are hard to do without, especially when there is ice. And one really comes in handy to cut stakes when you trap muskrats.

A pair of wire cutters is a must. Drill a hole in the handle, put a ring through the hole, fasten a piece of small chain to the ring, and at the other end secure a small dog snap. Put a big safety pin in the shoulder of your coat and hook the dog snap to the safety pin. You will have no lost time hunting for wire cutters in muddy water.

When trapping in a place that has a lot of trees and stumps you almost have to use markers. In my territory you don't dare make your markers too obvious or trap thieves will clean you out. I get white thumbtacks. If you aren't looking for them, you won't see them. Don't get unpainted ones, they will rust quicker.

Anyone who has read my articles knows I love to use fish for mink and raccoon, and it works well for about any animal. They never get shy of it, they smell it everyday, and it's cheap to use. Young trappers can have fun catching fish in the summer time, cut them into pieces, place in bread sacks and put into the freezer, until needed. (Carp is the best, because it is oily.)

Use one trap per set, you don't have enough traps to gang set yet. I have plenty and I still don't! I don't use

lure for water animals, but I don't have anything against call lures.

Another way to save money is by dyeing your traps with walnut hulls. Put the hulls in a large container, pour water in and let it boil. Now put in the traps and let them boil. Handle this operation with extreme care and adult supervision. About sixty-five years ago I didn't. My buddy and I played hooky from school, gathered walnut hulls, and dyed our traps. When I went back to school the teacher asked me why I was absent and I told her I was sick (wrong). She said she could tell by my hands that I'd been cleaning walnuts. Well, the teacher whacked my butt, my Grandmother found out, and she did the same. Don't be dishonest!

A lot of building contractors dump bricks to make fill, and sometimes they will let you pick them up if you ask. They have holes in them and you can put them in dad's car, or yours, and drop them off at the bridge where you will be trapping. It's a quick, inexpensive way to fasten your traps.

My brother, Chuck, trapped from his bicycle when he was about fourteen years old and it would have kept an adult busy to keep up with his numbers. (He is now deceased.)

There are a lot of good holders and stabilizers sold for bodygrip traps. But again, if you don't have a lot of money, find where someone is building a new house and ask if you can pick up some scrap lumber. Find some 3/4 board scraps and make some wedges 3/4 X 1 1/2 X 4 inches long. When you get to the creek, find where you want to set your trap. Next find a stick and push it down through the spring hole into the mud. Now push your wedge in beside the stick. Now you have a holder that didn't cost anything.

Find a place where they are changing rain gutters and ask if you can have the spikes. Go to the hardware store and get some lock washers a size smaller than the gutter spikes. Take the rivet out of your bodygrip trap and slip in the spike. Drive the lock washer over the spike against the trap. Now just set your trap and push the spike in the mud wherever you choose.

You will need a trowel. Maybe your mom has one she uses in the garden. She won't be using it in the winter when you will need it. If you ask nice and take special care of it, she may lend it to you for the season. It is one of the most important tools a trapper needs. Buy a good one when you can afford it. Or if you are fortunate enough you may get one as a gift for Christmas or your birthday!

A shoulder length glove is a must, when you have saved up enough fur money to purchase one. I trapped for years before there was such a thing. Ice would freeze to the hair on my arms.

One of the most important things for a trapper to remember is CURIOSITY. Did you ever hear the old saying "curiosity killed the cat"? Well, believe it, because it has done in many animals. Mink will go in about every hole they see; sometimes they will kill a muskrat and stay a couple of nights. Animals will investigate almost any foreign smell. A piece of bait in a hole works great on curious mink and other animals.

Our next step is getting permission. Go see the landowner. Go clean, don't go looking like a bum. Don't act like you are doing him a favor by trapping his place. Be courteous and respect his land. Shut the gates and let him know if you see anything out of the ordinary on his property. Never steal anyone's traps, even if someone has taken one of yours. **BE HONEST, IT PAYS.**

Question: How much do I love to trap? The last season I trapped I did so with arthritis in my hips, a heart problem and prostate trouble. What do you think?

Editor's Note: The OSTA would like to thank Clyde for his many contributions to the trapping world. A special thanks for the generous gift of his book to the young trappers who submit stories to the Buckeye Trapper.