

Trapping with The Boss
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No, it is not what you are thinking. I didn't take my wife with me. I took my other boss, you know, the one that signs my paychecks. Now you're probably thinking there is no way you would take your boss with you on the trapline. Well, most bosses that I've had I wouldn't take either (or I would take them and get them lost). But Denny is different. He is an avid hunter and fisherman and has an appreciation for those fevers that hit at certain times of the year. He go me started on turkey hunting and even gives me some mornings off (paid) every year to do some hunting. I even shot my first turkey on his property.

This all started a couple of years ago when Denny asked if he could go with me some day to check my traps. Denny is 58 years old, but looks ten years younger. (Maybe if he reads this I will get a raise.) He is in good shape for his years, but I still had concerns about him being able to keep up. I warned him that when I am longlining mink it is not a one or two hour excursion. It is more like a 9-10 hour day that starts at four in the morning and that we don't stop for breakfast and there is a lot of walking and climbing up and down steep embankments. I wasn't able to discourage him and was glad that I didn't. I enjoy taking people with me whenever I can and the fact that he had an appreciation for hunting and the outdoors I knew he would enjoy himself.

It took three years of trying to fit a day into our schedule before we were finally able to go together. It seemed like whenever he could go something would either come up on his end or it would rain cats and dogs and I would cancel because I didn't want to take him out and show him rain swollen creeks all day. I also wanted to be able to show him what goes into establishing, setting up, and running a long trapline, plus I wanted to be able to hopefully show him some catches.

Finally, this year everything worked out and he was able to go. Denny showed up at 4am as I had requested. I had trouble sleeping that night, had got up at 3am, and had already checked two locations close to the house. I showed him a female mink that I caught in a bottom edge set and told him that I hoped it wasn't the only one of the day. I was somewhat concerned about our success rate because the temperature had fallen into the low 20's, (I knew some of the water's edge sets would be frozen in). The line had been out about a week already, and had produced close to 30 mink and almost as many muskrats and raccoons. I also had four coyote sets out for some nuisance work and had taken a large 40 plus pound male coyote.

I decided to run the line backwards that morning, as I sometimes do just to keep things interesting, so we had a bit of a drive before we got to the first location. On the way I explained we would be looking at a lot of empty sets, partly because of the weather, and the fact that I was trying to avoid raccoon as much as possible and that when targeting the mink that this is the norm.

We finally arrived at the first stop and the traps were as I had left them the previous day. We picked up a small raccoon in a blind set at the fifth stop. We continued this routine until finally we reached the 12th location. At this stop there is a small, fast moving brook with lots of long grass overhanging the banks and it contains lots of minnows and crawdads. I had already caught one buck mink here in a bodygrip on a bank trail. All the sets were empty except the last two. We caught a large male raccoon in a blind pocket set and had caught another male mink in the bank tail set.

We continued on, and it was about at this point in time that I started to hear a constant whining (there goes that raise) from the other side of the truck. If I remember right, it was something about giving him the boots with the holes in them and his foot was getting cold. I assured Denny that the last time I wore those boots they didn't leak, but that leaky boots are just one of many hardships a trapper has to endure. I had even gone as far as putting some liquid boot sealant around the edges of the existing patches a couple of nights before, but I

guess it didn't help.

Things continued to go very slow, but we were able to pick up a nice raccoon and a muskrat over the next several stops. We finally connected on another buck mink in a bodygrip under some overhanging tree roots. This was a set that I had added just the day before. It sure pays off once in a while to add to and rework your line.

At about 10am we arrived at the farm where I was trapping the coyotes. I got out of the truck and fired up the four-wheeler. I noticed that Denny was still in the truck. I asked him if he was going to ride back with me and he said something about being cold and having a wet foot (sissy). He went on to say that if I caught a coyote to come back and get him, he would then come out for a look and take some pictures.

Well, as luck would have it I caught another large male coyote, but I had to dispatch him immediately. It was only caught by two toes and it had pumped my 24" rerod stake up about six inches out of the ground. I figured that if I took the time to go back and get Denny I might not have a coyote when we returned. There was a heavy fog in the valley that morning and I couldn't see the coyote until I was almost on top of him. If it would have been clear I would have seen him from a distance and would not have went up to him, but would have returned for Denny first.

I explained all of this to Denny when I returned with the coyote. He was disappointed, but still took some pictures anyway. He liked the coyote so well that he is having it mounted. It is probably the nicest looking coyote I have ever caught.

The rest of the day was pretty much uneventful. We picked up another raccoon in a pocket set, but that was it for the day. We ended up with three mink, four raccoon, one muskrat, and the one coyote. Not a great day, but still a good day all things considered.

Denny said he enjoyed himself and I truly believe that he did. I think he now has a better understanding of how much hard work goes into setting up and maintaining a trapline. He even watched me skin the mink. He wanted to see it all. We had a good time and he is welcome to go again anytime he wants, but every once in a while I still hear him whining, to anyone at work will listen, about how I kept the good boots for myself and gave him the pair with the holes.