The Great Miami Blitz Article from Mar - Apr 2005 Buckeye Trapper by Dan Dickerson

I was on second shift at work. Jim Keith was on a long weekend. A good weather forecast finally had coincided with our schedules. Our plan was to trap beaver on a section of the Great Miami River out of a canoe. I had never trapped beaver before but Jim accepted the offer to partner up for the next five days, a move he would probably regret later on.

Day one found us on the river a little after daylight. The temperature was around 20 degrees with no wind. Jim had trapped raccoon on the river earlier in the year and had some good spots scouted out. I set up the first spot, a bank den with a large food cache pile all around it. I made two castor mound sets on each side of the food cache and a slide set on the other side of a big tree hanging out in the water. I couldn't believe the size of the slide going up the bank. It looked more like a cattle trail.

We traded off setting traps and holding the canoe steady as we went downstream. One location looked really good. This was a backwater area with little current and steeper banks. Peeled sticks were floating everywhere with plenty of slides going up the bank. Both of us made sets at this location. For the day, we ended up making a dozen castor mound and slide sets with #3 coil springs traps

Day two dawned cold and clear, 16 degrees. With no wind, it didn't feel that bad. As we pulled up to the food cache and saw that my first trap was gone, I got real excited. I pulled on the cable attached to the drowning bag and up came an empty trap. Oh well, maybe I got one on the other side. That trap was gone too, but also empty. Maybe I hadn't set them in deep enough water. I was a little upset, but when we pulled around the big tree, there sat a live beaver on the bank in my slide set. We quickly dispatched the beaver and remade the set. After a few high fives and some pictures, we made our way downstream. My first beaver was 52 pounds. Downstream in the backwater area, Jim picked up two more beaver in what turned out to be our honey hole.

We set a few more traps on the way to our pickup spot. We made it to the truck at 12:30 and I had to leave for work at 1:30. That left Jim with taking care of the beaver that evening. I skinned some raccoon for him earlier in the season, but I think I got the better end of the deal. Work went slow that evening. I couldn't wait to get back in the river the next morning.

I crawled out of bed the next morning to 15 degrees. I was tired, but ready to go. The river dropped about six inches that night. All sets had to be remade. Jim said welcome to river trapping. Jim caught a huge beaver at the honey hole that weighed 62 pounds. I caught a beaver half that size ten feet away. Further down the river in a set that was made the day before, Jim had a trap missing, but so was the anchor stake. We knew the beaver couldn't be very far, but we had no luck trying to grab the drowning cable with the oars. We would have to make something and try later. Back at Jim's house, I helped with the skinning and fleshing until it was time for me to go to work. I felt guilty leaving Jim most of the work, but he never complained.

Day four was spent lowering traps again until we got to the honey hole. Jim's set connected for the third day in a row, another big adult beaver. We picked up a small kit beaver to finish the day. We were getting tired, hadn't slept much, and Jim had to go back to work. We also talked about the lack of muskrat sign. I wish someone could explain what happened to this neat little furbearer. Twenty years ago, it would have been easy to catch a hundred on this stretch of river. It seems like they have just disappeared.

On the last day, we didn't paddle much. The canoe was sitting pretty low in the water with all of our equipment and three large beavers; we just let the current float us along as we took in the sights. Canadian geese were everywhere. They seem to know when the season is over. We saw many different breeds of ducks and had a flock of seven huge white swans land in the river not too far away. It had been a great five days. Jim said the best part about it was that I didn't tip the canoe over on us. We ended up catching three muskrats and ten beavers, including the one that pulled the anchor stake. Dad welded up what looked like a huge treble hook. We tied a rope to it and Jim snagged the drowning cable on his third try. We learned a few things too, like using solid staking and heavier drowning weights. Beaver are big and strong animals. The biggest problem I had was trap placement. Setting traps in deeper water and farther away from the bank was hard getting used to, but it paid off.

Our beaver topped the sale at Xenia in February. That made us proud. I want to say thanks to Dad for dropping us off and picking us up everyday. Jim, for helping me catch my first beaver and putting up most of the fur. Special thanks go to my wife Lori and Jim's wife Dorothy for putting up with us during trapping season. You help make it possible by supporting what we love to do. Love ya! Hopefully next year, there will be another Great Miami Blitz. ### Dan Dickerson, 1271 Middletown Eaton Rd., Middletown, OH 45042-1522

Editor's Note: Dan explained this is his first attempt at putting his trapping experience down on paper. He saw the ad in the BT and thought he would give it a try. Thanks Dan, we're all glad you did, great story and well written!