

**Think Like A Mink**  
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**by Nick Bower**

I'm not certain how you feel about mink trapping; all I know is that for years I held the mink in high regard. A secretive little critter, few and far between; almost magical in nature. Though it's been more than a few years ago, I still remember the first mink I ever caught, quite by accident I might add. I would guess that most of us trappers have this same mind set.

I made a commitment to myself to do my homework, pay my dues, and go after the little furry tailed critters with reckless abandon. Why? That is a very good question. I guess because, like I said, the "Magical" mink intrigued me.

For me it became an obsession. I armed myself with the best knowledge I could find; books, videos, talked to everyone who would share anything they had learned over the years about the mink. One person in particular, Randy Schworm, was and still is, an inspiration to me.

Over the last two seasons I have had the opportunity to spend most of the season afield in search of my quarry. It has been a great learning experience for me. If you allow yourself to actually see what you're looking at it, it is amazing just how much the animal will teach you. Let me explain a bit about what I've learned.

Mink amaze me in the respect that there is absolutely no rhyme or reason to their actions at times. They're hunters, on the move constantly in search of prey I guess. It appears to me that the mink just can not help themselves, they have to check out every inch of their territory at times, but then again, I've seen them avoid the same trail on their next trip through; choosing another path to travel.

I've heard this said, and how true it is; more can be learned by a non-catch sometimes than by a catch! There are several darn good mink trappers out there today. Depending on their school of thought, some insist that the blind set is the way to go, others have good results using pockets, and then there are the bottom edge set guys. I personally put all these sets to use, but I just seem to rely on the baited pocket more and more. Why? Let me relate one instance here.

I had an abandon beaver pond on my line, the dam had a breach in it, man made I might add. It was at the end right next to the shore line. A few strategically placed obstacles were used here to make what I felt was the perfect blind set. This set went with no action for almost four weeks. Now there is a bit of snow on the ground, I could plainly see where two mink had worked the shoreline of this pond. This made me scratch my head in wonder. What had I done wrong or what had I overlooked here. I thought, maybe it's time to change tactics, so I dug a pocket into the exposed end of the old beaver dam and baited it with a chunk of muskrat. I moved the trap to the new location and said to myself; let's see what you think about this. This new set was within three feet of where the blind set had been made.

To my delight, the next two checks produced two nice male mink. Before the season's end, this location produced a female mink. This female provided me with even more information. She was a large female, and I could tell I needed to examine her stomach contents. I do this with all the mink I catch. Her stomach was full, and I mean full. Yet she could not help examining the hole with an odor coming out of it. I know that she could not have been hungry.

Location, location, location!!!! Another very important part of this mink madness. Like any animal we attempt to capture, if they ain't there, we ain't gonna catch one! This was probably the hardest thing for me to overcome during my pre-season preparation; the lack of sign. I found myself wandering aimlessly looking for mink

sign on my line. I would at times, find some scat or on a rare occasion I would find a track. This put me to doubting that I actually had a mink population worth trapping. I had to keep telling myself, if I were a mink I would want to hunt and live here. Again, it amazes me where mink travel. I soon found out that lack of sign did not mean the animal was not using the areas that I felt were good mink habitat.

Snow can be a help and can also be a very humbling experience. A lot can be learned quickly from spending some time tracking the mink's movements. The more I pursue the mink the more I learn about them and their quirks. They have taught me that mink trapping can, and is, a waiting game.

I'm certain that there are mink men out there who would make me look like a rank amateur. My thoughts were, and still are today, I'll just have to make lots of sets in a given area to cover up for my lack of knowledge. Trial and error has taught me that this is not a bad thing. It has proven to me that it takes this type of mind set to take advantage of the mink's habits and quirks. My eyebrows have risen more than a few times when I've seen a mink floating at a set that I thought was really not needed, and at the set I felt would produce, which sat empty. It's this exact set of circumstances that keep me intrigued, it's definitely a challenge.

I'm still learning. Everyday on the line I try to look at something and make some sense or reason of what I'm looking at. Why do mink, do some of the things that they do. I'm finding that I'm a much better mink trapper now, gaining knowledge and confidence in my methods. I keep telling myself, "Nick, ya got to think like a mink". ### Nick Bower, Box 181, New Athens, OH 43981