

Buckeye Trapper Article
First Year Trappers Journal Part One
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by Wayde Looker

For all intents and purposes, this is my first year truly trying to learn the craft of trapping. I have set traps before but have never run more than a couple traps at once. Since this is a learning experience for me I thought I would keep a journal about my first year experiences. Being a student at OSU I won't be able to set every weekend but I am going to definitely try to trap as much as I can.

November 10, 2010

I woke up to the big buildings and stop lights of Columbus. I day dreamed through my statistics and biology classes while my mind was in the woods and not in school. Finally at 11:45 am I got out of biology lab. I ate a rushed lunch and hit I-71 for the 45 minute trip north to home. I loaded up the truck, picked up my buddy Ethan, and was in the woods by 3 o'clock. We worked fast and hard and were able to get 28 sets out before darkness ended our day. I bought 6 Duke DP traps at the Ohio State Trappers Convention, those sure are time savers! I was able to set and bait and be on my way all within 2 minutes. I did have one mishap today. There is a shallow drainage creek that runs through the woods and I saw lots of coon sign on the other side of this creek. I stepped into the creek and immediately sunk to my waist in muck. Needless to say I was stuck. I hollered for Ethan, and with some elbow grease, he was able to haul me out. At the end of the day we got out the 6 DPs, 4 Bridger 1.75 offset for fox/coyote, 3 snares for coon, and 15 Duke 1.5s for coon. I am extremely excited for what tomorrow brings. I'll bring the camera and take pictures of what is caught.

November 11, 2010

Today was a good opening day. I slept in until 8 this morning (an hour later than I usually do at school!) and hit the woods at 8:30. The first set was a dirt hole set lured with Blackie's Blend lure and Red O'Hearn's Coon Bait #1. This set held a big boar coon. I was 1/1 for the day! I took this as a good omen for things to come. The next 2 sets were empty. I turned the corner of the pasture to a flat set that I had made for canines. I noticed that something was off so I walked over and checked it out. Right on top of the trap bed was a big cow print. I smoothed it all out and went on my way. The next location that I came to was a spot where it looked like 4 den trees were within about 50 yards of each other. Yesterday I gang set this location with a DP, and 3 Duke 1.5 dirt holes. This area produced another 2 coon, a huge boar and a decent sized sow. From there I went by 4 more empty sets before coming to another location that I was very excited about. I made 3 dirt hole sets for coon in this area, right by the creek I sunk into. The first 2 sets had been snapped. These were Victor 1.5s. I was pretty discouraged about this but I remade and re-baited the sets. Hopefully the bandit will be back tomorrow. The third set was empty and hadn't been tampered with. I moved on and checked the rest of the line which produced one big boar at a dirt hole I put at a fence post.

Overall, I was very happy with today. I collected 4 big coon and although I didn't connect on the 2 that got away at least I know I got them there, that's at least a start. I was surprised that none of my DPs had any coon in them. I used dried molasses and thought that maybe that was smelly enough. I put some of the O'Hearn bait inside them so hopefully that will help. I also put in two coyote sets at my house today. I was walking back to the fence row where I have regularly been seeing a coyote when I saw these clumps. I think they are clumps of dust left over from the combine. I figured that if they caught my eye and made me wonder what they were then they would do the same to a coyote. I made a flat set and a dirt hole.

November 12, 2010

Today I hit the woods at 7 am. It frosted last night and was pretty chilly this morning. I checked the 2 coyote sets at the house first but both were left undisturbed. The first set at the other place had gotten stepped on by a cow and fired. The third set was missing. The landowner was cutting wood and just happened to cut up the log that my trap was by. There were tractor tire tracks all over and the ground was all torn up. I didn't find the trap. I am going to take a rake tomorrow and see if I can find it. The next few sets were all empty too. It was definitely not a good start to the day. I got over to the creek where 2 of the 3 sets had been snapped the day before. Today the same 2 traps were snapped but this time one held a coon. Looks like the coon just couldn't resist a return trip. The next few sets were empty as well. I came to the last 5 sets with only one coon. The next set, a dirt hole set, held another small coon. As I walked up on top of a ridge where I set a DP I noticed it had been disturbed. This DP was full with a mammoth boar coon! He was a monster! The next DP was empty but the last set of the day held a possum. Overall the catch was 3 coon, one of which was huge, and a possum. Another day with 4 critters. I was happy with it.

November 13, 2010

Well if you were to describe today in one word, that word would not be boring. I got up at first light and went out to check the coyote sets at my house. At the dirt hole set the front jaw of the trap was flipped up. I think this means that I didn't have the trap

bedded tight enough. My pan cover had been lifted off and the clump of dirt was torn up. The flat set had also been worked. The clump of dirt with the fox urine and coyote gland lure was all moved over. At first I didn't see the trap. It hadn't been tripped but it wasn't there and it wasn't dug up. My pan cover was lying beside the set though. I found that dirt had gotten under my pan and didn't allow it to compress down. I probably should have had a coyote in this set. I remade them both making sure to get them bedded real solid and made sure the pan covers were over the pan. Needless to say the chess match with Wiley Coyote is on.

When I got to the main place I am trapping I checked a few empty traps. I got to the set where the wood had been cut and I couldn't find the trap yesterday. My buddy Ethan and I looked and looked but could not find it. I later talked to the land owner and he said it was him back there cutting wood and running the skid loader. He said that he saw my orange flagging tape and realized that I had had a set there. He said he too looked for the trap but couldn't find it. He was very apologetic about it though. If he didn't take it then that means it is still there somewhere, I'll find it tomorrow. All the sets were empty until I ran into the creek. I had 3 sets on one side of the creek. The one has not been touched all week long. The second was snapped the first day, held a coon the second day, and was snapped again today. The third has been snapped all 3 days. The one that hasn't been snapped was a Duke. So I pulled the other 2 and made a single set with the Duke. My thinking is that the Victors at the other 2 sets were weak and getting pulled out of. I am not sure really but just thought I would try it. On the other side of the creek I had 2 snares and a pocket set in a big mound of dirt. The snares were empty so I moved them to what I think are better locations on the other side of the creek where the traps keep getting snapped. In the pocket set was a coon though! Up to this point I had 8 coon, all of which had been caught in different sets. The coon had a short patch of hair on its back. This is my first experience with an animal being "rubbed".

I moved along the line to the other side of the woods. The fence post set that produced before was empty. Once again the sets were empty until I got to the last 4 sets. At the DP set that produced the monster coon yesterday there was a nice female coon waiting on me. This was my first catch in a remake. Then about 50 yards down the fence line, in the set that caught the possum yesterday I had another coon caught in another fence post set. This coon was really neat because it was very, very black, almost majority black.

At the end of 3 days I have 10 coon and 1 possum. Not too bad I don't think. After catching these guys I hung a gambrel in a tree to skin them. I started to make my first cut and noticed that my knife was really dull so I started to sharpen it. I, of course, cut my left ring finger real bad right on the knuckle while sharpening the darn knife. Luckily, my buddy Ethan was with me and he carried the coon back to the truck while I bled everywhere. The land owner was outside as we walked up to the truck and let me wash it out in his hydrant in his barn. He is a real nice guy.

Tomorrow is my last day checking for the week. I have to be back down at school tomorrow night so traps are getting pulled on tomorrows check. Hopefully I can get 5-10 sets out for a couple days next weekend.

November 14, 2010

Today the coyote won again. The trap at the flat set was snapped. I couldn't see any sign though. I didn't find any scat, tracks, or hair. The field its set in though is bean stubble so it would be hard to see tracks.

Today I pulled all the sets that were out. Caught a little coon in one of the snares I moved. I also caught a little reddish coon at the pocket set on the mound of dirt that caught one yesterday. I also had a possum at another remake. I ended this first weekend of trapping with 12 coon and 2 possum. Not sure when school will let me get at it again. It might not be until Christmas break.

November 19, 2010

I went to the hand specialist this morning because I haven't really been able to move the finger that I cut. Turns out I cut the tendons in the finger which is why I haven't been able to move it. Good news is I don't have to have surgery like the first doctor thought. Bad news is that I have this big splint that I have to wear 24/7 for the next 6 weeks. It is just a minor trapping setback.

After I got done with the doctor today my buddy Ethan and I went out to what I think is the best piece of land I have permission to trap on. We got out about 35 sets today after we got home from class. I put my first couple as blind sets. One is at a culvert. The culvert has an animal guard on one end but the soil has eroded a hole out from under it a couple feet back from its edge. There the bottom is rusted out and it looked like a place where animals were entering and leaving the culvert. Tried my first pocket set too. I'm hoping for a lot of firsts tomorrow.

November 20, 2010

Today was a somewhat disappointing day. Both of my blind sets were empty. Then I came to the culvert where I had that blind set that was empty. I had a snare set real close by and that held a big boar coon that had already expired. On that side of the woods I

also had a possum in a dirt hole.

The other side of the woods holds a big creek and is just a really great woods. However, all of my sets except one were empty. My buddy Ethan made a dirt hole set up against a fallen down tree. As we came up to the set it looked like the trap was just snapped. When we got to the set we saw a black tail sticking up out of the bait hole. Initially I thought "Jeez we caught a cat" but when we pulled it out there was the mink. It was the second that he has caught. It was the first mink I have ever seen up close. It was pretty cool.

I put in 3 coyote sets here at the house in the same place as the other sets that I had. Also put in 4 muskrat sets at a pond down the road.

Not sure if there just wasn't much movement last night or what. Hopefully tomorrow holds a few more surprises!

November 21, 2010

Today wasn't much either. I caught a possum about halfway through the line. I thought I was going to get shut out besides that when I came to the last set. It was my first attempt at a pocket set. I punched it in yesterday as I was able to go a little further up the creek. It was a XXL female coon. She had beautiful creamy white skin. I didn't have any action at the coyote set or rat sets I put in. I put in another 6 rat sets in the creek at some holes. I'm going to get Ethan to check the traps tomorrow since I have to be back in Columbus tonight.

I'm not real sure what the deal is on not connecting on the coon in this woods. I know they are there. There are tons of places they should be. It's a nice creek with tons of minnows and crayfish in woods with a lot of big trees bordered by cornfields. I feel confident in my sets too. Maybe it was something with the weather the past 2 nights? It was REALLY foggy last night. Maybe that was it.

November 23, 2010

Today was quite the experience on the line. The day started off pretty slow. I didn't catch anything on the first dozen traps or so. Then I came upon quite a surprise.... a badger!

In Ohio badgers are endangered so I never thought I would catch one. I had never even heard of them being anywhere close to our area. I came around the bend in the field and saw the huge catch circle. Initially I thought I had caught a coyote or something and it had gotten out. Upon closer inspection I found a hissing and very angry badger down in the trench he had dug. I called the Division of Wildlife and they told me that they were no longer doing any studies on them so I could dispatch it or try to let it go. I called my dad and had him come look and take a couple pictures. We tried to figure out a safe way to release it but couldn't think of anything that didn't put one of us in danger. I dispatched it and showed it to the landowners. The landowner is a wildlife educator at the state park. I didn't know what I was allowed to do with the animal so I froze it whole. Good thing I did because about an hour later a guy called me and said that I am not allowed to possess the animal so they are going to come get it. I am going to suggest to them that they get it stuffed and give it to the landowner so that she can use it in her educational program at the state park. It was definitely the most unique experience on the line so far.

I finished up the day with another coon at the pocket set. It is 3/3 in the 3 days I have had it out. It is the only set that has produced a coon in the past 3 days. I will probably pull the line tomorrow and move it somewhere else. ### Wayde Looker 7147 County Road 14 Fredericktown, OH 43019

To be continued.