

Between Christina and the fireguard lay something better than a hundred feet of smoking sod, with little tongues of flame feeding on the blackened tufts of grass. Christina did not pause to consider what were the probabilities of attempting a passage. In the house was a helpless child, cruelly frightened, if not in actual danger. The fact of a not fully developed reason always made its sufferings through fear abnormal. The little face seemed to look out through the smoke, and lead her as she plunged across the fiery, smoking ground.

A gasp of relief escaped from Christina when she reached the fire-guard and found that the ground within had not been burned. And then, in the twinkling of an eye, Christina's cotton dress burst into flames.

The flames seemed to be all over her skirt at once. She endeavored to stifle the fire by gathering the blazing material closely to her. But it burned her hands cruelly, and now the fire was catching on to her sleeves, now she could feel its hot breath on her face. Then someone threw a coat around her shoulders and was beating out the flames.

There are moments in the life of every mortal that are so pregnant of the greater things of this existence that the fetters of the mortal seem to fall from us, and we stand forth before another as a naked soul in the full glare of the white light of a perfect understanding. It is never the moment of glib speech. Emmett Brooks was silent, nor did Christina speak. They stood looking into each other's eyes for perhaps the space of a second, or perhaps it was a much longer period. They could never have told you. But Emmet Brooks understood as by a flash of inspiration, that in sinning against the woman before him he had sinned against his own happiness. The love that the Infinite intended for him was still his, but, during the process of healing, the wounds he had left on this heart would often ache. The love that Christina bore for him would henceforth be a saddened one.

The fact of his own love for the woman before him swept over him as a surging tide. Why had he never wakened to it before? He had spent the months in denying the existence of love, and God had punished him by sending the revelation of the crowning love of his life in pain instead of in joy.

Emmett Brooks did not tell Christina in so many words the fact of his new-found love for her. Moments of such understanding between two hearts are absolute. He knew that her assurance was deeper than any assurance of words. Some other time, when their hearts were not so deeply stirred, words would come easier.

In the evening they sat in the doorway, and watched the sun dip behind the western horizon. A low-lying cloud turned to crimson, then deepened to purple and faded to grey. The child was in Emmett Brooks' arms, but he coaxed for Christina to take him.

But Christina's arms, heavily bandaged from elbow to finger tips, lay helpless in her lap.

"You'll have to learn patience, young man," Emmett Brooks said to the child. "It will be several days before your mother can take you."

It was the first time that Emmett Brooks had so defined the relationship. A strange new joy surged through Christina's heart.

"The sunset seems to be nearer to-night than usual," Christina said, breaking an intimate silence. "I wonder if it is the cloud that makes the difference?"

Trapping the Muskrat and the Coon

By George J. Thiessen

A small army traps the muskrat every season. More go after its pelt than all the other fur-bearing animals put together. As stated before, it is the only one which exists entirely upon vegetable matter, and this is the reason why the skins of the far north, where the long, cold winters are responsible for the scanty vegetation, are of inferior quality. Owing to the fact that the hides of this little animal have proven so popular, especially in the making of imitation seal, the demand for them has steadily grown. This season high prices may be expected for all the pelts taken.

The simplest method of taking the muskrat is by placing traps at the foot

of slides in about four inches of water. I mention this depth, because if the set is made where it is shallow, the fur bearer is liable to be taken by the short and weak front legs, instead of the long and strong hind ones. When this is done, the trap usually breaks the bones and the animal escapes to die, no doubt, in some hole where the trapper will never find it.

The muskrat is most active in the fall of the year when it is preparing its winter quarters and storing the food. While some imagine there are two distinct species, namely, the house builders and the den rats, they are mistaken. In lakes, swamps, etc., the muskrat invariably builds a house, but in streams where the current is more or less rapid it lives in the bank. While I have seen houses in streams and dens in lakes, this is the exception rather than the rule.

Often shallow runways between two ponds close together may be discovered, which this animal uses. Traps set at each entrance will always prove effective.

Incline a board at an angle of about forty-five degrees in shallow water, one end of which is stuck in the mud and the other supported by a brace so it is just above the surface. A few inches below the water, arrange two nails so as to hold the trap in position. On the top of the board place some vegetable, such as an apple or parsnip. The muskrat in climbing this board for the decoy is sure to be caught.

A very successful method is by staking a pumpkin or head of cabbage in shallow water, not far from the shore, and surrounding it with a number of traps.

When dens are discovered in deep water, use a Sabo trap. Employ no lure of any kind, as the animals in swimming to the feeding ground are sure to be caught. In the winter time, when the weather is extremely cold, the animal mentioned in this article is not very active. Trappers often make their sets within the houses by chopping out a portion and arranging a Hector or Hopper in such a manner as to take whatever enters. At springs, or the mouths of flowing tiles, are good places for winter sets also.

In shallow water, on inclined sticks, place some vegetable such as I have already named. Under these arrange sets. It is best, when after this fur bearer, to fasten all traps in deep water. When this is done, the animal in attempting to escape will invariably tangle the chain and be unable to reach shore; consequently it will drown.

At the beginning of the fur season, when the streams are just commencing to freeze and ice is forming at the foot of slides thick enough to hold the weight of the muskrat, often the slides may be kept open by placing a small quantity of coarse salt in a sack at the foot of them. Arrange a trap on the top of the salt.

The coon is much harder to trap than the muskrat. It has a keen sense of smell and, like its larger brother, the bear, always seems hungry and may be lured by almost any kind of bait.

When after this fur bearer, employ nothing smaller than a No. 1½ trap. It is very strong and often pulls out even when fastened permanently. Instead of using a stake, it is best to wire the chain to a rock weighing from twenty to twenty-five pounds.

Even the amateur will have no trouble in distinguishing the track of the coon. The imprint resembles that of a human foot, only much smaller. Generally speaking, this animal is never found far from timber country; usually near water.

In shallow water, not far from shore, build three-sided pens of rocks. In the back part place some honey just above the water, or a small fish. Guard this decoy with one or more traps. When the stream is clear and clams may be found, open a number of them and surround with four or five Hector traps, the springs of which should be placed nearest the bait.

Of course, land sets may be made for this animal also, concealed in runways or similar to those I have described for taking the skunk. Ordinarily, however, the novice will get more fur if he uses water sets entirely.

The raccoon is the only one of the smaller animals which should be skinned

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open; that is, cut down the belly. The pelts should be removed similarly to the manner in which the hide of a cow is taken off, and stretched flesh side out.

Trapping Skunks

By Fred Storey

The skunk is the first of the smaller animals to become prime in the fall. It is one of the easiest to trap. As a rule, skunks prefer stony ground for its den, but they are found almost anywhere, under barns, houses, and similar places. They show no fear of man.

The simplest method of trapping is to locate a den and conceal a set at the mouth of it. No covering is necessary when after the skunk, yet the amateur will find much practice in concealing the traps. To do this properly, scoop out a small excavation just large enough for the trap. The depth should be so that the pan is slightly below the surface of the ground. As a covering, use that natural to the place. For instance, if there are dried leaves at the mouth of the hole, employ dried leaves; if grass, use grass. It is advisable to place a small wad of cotton under the pan of the trap so that nothing can get under it—such as dirt, etc.—and prevent the set springing. The material used for covering should not be too heavy nor too light. In the former case, often the jaws are clogged and the fur bearer is able to escape; in the latter, frequently the exposed trap will warn the animals. This latter may be ignored when trapping the skunk, but should a wandering mink come along, as is frequently the case, it would speedily locate the trap and pass by. On the other hand, should the set be well hidden, the chances are that the pelt would be taken. I have added many a skin of the mink in concealed sets for skunk.

The beginner need have no difficulty in telling whether a skunk den is inhabited or not. Examine the dirt taken from the path leading into the hole and also the sides of the burrow. In case the fur bearer occupies it, you are almost sure to find long black or black and white hairs.

Where there are indications of the skunk, dig small holes about three inches deep. In the bottom of these set traps. Over the traps place a small pile of grass. Light the covering and feed into the flames small bits of meat. The smell of the burning flesh will attract the animals and in digging in the ashes for it, the fur bearers are sure to be taken.

Some pelt hunters prefer to scoop out shallow dens in the sides of banks, in the back part of which a bait is placed. The lure, of course, is protected with traps.

Frequently small wooden culverts can be found in which there is no water, and according to indications, dry most of the year. If one will examine the entrances closely, often signs of skunks can be seen. Even though there are no indications of the animals passing through and there are some in the vicinity, place a large piece of meat in the culvert and traps at each entrance. These ought to be well concealed for a set of this kind often is responsible for the capture of much more important game. For this

reason when No. 1 traps are employed, it is advisable to place two at each end of the bridge.

There are many methods of killing the skunk without odor, each championed by various trappers. I have tried them all, from stabbing to drowning, but have found none so good as shooting the captured fur bearers just back of the head with a small caliber rifle, so that the bullet cuts the spine and renders them powerless to eject their fluid. In approaching, care should be taken that the animal is not unduly excited. Should, however, an accident happen and the smell be got either on the clothes or hands, washing in gasoline once or twice will remove it. This operation should take place out of doors to avoid the danger of fire.

In skinning the skunk, one should remember that the scent glands are at the root of the tail. Cut around these, leaving the small patch of fur. This practice is followed by most professional trappers and does not lessen the value of the hides.

Smoking Out Skunks

The trapper or hunter who succeeds in locating the den or hiding place of any fur bearer should count himself fortunate, as he is often able to catch half a dozen or more animals in one haul. When a den is found and it is reasonably certain that the occupants are "at home," all openings should be immediately blocked until the smoking-out process can begin. Smoking out is by far the most satisfactory method of taking animals, as the trapper has the privilege of selecting only those that are of value to him at the time and letting poorly-furred creatures, females and kits go until their pelts are marketable. He can also secure, uninjured, such as he may desire for the purpose of selling alive or keeping in captivity until their furs are of greatest value.

There are several good smokers on the market which can be bought for a nominal sum. Possibly the best is made in three detachable sections, consisting of a bellows, smoke chamber and nozzle. This smoker is very light and can be carried easily, and when long distances must be traversed these two features are of prime importance. To operate, the smoke chamber is loaded with a piece of ordinary burlap sacking, old rags, cotton, corn cobs or any other inflammable stuff that will make smoke, and a little sulphur or cayenne pepper added will increase the efficacy of the fumes. The load is set afire, and with the aid of the bellows a suffocating spray of heavy smoke can be projected into every nook and cranny of the hiding place.

In from ten to twenty minutes, depending on the size of the den, the animals will be forced to come out for fresh air, and they are so weakened and dazed by the fumes that they can be easily caught alive in traps, nets or slip noose, or they can be killed with a club or rifle.

Such animals as are undesirable for any reason can be permitted to escape until some future time when they are in marketable condition. In this way the experienced trapper conserves the fur-