

TRAPPING

in Kentucky



KENTUCKY'S *Trapping History*

Kentucky's history is rich with the experience of many generations of its outdoorsmen, particularly trappers. Like much of North America, Kentucky was initially explored and settled in part as a result of the fur trade. Many towns in early Kentucky began as trading posts.

As time went on, trapping became an increasingly important way of life. In early Kentucky, trapping was necessary to protect crops, poultry, and livestock from damage by wild animals. Also, the sale of fur pelts from these animals provided much-needed cash for many people. During the Great Depression, a trapper could earn more for his family, during the fur season, than the average worker at a time when jobs were scarce, working conditions were hard, and pay was low for those lucky enough to be employed.

Trapping skills and techniques were passed down from generation to generation in many Kentucky families. Many trappers today started the activity as schoolboys under the tutelage of a father, brother, relative or neighbor. Many Kentuckians have, among their fondest memories, those days spent afield as a youth, running a small trapline before or after school, learning hard work and responsibility, and enjoying the "grown up" feeling derived from the sale of the fur harvest each winter. Many remember

how the season's fur check enabled them to pay for Christmas gifts, clothing, and other needs. Much of this tradition is alive and well in Kentucky today. Many people are showing an interest in getting "back to the land." Parents are experiencing a desire to expose their children to the



outdoors and to share those activities with them. Trapping provides a perfect opportunity for this at a time of the year when many other outdoor activities are not practical. The interest in trapping and the sale of trapping licenses in Kentucky have increased substantially in recent years. Recognizing this, and the need for the management of furbearer populations, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources has made the promotion of trapping one of its priorities and has included it as part of its Hunter Education Program.



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THE ROLE OF TRAPPING *in Kentucky Today*

In today's largely urban society, people have become removed from nature. They have been influenced by television, the news media, the animal "rights" movement, and have attained a somewhat distorted view of hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife management. All Kentuckians enjoy the benefits of scientific wildlife management provided by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, yet at no expense to us as taxpayers. These programs are paid for entirely by outdoorsmen and women, through the sale of licenses and permits, and excise taxes on hunting, archery, fishing, and boating equipment. Whether a person is a

hunter, fisherman, trapper, hiker, canoeist, wildlife photographer or a birdwatcher, he or she is positively affected by the efforts of the Fish and Wildlife Department, paid for by sportsmen and women, here in the Commonwealth. At the same time, there is no evidence of any significant expenditure of money or effort by any animal "rights" group in Kentucky, to procure habitat, re-introduce species, or to conduct studies benefiting wildlife.

The scientific community recognizes trapping as a vital part of wildlife management. It is necessary for a number of reasons, including:



DISEASE CONTROL

Furbearing animals, when over-populated, are prone to "density related" diseases. Some of these diseases, along with parasites, are transmittable to humans, pets, and livestock. Such diseases include distemper, rabies, sarcoptic mange, parvo virus, giardiasis, tularemia, leptospirosis and others. Regulated trapping maintains stable populations of furbearers, decreasing the likelihood of such disease outbreaks.

PREDATION CONTROL

Population management through trapping minimizes the possibility of excessive predation by furbearers. Small game, ground nesting birds, deer fawns, fish, frogs, turtles, and domestic pets fall prey to a variety of furbearing predators in Kentucky. These predators range in size from the weasel to the coyote, and include mink, red and grey fox, raccoon, opossum, skunk, otter and bobcat. The success of many management programs for small game and birds depends on a well-regulated trapping effort to manage predation.

AGRICULTURAL DAMAGE

When furbearer populations are left unmanaged, considerable agricultural damage can occur. Beavers, muskrats, raccoons, and coyotes can damage crops such as corn, soybeans, fruits, melons, and vegetables. Farmers who raise poultry, cattle, hogs, sheep, goats, horses, and other livestock are constantly faced with the threat of predation from coyotes, foxes, and bobcats.

PROPERTY DAMAGE

Muskrats can be particularly damaging to man-made lakes and ponds by burrowing into banks and dams and causing leaks, which can be expensive and difficult to repair. Beaver cause flooding by damming culverts and streams, and destroy valuable trees. Raccoon are notorious for invading houses, raiding garbage cans, and destroying commercial feed for hogs and cattle. Again, regulated trapping minimizes such damage by keeping populations at acceptable levels.

OTHER BENEFITS

Trapping has been used to manage predator populations in critical nesting areas of waterfowl and several species of endangered birds. It has been a valuable tool, as well, in the capture and re-introduction of species such as the river otter, including our otter here in Kentucky.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TRAPPING *In Kentucky*

Though largely recreational, trapping provides financial benefit to many Kentuckians. Trapping provides a source of income for its participants through the sale of raw furs. Many of these furs are exported overseas and contribute to a favorable balance of trade, going to countries such as Greece, Germany, Italy, Russia, China, Korea and Japan. Local buyers throughout Kentucky buy and sell raw fur as a source of income, and garment makers and retailers are employed and profit from the finished product. The financial benefit to the agricultural industry through the management of furbearer populations would be difficult to calculate but nevertheless quite significant. Finally, trappers contribute to Kentucky's economy through the purchase of equipment, clothing, gasoline, and more.

TRAPPERS ARE SPORTSMEN AND CONSERVATIONISTS

Trapping is a rich outdoor activity, which provides many hours of safe, educational, and exciting outdoor experience for its participants. Trappers are among the most knowledgeable and ethical of all outdoor enthusiasts. Trappers attain, by necessity, a keen awareness of their surroundings, the animals they pursue, and the world of nature. This results in a deep appreciation of the outdoors and wildlife. Many trappers are active in the Conservation Movement and belong to a number of organizations benefiting wildlife. They support wildlife management programs and practice the ethical harvesting of wildlife and its wise use.



A young trapper with his first beaver.

TRAPPING IN KENTUCKY IS CAREFULLY REGULATED

There are a number of laws and regulations in place to ensure safe, ethical, and humane harvest of Kentucky furbearers. Many of these have been enacted as a result of the efforts of individual trappers and organizations such as the United Trappers of Kentucky, Inc.

- Furbearers enjoy a closed season, during which they can reproduce in order to sustain their numbers. Trapping is conducted in the late fall and winter months, when the fur is prime and furbearers have grown to maturity.
- Traps have smooth jaws without teeth and limitations are placed on legal size in order to ensure the safety of domestic animals.
- Traps must be checked every day and all catches removed.
- Trappers must have permission of the landowner in order to trap on private property.
- All traps must be tagged with the user's name and address.
- All trappers must be licensed.
- Traps may not be set on trails or paths commonly used by humans or domestic animals.

SUMMARY

Trapping is a valuable part of Kentucky's cultural heritage and even today it is a lifestyle for many of us. It provides income and recreation, protects the public health, agricultural interests, and is recognized as an important wildlife management tool. Kentucky trappers today are among the most skilled and ethical outdoorsmen and women to be found anywhere. We are very proud to call ourselves "Kentucky Trappers."



ABOUT *The United Trappers Of Kentucky, Inc.*

The United Trappers of Kentucky, Inc. is a statewide sportsmen's organization of Kentucky fur trappers. Founded in 2004, we are the largest trapping organization in Kentucky with our primary goal being the enhancement and perpetuation of trapping for present and future generations of Kentuckians. We work with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, the League of Kentucky Sportsmen, the Kentucky Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, and other groups regarding trapping and issues of wildlife management and conservation.

We appear at youth groups, schools and Hunter Education classes throughout Kentucky to introduce and promote ethical trapping. We conduct training seminars at our regular meetings and hold trapping "workshops" to teach trapping and fur handling methods to beginners and experts alike. We also have a scholarship fund for Kentucky students who wish to pursue a career in Wildlife Management.

We have an attractive membership package, which includes youth and family memberships. Visit us on our website at www.kentuckytrappers.com

