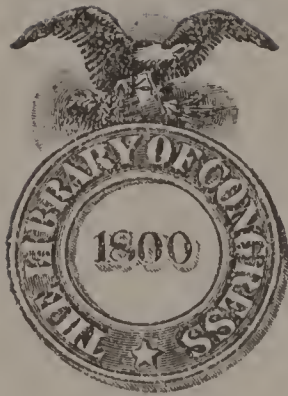


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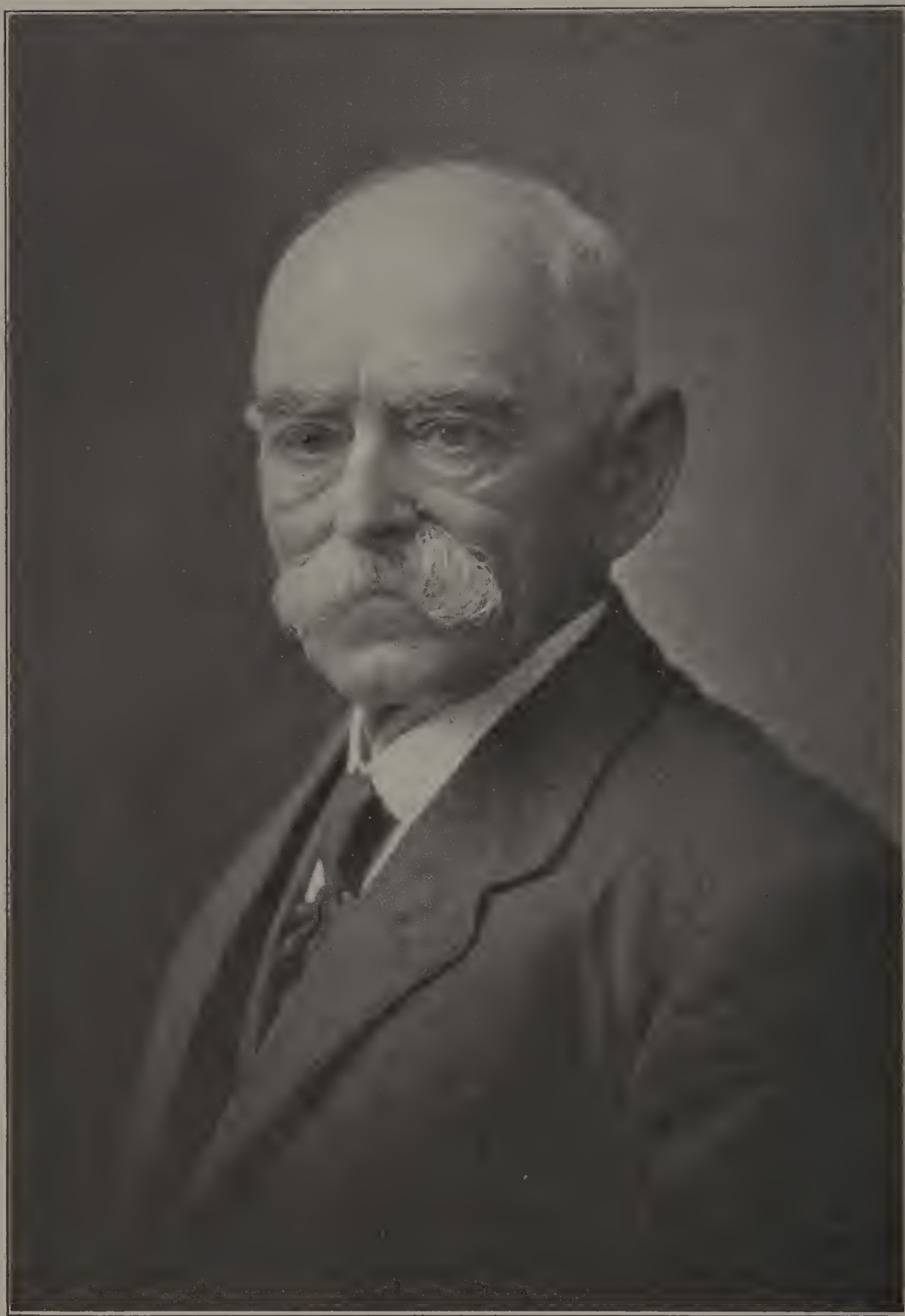
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WILLIAM HASKELL ALLEN

William Haskell Allen

# Allen's Trapping Secrets



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## INTRODUCTION

In distributing this book to the public, many are personally acquainted with the Author, Mr. Wm. Haskell Allen. Few, however, realize his great success in the taking of fur-bearing animals, as he is not boastful and has rarely advertised his marked achievements. We have known Mr. Allen for many years and can vouch for his truthfulness, although some of his experiences seem exaggerated. To us he holds first honors of the trap line. His ability to locate game is marvelous, but his indomitable will power to keep everlastingly on the move, often traveling day and night spells the keynote of his marked success. Mr. Allen is now 71 years of age and as active as ever. Kakas Bros. Inc., recommend this book to all lovers of the trap line.

Mr. Allen says, "In giving my methods of catching the various kinds of fur-bearing animals, I have endeavored to make the reading interesting as well as instructive. To the young trapper, I will say,—after you acquire your knowledge, do not forget that success comes to those who persevere. Follow your trap line as you would any vocation for only by doing so, will you be well rewarded. To the old trapper, I wish to add that criticism of my book is welcomed. The methods herein set forth I have endeavored to put in concise form, but there are many other good ways of taking the Fur Bearers, and what I *do not* know about trapping is well worth knowing."

Very truly yours,

The Author.



## CHAPTER I.

### EARLY EXPERIENCES

I was born in the town of Brimfield, Mass. in 1853. My father William Allen being a lover of nature, and a man who was fond of hunting, fishing and trapping, very often allowed me to follow him on his travels. It is therefore not strange that I inherited a taste for the wild, and very early in life there sprung in my heart a keen love of nature and a desire for life in the open.

When I was eight years of age, my father enlisted in the army and went away to war. As I was the oldest boy in the family, I felt the responsibility of carrying on the farm and being the chief support of my mother.

My earliest recollection of setting traps was at the age of ten, when I went alone and made sets for the different fur-bearing animals, namely—Mink, Muskrat and Skunk. The early training which my father had given me, I found much to my advantage as my efforts were successful almost from the start, and I was rewarded with some fine pelts after a few days trapping. That

year, I caught twenty Muskrats, fifteen Skunks, and two Mink. My mother sold the two Mink for \$10.00 each, and part of the proceeds went toward buying more traps. It is needless to say that I was greatly encouraged, and at this early stage in life, I made up my mind to make trapping my life's work.

Early training with the gun enabled me to become a fair shot, and at the age of fourteen, I landed three handsome Fox ahead of my father's hound. It occurred to me, that the Fox should be more readily captured by the use of the trap than with dog and gun. I therefore began the study of his nature and habits, and soon learned some very interesting facts, which I will attempt to bring out in detail in the chapters which follow.

As I had made up my mind at an early age to make trapping my vocation, I had to consider what the financial returns might be. I soon found out that success in trapping not only depended upon the study of the different fur bearers, but also upon the time and amount of effort devoted to the work. I increased my traps each season, and found at the age of seventeen that I was meeting with good success. That year I caught two hundred fifty Skunk, twelve Mink and seventeen Raccoon also many

Muskrat and several Fox. It will be remembered that at this time the value of furs was very low, and the amount realized from the sale of my entire collection would not be as much as a tenth part present day prices. Still a dollar looked pretty big to me, and I realized that all I had to do to increase my wealth was to work harder. I therefore decided to make a scientific study of all fur bearers common to my section of the country, and in the pages which follow I have endeavored to give the young trapper the benefit of this knowledge.

At the age of thirty, I decided to try new territory, and went to Virginia, where I was successful in trapping the Otter and Beaver, the latter of which was not found in the Bay State. This being my first journey from home, I would like to relate my experience in Virginia, as it illustrates the true hospitality of the Southern people.

I landed in a small village in the southwestern part of the State. Here I caught ten Beavers, three Otters, one Mink, one Opossum and one Cross Fox, all in traps which had been set for Otter. I then went twelve miles down stream and stayed there about two weeks. It was a very severe Winter and business in general in the South extremely dull. On my second move, I

went to Stanton River, staying there about ten days. Here I caught one Beaver and three Otters, but as I ran into other trappers, I packed up and got out of there.

I went up the River about twenty-five miles from my last stopping place, and saw on the opposite side quite a good sized stream, and I thought there might be Beaver and Otter in the creek, so I went prospecting. On inspection of the creek, I found the finest trapping grounds I had yet seen, and the further out I went the more signs I discovered. There were Beaver and Otter and I followed the stream up about two miles through a tangled swamp, and was satisfied that game in this section was plentiful. As night came on, I went to the nearest house I saw and asked the man living there if he would keep me over night, explaining that I was a stranger and wanted to trap on the stream. He said he didn't think he could keep me as they did not have much room, but that Colonel J—— who lived about three miles direct south through the woods might do so. Before I got through the woods I heard the barking of dogs, so kept on until I was beset by dogs, a dozen or fifteen of them. They treed me on the fence, but fences were high down there, so I was well out of their reach. Finally an old Darkey heard the com-



motion and coming up saw the trouble and called the dogs away. I asked if Colonel J—— lived there and he said that he did, and was chopping wood nearby.

Evidently I did not make a good impression on the Colonel as he told me he did not think that he could put me up for the night. I informed him of my intention to trap on the stream below, and he said there was plenty of game. By polite insistence, the Colonel finally consented to ask his wife if they could lodge me over night, and I assured him I would pay a good price if he would keep me. I told him I was from the North, although of course that was not necessary as he knew by my speech that I was a Yankee, and I presume expected me to play him a "Yankee trick." After being gone for some little time, he came to the door and said in a drawling tone that he reckoned they could keep me. We sat and chatted until about nine o'clock when a bell rang in an adjoining room and the Colonel's wife announced supper. My tramp of the day had given me a good appetite and I ate heartily. We talked for over two hours, and as I was about to retire the Colonel turned and said, "Mr. Allen you are a trapper, and I wish you would tell me some way to get rid of my rats." I suggested that he use dead falls, and

in a few moments showed him how to make one by using a flat box with a weight in it. We set four in the attic and much to my surprise and to his great pleasure, next morning found a rat in each trap.

As it rained very hard the next day, I remained indoors, and got quite well acquainted with the Colonel. I found him an interesting character and told him about the different people with whom I had stayed and convinced him that I was respectable. About three o'clock that afternoon it stopped raining and the sun came out. Colonel Jones was taking a nap and his wife sat playing the organ. At last she put her head down on her hands and went to sleep, and it was pretty dull music for me there, so I left the house quietly and went down the stream where I had not ventured the night before. I found the water so high that it was impossible to tell what the conditions were, but still I tramped around and did not come back until after dark. When I did return the Colonel was out bringing in wood and he said, "Well, Mr. Allen, I thought you had left us." "Yes," I replied, "You thought probably I had played a trick on you, but I am not that kind of a person." We went into the house, and he seemed quite willing that I stay with him again that night, but I intended next

morning to leave and find a new boarding place. The Colonel wanted to know if I was satisfied to stay there, and I told him I should be very pleased to do so, while I was operating on the creek, so he said, "Well, I reckon we can board you." As I had to have more traps, and had left some of my belongings back in town, I took the train and went to get them that day, returning with a large bag loaded with Otter and Beaver traps. As the stream lay between the railroad station and the Colonel's house, I started through the village down onto the stream, and had time to set four traps before dark, one for Otter and three for Beaver. I hid the other traps under an old fence, and went up to the house. Next morning when I went to my traps, I was rewarded with one Otter, two Beavers and one Raccoon. I kept increasing my output of traps every day, and had very good success along this creek.

My presence in that locality aroused considerable curiosity, and the villagers and neighbors would often call at my boarding place and when returning from my trap line, I would find horses and carriages hitched to the trees around the house. They wanted to see the "Yankee Trapper." Often I waited outside for more than an hour until they went, I did not want to

inform them about my doings as they would go into the creeks where I would be trapping and would annoy me, and sometimes I would find my traps missing.

One day while getting ready to pull up stakes, a stranger drove into the yard driving a fine carriage with a pair of horses attached. I walked up boldly to the gentleman and greeted him. He asked me if I worked for Colonel J——. When I vouched the information that I was stopping with him and trapping along the stream below, his interest was at once aroused and I was obliged to tell him of my success whereupon he insisted on seeing the skins I had taken. "Well, well," he said, "I have heard that there were Beavers around here, and have seen some of the damage they have done along the creek, but these are the first I have ever seen." He became very enthused at my success, and said I was the first real trapper he had ever been privileged to meet. Then he added, "My name is Jones, and I am a Minister, and would like very much to have you come to my Church." When I explained to him that my clothing was not fit to wear to Church, and that my good clothes were many miles from there, he remarked that I could hear just as well in those clothes as in the best ones money could buy, and he very

much desired my presence at Church services. I thanked him for the courteous invitation, and left him in a very happy frame of mind. It seemed delightful to meet so many affable people while away from home, and friends, and this, my first experience in Virginia, will always be a very pleasant memory to me.



## CHAPTER 2.

### MORE EXPERIENCES

ONCE while trapping in the month of February along both sides of a river, I had occasion to cross the stream, moving down about three-quarters of a mile below the bridge on which I had crossed. At this point I came to one of my traps on the opposite side of the river. I could see from where I was that I had captured a nice large Mink. The water was high, as there had been a regular freshet, but I wanted to cross so as to get the Mink without going back to the bridge three-quarters of a mile above. I hunted around and found an old rail fence and after a few minutes labor, I withed four of these twelve-foot rails together with some willow sticks, making a raft which I thought would serve my purpose. Securing a long pole, I intended to pole my way across the stream. Shoving off bravely I got about one-third of the way out when I saw that the current was very strong. It sent me to one side and at the same time my

foot slipped between the rails and the more I tried to extricate it the harder it wedged in. In my excitement I did not notice what was taking place, but a big cake of floating ice came down the river, struck my improvised raft and in a second I found myself struggling in the water underneath the raft. Fortunately I was a strong swimmer and did not lose control of the situation. I found, however, that my pole was not long enough to reach the bottom and that I had to swim, pulling the raft behind me on one foot. The more I tried to withdraw my foot from the raft the tighter it clung to me. After some little time in the water, I struck the opposite shore about two hundred feet below where I had started. I lifted myself up by the bushes at the same time pulling my foot out of my boot. When I was on shore, I found a strong Northwest wind blowing, and I realized I must wring what water I could out of my clothes, as there was no other way to dry them, since I was a long way from any house. My position soon became ludicrous as before I could get my clothes on they began to freeze. However, I finally succeeded in accomplishing this feat and I certainly moved around swiftly until I got warmed up. I got a nice large dark Mink in my trap, so soon forgot my unpleasant



experience, and when I reached home that night, was none the worse for my ducking in the river.

As game was not very plentiful in my section I thought there might be better grounds outside. I finally found what looked to be a good country for Skunk so I set my traps right along, about forty of them and when I set the last one, it was just dark, and raining hard. As it was a long way to my home, I thought I would have to stay the night with one of the farmers. I walked up to a house and saw that the curtain was up and a man sitting by the window. I asked at this house if they could keep me for the night as I could not get home in the storm, and they said they could. I began telling them that I was a trapper and might smell somewhat of Skunk, and asked if they objected, but the man spoke up and said that both he and his wife had catarrh for forty years and couldn't smell a thing.

I went on from there and set traps all the way home the next day, and the distance I covered setting traps was about fifteen miles. It snowed a little and when the snow went off, I thought I would attend to these traps. I started early in the morning and made the trip up to those that I set the first day, then I got interested, and I thought I would go through with the whole

trip, so kept on all night and did not have anything to eat after I started until I reached home thirty-six hours later. I skinned the animals during the night by feeling, as I had no light. When I got home I had fifty-one Skunk, one Fox and one Raccoon. The last mile or two I was rather played out, but I did not let down my load until I reached home. The next morning I thought I would weigh my catch, and was quite surprised to see it tip the scales at seventy pounds. This I had carried on my back all the way home.

## CHAPTER 3.

### THE FOX

THE FOX is a very crafty animal and is thought to be very difficult to trap, but is very easily taken if one goes at it right. There are several methods of trapping the Fox. I will mention one in which I have been very successful. I find old fields and pastures and edges of woods where I know Foxes travel. Finding a pine or hemlock tree I drop down some limbs, making a pile of them, at the same time leaving a path or gap wide enough for a Fox to pass through. Carefully set trap near the middle of this path making a hole by pounding down the earth with the heel of your boot. This is best done by first removing the pine needles, which are to be put back over the trap lightly so as to make the ground look natural. Set the trap so it will come level with the surface when it is covered. Now find a small stick the size of a pencil, or even smaller and very carefully lay across the path about three inches from the

trap, and raise this stick about three inches from the ground. The object of placing this stick across the path is to make the Fox step over it and nine times out of ten, he will step directly into the trap. I prefer pine needles for covering a trap as they lay flat and will not blow off like leaves, exposing the trap. After you have done this, step back a few feet from the path you have made through the pile of brush, and make a small hole in which place a little bait, covering the bait lightly. Do the same thing on the other side of the path through the brush. The idea in placing two baits being to lure the Fox from one to the other. When Mr. Fox has tasted one piece of bait, he will be looking around for the other and will go directly through this path into your trap. I do not like to set a trap too close to the bait as the Fox has a very acute sense of smell and often will locate the trap and keep away. Now for bait I use Skunk or Muskrat, cut in small pieces, and put into a clean quart preserve jar, and when about to go on the trap line, remove bait to small jar suitable to carry in pocket. Never handle the bait with your hands, use a sharp stick, both in putting it into the can and removing it. I do not believe there is anything in the world that a Fox likes better than Skunk, although Muskrat or House Cat are also

very good. In preparing bait, take the carcass to be used and soak in some stagnant pool of water for at least two or three weeks before using. This soaking removes all human scent and gives a flavor to the meat which the Fox very much likes. In picking my traps for Foxes, I endeavor to select the best made trap I can get, and prefer those that set low and do not take up too much room, but are strong enough to hold. For land sets, I prefer and almost always use a No. 1½ and do not know that I have ever had a Fox pull out of a trap this size. For water sets, however, a larger sized trap is necessary. I never stake a trap for a Fox. I use a chain about three feet long with a two-prong grapple on the end, one turning up and the other down. In setting the trap, coil the chain up and place it under the trap or pull it to one side and cover it up. When the Fox is caught, he will go off with the trap, but you will find him tangled up not far away.

Another very good set is called the "blind set," and I use this in a path where Foxes are most likely to travel. Find where some farmer has done his Fall plowing, and on the outside furrow place your trap. Make a hole large enough to take both the trap and grapple and cover it all with whatever material is natural to the place.

Put a stick in front of the trap as above stated. Place the bait for this set on either side of the trap about one hundred feet apart. Two or three traps set between the baits is of course more likely to produce a Fox than one, but a great deal of importance should be attached to the placing of a very small sized stick three inches to one side of the trap, as explained in the foregoing method. A Fox will always step over this stick into the trap. One of the best coverings for a Fox trap is the dirt from an ant hill. This is nearly always dry and will shed water. Put some into a paper bag and carry in your hunting coat pocket. Before you cover your traps, place one or two large flat oak leaves over the trap, to keep the dirt out, then use the ant material over all. I always carry a small trowel with me while trapping as it is handy to dig with and should always be used in handling the dirt covering.

A little good scent should be placed on the meat you have used. This is made from different materials. I have always found the scent glands of the Mink as good as anything. Take them out, and put into a small bottle with a little alcohol, and only the pure should be used. This may be hard to obtain, but it is an important point to remember in making scent.

In preparing traps before setting, boil fifteen or twenty minutes in hemlock boughs. This will take the new off, making them look black and will also kill the scent of the iron. Next get some Bayberry wax or tallow, put in a kettle of hot water, and let remain until it melts, then dip traps in and out slowly. This will also form a coating over your traps that will last a long time, and will keep them from rusting. The traps should be prepared two months before the trapping season. For land sets, I take my traps out to the trapping grounds a week or two before I begin to trap, and lay them to one side so I will not have to handle them much until I set them for the game. Some trappers use gloves in setting traps, but I use bare hands, keeping them rubbed with fresh earth while setting the traps.

### WATER SET FOR FOX

The Water Set is best made in a spring. Find a good one which does not freeze over, three or four feet across, leaving if possible the edge of the bank not over an inch or two higher than the water on one side. Set the trap three inches from the shore, under water enough to cover the trap. Seven or eight inches from the

trap, lay a stone, sod, or mound of some kind having it an inch or two above the water. On this place the bait. Place chain and grapple under water with trap and cover all with mud, or old water-soaked leaves. Where set is made in woods or brush and it is possible to do so, place a piece of moss on pan of trap large enough to conceal it. If, however, your set is made in open country, put a piece of sod with short grass in place of the moss. This leaves the surroundings natural, and is done to induce the Fox to put his feet on it in reaching for the bait, and should be left one-half to three-quarters of an inch above the water.

To support the pan of the trap, with its weight, get some old brittle sticks such as Goldenrod, as these will break when they are wet as well as when dry. Place one of these under the pan of the trap, letting it run across the trap from outside of jaws to outside. Do not have it strong enough to hold up the whole weight of the Fox, as it must give way when he steps on the pan of the trap to get the bait. This set can be made in small streams as well as in springs. The trapper should wear rubber boots and get into the water below where set is to be made, and follow up stream. This is done to cover up approach to the trap.



When you have completed your set, return in the same manner, and do not make any disturbance about the trap, while setting it.

### STILL-HUNTING THE FOX

I have had many good times with a Fox Hound chasing Foxes all day long. Have shot a good many ahead of dogs, but have also enjoyed still-hunting the Fox. This is best done when snow is on the ground. A great deal depends on being able to work quietly and having much patience. Most people do not like to still-hunt the Fox, as this animal's acute sense of smell and hearing requires very careful work on the part of the hunter. A Fox usually starts out and travels during the night, and at daylight he will begin to prepare for his day's nap. He will first begin to run crooked and perhaps make back tracks, then jump out to one side, and perhaps repeat this operation or jump on a log and run up and down that, in fact, he will jump on anything on which there is no snow so as to cover up his trail. When the hunter sees this, he wants to watch very carefully as there is sure to be a Fox nearby, and he is probably preparing to lay down. Keep a sharp lookout as probably the Fox is watching

your every movement, and is laying down facing his back tracks. I have hunted Foxes in this manner for a good many years, and have never known a Fox to face in any direction except that from which he came. When a Fox lays down, he does not go to sleep for quite a while, as he is looking for enemies, and will not go to sleep until he is satisfied there is no danger at hand. If the hunter has been extremely cautious, he may be able to get very close to the Fox before attracting his attention. When still-hunting, it is very important to remember that you must keep your face to the wind, as should you travel the other way your scent will be carried to the Fox's nose, and you will have no chance of getting him. Sometimes the Fox will hear you, and move a little, but is not likely to go very far, unless you have given him a good fright. Try to find some bush or stone behind which you can hide, and watch Mr. Fox. I have stayed around watching a Fox for an hour at a time and when he got sound asleep would try to crawl along to get within gun shot. Should your Fox move he will very likely circle right around and get his nose into the wind again. Do not let this discourage you, but keep right after him just the same. I have been after one all day long, starting him a good many

times, the Fox finally getting so tired that he would go sound asleep, and could be easily shot. In fact, I have crept up within fifteen feet of them. There have been times when I would not be able to land Mr. Fox until just about dark. This method of taking the Fox requires a great deal of skill and patience, but to me is always very interesting.



## CHAPTER 4.

### MINK

THE MINK is considered a wise little animal and most people find them quite difficult to trap. They may be in some sections, but I never had any trouble in catching Mink, wherever I could find them. I go along a stream and if I find signs of Mink, I make a hedge across the brook where not likely to be seen by human beings, by putting down some sticks to obstruct their passage leaving a narrow place open on the outside in which to set the trap. Place the trap an inch or two under the water and two or three feet away put a little scent on a dead stick. If the Mink is making his way up or down stream, he will stop and investigate and be caught. This set is ideal for use along small streams leading into larger ones. On larger streams such as rivers, I take the inside curve or bend and make a little pocket or shelf at the water's edge by beating down the earth with the heel of my boot. Traps should be set on this shelf under

water an inch or two and out from the trap on the water, stick down some old sticks two or three feet out into the water. On a dead stick place a little scent and stick in the bank so that it will come over the trap. This will call the Mink in. The fence which you have made in the water will serve to guide them into the trap.

Mink can be very often caught on land in what is known as the "dry set" by making a small bush fence along the bank of a stream and leaving a small opening just wide enough to set the trap in. Where this is done it is advisable to lengthen the chain of the trap allowing the Mink to get into the water. The trap should be fastened to a small bush as this makes a good drag, and if used, the Mink is not likely to pull out of the trap as he will soon drown in the water. A good place to catch Mink is under overhanging banks. If a close watch is kept, you will see their tracks. Mink can be caught in many other places, such as under stumps, roots, rocks, holes in the bank, etc. When a Mink travels up or down a stream, he will invariably run into these places in search of mice or other food, suitable to his taste.

In severe winter weather a water set can be used successfully in a spring or where it does not freeze. The land set has an advantage in that

it can be used any time until the deep snows come. For scent, use early in the season the Musk of the Mink and Muskrat put together in a little alcohol. Later on add a few drops of Skunk's essence, and I am very sure that you will have as good a scent as can possibly be put together. It has been my experience that nearly all wild meat-eating animals are fond of Skunk flesh. The Fox, Raccoon, Skunk, Mink, Wild Cat and Weasel take to this bait quite readily, and I have often caught Mink in deadfalls which I had set for Skunk, but some of them were quite a long way from the water. A Mink will go from one water course to another by crossing over a hill, following along a fence or wall. In such places, it is quite common to catch them in deadfalls.

Never stake a trap down solid for a Mink. Fasten it to a small bush about three-fourths of an inch through. Cut it five or six inches below a limb, and then cut the limb off about three inches from the stick, and put ring over the butt end of the bush, and over the limb you cut off, and let ring go back to the limb. Lay bush so that it can be drawn into the water, letting the Mink go with it loose. I never stake a trap solid for any animal and I never use a bait for Mink, only the scent alone.





## CHAPTER 5.

### THE OTTER

I have found the Otter the most difficult to trap of all the fur bearers I have had to contend with. Their scent of smell and sight is very acute and extreme care must be exercised in trapping them. The Otter frequents rivers and ponds preferring streams of larger size, as he is famous as a fisherman and makes his living largely on the fish he catches. It is therefore natural that they should live in the larger streams where fish are more abundant. The Otter is found in large swamps where he can work under the bogs and roots and where springs and frogs are plentiful.

In seeking a proper location for your trap, bear in mind that the Otter prefers to make his landing along a steep bank where the water is of considerable depth. This is explained from the fact that he usually slides from his hiding place down into the water and he naturally wants a good place in which to dive. The trap should be set at a favorable landing about three or four

inches under water, and about three inches to one side of his path, as the Otter's legs are short, and far apart and if the pan of the trap is placed in the centre of his way out, the Otter would be likely to spring it with his breast. In such a case, Mr. Otter would leave those parts immediately, and would very likely not return for a year or more. The trap should be a very strong one, a Number 3 or 4 in size, of a good reliable make. Use a strong chain on the trap, six feet long. Fasten the chain to a bush same as for Mink, but have the bush much larger, say an inch and a half through at butt end. When an Otter gets into a trap, let him go with trap and bush and you will very likely find him not far away tangled up around a root or if the water is deep, he will very likely drown very soon after he is caught.

Many times where the Otter comes to land, a trap cannot be set in the water, as it will be too deep and the bank too steep. In such cases, I make a land set, in places where they wallow and tumble about in the mud. Put your trap into the ground deep enough so that it will be level when covered whenever possible. Before setting the trap take some of the Otter's green manure and rub it all over the trap. Otherwise he would be apt to smell the trap and leave, not to return. When set right, cover trap and

chain well so as to look as if you had not been there. Make a little furrow out toward the water, to lay the chain in, and set a bush up as if it were growing, or if the ground is hard, hang it over, but not near the trap. In placing the trap under the mud, it is very important to remember to place some light substance under the pan such as Goldenrod, or weak sticks to keep it up, and at the same time allow the trap to spring easily with the weight of the Otter on the pan. If any part of the chain is placed in water, be sure to cover it also, as the Otter can see as well under water as out. On rivers, ponds, and lakes, where the water is deep, the top of the bush to which the trap is fastened should be tied, wired, or withed to another bush or tree, for should the Otter drag the trap into deep water, it would be impossible to locate him. Nearly always, however, the Otter can go loose with the bush, and I have never lost one in that way.



## CHAPTER 6.

### THE SKUNK

I find some trappers do not trap the Skunk on account of the odor, but to me the scent of the skunk is not as offensive as that of the Mink or Weasel. I also note that a large number of trappers use steel traps in taking the Skunk. This method I seldom employ, preferring to use a stone dead fall, which is commonly called the "Figure Four." I consider this a much better way as it is a sure catch. Of course, there are locations where suitable flat stones for dead falls can not be found and in such country, I use the steel trap. The dead fall kills instantly, and when caught in this way there is very little, if any odor. I doubt very much if many trappers have ever caught as many Skunk in steel traps during a season as I have in dead falls. Some open winters I have secured over four hundred fine pelts in this manner. To accomplish this, it is necessary to set as many as five hundred dead falls. One disadvantage of the dead fall is that it cannot very well be used after snow fall,

but it is certainly very satisfactory through the Fall months.

I generally bait with the flesh of the Skunk, and I find they will take this in preference to other meat through the Fall and early Winter. As the season advances, the Skunk has a rank flavor, and I discovered that roasting will make the bait far more attractive. Smoked ham is also a good bait, as the cold weather approaches, but mice will clean it off the spindle in a short time, so to prevent this I get a box of "Ruff on Rats" and roll the bait in it. If one does this there will be no more trouble with mice.

One season while trapping, we had had a hard Winter, and as soon as there came a break, I put in some dead falls, but the Skunk would not go near them, although I felt sure that they would be hungry. However, Skunk will sometimes live through the Winter on their fat, not coming out until Spring, and then are not very anxious to take bait. This time I decided to try an experiment. I took a Skunk carcass that I had, cut it into small pieces and baked it in the oven. I then went out and set fifteen traps, using this bait. The night was rather warm, and it snowed a little, so next morning, I went around to my traps and found nine Skunk in the fifteen traps. After that I always roasted my bait in late Winter trapping.

I must emphasize the fact that Skunk is an excellent bait for many of the fur-bearing animals. There is nothing the Fox likes better than Skunk flesh. One winter I hung up several carcasses to dry; the Foxes would come and pick those carcasses bare of flesh. Finally one day I got a large one, skinned him in good shape, and strung him up on a little pine, three or four feet from the ground. A few days later, I got another, and hung it in the same place. Shortly after, while passing this tree, I noticed the Foxes were working on these carcasses. In order to do this, they had to stand on their hind feet and I thought there was a very good place to get Mr. Fox, so one day I went with my traps. It looked as if a snow was coming, so I put down two traps at the foot of the pine, about two feet away, and arranged them in such a manner that while the Fox was working on the Skunk carcasses, he would be likely to get caught. Next morning, much to my pleasure, I had a nice Red Fox and later caught two more. When setting these traps, I put paraffin paper over them to keep out the snow, and keep the traps from freezing. Here was a case where the Skunk had assisted me in landing three fine Fox pelts.

As the Skunk makes his home in a den, this is

the most favorable place for the use of steel traps. Unlike the Fox, he has no cunning, and will walk directly into a trap placed in his path. He very rarely digs a hole for himself, but prefers an old den of a Woodchuck, or a Rabbit's hole or an old stone wall where he can make his home without much labor. In such places it is an easy matter to set the traps, covering them over with a little light material such as leaves or weeds, and fastening to a bush. An ideal location for a Skunk is on a side hill around ledges. They are often found, however, under old barns in the cellar walls. As they usually den up in December the best trapping period is from the opening of the season until Christmas. In a January thaw, they will sometimes venture forth but in early February they come out again, and if a little snow is on the ground, they are easily tracked to their new lairs. As many as ten or twelve Skunk will often be found in a den. Any good strong trap, a No. 1½ or No. 2 can be used for catching the Skunk.



## CHAPTER 7.

### THE MUSKRAT

**T**HE MUSKRAT is found in larger numbers than any other fur-bearing animal in America. It is very easily trapped, although some trappers will be more successful than others in taking them. Their success depends largely on judgment in placing the traps. The most common set is known as the "blind set," which means placing the trap in the Muskrat's path. From this the trapper will see that it is important to know where the Rats travel. Such places as a small ditch leading from larger streams or along a mud bank are ideal locations.

The Muskrat inhabits swamps as well as running streams, ponds and lakes. They are found along the banks of rivers and ponds or lakes at such places where they can erect their grass houses in which to live and breed. An ideal location for the Muskrat is a large swamp. In small streams, ditches or around mud holes, the trapper will learn to locate the hiding places of these little animals. His tracks will be seen in

the mud and well-beaten paths will be found leading back from the water's edge to the den in the bank. The trap should be placed at the edge of the stream under an inch or two of water. Fasten the trap to a small bush same as for Mink, as explained in Chapter 4. Care should be taken to make the set appear as natural as possible to surroundings in order to avoid a discovery by marauders. Place a few water-soaked leaves over the trap, covering chain with mud, and the set is complete.

Traveling up or down streams, Muskrats will almost invariably stop on rocks or stumps and a good set is made by placing a trap on one end of a log, partially submerged. Select any piece of timber, six or seven inches in diameter or larger, and at one end hew or saw down so as to make a flat surface on which to place the trap, and fasten the chain with a staple. Carry the timber well into the water, and anchor, or fasten a wire so that part of the log is above the surface of the water. This makes a stopping place for the Muskrat, and if desired a trap may be placed at both ends of the log.

As explained in the method of trapping Mink, it is sometimes advisable to make a small fence part way across the stream, and in such a manner that the Mink would be guided to the trap.

The same thing may be done with the Muskrat, and when Mr. Rat comes along the stream to such a point, he is sure to follow this obstruction to the water's edge where the trap should be placed. Some trappers are more successful by using bait, but I very rarely employ this method. A piece of an apple, or parsnip can be used by placing it on a stick twelve or fourteen inches above the trap. The advantage in using a little bait sometimes lies in the fact that the trap can be placed almost anywhere along the stream, and if food is scarce in that section, a Muskrat would be likely to come to it. I always try to make my sets in such a manner that the Muskrat will drown quickly. This leaves no scent about and makes the catch sure.



## CHAPTER 8.

### THE RACCOON

I never make any special sets for the Coon. Have caught many of them in traps which were set for Mink. They are poking around the water much of the time and any bait or scent that will attract the Mink will also attract the Coon. They are fond of fish, frogs, nuts, berries, grapes, cherries and apples, also various kinds of meat. I have caught a good many Coon in deadfalls that were set for Skunk, and baited with Skunk and Muskrat. Of course, they can be taken in traps about the water just as well, with the same baits, and the scent which I use for the Mink would bring them to the trap. Coon will move about in cold weather if the ground is bare. After snow fall their signs are seldom seen. In the South they seem to be active all Winter. I have caught many of them there in traps set for other game. On streams where trapping Mink, if I see signs of Coon, I fasten the trap same as for Mink to a bush, but having it larger and of hard wood, as

the Coon is a hard fighter in a trap and is very apt to cut into a soft wood bush and get away with the trap.

As the Coon is strong and a great fighter a good reliable trap is necessary. A No. 2 will hold them although some trappers prefer a No. 3 for this animal.

The best location for Coon is in a heavy growth of timber or in country where ledges are plentiful.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE BEAVER

WHILE the Beaver is not so difficult to trap as the Fox and Otter, yet care and caution should be taken as it does not take much disturbance to frighten them. My first experience with Beaver trapping was in the southern portion of old Virginia, which was forty-one years ago. At that time I had never seen a Hunter and Trapper's Guide, nor had never received any instructions in catching Beaver. I did not know there were any Beaver in the South, until I got there. On being informed by the natives that there were Beaver in that section, I began to prospect for them, and in a short time found a colony. I arrived on the Beaver grounds late in the afternoon with four No. 4 traps which I set. I started off the next morning with eight more traps, and on getting to the creek, found I had caught two Beaver in the four traps set the evening before. After resetting these traps I took plenty of time in setting my other eight traps which made

twelve in all in the best places. The next morning I started out expecting to get several Beaver, but got badly left, as I did not get anything, not even a trap sprung, nor did I get a Beaver for a week or more. Could not see where one made a move, and when I did it was very slight, all because the first two I caught were not drowned. When the others saw them fighting the trap, it warned them of danger. After a time they began to work more freely, and I caught the whole colony in a few days by getting at it right.

Some trappers make a break in dam and set trap there, but this is a poor method, as when one Beaver is trapped, the others will know it, and the trapper will have trouble in getting them, as I have stated above. The trap should be set so as to be taken while working alone, and drowned as soon as possible, which can be done by the weight of a stone of about eight or ten pounds fastened to the chain six inches from the trap. I have the chains from five to six feet long on all of my Beaver and Otter traps. When trapping Beaver, one should carry a hatchet and when ready to set the trap find a stone of the right weight rather oblong in shape and use the head of the hatchet to make some notches quite deep around the stone. Put the



chain around it so the links will be one-half inch apart, then put baled hay wire or some other wire about the same size through links and draw it up and twist it tight, and cut it off with pliers, which every trapper should have with him while trapping. Set the trap three or four inches under water, place stone to one side and cover it up. If the water is deep enough to drown the game, fasten the trap at the end of the chain under water out of sight, if the chain is not long enough to reach deep water, use some wire that will be long enough. In trapping Beaver on a stream that is not very large, and not deep, let them go with the trap loose. Get a dead dry stick, cut a notch around the middle, put a wire around the notch in stick and through ring of chain and twist up tight. Have the stick about four feet long, lay the stick under water out of sight. To hold it down cut a short stake like a hay hook and put it down over the dry stick, just enough to hold it down. When the game gets caught it will go down stream with stone, stick and trap, and you will locate your Beaver in the first deep hole down stream as the stick will float and it will prevent him from getting into any hole under the bank.

I always carry a small iron hook with me with a five or six inch shank and lash it to the

small end of a pole with a string or wire to fish them out with. It is a good plan to find what kind of wood they are feeding on, and cut a small stick or sapling and stick down where the water is shallow and set a trap beside it. This will attract their attention, and they will go up to cut it off and will be caught. I do not always use scent, but when I do, I use the Beaver Castor, which will be found on the Beaver, same as glands on the Muskrat. Put it in a bottle and in using same, put it on a stick near the trap. The Beaver will be quite sure to go to it.







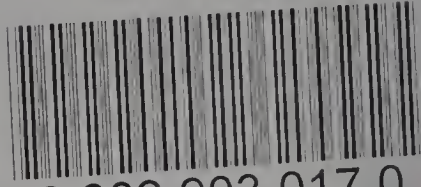
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