

TRAPPER EDUCATION NEWSLETTER
FEBRUARY 2007 EDITION

Greetings. Our Trappers courses are in full swing and it looks like we will finish up in early March. If all goes as planned we will have completed 15 courses this fall and already we are getting some requests for next year.

I am almost out of new manuals and will keep the remaining stock for our students. I will be doing a reprint this summer with some new additions but it will basically be the same manual. The new manual will have a stitch binding as the old ones do not stand up to heavy use.

What a strange season we are having this year. Last year we were crying for some snow, and this year it arrived. Unfortunately it came to fast which resulted in the ground and ponds not freezing well. Trapping on ponds was dangerous and many trappers did not bother. There were a lot of mice and vole sign and the marten and fisher responded well. Rabbits started showing up but the lynx are spotty. Coyotes are scarce over much of the areas and I don't know why. We always have mange around but perhaps another disease is present (Parvo?) . This said, in my area of the Swan hills the wolves don't appear affected. I can't tempt them into a bait site as they kill a deer any time they want to eat. It is a tough year on deer right now but the wolves are just doing their job.

There is an interesting site to watch if you have not seen it on wolves taking down a moose. Here is the connection

http://www.isleroyalewolf.org/photo_ess/pe_EP_kills_moose.htm

Speaking of wolves, last week I checked my bait sites and found I was only feeding the birds. I said that's enough and went fishing. When I got to the lake there were 11 wolves crossing. It is interesting to note the color combinations. About 2/3'rds were black and the rest grey.

No squirrels to speak of in my area this year but also no cone crop. Lots of weasels due to the mice population.

Even though the trapping was poor for the most part the ATA still shipped a lot of fur to auction. About the same as last year. Here are the latest results from the Feb. auction for NAFA :

Coyote (western heavy) = \$55.80

Marten (#1) = \$59.14

Beaver (western #1) = \$22.05

Rats = \$4.08

All prices in US dollars. See the NAFA website for complete listings

Go to the site also for news about otter. Apparently the market in China has collapsed and new markets are being sought. This might take a couple of years.

TRAPPING INSTRUCTORS

I will be training some new instructors this summer. Although I have had requests from many individuals for consideration as an instructor I had to pare the numbers down. If all goes well I can bring 5 or 6 more on board. A couple of my instructors are retiring after years of good service and they have our thanks. We will be running a 10 day course in July for these instructors and possibly training three more from the Yukon. In addition we will be training one person from industry who acts as a trapping coordinator for a large lumber company. This individual will not act as an instructor but is taking the course to gain further job knowledge. All instructors will also be trained with our school program and therefore can deliver presentations near and within their communities.

FISHER CARCASS COLLECTIONS

My thanks to all the trappers that donated their carcasses to this office. I am not sure of the numbers yet, but it was more than last year. Public education receives the \$5 "reward" from SRD and the carcasses supply valuable information about the health, age and sex ratios for this important fur bearer.

DISEASE

Just a note on tularemia. Ross Hinter (instructor and trapper) submitted a beaver carcass to Fish and Wildlife for testing. Ross had lots of beaver and rats on his line last year and this year it is empty. The results came back that this disease is present in his area. This just shows the importance of submitting suspicious carcasses to fish and wildlife and the importance of harvesting (managing) fur bearers. They cannot be stockpiled as nature will look after the surplus. It also re-enforces the need to wear gloves and be alert when handling fur. Here is an excerpt about tularemia from our trapping manual:

"Tularemia bacteria may enter the human body by accidental ingestion (drinking water, contaminated hands) or through open sores". "symptoms in humans include fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes, general ill feeling and persistent ulcers at infection sites".
"Tularemia cannot be spread from person to person and is treatable with antibiotics."

BAIT

Just a note on preparing liquid bait (sort of) for bait sites. This stuff really works but you will need a place in the country to do it or every cat in the neighbourhood will be your friend. Gather some pails that have a lid. Cut up your beaver into chunks and place in the pail to rot all summer. Add some fish guts, heads or whole fatty fish chunks if you can get some. Fill the pails about 1/3 full and allow the pail to vent. You can do this by tying some screening around the hole at the top of the pail so the flies cannot enter and the gas can escape. You could also leave the lid on loosely so the gas can go and the flies cannot enter. After a summer of this mess stewing in the pail, use it at your sites. If you can stomach pouring off some of the liquid into a container, you can use this liquid as a marten lure for your sets. If you get some on you accidentally you might consider burning your clothes (just kidding, *not really*). This stuff is a good attractant for most animals.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

We just finished the Northern Alberta Teachers Convention showcasing our school program and already requests are coming in for presentations. Since April 2006 to Dec 2006 we have completed 34 presentations to 1516 students (grade 4 & 5). Our funding comes from grants from Sustainable Resource Development and the Alberta Conservation Association. I have again applied for new funding to continue the program. This year we targeted Edmonton and next year I would like to concentrate on the Red Deer Area. We are getting requests from the south (Hobbema, Rocky, Drayton) and are trying to accommodate them. As this program continues I am gratified to see the positive feedback both from the students as well as the teachers. With more instructors and if we can find more funding, we can expand this program to a larger audience. This program not only discusses modern fur bearer management, but provides an overview of the fur trade and tries to develop an appreciation for the beaver. In addition a pine cone seedling project complete with instructions and cones are given to the teacher for a class project. The hope is that habitat will be enhanced and the students will get a better idea of what happens in a healthy forest. If any of our industry partners / stakeholders would like more information about this program , please contact me.

The Edmonton sports man show is in March and we will be there with a display. Drop by and talk to the trappers at the booth. It is at the Northlands Agricom , March 15-18th.

Plan to take in the trapper's convention in High Prairie in June and watch for events and dates in our magazine.

That's enough for now. If you want off this newsletter send me an e mail. If you know of someone that would like to receive this letter let me know.

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