

# Work Smart - Targeting and Planning Your Line

By Garry L. McLaughlin

I talk with other trappers each and every day, sometime in person, chat rooms, or through online forums. My trapping of furbearers now spans sixty-six years. Throughout that time I have seen many trappers come and go, but one thing usually remains the same – most of them only target one water animal at a time. This does not mean they only catch the target animal, only that they concentrate on only one.

I have trained myself to target more than one animal. In fact, I target three animals when I am water trapping. My reason for doing this is that I have fewer incidental catches because I am using the proper trap to detain or dispatch the animals I catch. If I am only targeting muskrats at a feed bed, using a #1 foot hold trap, and a big old boar raccoon comes along and gets in my trap, I have a good chance of either loosing the raccoon or it making off with my trap. The only answer in my book is that you set each trap with the knowledge that if a raccoon, muskrat, or a mink get in your trap, they will be waiting for you when you run your traps.

This process, very often, requires more effort and time than walking down a creek and throwing traps at the bank and hoping a muskrat will stumble into it. It may cause you to have to carry more than one or two kinds or sizes of traps, along with wire, stakes, and drowning devices.

Many trappers this day and age are strapped for time. Many not only have jobs they have to contend with, but families and their needs that have to be taken care. With these responsibilities in mind, they take shortcuts. Most often, the shortcuts they take are with their trapping. On their water line, they set a few body gripping traps for mink and muskrat and a few 1.5's, either coil or long spring, and hope they have all of their bases covered.

Smart planning can help solve the problem of incidental catches, help up your total catches, and give you more time to work your lines. I can only assume that most trappers go out ahead of season and scout your areas. How you do this can be more important than you think. For instance, if you go to where your line will be and you just walk along the stream and say to yourself, "Yep, there are muskrats here. Yep, there are mink here. Yep, there are raccoons here," you are defeating yourself and making a lot of extra work.

Do the work ahead of time before the season and it will be half done for you. In today's modern age with all of the advances that have been made with the Internet, you have a great tool within your grasp by clicking on a few keys. There are several systems out on the Internet, but one of them I use is Google Earth. Once I have permission to trap a property, even before I go on it, I pull that property up on Google Earth and enlarge it as much as I can. There are times when one property may take six to eight sheets of paper to print out, but I do it.

Now it is time to go scouting the property. With a magic marker and my aerial views of the property, I am ready. As I walk the creeks, streams,

ponds or lake, I mark on the map where I want my traps, what kind of trap and what the set is for. This may take you a few minutes to do this, but at this point time that is not important and you will find by doing this you will pay closer attention to what you are seeing. Are you seeing muskrats, or mink or raccoon all together, or just one or more? Do you need a heavy wired stake here or just a willow branch stake? How about a drowning rig – do you need one at this location?

Here are some of the codes I use on my maps:

BGR = Body Grip Rat: Usually a #110-body grip trap.

BGM = Body Grip Mink: Usually #120 body grip trap.

Col = Colony Trap: For mink and muskrats.

LS 1.5 = Long Spring foothold: Usually for mink or raccoon, but possibly for muskrats.

BGC = Body Grip Coon: Usually a #220 for raccoon.

C#1 = Coil Spring #1: Usually for raccoon or mink.

C#1.5 = Coil Spring #1.5: Usually for raccoon or mink.

D = Drowning rig: Can be used for any of the three animals.

HS = Heavy Stake: Usually for a

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raccoon, but for incidental also.

Fg = Willow Stake: When no stake is required for using as a flag or marker for colony trap.

The photo shows a map of a pond I trapped earlier when I had a much less sophisticated labeling system. It shows the location I wanted traps, what kind of traps and the number of them. I knew exactly how many of what kind of traps I needed for this location. I also knew what stakes I needed to carry

with me. After returning home, I label them on the computer, and I print out sharper and clearer photos and keep them in a file. Next year I will know exactly where I had traps set before.

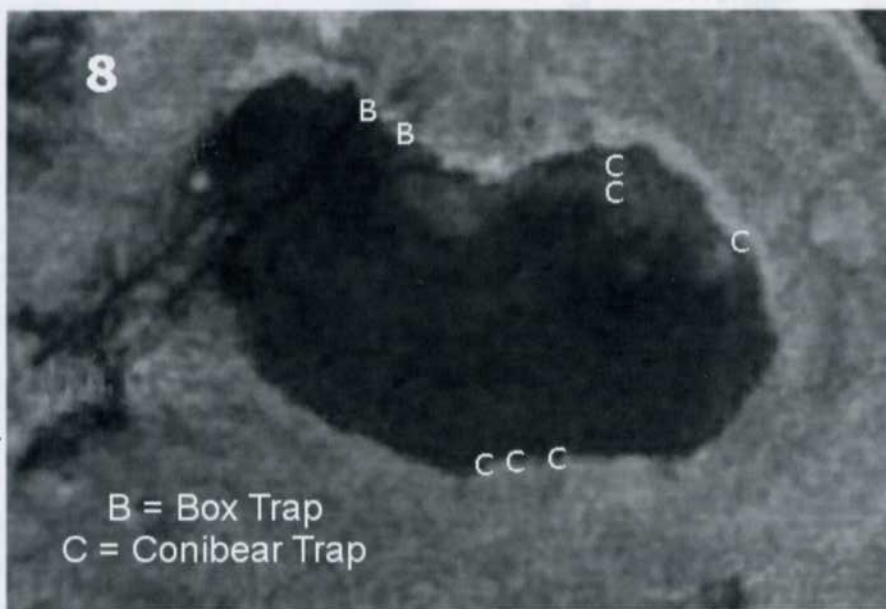
Once you have your map labeled, you can carefully plan what traps and how many of each kind you will need. You will know how many heavy stakes and drowning rigs you need. If you have a lot traps to set in a given area (if allowed by law in your state) you can go out a day or week before the season opens and stash the stakes and traps you

will need in a certain area. I have in the past (on private property) walked to the middle of my trapping line and deposited traps that I would need

where the dens are and tracks along the edge in the water. By wading downstream, you continually have to stop and wait for the water to clear before advancing on. Wading upstream does not present that problem. I also do it for the safety factor. I have seen where a little high water for a few days will alter the creek bed and you can step into a hole over your boots, if the water is cloudy.


Now that you have figured out how to set and trap all three animals at one time, you can not only increase your catch, but also do it in shorter possible time. Instead of burdening yourself with

unnecessary traps or not having the traps or stakes that you need, you can go prepared. Not only will you catch more animals, but you will lose less and be able to move on to the next location in less time. Planning your catch is as important as catching it. So why not get with it this year and work smarter, not longer and harder. Use the tools that are at your fingertips. ### Garry L. McLaughlin, 145 Hancock Street, Newark, Ohio, 43055, (740) 344-6583, [actor1@windstream.net](mailto:actor1@windstream.net).



from that point to the end. This saved me from trying to carry too much at once and fumbling around trying to find which trap I wanted to set at a given place. Mark on your map where you left your stash and you can walk right to it even in the dark. Another time saver and a safety factor I always try and impress on younger trappers is always walk upstream. If you have driven your vehicle to your line and have to wade most of the creek, by wading upstream you do not cloud the water ahead of you. By doing this when setting traps, you can easily see

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