

Newsletter for

December 2013



the CRAYFISH TALE

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CRAYFISH TRAP TYPES

Over the years I have used several types of crayfish traps. Some were good, some not so good. But they all caught crayfish if I only used attractive bait. And there's the rub. Practically any crayfish trap will catch crayfish. All you have to do is to use some good bait.



(Above: a collection of different trap designs that all work)

But to find out about what I consider good bait, you have to read some other of my many newsletters on the subject.

Now, let's go through the different types of crayfish traps and discuss their pros and cons – what's good and what's not so good about them. But remember, this is only my opinion about them. Someone else might have a completely different opinion about the same trap. But here are my opinions, for good or for bad. You take your pick.

THE CYLINDRICAL TRAP



The round – cylindrical - trap is the one I was first introduced to as a youngster. This trap has an opening at each end and has become a classic design. Whenever you see pictures of people catching crayfish, you are bound to see this old and proven trap design. Trapper Arne has offered them for many years under the name of the Trappy, the Jumbo or the Trapper.

PROS

This trap is most likely to come in nicely when pulled from the shore without bringing all sorts of sunken debris with it. My oldest cylindrical traps are now about 30 years old and are still going strong. With their two entrances, there is always one in whatever direction the crays come searching for the attractive bait.

Openings at opposite ends allow crayfish to enter from different sides of a lake or river.

CONS

Not being collapsible, this trap takes more space than a collapsible trap. In a kayak, that might be a problem. I have not yet tried to make a collapsible trap, but I can imagine that they probably are more difficult to manufacture.

THE PILLOW CRAYFISH TRAP



When I first saw a pillow trap I did not know what I was looking at. First I thought it was a trap someone had accidentally sat on, it was that flat. However, an owner of these traps told me that where he comes from, these traps are very popular and they actually catch crayfish if baited right. The ones I saw had only one opening at one end which may confuse a crayfish who can smell the bait but not find a way to reach it. Made from small mesh chicken wire, they are easy to make and lots of amateurs use them.

PROS

Easy to make and can apparently hold a lot of crayfish.

CONS

Pillow crayfish traps can easily be deformed by rough handling

PYRAMID CRAYFISH TRAPS



The pyramid trap is the most common trap used in the South where they are seen in the shallow crayfish ponds that also serve double duty raising grain crops. The pyramid trap reminds me of some old fashioned Swedish traps that looked like bee hives with only one opening at the top. The pyramid trap sits on the bottom with its base where the three or four openings are located. Their flat bottom makes them usable only if the bottom of the pond is even and only some 2 to 4 feet deep. But their design makes them perfect for easy placing and retrieving when managing them from a boat. With their top reaching up above the water's surface, they are easily located and as easily turned upside down for harvest.

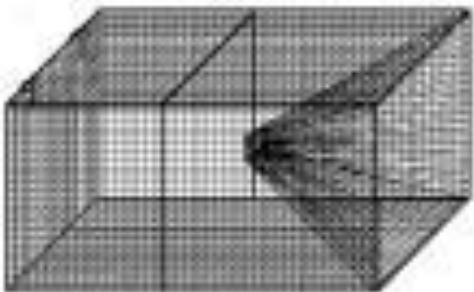
PROS

Easy to set out and locate and very easy to harvest makes them very popular for commercial use.

CONS

The problem is when using this trap in lakes deeper than its size or where the bottom is uneven or rocky. Probably rather difficult to manufacture for amateurs.

SQUARE CRAYFISH TRAPS



The first crayfish trap I made was square. And it did not last long as it got caught in some bottom debris. But it is easy and fun to make and most of us have some chicken wire available to make them.

PROS

These traps may have from one to four entrances and can thus be quite productive. They usually last a long time – or until they get stuck on bottom debris.

CONS

Unfortunately these traps are bulky and take a lot of space in a boat, truck or car.

COLLAPSIBLE CRAYFISH TRAPS



Among the cylindrical traps are the collapsibles, the traps I grew up with in Sweden. For backpackers and kayak fishermen, these traps save space. Not only that, they seem to catch unusually much crayfish. These traps come in many shapes. Trapper Arne sells them under the name "JACKPOT"

PROS

Perfect when space is scarce. They catch plenty of crays.

CONS

As the trap funnel openings are large and flexible, crayfish tend to escape after bait is gone. Use with lots of bait.

OPEN NET CRAYFISH TRAPS



Among the first 'traps' I used were the open nets. I had lots of fun watching crayfish crawling into these open nets which usually are placed in a shallow area. They are so simple to make that anyone can make them. With some bait tied to the middle of the circle, you'll soon have something to harvest. Perfect for kids.

PROS

Inexpensive and fun to watch – for kids and grownups.

CONS

Not very productive. You have to watch the net constantly and harvest very often.

SPECIALTY CRAYFISH TRAPS

The challenge of making a crayfish trap brings out budding engineering abilities in just about any crayfish enthusiast. I had the greatest of times designing my own traps and to design them so that the trapped crayfish would not escape. There are numerous intricate designs for that purpose, some more complicated and effective than the other.

Then I found the secret! You don't have to worry about escape stoppers and gimmicks designed to keep the crays in the trap. It's really very simple and goes back to the psychology of animals in general. If an animal is caught because it enters a trap to get to an attractive bait, I can assure you, the crayfish will stay there until the bait is eaten up and gone. It is as simple as that.

In other words, you DON'T NEED ESCAPE STOPPERS as long as your trap has bait in it. So, keep your traps well baited. But should your trap run out of bait, an escape stopper may come in handy!

Those are my words of wisdom for this time. Have fun now catching lots of crays.

Greetings

Trapper Arne, Sr.

For comments of the contents of these newsletters, please contact Trapper Arne Sr. at Trapperarne1@gmail.com. To change addresses or to unsubscribe, please contact Trapper Arne Jr. at trapperarne@cox.net.

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