



the
CRAYFISH TALE
www.trapperarne.com

More about crayfish bait

Every crayfish catcher has his own favorite crayfish bait. Even though fish seems to be one of the most common favorites, the proverbial “stealthily shot neighbor’s cat” still lingers in my mind. Yes, I have gone through a whole series of different crayfish baits with different luck. The worst was rancid chicken pieces that I had left in a bucket during a couple of camping days. Contrary to some beliefs, crayfish don’t like everything ‘smelly’. It has to be fresh, and I proved that rancid chicken meat does not attract crayfish.

Another crayfish bait I tried which did not work out well at all was Tilapia fish. The fact that it had been frozen I don’t think was the problem. It just did not seem to attract crayfish the way oily fish does. Oily fish like salmon, mackerel or shad. But, as you may remember from my bait newsletter of last fall, fishy cat food in cans has worked surprisingly well for me.

Then comes this letter from one of my customers:

“Last night, a large, fat cottonmouth snake was cruising the creek, looking for a meal. Looking ahead, it spotted a couple of crayfish sitting motionless on the bottom. Lunging quickly forward, it didn't notice the slippery string and wire that funneled its head through a small hole. As it passed through the hole, it discovered it could go forward, but something held it from backing up. It tried to coil, but found it couldn't coil until its entire body was through the small hole. When it finally was able to coil, it discovered something prevented it from surfacing for air, and it couldn't get back the way it had come in. It had entered a Trapper Arne crayfish trap. The trap was completely submerged under a foot of water. It thrashed for a while, then quietly floated to the top of the trap.”

“But that's not the end of the story. It's only the beginning.”

“The crayfish in the trap gazed upon their tormentor, and watched dispassionately while the cottonmouth departed from this earth. After it was still for some time, they approached the snake and attacked the thin skin just behind the snake's head. As they ate, a smell was released into the water. The word went out. DINNER IS SERVED! All night, they came from near and far, crowding into the trap, feasting on the hapless

snake. Soon, twenty large, adult crayfish had jammed into the small space. The two traps upstream and downstream also trapped a few of the crayfish on their way to the banquet. In the morning, twenty-eight crayfish waited in the three traps.”

“Cottonmouth snakes are aggressive. They are the most dangerous and poisonous animals on our farm. A cottonmouth at this particular place of the creek will likely encounter me, my spouse, my guests or our dogs. Therefore, we must conclude the obvious:

- (1) Crayfish trapping is a public service, and*
- (2) Venomous snakes make great bait.”*

I responded to this unusual email from my customer. Mentioning also that hopefully the venom of the snake would not enter into the meat of the crayfish and cause subsequent distress when eating. I also mentioned that another customer had recently related to me how he had successfully caught crayfish by using some discarded cheese. Thereby adding another choice of bait to all the others when it comes to catching our favorite food.

“Arne, your traps that I have are several years old now, but they are still going strong. Yes, you may certainly use the story for your monthly newsletter. However, there’s a condition. You must put me back on your email list for your monthly newsletter. We’ve changed computers since I purchased the traps and I never got around to correcting the email address.”

“You know, I didn’t even consider that the crayfish may have absorbed some of the cottonmouth’s venom. However, I won’t be eating these crayfish, as they are destined to populate a new one-acre pond I created this year down on the south end of our farm. I don’t think they ingested any venom because they looked very healthy as I was releasing them. They certainly took a big chunk out of that snake in only one night!”

“Because the creek is barely running at this time, I removed the snake from the area. I’m worried that either the dead body or the venom inside it may poison the small pool in which the traps are located. The pool is also home to several species of amphibians, including one young bullfrog.”

“I was just about to discard some old cheese. I’ll keep it in the refrigerator now. I will try the cheese as bait when I get back on Monday. I’ll let you know the results. Thanks for the tip”!

Thank you, Wayne, for an interesting crayfish bait story.

COMING ON THE OCEAN BLUE

Anticipating better than average sales of crayfish traps this summer, I have ordered a large supply of my Swedish imports of Trappy and Trappy XL traps. Expected arrival by the beginning of June, the traditionally best month for selling crayfish traps – starting the peak season for crayfish trapping in northern states.

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