

Newsletter for

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the CRAYFISH TALE

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Escape stoppers – Yes or no?

Ever since I started catching crayfish, I had wondered, are escape stoppers really necessary? The first crayfish traps that I used were of the collapsible type. This type of trap has a large and loose fitting funnel entry, and can not be fitted with the traditional escape stopper.

So for years I thought they were not necessary. For a long time I did not even know that escape stoppers existed. And while in that state of bliss, I caught thousands of crayfish while enjoying lakes in the state of Arizona.

But then I became familiar with the Bullard traps. And they all had escape stoppers.

So I started thinking. Most of the time when I pulled my Jackpot traps up from the depths of Hawley Lake on the Indian Reservation in Arizona, my traps were well filled with crayfish. After three days and nights of camping and cray fishing, I usually had catches that topped a 1000 crays. As I was fishing for myself only, and not commercially, that was plenty good for me.

But now and then I noticed that a trap would come up from the lake with hardly any crays in it. At first I just chalked that up to bad fishing luck. But soon I also started noticing that when a trap came up nearly or complete empty, much or all of the bait was also gone.

At first I did not make the logical connection between these two facts. **But as years of pulling crayfish traps from Arizona lakes increased, my experience and** know-how also increased and I started adding two and two together. There was a connection between

these two facts – that an empty trap usually came up with the bait holder also empty.

Hmm? Why would that be? Then I found an article about catching crayfish written in my old mother tongue, Swedish. There it stared me in the face! “As soon as crayfish run out of bait in a trap, crayfish will also start running out.” In other words, no crayfish worth its salt will stay put in a trap that has no bait to attract it. Sounds logical, doesn't it? So the more I pondered this simple statement, the more I started believing it was probably true.

So from then on, still using my collapsible Jackpot traps with big funnel entries, I made very sure that if leaving the traps in for more than four or five hours, or overnight as I usually did, the traps were filled with enough bait to last at least through the night.

Then one day I started building my own traps. I designed a trap I called the ‘Trapper’, and this trap was of the non-collapsible type. So now I was able to fit it with an escape stopper at each end of the trap. This trap caught thousands of crayfish no matter how many hours it was soaking while trying to entice crayfish to get caught. Crayfish, once inside this trap, would have trouble leaving even if the bait was all eaten up.

Before too long I designed a new and larger crayfish trap. After studying the Trappy XL trap from the clever Swedes, I noticed that the entry funnel had practically no escape stopper. Yet it caught crayfish. So I started a cyber communication with the designer of the Swedish Trappy XL trap. After several back-and-forths about escape stoppers, this designer repeated

what I had been told many years before. trap.”
“Crayfish in a trap with bait, will not leave the



So I designed my new big trap, the Jumbo trap, with no escape stopper. I simply used the same funnel as the so successful Trappy XL trap used. And again, I caught thousands of crayfish using the Jumbo.

But once in a while I pulled up a Jumbo with very few crayfish in it. Slowly I came to the same conclusion of several years ago, that once in a while the bait in a trap is eaten all up. This can easily happen if you are fishing a lake with large crayfish populations as I did just a few months ago. Then you have the same situation again, the crayfish start looking for the exit.

Had I not learned my lesson? Yes and no. I had forgotten the simple fact that all rules have their exceptions. Although I always tried to make sure my Jumbo traps had plenty of bait in them during the overnight sessions, there were cases when the crayfish simply managed to devour all the bait in the trap. Indeed, quite often I started noticing that some, maybe most, of the cat food cans with white fish and tuna came up rather or completely empty.

But then, as said before, the caught crayfish would start leaving the trap!

Back to the drawing board. I simply had to equip my Jumbo traps with escape stoppers,

just in case the bait in the trap would be depleted before sunup. And now I knew this

At the drawing board I designed a little device in the shape of an escape stopper that could be attached to the funnel entry of the Jumbo and the Trappy XL. Now, finally, even if the crays had eaten all of my Walmart

sometimes would happen.

purchased cat food, they were stuck in the trap until I pulled it up at sunrise.

My catches soon started to increase. Several Jumbos came up with over 100 crays in each. Now I use escape stoppers on all my Jumbos. Maybe you should too?

Greetings

Trapper Arne, Sr.

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