



The

CRAYFISH TALE

By TRAPPER ARNIE

CHASING THE TRAPPY CRAYFISH TRAP

Swedes love crayfish. No wonder my niece Katarina served crayfish when I visited her a few years ago. Just a few miles north of Stockholm, on the island of Yxlan, she has a lovely summer place overlooking the archipelago. She offered signal crayfish, the crustaceous American transplant to Swedish lakes. Officially it is called *Pacifastacus leniusculus*. In California it is simply the 'crawdad'. In Sweden it is replacing the native noble crayfish.

While enjoying her delicious crayfish dinner in family company, I asked Katarina who supplied her crayfish. 'My neighbor over on the mainland catches them in his local lake'. So we talked about the type of crayfish traps he used, and Katarina described the traps in his boat house. 'They were all from China, he told me.'

That started the chase. China!?! Having just started my crayfish trap business, I listened up. Maybe that's where I should get my traps from. China has inundated the world with inexpensive stuff, so why not crayfish traps.

After returning to my traps in AZ, I concentrated at first on making my own traps. China traps were placed on the back burner. As the trap business grew, I became increasingly involved in making traps, the Trapper, the Jumbo and the Dipper. I sighed relief when an order also included my Swedish imported traps such as the Blueboy and the Jackpot. During the summer peak of the season I found it hard to keep up production to satisfy all buyers.

That's when I moved China traps back to the front burner to relieve my crayfish trap demand overload. I just had to find where they made those fine new traps they used in Sweden. And realizing that Chinese products are highly price competitive, I imagined being able to compete in the US market even if the traps had to toss on waves all the way from the Orient.

But how to find who makes these good looking traps that I wanted to sell here in Arizona? The Internet came to mind immediately, and soon I was hogging the telephone for my dial-up internet connection. (Friends started complaining that our phone was always busy, and Joyce had trouble getting out with me surfing for hours every day.

The internet is fantastic. Google will find anything. Soon I had made several contacts with organizations that specialized in importing from China, Korea and Japan.

But I had trouble finding anyone who made crayfish traps. Fishing equipment, yes, inflatable boats and plastic waders and landing nets, maybe, but very few did any business in crayfish traps. Once in a while I managed to see a fishing gear manufacturer who also sold net material and included some crab or crayfish nets. But I was looking for that neat looking plastic cylindrical trap I had seen among pictures of Swedish crayfish traps. The one now spreading all over Europe.

I even engaged a local export/import expert in my quest for this elusive crayfish trap. And as my son-in-law was planning to get into the export business, he too tried to help me locate a Chinese trap manufacturer.

One day, while surfing the net for traps, I found a Turkish university report that mentioned 'the Swedish Trappy.' I perked up and read on. They were using what they called the Swedish Trappy in a study of Turkish crayfish populations. Then I found some organizations in the UK who also did scientific work on crayfish, mostly in an effort to eliminate (!) the Signal crayfish. They also talked about 'the Swedish Trappy'. One of them had a web site that mentioned this 'great, productive trap' from Sweden. I wrote to them asking for the origin of the trap. China? No. Sweden!

They knew they bought the trap from Sweden, maybe it was even made there. I started surfing again, *in Swedish*, for anything that was called Trappy. Lo and behold, suddenly up popped a company selling crayfish traps in the town of Virserum in the province of Småland. The manager's name was Jan-Fredrik and I dashed off an email to him asking where he got his traps from. China? No. He made them right there in Virserum, Sweden.

Eureka! I had finally found my trap. And it was not made in China after all. It was made *back home* in my own childhood neck of the woods. In the middle of the area of Sweden that is well known for its plentiful crayfish. So I had been looking all over the world for this elusive trap, and it was there in my own back yard, practically.

I made quick contact with the manager and agreed to purchase a large amount of traps to relieve me of the chore of making my own traps from morning to night. Jan-Fredrik loaded a pallet of his Trappy traps on a truck destined for Hamburg, and soon the load was happily aboard a containerized ship heading for the US East Coast. That's where it is as of today, and after re-loading onto a truck, the yellow funneled Trappy traps will cross the country on its way to Arizona mountains and to Trapper Arne in Payson.

The Trappy is a neat little trap. Each side of the black plastic cylinder has a yellow funnel that cleverly twists off when you want to empty your catch or insert bait. This trap collapses flat to take little space during transport. It is lightweight and has a metal stabilizer along the bottom to let it sink faster in the lake and comes equipped with a bait container. Bait containers work, but I still prefer hanging the bait freely inside the trap for better dispersion of the bait scent especially when water is cold.

The Trappy is popular in both Sweden and other European countries. Soon I, as the sole US distributor, will proudly present 'the Swedish TRAPPY' on my web site. As soon as it arrives, you will see it introduced on WWW.TrapperArne.com.

Trapper Arne