

# Chapter I Introduction to Trapper Education



Photo Michigan DNR

Trapping benefits society.

Trapping is highly regulated.

Trapping is a highly engaging, year-round activity.



**Content Standard** - *Students demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of trapping and trapper education in today's society*

## Introduction

Trapping is part of our North American heritage. First-time trappers in many states and Canadian provinces must complete a trapper education program covering skills, regulations, and trapping's role in scientific wildlife management. Trapper education programs teach basic techniques with a strong focus on the responsible treatment of animals, legal methods, safety, selectivity, and ethical trapper behavior.

This Trapper Education Program was developed by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). The Association represents professionals from the fish and wildlife agencies of the states, provinces, and federal governments of the U.S. and Canada. The program was developed to:

- Protect the health, safety, and welfare of people, wildlife, and domestic animals
- Support wildlife conservation programs that sustain species and ecosystems for the benefit of future generations
- Increase the benefits society currently receives from regulated trapping activities



**Recognize that the decision to become a trapper represents a serious commitment of time and dedication to responsible behavior**

Trapping is a highly regulated activity because the public is concerned about wildlife conservation and the welfare of wild animals. Regulations are designed to help manage furbearing animals using safe and selective equipment and techniques.



Trapping takes a lot of time and dedication. Trappers spend time studying wildlife, scouting, preparing traps, working with landowners, setting traps, running traplines, and preparing pelts. When trapping season starts, trappers must check their traps on a regular basis until they are removed. Many states, including Michigan, have minimum trap-check requirements. *Please check the current Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide for more information.*

Society, trappers and non-trappers alike, will not accept illegal or unethical behavior. This course can teach you the basics. You must be willing to spend the time and effort to trap responsibly.

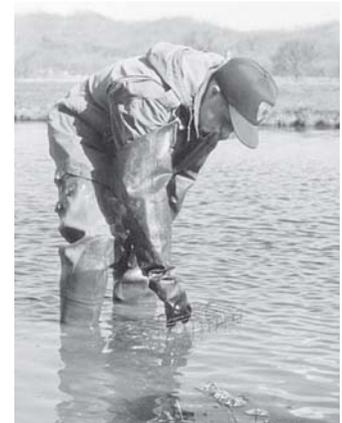


**List five positive or negative values of furbearers including ecological, biological, cultural, aesthetic, and economic values**

Today fur products and trapping are still of cultural and economic importance. Furbearers continue to be used and managed as valuable, and renewable, natural resources.

Values associated with furbearers:

- Economic - Positive values include furs, meat, and by-products such as perfume and fishing lures. Examples of negative values include crop and livestock depredation, property damage, and flooded roads.
- Ecological - Furbearers have positive value as predators and prey in functioning ecosystems.
- Cultural - Trapping is valued by many people as part of their cultural heritage. Trapping involves outdoor skills, knowledge and respect for wildlife, and family activities. Some people look to nature or the land to provide vegetables, firewood, meat, and furs. Trapping provides these people with needed food and clothing.
- Biological - Furbearers have positive values that help us understand human health and the effects of environmental pollutants (e.g., reproductive success of mink is less in highly polluted waterways). Negative biological values include human exposure to disease and parasites.
- Aesthetic - Furbearers have many positive aesthetic values for fur and wildlife watching.



Ohio DOW Photo

Farmers who have crop damage may give you permission to trap.

Illegal or unethical behavior is not acceptable. Show respect for wildlife, people, and property.



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Trapping is a way of life for many people.



Rabies and tularemia are two of the diseases humans may contract from furbearers.

Wetland habitats are home to hundreds of species of wildlife.



FWS Photo

Whooping Crane - a wetland-dependent species.

When voters restricted trapping in Massachusetts in 1996, landowner beaver complaints doubled.

Trappers have helped restore river otter populations in 19 states - visit [www.conservewildlife.org](http://www.conservewildlife.org).

A US Fish and Wildlife Service survey revealed 487 wildlife management programs that involved trapping on 281 National Wildlife Refuges.



## **List a minimum of four benefits regulated trapping provides to society**

Responsible trappers provide these benefits to society:

- Disease Control - In some circumstances, trapping can help reduce the disease transmission rates and frequency of occurrence.
- Habitat Protection - When furbearers overpopulate they can destroy habitat. For example, the harvest of nutria in Louisiana helps protect 3.6 million acres of coastal wetlands.
- Endangered Species Protection - In certain situations predators can be an important source of mortality for rare species and may even prevent recovery. Foothold traps may help protect many rare and endangered species from predators at the local level.
- Property Protection - Farmers and other landowners benefit when trappers remove excess furbearers that threaten property and crops.
- Wildlife Restoration - Trappers use foothold traps to capture species such as river otters in states where they are plentiful so they can be released in other states to re-establish populations.
- Wildlife Research - Foothold traps and cable-restraining devices are the only effective means for catching elusive species such as wolves, coyotes, and foxes. Wildlife biologists depend on traps and trappers to help study many species of wildlife.



## **Know that trapping is an individual privilege, not an individual right**

In most states, trapping is an individual privilege available to all citizens who choose to follow regulations and behave responsibly. Trappers who violate laws can lose their privilege to trap. If trappers as a group do not behave responsibly, citizens could decide to stop all trapping.

Some states have made it a collective right to hunt, fish, and trap. This protects the activity of trapping for future generations. It does not protect trapping privileges for people who violate trapping regulations. Judges can, and do, suspend trapping privileges for serious violations.



## **Identify a minimum of two state or national trappers associations that provide materials and continuing education for trappers**

Trappers have formed state and national organizations to help address issues related to trapping and furbearer management. Two national groups include the National Trappers Association and the Fur Takers of America.

The National Trappers Association (NTA) has the following purpose statements:

- To promote sound conservation, legislation, and administrative procedures;
- To save and faithfully defend from waste the natural resources of the United States;
- To promote sound environmental education programs; and
- To promote a continued annual fur harvest using the best tools presently available for that purpose.

The Fur Takers of America (FTA) has the following purpose:

- To promote interest in and accumulate and disseminate knowledge concerning the trapping of fur bearing animals among persons interested therein.

You can find out more about the NTA and FTA at their Web sites:

- <http://www.nationaltrappers.com/>
- <http://www.furtakersofamerica.com/>

The Web sites also link to state trapping associations, online bulletin boards, and other helpful organizations.

There are many benefits to membership in trapping organizations. You will learn new techniques to become more successful, be invited to meetings and other activities, gain a greater understanding of wildlife management, and learn about issues affecting trapping.



FWS Photo

Organized trappers, hunters, and anglers have supported fish and wildlife conservation programs for more than 100 years.

Membership in state and national trapping organizations may help you become a more successful and responsible trapper.



Photo Michigan DNR

**Bobcat**

Online bulletin boards for trappers are a good way to learn new techniques and solve problems. Post a question, and get answers from friendly, experienced trappers. Questions regarding trapping regulations may be submitted through an online Frequently Asked Questions page at [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr) or by calling your local DNR office.

In other chapters you will learn more about trap types and trapping techniques. Foothold traps, for instance, are live-restraining devices, but they can be used in “submersion” sets to kill aquatic furbearers.



Ohio DOW Photo

Submarine or Colony Trap - used to catch multiple muskrats.

Trapping technology and techniques have shown continuous improvement for nearly 200 years.

Raccoons and coyotes are widely distributed in the U.S.



## Know the legal types of traps that may be used in Michigan

Each state regulates the types of traps that are legal. States consider animal welfare, efficiency, selectivity, and safety when they select legal traps. *See the annual Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide for types of legal traps or call your local DNR office for more details.*

Deadfalls and many types of traps, including traps with teeth, are prohibited. Legal traps fall into two categories known as kill-type, and live-restraining devices. Put a check mark beside the traps that are legal to use in Michigan.

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Basic Trap Types	Legal in Michigan
Foothold Traps	
Body-gripping Traps	
Cable Devices	
Cage traps	
Traps with teeth	
Deadfalls	
Other	



## Name the species of furbearers that inhabit Michigan



Eyewire.com

Raccoon



FWS Photo

Coyote

The following species are known as furbearers in North America. Some of these species will not be present in Michigan. Even if a species is present, there may not be an open trapping season for it in Michigan.

Place a check in the box on the following chart to indicate if a species is present and if there is an open trapping or hunting season for it in Michigan. Use the hunting and trapping regulations brochure to find this information.



Species	Present	Trapping or Hunting
Coyote		
Red Fox		
Gray Fox		
Gray Wolf		
Swift/Kit Fox		
Arctic Fox		
Beaver		
Muskrat		
Nutria		
Bobcat		
Canada Lynx		
Mink		
River Otter		
Fisher		
Marten		
Weasels		
Striped Skunk		
Badger		
Opossum		
Raccoon		
Ringtail - Bassarisk		
Wolverine		
Other:		

Even though a furbearer is present within Michigan, it may be restricted to specific habitats within a certain range.

Legislation or Department of Natural Resources orders prohibit the taking of any species if it would harm the long-term sustainability of the population.

Responsible trappers care about wildlife conservation, animal welfare, and the public perception of trapping.

Nutria were introduced from South America. They are found in the gulf coast states, parts of the east coast, Washington and Oregon.



Nutria FWS Photo



Gray Fox FWS Photo

The gray fox is common in many parts of the country.



## ***Know that the Trapper Education Course is based on Best Management Practices developed by wildlife biologists, trappers, and researchers***

State fish and wildlife agencies, trapping organizations, veterinarians, and university researchers help develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for regulated trapping in the United States.



FWS Photo

River Otter

Trapping BMPs are documents that provide information to help trappers practice safe, humane, and efficient techniques. BMPs describe different types of traps, how they work, how traps should be set, and what training may be needed for people who use BMP traps.

Five criteria are considered when developing BMPs:

- **Animal Welfare** - Researchers tested live restraining traps for injuries to furbearers using two methods. One system evaluated specific injuries, and the other grouped the injuries into categories from mild to severe. BMP approved traps must have a low rate of injuries to the furbearing animals being studied. Recommended traps resulted in moderate, low, or no injury to at least 70 percent of the animals trapped.
- **Efficiency** - Traps meeting BMP criteria must be able to capture and hold at least 60 percent of the furbearers that spring the trap.
- **Selectivity** - Traps must be set and used in a fashion that limits the risk of capturing nonfurbearing species while increasing the chances of capturing the desired furbearer.
- **Practicality** - Each recommended live restraining trap was evaluated by experienced trappers and wildlife biologists for practicality. Criteria used to measure practicality and cost, ease of use, ease of transport, storage, weight and size, reliability, versatility, and the expected life span of the trap.
- **Safety** - Each recommended live restraining trap was evaluated for safety to the user and other people who might come into contact with the trap.



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Opening Day

BMPs provide guidance to wildlife agencies and help responsible trappers make decisions in the field.

Chapter 1 – Introduction to Trapper Education

Content Standard - Students demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of trapping and trapper education in today's society

Recognize that the decision to become a trapper represents a serious commitment of time and dedication to responsible behavior (pages 2-4).

- When trapping season starts, trappers must check restraining type traps and snares designed to hold animals alive at least \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lower Peninsula and at least \_\_\_\_\_ in the Upper Peninsula until traps are removed. (Note: use current Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide to answer this question.)

- List five positive or negative values of furbearers including ecological, biological, cultural, aesthetic, and economic value

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

- List two products that come from furbearers:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

- List two problems caused by furbearers:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

- List two problems that may result when furbearers overpopulate:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

- Trapping is valued by many people as part of their \_\_\_\_\_ heritage. Trapping provides people with food and \_\_\_\_\_.

- Furbearers help us understand \_\_\_\_\_ health.

- Furbearers may expose humans to disease and \_\_\_\_\_.

- Furbearers have positive values for \_\_\_\_\_ and wildlife watching.

**List a minimum of four benefits that regulated trapping provides to society (page 4).**

1. Disease \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Know that trapping is an individual privilege, not an individual right (page 4).**

- Trappers who violate laws can lose their \_\_\_\_\_ to trap.

**Identify a minimum of two Michigan or national trappers associations that provide materials and continuing education for trappers (page 5).**

- Name two trapping associations you can join:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Know the legal types of traps that may be used in Michigan (page 6).**

- Put a check mark beside the traps that are legal to use in Michigan (*Note: use current Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide to help answer this question.*):

1. \_\_\_ Foothold traps
2. \_\_\_ Body-gripping traps
3. \_\_\_ Cable devices (snares)
4. \_\_\_ Cage traps
5. \_\_\_ Traps with teeth
6. \_\_\_ Deadfalls

**Name the species of furbearers that inhabit Michigan (page 6).**

- Using Michigan's trapping regulations, name five common furbearers that are legal to trap in your state (*Note: use current Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide to help answer this question.*):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Know that the Trapper Education Course is based on Best Management Practices developed by wildlife biologists, trappers, and researchers (page 8).**

- Name five factors or components considered during the development of Best Management Practices:

1. Animal Welfare
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_