



## Trap works like this

Mike Hopper, a fur harvester and wildlife conservation officer for the state Department of Wildlife and Parks, explained the Lil' Grizz Get'rz live foothold trap for catching raccoons to kids at the Colby Youth Skills Day. Hopper said it is one of the best traps he has because it can be set in a barn, and dogs won't get caught in the special trap. He said the trap is designed to have the raccoon put its paw in to get the bait, and once it is pulled, the trap catches the raccoon's arm and it cannot escape.

# trapping and hunting opportunities

"A good day's catch out of 45 traps is 14 animals," he said. "I know some who can set out 35 traps and catch 20.

"You might go several days without catching an animal."

He said most of the traps being used today are foothold traps. He said there is a misconception about traps that people do not understand.

He said the state is using these traps with the river otter project in the eastern part of the state - to catch, test and transport them - foothold traps do not hurt the animal.

"We have a fair number of bobcats out here," Hopper said. "I come up with a couple to a dozen a year. I am sure there are more there than I get. The cats are pretty prevalent across the state.

"Bobcat is the most sought after pelt as for as the price is \$100 to up to \$300 at the fur auctions. I have seen only a few that will make the high price, but many will bring \$100 to \$150.

"Back in the '70s, they used to get up to \$90 for a coyote. Today if they do their own skinning and stretching they might get \$40.

Skunk pelts are worth money, he said, but the primary item utilized today is the essence from the skunk.

"That is still used today in perfumes, cosmetics, soaps, colognes and other personal type of products," he said.

"This is truly a lost art," he said, "Furharvesting and doing the pelt preparation. There are not a lot of people who do it."

He said he thinks there are two in Sherman County, three in Cheyenne County, about three in Wallace County, one in Thomas County, possibly two in Rawlins County and one in Logan County. He said there are more trappers in the center and eastern part of the state.

"Every day is like Christmas," Hopper said of the thrill of trapping. "You are up before sunrise checking sets, and you don't know if you are going to get a new present at each trap.

"You don't know if it is a opossum or a skunk. Finding a bobcat or a coyote is like mom and dad giving you a new shotgun.

"Some enjoy duck hunting or goose hunting. I just happen to enjoy fur harvesting."

Asked about his most interesting trapping story, Hopper said it was probably the first bobcat.

"Trapping cats is a different story," he said. "As you approach the animal they don't want you near and they sometimes fight the trap, but the cat doesn't fight a set like that. I was within a few feet of the trap before I even knew I had a cat. They are truly the sneakiest.

"I have a respect for all furbearers that college could not give me. I have the most respect for a

raccoon because they are one of our most tenacious animals we have in Kansas."

Hopper said the eastern part of the state still hunt coons with dogs, but not out here.

"An old trapper told me if a coon goes in the water do not let your dog go in after it, and if you do bet your paycheck on the coon because he is going to win."

Another animal Hopper has respect for is the Swift fox.

"Pound for pound the swift fox is the meanest animal in north America," he said. "When you catch one you would think you had the devil himself in one of the traps."

Hopper takes care of Cheyenne, Sherman and Wallace counties, and has been here for more than six years. He hails from Pretty Prairie, which is halfway between Hutchinson and Kingman. He graduated from high school in Pretty Prairie and went to college at Pratt where he got an associate's degree in biology and then went to Fort Hays State where he got his Bachelor of Science degree in biology with an emphasis in wildlife.

### Small game hunting

Among the small game hunting available in Kansas are prairie chicken, quail, cottontail and jackrabbits, squirrels and crows, and then there is nongame hunting of prairie dogs and other

rodents.

A hunting license is required to take nongame species such as prairie dog, ground squirrel, woodchuck, kangaroo rat, starling and house sparrows.

Some landowners allow hunting of prairie dogs on their land as part of an effort to control them. The wildlife officers usually can provide a list of those who allow prairie dog hunting.

Rabbit season is open year round for cottontail and jackrabbits. Daily bag limit on rabbits is 10 with 30 in possession. Squirrel (gray or fox) season is from June 1 to Feb. 29. Daily bag limit for squirrel is five with a possession limit of 20.

Prairie chicken season runs from Nov. 17 to Jan. 31 except in the southwest, where the season is from Nov. 17 to Dec. 31. The bag limits are different in the northwest and in the southwest one per day.

Residents 16 to 64 must have a hunting license, and nonresident hunters, regardless of age, must have a nonresident license. Anyone who has not lived in Kansas for 60 days is considered a nonresident. Lifetime licenses for residents only are available from the state.

Nonresidents who are full-time students at state colleges or vocational schools may obtain resident licenses and permits, but must carry evidence of their status as students.



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