

# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Trapper Education



Ohio DOW Photo

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 International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA). 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.

## Safety - Animal Welfare - Responsibility - Furbearer Conservation



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 the traps every day until they are removed.

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 includes furs, meat, and by-products such as perfume and fishing lures. Examples of negative values include crop depredation, property damage, and flooded roads.
- Ecological - Furbearers have positive value as predators and prey in functioning ecosystems. Excessive numbers of furbearers can have negative values if they harm habitats or prey on endangered animals.
- 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, venison, and furbearers. 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. Negative biological values include human exposure to disease and parasites.
- Aesthetic - Furbearers have many positive aesthetic values for fur and wildlife watching.

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



Ohio DOW Photo

Farmers who have crop damage will often give you permission to trap

Trapping is a way of life for many people



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# Introduction to Trapper Education

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

Wetland habitats are home to hundreds of species of wildlife



FWS Photo

Whooping Crane

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

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

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey revealed 487 wildlife management programs that involved trapping on 281 national wildlife refuges



FWS Photo

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

Responsible trappers provide these benefits to society:

- Disease Control - When trappers reduce local furbearer populations it helps reduce the spread of diseases among animals and people.
- 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 - Foothold traps help protect many rare and endangered species from predators. Examples include the desert tortoise, sea turtles, whooping cranes, black-footed ferrets, and piping plovers.
- Property Protection - Farmers and other landowners benefit when trappers remove excess furbearers that threaten property and crops.
- Wildlife Restoration - Trappers use foothold traps to harmlessly 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 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.

## ***Choose correctly 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 statement:

- 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.

Write the name of your state trapping association here:

\_\_\_\_\_

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.

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

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



FWS Photo

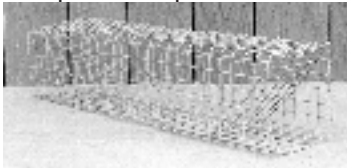
Arctic Fox

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.

# Introduction to Trapper Education

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

Submarine or Colony Trap trap for multiple muskrats



Ohio DOW Photo

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 your state**

Each state regulates the types of traps that are legal. States consider animal welfare, efficiency, selectivity, and safety when they select legal traps.

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 your state.

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

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

## **Name the species of furbearers that inhabit your state**



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 your state. Even if a species is present there may be no open trapping season for it in your state.

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 your state. Use your state hunting and trapping regulations brochure to find this information.

# Safety - Animal Welfare - Responsibility - Furbearer Conservation



Species	Present	Open Season
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 your state, it may be restricted to specific habitats within a certain range

State wildlife agencies prohibit the taking of any species if it would harm the long-term sustainability of the population

Responsible trappers care about wildlife conservation and animal welfare



Nutria FWS Photo



Gray Fox FWS Photo

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

The gray fox is common in many parts of the country

# Introduction to Trapper Education



FWS Photo

River Otter



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Opening Day

## ***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.

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
- Trap efficiency
- Trap selectivity
- Trapper & public safety
- Practical application

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



## Chapter 2

# Historical Considerations



**Content Standard** - *Students use knowledge of history, public attitudes about wildlife, and the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation to understand regulated trapping as a legitimate activity*

### ***Students become aware of the fur trade's role in the exploration and settlement of North America***

North America's fur trade began during the 1500s when Europeans explored the eastern coast. American Indians gave the Europeans furs, deer hides, and meat in exchange for iron tools, wool blankets, colorful cloth, and guns. Samuel De Champlain, a French explorer, established the first North American fur trading post at Quebec in 1608.

The fur trade became North America's primary business. It was dominated by France until 1760. Numerous cities such as New York, Chicago, and St. Louis started as trading posts.

Many wars and battles were fought over the fur trade. During the 1600s, the Iroquois Nation frequently battled other native tribes in Canada and the Ohio Valley to gain control over land where furbearers lived. This period of time is known today as the Beaver Wars.

European nations also struggled for control of land and native trade. The Pilgrims at Plymouth issued licenses to regulate those who were permitted to trade furs with native people. The British gained control of the fur trade in 1760 after winning the French and Indian War. In 1816, the United States took control when Congress made it illegal for foreigners to trade in this country.

The fur trade declined over time, reaching a low about 1850. Habitat destruction and unregulated killing made furbearers scarce. Europeans were favoring silk over beaver felt, and American Indian fur suppliers had declined due to disease, warfare, and displacement from their homelands.

During several centuries of fur trading, there was no effort to conserve wildlife or protect habitat. Everyone competed for the same wildlife re-



FWS Photo

#### **Fun to Know**

Beaver felt hats were prized possessions among European men during the 1700s and early 1800s. They were expensive to make. The beaver were captured in North America and shipped a long distance to reach Europe. The manufacturing process was complex.



FWS Photo

Kit Fox



source. Beaver and otter were eliminated from much of the country. The government did not regulate seasons or methods that could be used to take wildlife. Furbearers of all kinds were shot, speared, snared, or killed using deadfalls. Ponds were sometimes drained so all the beaver could be captured.

Widespread habitat destruction played a key role. During the early 1800s millions of acres of wetlands were drained, forests were cleared for farms, and prairies were plowed under. Streams and rivers ran heavy with silt, sewage, and industrial waste. In the East, nearly all species of fish and wildlife were in decline.

Steel traps did not play a major role in the development of the fur trade or the widespread declines of beaver, otters, and other furbearers. Steel traps were not mass produced or widely available until after 1823.

***Students recognize that fish and wildlife resources are publicly owned, and managed according to society's laws, values, and attitudes***

In North America wildlife is a public resource, owned by no individual. State and federal wildlife agencies manage wildlife for the benefit of all people. Public values and attitudes about wildlife determine how it can be used. Since the first European contact, people's attitudes about wildlife have changed.

People sometimes have conflicting attitudes about the way wildlife should be used or managed. The most serious conflicts are among people who have different views about killing wildlife. However, even people who hold similar views may disagree on how animals such as furbearers should be managed.

**Attitudes and Values**

The values people place on wildlife underlie their attitudes about when and how animals may be used. People who use wildlife for subsistence may revere animals even though they harvest wildlife for food and clothing. People who misuse or try to exterminate wildlife do not value animals at all until they are dead.

Conservationists place the highest values on preserving habitats, ecosystems, and sustainable wildlife populations. Conservationists accept regulated harvests of surplus animals as appropriate.



Two kinds of beaver were used to make felt hats. At first, coat beaver were preferred. These were furs that had been worn by American Indians until the guard hairs wore off.

Parchment beaver were prime pelts, but for a long time they had to be shipped to Russia for processing to remove the guard hairs. Eventually French and English hat makers discovered the Russian secrets and began to use parchment beaver for all their felt hats. The final blow to the early fur trade came when silk hats gained popularity in Europe.



Eyewire.com

Beaver

**Great Hinckley Hunt, 1818**

On December 24, 1818, 600 armed men encircled Hinckley Township in northeastern Ohio. They marched toward a central point and shot 300 deer, 21 bears, 17 wolves, plus hundreds of turkey, fox, and raccoons. This was an effort to exterminate all the wildlife.

## Historical Considerations



FWS Photo

### Grand Squirrel Hunt - Franklin County, Ohio 1880 Newspaper Story

“The hunt was conducted agreeably to the instructions in our last paper. On counting the scalps it appeared that 19,660 scalps were produced. It is impossible to say what numbers in all were killed, as a great many of the hunters did not come in.

We think we can safely challenge any other county in the State to kill squirrels with us.”

### Market “Hunters”

Before wildlife was protected by seasons and bag limits, market “hunters” killed millions of animals a year to supply food to restaurants and grocery stores. Market “hunters” had a strict “utilitarian” attitude toward wildlife. They were not “hunters” according to today’s meaning of the word.

Strict protectionists value individual animals. They tend to oppose hunting and trapping out of concern for individual animals. Some protectionists have a mistaken belief that hunting and trapping will threaten the entire population.

Animal rights activists believe all animals have the same rights as humans. They oppose any human use of animals and may value an animal’s life as much as a human life.

### Subsistence Attitude

Prior to European influence wildlife was a source of food, clothing, and tools for American Indians. They had few crops to grow, and no livestock. The lives of plants and wild animals were spiritually and culturally connected to the lives of native peoples.

Later, pioneers such as Daniel Boone and Simon Kenton depended on wildlife as they opened up new territory for settlement. Today, only a few people totally depend on wildlife for subsistence.

### Utilitarian Attitude

European settlers and American Indians alike viewed wildlife as a common resource. No one owned wildlife until they killed it. Some people made their living by killing animals for fur, meat, or feathers. At the time there were no government agencies to manage and protect wildlife.

### Extermination Attitude

When people started farming in the wilderness, wildlife became a nuisance. Bears, wolves, and mountain lions were a threat to people or livestock. Deer, raccoon, and squirrels damaged crops. Farmers shot wildlife, or paid others to do it. Government agencies paid bounties on many animals.

During the 1800s former military officers sometimes organized “armies” to conduct “wars of extermination” on wild animals. Communities held events to see who could kill the most wildlife on a given day or weekend. Widespread events could result in tens of thousands of animals being killed in a single day.

### Conservation Attitude



By the mid-1800s many people no longer depended on wildlife for survival. Some began to enjoy hunting, fishing, and camping as leisure activities. Habitat destruction, market hunting, and extermination efforts were reducing animal populations. As wildlife became scarce, conservation became a concern for hunters. Conservationists wanted to save critical habitats and remaining populations of wildlife. There was no scientific knowledge about wildlife management. It took decades to create natural resource agencies and funding sources. Leaders such as President Theodore Roosevelt, a hunter, created public support for wildlife and a conservation ethic.

Today, wildlife conservation programs are based upon sustainable use. Individual animals may be used in accordance with laws, while habitats and animal populations are preserved. Many people, including hunters and trappers, are conservationists who care about wildlife while recognizing that regulated use is beneficial to society and the resource.

## Preservation Attitude

Many people value wildlife but they fail to see the positive connection between hunting and trapping, and sustainable populations. Preservationists may oppose hunting and trapping in the belief it endangers animals. However, many preservationists are open-minded, and willing to examine facts about wildlife management.

## Animal Rights Attitude

A small but highly vocal group of Americans believe in animal rights. The primary concern of animal rights advocates is the moral obligation of people. They believe animals have the same rights as humans and therefore oppose any human use of animals including hunting, trapping, farming practices, research on animals, rodeos, circuses, horse races, and other animal-related activities. Some animal rights proponents even oppose owning animals as pets.

## Apathetic Attitude

A high percentage of the American public is growing up with little connection to the land. Few of these people think about wildlife on a daily basis, and most have no personal experience that would help shape their attitude. If they encounter wildlife doing damage to their property, they may want it exterminated or removed. If someone shows them pictures of



FWS Photo

## Sport Hunters

The term “sport hunter” arose in the United States during the mid-1800s to distinguish those who practiced “fair chase” hunting techniques from commercial “market hunters.” Sport hunters placed limits on themselves and their hunting methods in order to test their skills and give animals a reasonable opportunity to escape. The code of the sportsman arose to define proper conduct for hunters.



Silvertip Productions

## Historical Considerations

Some people oppose any use of animals, including human consumption of meat, fish, eggs, and milk.



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Meats



FWS Photo

Bobcat

animals in traps and claims it is cruel, they may oppose trapping or vote to make it illegal. An apathetic person's attitude can be easily changed, but they may not spend much time considering the issues.

### **Animal Welfare and Animal Rights**

Most Americans, including those who trap, care about animal welfare. A small number of people hold animal rights beliefs. A person concerned with animal welfare wants to minimize pain and suffering when animals are trapped, or used any other way. A person who believes in animal rights believes animals have a right not to be trapped at all.

Most trappers are concerned with animal welfare. Those who are not are unlikely to be accepted by other trappers.

Wildlife agencies are concerned about sustainable long-term populations and individual animal welfare. Many trapping regulations are enacted to improve animal welfare. Agencies regulate types of traps that may be used, where they may be set, seasons, and how often traps must be checked. Trapper education programs play a role in animal welfare, too.

One of the most important efforts to improve animal welfare is known as the Best Management Practices project. The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has spent years working with wildlife agencies, trappers, veterinarians, universities, and other groups to develop Best Management Practices. This project is ongoing, and provides information used in this Trapper Education Manual.

### ***Students identify key components of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation***

The United States and Canada have the most successful system of wildlife management the world has ever known. Conservationists, especially hunters and trappers, supported the development of The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. This model is defined by seven principles:

### **Wildlife as a Public Trust Resource**

Legally, wildlife is a public resource, held in trust by the government, and managed by fish and wildlife agencies. State wildlife agencies are responsible for most wildlife management and regulation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has authority over migratory birds and federally endangered species. The Service works cooperatively with the states and other nations.



### **Elimination of Markets for Wildlife**

The elimination of commercial killing (market hunting) of most wildlife for meat, feathers, or other uses was critical in halting what would have been a “tragedy of the commons.” Furbearers are an exception. Using regulated trapping, furbearer populations will sustain a commercial market and provide significant benefits to society.

### **Allocation of Wildlife by Law**

Public privileges to use wildlife and have a say in its management are guaranteed by law. Hunting and trapping privileges are not restricted to wealthy landowners or granted as special considerations. Individuals can lose their privileges if they violate laws pertaining to the legal harvest of wildlife.

### **Wildlife May Be Killed Only for a Legitimate Purpose**

Killing wildlife for frivolous reasons is prohibited by law. If society is going to sanction the killing of wildlife it must be for a legitimate purpose such as using the animal or its parts for food, clothing, medicine, self-defense, or property protection.

### **Wildlife Is Considered an International Resource**

The Migratory Bird Treaty of 1916 between the United States and Canada was the world’s first significant international treaty for the management of wildlife. Today, waterfowl, songbirds, and other migratory wildlife benefit from international management and regulation.

### **Science Is the Proper Tool for Discharge of Wildlife Policy**

Science has been the primary basis for wildlife restoration and management, and the formation of the wildlife profession. North Americans used wildlife science as a basis for managing wildlife decades ahead of everyone else in the world.

### **Democracy of Hunting and Trapping**

### **Tragedy of the Commons**

The “Tragedy of the Commons” relates to common resources that are available to all. In this situation, the greediest will gain the most, for a time. Restrictions on use of common resources are necessary to prevent overuse by individuals that could result in the loss of these resources to society.



Eyewire.com

Red Fox



FWS Photo

Muskrat

## Historical Considerations

Furbearers are not considered to be migratory. State fish and wildlife agencies are responsible for managing furbearers.



Eyewire.com

Coyote



FWS Photo

Bobcat

In North America, everyone has the opportunity to participate in regulated hunting and trapping. President Theodore Roosevelt wrote about the societal gains to be made by keeping land available for hunting for all people. This is very different from a model that existed for centuries in Europe, where wealthy people owned wildlife and the land, and only the wealthy could fish and hunt. In North America, wildlife is owned by the public, and responsible citizens have equal opportunities to participate in regulated hunting or trapping.

Hunters and trappers provide the funding for wildlife management programs and the purchase of critical habitats. When they join together with a common purpose, hunters and trappers are a political force speaking out in favor of wildlife conservation.

Thanks to conservation-minded hunters and trappers, species such as elk, deer, geese, wild turkeys, wood ducks, beaver, bald eagles, and river otters are more numerous today than they were in 1900. Hunters, trappers, and other conservationists were the first people to place a value on living wildlife. As a result, wildlife is now managed as a public resource to be conserved for the benefit of all.

***Students use their knowledge of history, public attitudes about wildlife, and the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation to participate in discussions about regulated trapping and the role of trappers in today's society***

Think about each of the people in the following scenarios and the attitudes they may have about furbearers and trapping. What would you do in this situation? If you could talk to the people, what would you say? What might change their feelings? If everyone in your community had the same attitudes about wildlife, what might happen as a result?

**Scenario 1:** You stop at a roadside stand where a farmer sells fruits and vegetables. You overhear a customer say "Why is your sweet corn so expensive this year?" The farmer says "Raccoons have eaten nearly half my corn. I never saw so much damage."

**Scenario 2:** Your family has trapped on several properties in your neighborhood for many years. One property with two large ponds was sold to a family from another state. A month before trapping season opens you stop by to introduce yourself. A young child waves at you as you pull in the drive.

## Safety - Animal Welfare - Responsibility - Furbearer Conservation



As you get out of the car you notice a bumper sticker on the car in front of you. It says "Real Men Don't Eat Meat." The front door opens and a young man steps out to check on the child.

**Scenario 3:** You take your dog to the vet for annual shots. While you are waiting a woman rushes in crying and holding a badly injured cat. She tells the receptionist her cat is dying after being attacked by a coyote.

**Scenario 4:** You are sitting in a restaurant having lunch. You overhear a conversation at the table next to you. It sounds like the three men sitting there are poaching deer and selling the meat, but you aren't sure. Sometimes their talk sounds like it is in code. When you leave the restaurant there is a truck parked next to you. You see a spotlight on the seat. As you back out you notice blood and deer hair on the bumper.



FWS Photo

River Otter