

Dispelling misleading myths on traps

Is the MSPCA misleading us about trapping? An emotional **Ron Kazlauskas**, regional director for the National Trappers Association of America, sat with me on the porch of the Auburn Sportsman's Club recently, wholeheartedly dispelling the myths about his much misunderstood tradition.



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Trappers are mostly men of humble means and part of a tiny coterie with little political clout. They don't have the money to educate the public and counter the damage caused by well-pocketed radical animal rights groups opposed to the management of furbearers.

He showed me a modern trap — not our grandfather's variety — intentionally letting it snap shut on his fingers. Surprisingly, the new trap, which the MSPCA vilifies, did absolutely no damage — nor did it inflict any pain.

Kazlauskas, an Auburn Sportsman's Club member, is incensed with the MSPCA for their attacks on trapping, which is essential to furbearer management and supported overwhelmingly by wildlife biologists. His demonstration was the preface to a scathing criticism of an organization that he believes has a radical agenda that relies on false, inflammatory propaganda.

The MSPCA's latest salvo, Kazlauskas fumes, stems from an incident last June, when a cat was pictured with an amputated leg that allegedly was caught in an illegally set trap. A single long-spring trap was pictured, too. According to Kazlauskas, "The largest trap of this type is a size 1½ with a jaw spread of 4 inches. It's used for muskrat, skunk, fisher and similar-sized furbearers. It will not hold a bobcat as the MSPCA claims." This was the trap Kazlauskas let shut on his fingers.

"I want to set the facts straight," Kazlauskas said. "About a skunk later caught in a trap in Worcester: I contacted the Environmental Police — the legitimate enforcers of wildlife laws — on this issue, and they had no knowledge of the incident. The EPO that I talked to said that if a trap were illegally set, they would or should be the agency to conduct an investigation, not the MSPCA."

Kazlauskas questions MSPCA Sgt. **Peter Oberton's** statement that this animal tried to chew its leg off to escape the trap. "This does not happen. It's a myth. A wild animal will not inflict pain upon itself. Sgt. Oberton's statement that bone and connective tissue are immediately shattered by the trap is also false," according to Kazlauskas. "All modern traps today are much different from old-fashioned, illegal traps. The new Better Management Practice-approved traps are designed to hold but not hurt. These traps are in fact regularly used by biologists to painlessly capture and reintroduce wild animals from overpopulated areas to underpopulated areas. The reintroductions of the river otter, lynx and wolf were in several areas accomplished with these harmless and valuable traps."

Kazlauskas asks those who want to know the truth about modern trapping to visit nationaltrappers.com and click on the link "Destroying the Myth." He's furthermore willing to put both his reputation and the ethical nature of trapping on the line by offering to meet with any open-minded groups to demonstrate what modern traps and trapping are really like — and why communities need them. Kazlauskas can be reached at ronk2008@hotmail.com. If he's right, maybe the MSPCA should accept his invitation.

Fishing season isn't over

You made a mistake if you put your fishing rods away. The action is far from over.

Baitfish and their attendant predators arrive and depart with the emergence and falling of our foliage. Consider that **Dan Hiemer** just landed a 19.69-pound bluefish in the Martha's Vineyard tournament, and albies have been thick on the south side of the Elizabeth Islands. Bonito have been hitting hard off Edgartown, too.

Meanwhile, stripers are moving along the Cape's south side, notably from Popponesset to Falmouth, and night fishermen casting live eels are still landing stripers in the Canal. Most impressively, the bluefin tunabite continues off Chatham.

Average foliage up north

While local foliage promises to be the best in years, northern foliage has been average. Vermont naturalist **Stan Rawinski** shared that

many factors, including underlying soils, affect foliage.

"West of the Connecticut River, alkaline soils favor maple forests, which rest on northern Vermont's limestone bedrock. An unusually wet summer contributed to an early leaf fall and less than vibrant foliage there."

"East of the Connecticut, Northern New Hampshire forests, with mostly acidic soils, granite bedrock and a more-varied flora, had greater contrast. Excessive summer rains caused an early leaf fall there, too, though."

Ideally, bright yellow birches and aspens contrast with red maples, sumac and mountain ashes, interspersed with orange sugar maples, bronze hickory, coppery beeches and oak, and various shades of light to dark evergreens that set off white bark trunks of birches, and gray trunks of defoliated trees. This is the potential palette of color that in peak years makes spectacular mountain bouquets and lures bedazzled visitors from around the globe.

Said Rawinski: "The predominant tree in Vermont is the sugar maple, so foliage intensity there is more of an all-or-nothing prospect, depending on how well that species thrives."

Outdoor Calendar

Today — Friday Night Lights Trap Shoot and Pot-Luck Dinner. Auburn Sportsman's Club. Info: (508) 832-6492.

Saturday — Montauk Hook and Slice Wounded Warrior Bass and Bluefish Tournament/Golf Outing to benefit Wounded Warrior Project. Donation of \$150 includes dinner at the Montauk (N.Y.) Yacht Club. Silent auction and door prizes. Info: Jerry Nigro, (917) 407-0248; www.montaukhookandslice.com.

Sunday — Birdwatching Lake Quabog. Forbush Bird Club. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Lake Quabog parking lot, Shore Road, Brookfield. Free. Leader Rodney Jenkins (508) 757-5010.

Monday — Singletary Rod & Gun Fundraising Meat Raffle. 2-5 p.m. Info: (508) 865-9698.

Thursday — Shorebird Migration. Forbush Bird Club program. Mass Audubon Broad Meadow Brook, 414 Massachusetts Road, Worcester. 7:30 p.m. Speaker: Shawn Carey. Free.

Oct. 19 — Manchaug Pond's 5K Run & 3K Health Walk to benefit the Manchaug Pond Foundation. Info and registration: www.manchaugpondassociation.blogspot.com.

Oct. 19 — Deer hunting seminar. Part 1 of a two-part series by the Massachusetts Becoming an Outdoorswoman Program for beginners 18 and older. Info: (508) 389-6300.

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