

TRAPS AND TRAPPING



**SURVIVAL GUIDE:
IN THE WILD**

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TRAPS AND TRAPPING

It is easier to trap most small prey than to hunt them. Even if you spot a small animal it offers very little target and can easily take cover. Trapping requires less skill and leaves you free to spend time foraging for other food. Nevertheless be ready to take advantage of sitting prey if you get the chance.

The survivor's own preservation must take precedence over humanitarian principles and unfortunately some of the easiest traps can cause considerable suffering to the animal. A trap which could bring quick death to the species, for which it is intended, perhaps by strangulation, may catch another animal by a limb and leave it suffering for hours. Regular checking is essential. Leaving a trap line unchecked will prolong an animal's pain and increase the risk that your catch may be poached by an animal predator or that the prey will have managed painfully to struggle free.

A great deal of error can be eliminated by studying the animals and their habits. Choice of baits and sites is important. If one does not work, try another. BE PATIENT. Give the traps time. Animals will be very suspicious at first but with time will come to accept them — and that is when they will run into them.

SURVIVAL SCENARIO

If you have no food supplies which foods are the most important to hunt or forage for?

No one-food source is more important than another, in fact it is vital that in any survival situation a mixed diet is achieved. If this does not happen then you will actually feel more tired and unwell if you just eat say fat or protein. However, if you are injured then you will need more proteins to help repair the damage, and in general you should eat little and often.

Even when on the move, a few simple traps, quickly set up overnight, may be productive, and if you are making a more permanent camp you will be able to set up well-planned lines of traps. The more you set the more chance you have of success.

Establish as large a trap line as you can manage in your area. Inspect it at first and last light. Collect the game and reset the traps. Repair any traps as necessary and move those that are repeatedly unfruitful. To be effective a trap must be very sensitive, so may be fired accidentally. You will probably have several empty traps for every success, but this does not mean that you are doing things wrong. If a trap has not fired, but the bait has gone, it is an indication either that the bait was not sufficiently securely fixed or that the trigger mechanism is too tight. Check both when you reset the trap.

By doing the rounds regularly you effectively patrol an area, noting the many signs of activity or change which help to build up knowledge of your surroundings.

TRAPPING TIP

Baiting a trap will attract the game. In a survival situation food may be scarce but, if you know there are animals to trap, a little used as bait may bring large rewards.

Where to trap

Find the game trails or runs, which lead from an animal's home to where it feeds or waters. Look for any natural bottleneck along the route where it will have to pass through a particular position - a deadwood fall or a place where the track goes under an obstruction will be ideal places to set a trap.

Do not place a trap close to an animal's lair. That is where it sits and listens and sniffs the air. If at all suspicious it will either stay put or use a less obvious route. Don't place a trap close to its watering place either. There, too, the animal is on its toes and alert, more likely to notice anything unusual.

If you lay traps down the side of natural pastures the animals will not go near them but use other routes. However, when alarmed they panic and will take the shortest route to cover. That is when the crudest and most obvious of traps will be successful. Rabbits are easily caught by causing them to panic.

Trap construction

The simpler traps and snares are made of string or wire. It will be easier to keep a loop open in the air if you use wire and the wire in your survival tin is ideal. Even the most sophisticated need nothing more than a knife to make them out of available wood. The choice of materials is important. Use strong, springy wood. Do not use dead wood or wood found on the ground. Hazel takes a lot of beating: it is easy to carve and retains its spring and strength.

Types of trap

Trap mechanisms make use of the following principles:

MANGLE STRANGLE DANGLE TANGLE

The deadfall mangles. The snare strangles. Springy saplings can make a trap more efficient and take the game up in the air — it dangles. The higher the sapling the more effectively it lifts the animal; a net tangle. Some traps combine two or more of these principles.

RULES FOR TRAPS

When setting traps, follow these basic rules:

1. Avoid disturbing the environment

Don't tread on the game trail. Do all your preparation off the trail and don't leave any sign that you have been there.

2. Hide scent

When you are constructing or handling traps don't leave your scent on them. Handle as little

as possible and wear gloves if you can. Do not make a trap from pinewood and set it in a wood of hazel. Each tree gives off its own smell - and the animals you are trying to trap have a very high sense of smell, many times sharper than yours. Although they fear fire they are familiar with the smell of smoke and exposing a snare to the smoke from a camp fire will mask any human scent.

3. Camouflage

Hide freshly cut ends of wood with mud. Cover any snare on the ground to blend in as naturally as possible with its surroundings.

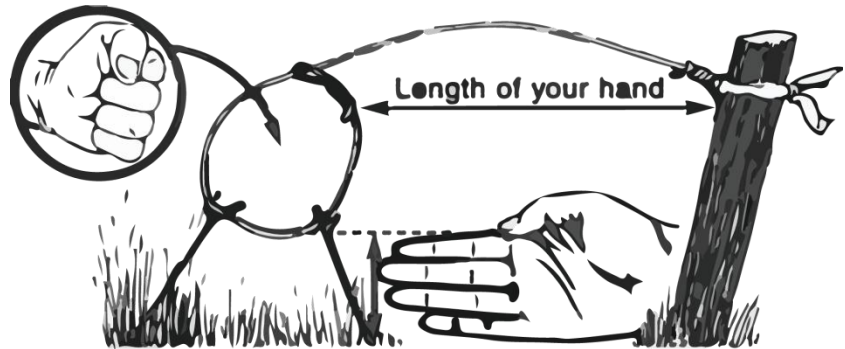
4. Make them strong

An ensnared animal is fighting for its life. It exerts a lot of energy in an attempt to escape. Any weakness in the traps will be exposed.

SNARES

Snares are the simplest of traps and should be part of any survival kit. They are made of non-ferrous wire with a running eye at one end through which the other end of the wire passes before being firmly anchored to a stake, rock or tree. A snare is a free-running noose which can catch small game around the throat and larger game around the legs.

A snare can be improvised from string, rope, twine or wire. Consider the kind of animal you are trying to trap when you place the snare. A rabbit, for instance, tends to sit in cover and observe. When satisfied that all is well it hops along. Setting the snare a hand's length from a fall or obstruction on the trail accommodates this hop. If the snare is closer to an obstruction the rabbit may brush it aside.



A wire snare (as big as your fist) can be supported off the ground on twigs, which can also be used to keep a suspended string noose open.

USING A SIMM.SNARE

Use for rabbits and small animals. Use your judgment to scale up these proportions for larger creatures, such as foxes and badgers.

- Make the loop a fist width wide.
- Set it four fingers above the ground, and one hand's width from an obstruction on the trail.
- Check that it is securely anchored, with twigs to support the loop in position if necessary.

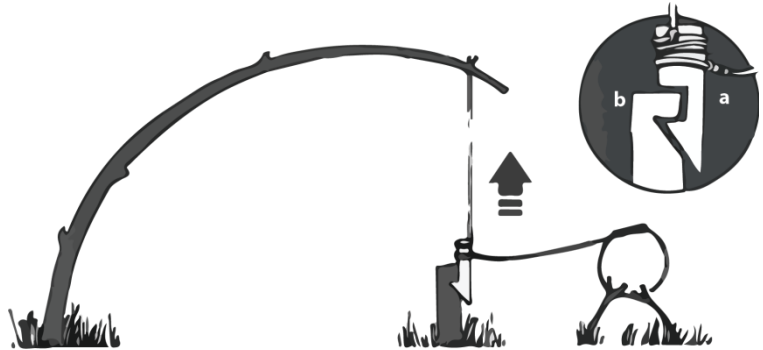
Snares under tension

Make a snare more effective by using a sapling under tension to lift the game clear of the ground when it is released. This robs the animal of purchase in its struggle to free itself and also helps to keep it out of reach of predators.

Spring snare

When game is caught the trigger bar disengages and prey is lifted off the ground. Good for animals such as rabbits and foxes, it will trap game coming in both directions and is ideally situated on the game trail by a natural bottleneck caused by a dead fall or a rocky outcrop.

Cut notch in trigger bar (a) to fit notch in upright (b). Drive upright into ground. Attach snare to trigger bar and use cord to sapling to keep tension.



Baited spring snare

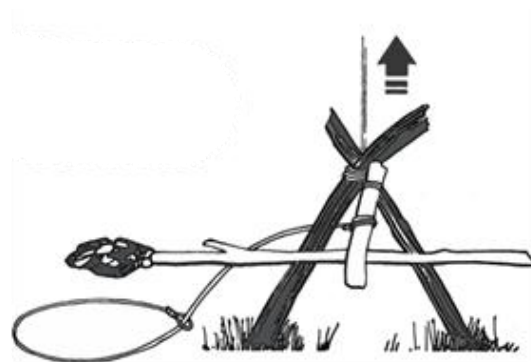
Mechanism as for spring snare, but here the quarry is tempted with a tasty morsel. The noose is laid on the ground, the bait strung above. As the game takes the bait the trigger is released.

Suitable for medium-sized animals such as foxes, this trap can be located in an open area as the bait will attract attention. Small clearings in woods are good sites.

The bait support stake should be only lightly driven into the ground as this must fly away with the noose.

Baited spring leg snare

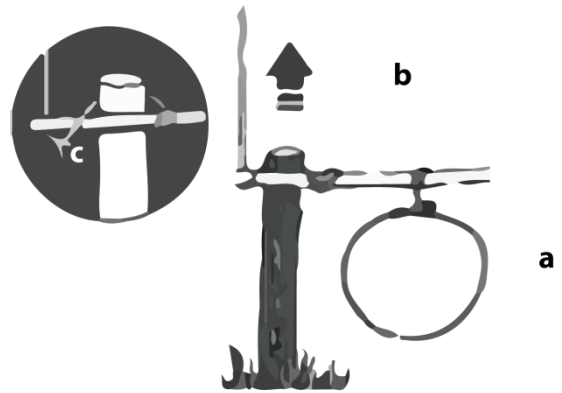
The prongs of a natural fork of wood, or two sticks tied together, are pushed firmly into the ground. The line from a bent sapling is tied to a toggle and to the snare and the toggle then passed under the fork. When the game takes the bait, which is on the end of a separate bar, the bar disengages and the toggle flies up carrying the snare (and hopefully the game). This is a trap for larger game such as deer, bears and large felines. For the herbivorous deer, bait with blood or scent glands, this will arouse its curiosity.



The upper end of the toggle presses against the fork and the lower end is prevented from pulling back through by a bait bar between it and the fork – the pressure of the toggle holding it in position.

Spring tension snare

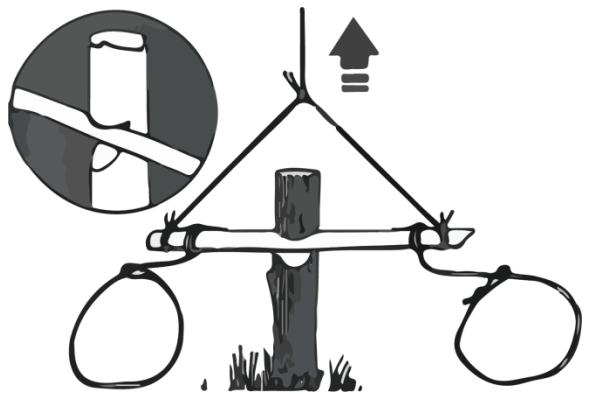
The upward counter thrust from the keeper stick (a) on which the snare arm (b) rests prevents the switch from pulling it up. When the game becomes ensnared the snare arm is dislodged from the keeper stick and the switch line slips off the other end. There are suitable for small animals such as rabbits. Site it on the game trail.



Note how the switch line secures one end of snare arm (b), while the other rests on the keeper stick (a). Keep the switch line near the end of the snare arm (c).

Trapeze spring snare

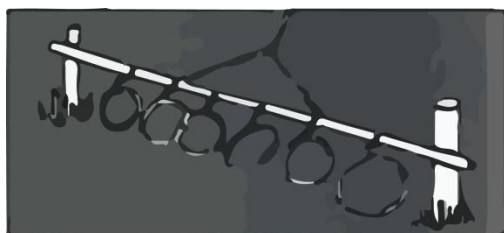
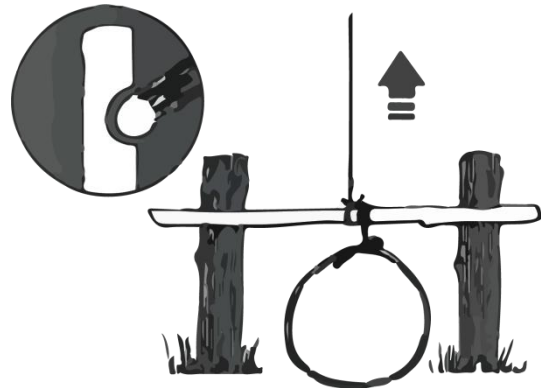
This snare can be used to cover two game trails in open country. The arm carries two snares and is held in a notch by the tension of the switch line.



Once ensnared, the animal's struggles will disengage the snare arm regardless of the direction from which it originally approached.

Roller spring snare

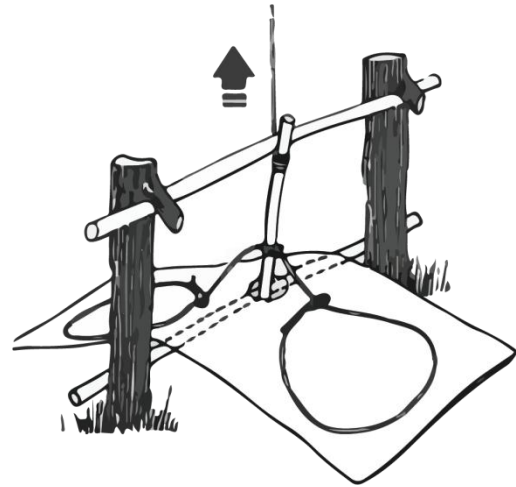
A rounded grip holds the snare arm here; the switch line is best pulled back at a slight angle to keep it in place. There are suitable for animals such as rabbits and foxes. Although tensed in one direction, the bar will be dislodged by an animal's struggles.



A wide area can be covered by employing several snares on a long horizontal bar. There are used where the game trail widens or offers options.

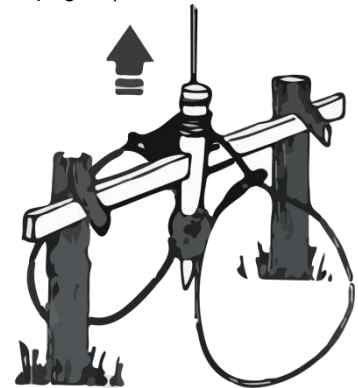
The platform trap

This trap is ideally sited in a small depression on the game trail. Snares are placed on the platforms on either side. When the platform is depressed the trigger bar is released and the game held firmly by the leg. This is ideal for larger game - such as deer, bears or large cats. A platform of sticks, stiff bark or other firm materials rests on the bottom bar, and the upper bar fits in the notches. A similar mechanism (a) to that of the platform trap, but using a large snare and no platform, is activated by displacement of either the toggle or bottom bar to catch small game by the neck.



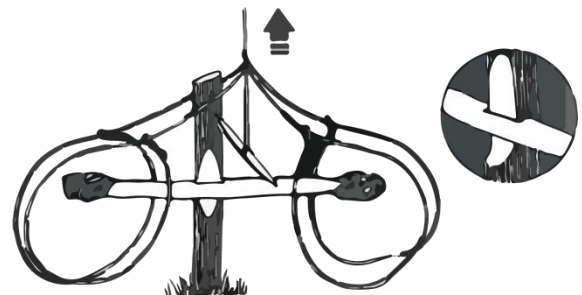
Stepped bait release snare

Two forked sticks hold down a cross-bar which engages with a baited notched upright (attached to a line in tension), which holds it in place and carries the snares. Site this trap in clearings to catch small carnivores and pigs. Retaining bar, or at least a section of it, should be squared off to fit a square-cut notch on the bait stick



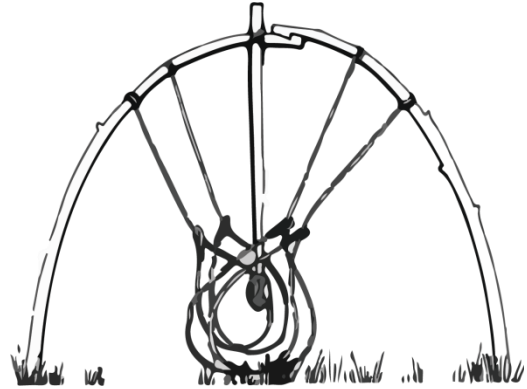
Double-ended figure for snare

A bait bar is set at right angles across an upright, the faces cut square, and a short trigger lodged between them to maintain their position. The trigger is linked to a springy sapling and the same line carries snares. When the bait bar is dislodged the trigger is released. Four snares will effectively cover both directions on a game trail, or use in clearings to snare small carnivores



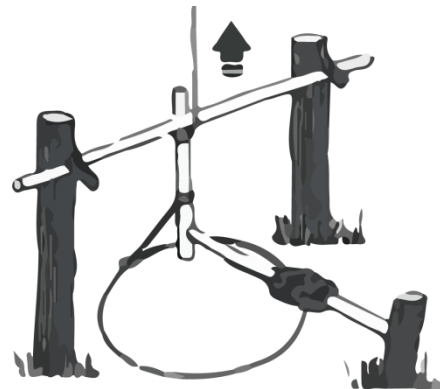
Double spring snare

Two saplings are notched to interlock when bent towards each other over the game trail. A vertical bait bar is lashed near the end of one of them. Two snares can be attached to each sapling, they need to be fairly stiff wire to hold their positions. This is another trap suitable for use in clearings to catch small carnivores. When the bait is taken the game is held in the air between the saplings.



Toggle and bait release snare

A bait bar is wedged between an upright and the lower part of a toggle, the upper part pressing against a retaining bar. The principle is like the platform snare with the bait bar replacing the platform. Movement of the bait bar releases the toggle which flies upward under tension from a sapling above, carrying snare with it.



Taut line from bent sapling to end of toggle pulls against cross-bar. Bait bar keeps toggle in position.

DEADFALL TRAPS

These traps all work on the principle that when the bait is taken a weight falls on the prey. All are good for pigs, foxes and badgers. Larger versions can be used for bigger animals such as bears.

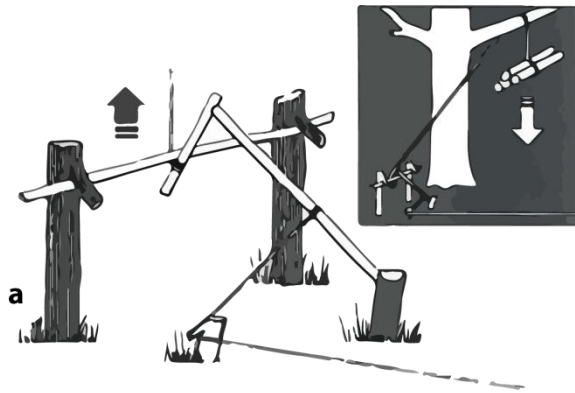
WARNING!

The target versions of these deadfall traps can be extremely dangerous for humans as well as for the prey for which they are intended. The toggle release and deadfall traps have trip wires and are easily set off accidentally. Even in a survival situation ensure that everyone knows exactly where they are. In survival practice keeps people away from them and never leave such a trap set up at the end of an exercise.

You cannot set a large deadfall trap on your own. Keep the mechanism to the side of the trail, well away from the dropping weight, or setting it will be too risky. Balance is critical - you are unlikely to get it right first time.

Toggle trip-release deadfall trap

This uses the same kind of mechanism as the toggle-release snare — though this time the release bar keeping the toggle in position presses one end of the toggle upwards. A line from the toggle passes over a tree limb to support a bundle of logs or other heavy weight above the trail. From the release bar a trip line (usually a vine) runs above the ground beneath the suspended weight to a firm securing point.



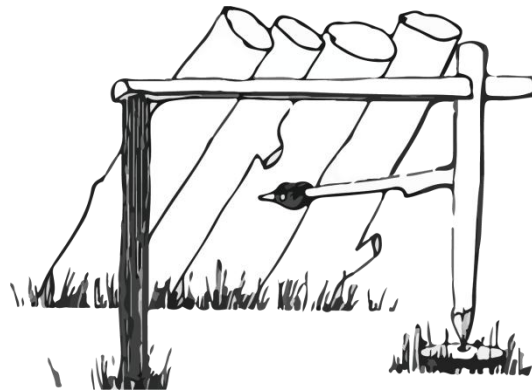
Run the trip line under a forked stick (a) so that it will pull the trigger bar sideways when operated.

Balance log

A forked stick, its ends sharpened to dislodge rapidly and one fork suitably baited, supports one end of a cross-bar, the other end of which rests on a fixed support, held there by the weight of the heavy logs or rock which rest on the bar. When the bait is taken the whole trap collapses.

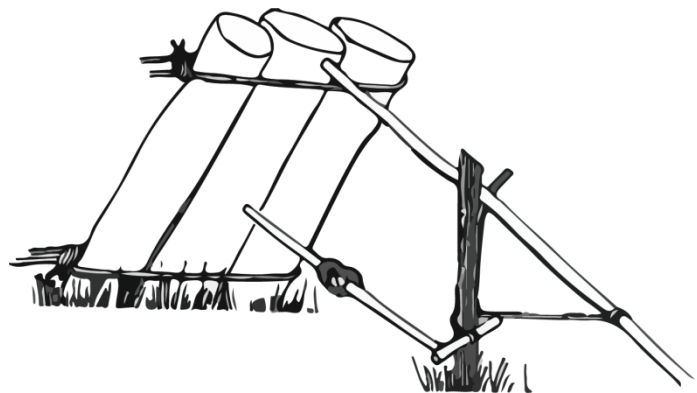
Squared-face release trap

Similar to the balance log trap but using a notched upright as the support, the lower face of the notch squared off. Fit cross-bar against the squared-off lower face of the bar supporting the weight.



Toggle and bait release deadfall trap

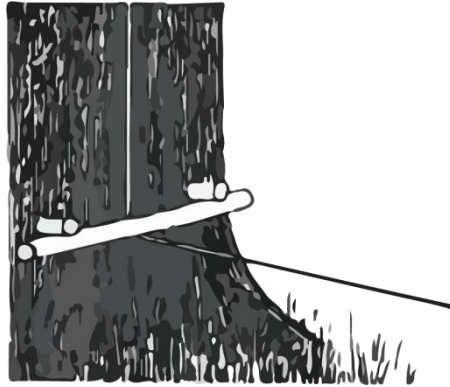
A rock or a group of logs lashed together is supported by a prop which is balanced over a fixed forked stick. The other end of the prop is clear of the ground and held down by a short line attached to a toggle which is wrapped around the upright stick. The toggle is kept in place by a bait stick wedged between it and the dead fall weight. Dislodging the bait stick brings the whole lot down.



The forked stick is driven into the ground first.

Deadfall trap

The weight of a log or other weight suspended over the game trail pulls the line carrying it against a retaining bar held by short pegs secured in a tree trunk. The line continues as a tripwire beneath the weight. Make sure that the line is long enough



and tripwire anchor weak enough to allow weight to reach the ground. Set the pegs slightly downward, but keep them short so that the bar disengages easily.

'Figure 4' deadfall trap

This looks complicated but once learned is easily remembered and very effective. It can be made to any size. A horizontal bait bar is balanced at right-angles to an upright with a locking bar, which supports a weight, positioned over the bait, pivoted on the sharpened tip of the upright.

Bait bar notched on top to engage locking arm, square cut on side to fit upright. Locking arm sharpened at lower end to release quickly, notched at center to pivot on upright.

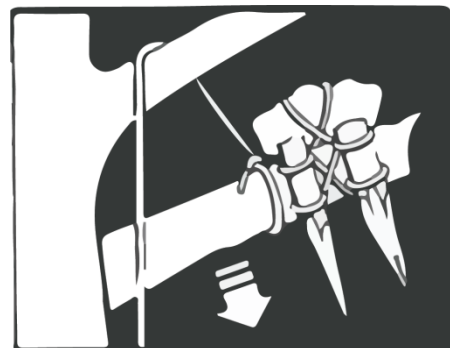
SPEAR TRAPS

WARNING!

These traps are particularly good for killing pigs and deer - but they are extremely dangerous and can be lethal to humans. Always stand **BEHIND** the spear when setting and ensure that the location and danger is known to everyone. Mark with signs to attract human attention. Except in a survival situation never leave spear traps set and unsupervised.

DEADFALL SPEAR TRAP

This uses the same mechanism as the deadfall trap (left) but uses rocks to add weight and arms the trap with sharpened sticks. It delivers a stabbing as well as a stunning blow.



Spring spear trap

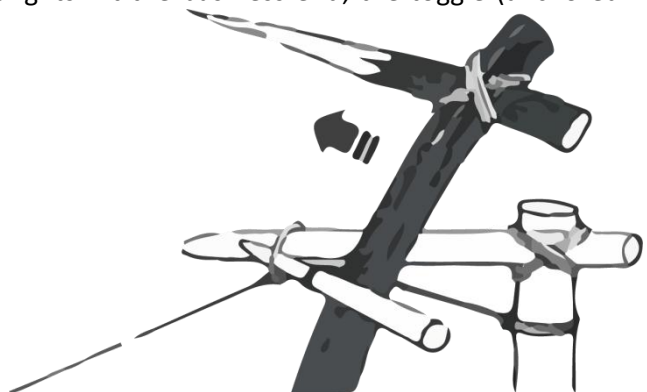
It is a very dangerous trap which will kill game. It is very effective against wild pig. A springy shaft, with a spear attached, is held taut above the trail. A slip ring made from bound creeper or smooth material (not rough twine which could catch against toggle) attached to a trip wire acts as a release mechanism.

A toggle (a) and short line (to a fixed upright) hold the spear shaft in tension. A further rod through ring is tensed between the near side of the spear shaft and the far face of the upright, securing all until tripped.

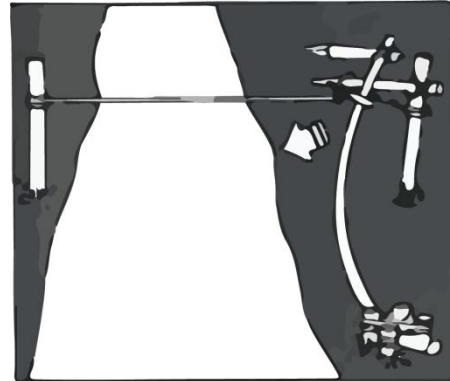
Pig spear trap

Similar to the spring spear trap but operating horizontally, this trap has the unarmed end of the springy shaft secured and lashed between four uprights. At the business end, the toggle (anchored by a short line) retains the springy shaft so long as the toggle point is held against the horizontal bar by a ring. The ring is on the end of a trip wire, anchored to a post on the other side of the trail.

Make sure that the spear is lashed very firmly to the springy shaft or it may be knocked sideways on impact instead of plunging into the animal's body.



Spear shaft is set at a height level with the body of the animal it is designed to kill, or angled to spring to that height.



Tension exerted on the springy shaft requires the uprights holding it to be very firmly set in the ground and the lashings to be strong and secure.

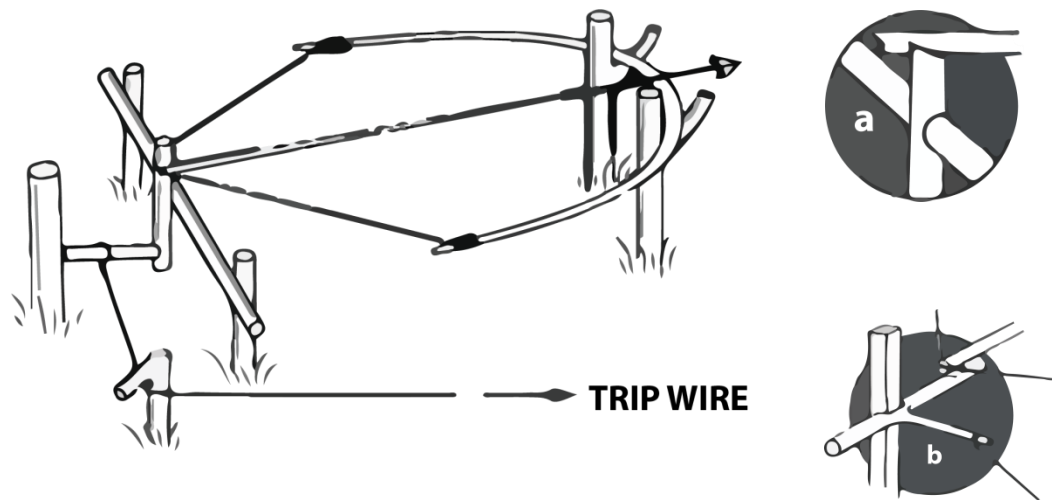
NOTE: Because spear traps are so dangerous, make sure the cord and the knots are strong enough to stand the tension. Never approach these traps except from BEHIND the spear.



Take no risks where these traps are concerned.

Bow trap

A simple bow made of suitable wood is held taut and angled to shoot slightly upwards by upright posts and a toggle switch with an arrow fitted. The trigger bar is held in place by a toggle attached to a trip wire, which must be routed round to the point of aim. Keep the first stretch of wire close to the mechanism, for there is no point in it being tripped by an animal approaching from behind the bow. This trap is suitable for large and dangerous animals and can work with animals coming head on to the arrow or approaching from the trip wire side. (The quarry passes across the arrow as it fires.) The arrow may also strike larger animals passing in front of the bow first.



WARNING!

Never leave this unattended where people could walk into it – it is a potential man-killer.

- a) Notch arrow for bowstring and for trigger bar. Angle trigger bar tip to fit arrow notch, cut side to fit cross-bar. Sit toggle between bottom of trigger bar and a fixed post.
- b) An alternative trigger mechanism: Cut a square face on an upright and a square notch on the side of a forked stick to engage it. Notch the upper face of the stick to hold the bowstring. Attach tripwire to other prong of fork.

Baited hole noose

Digging pits disturbs the environment and leaves a permanent mark. This will alarm some animals. In others curiosity may outweigh discretion and they will investigate. Baiting the hole may bring animals sniffing. Foxes, pigs, wild cats and badgers will all dig up rubbish pits and this could attract them.



The animal smells the bait and pushes its head down. If it goes past the stakes it will not be able to retract it. If it uses a paw it will become ensnared.

Drive four sharpened pliable stakes through the edges of the pit to emerge below surface where they are less noticeable. Lay a noose across them, attached to a post outside the pit.

BIRD TRAPS

Nets

A fine net stretched between the trees where birds usually roost is one of the simplest ways of catching them. Instead of a net, fine twine cross-crossed between trees across their flight path will damage birds which fly into it.

Bird lime

Liming is an ancient way of catching small birds. Boil holly leaves and any starchy grain in water and simmer until you have a gooey mess. Spread this on the branches or other perching places before the birds come home to roost and they will get stuck in it when they alight

Suspended snares

Hang a line of snares across a stream a little above water level. This works best when set among reeds and rushes.

Baited hooks

Fish hooks buried in fruit or other food can be an effective way of catching birds. The hook gets caught in the bird's throat.

Noose sticks

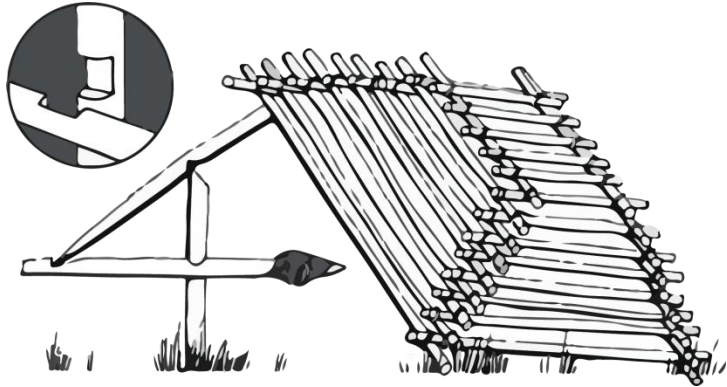
Tie many fine nooses 1.25-2.5cm (1/2-1 in) in diameter, close together along a stick or branch, use horsehair preferably but any strong material will suffice. Place the stick in a favorite roosting or nesting spot with the nooses uppermost. Birds become entangled when they alight. Do not remove as soon as one bird is caught. It will attract other birds and you will soon have several.



'Figure 4' trap

This mechanism can be used with a 'log cabin' type cage, made from a pyramid of sticks tied together, which is balanced over the bait. For small birds you can use a quick method of making the cage: lay all the sticks in position then lay another two sticks, the same length as the bottom ones, on top and tie them tightly to the bottom layer, tight enough to keep all the others in place. Larger animals will soon break out of this and for them each stick must be individually tied in.

Experiment with different ways of making a cage. You may have a suitable box or large tin which would do just as well. It is also possible to prop the raised edge of the cage on a single stick tied to a long line. Take the other end of the line and hide some distance away. If you hold the string taut, you can snatch the prop away as soon as a bird ventures under the cage. Broadcast bait around and under the cage. This works best in areas where birds seem plentiful.

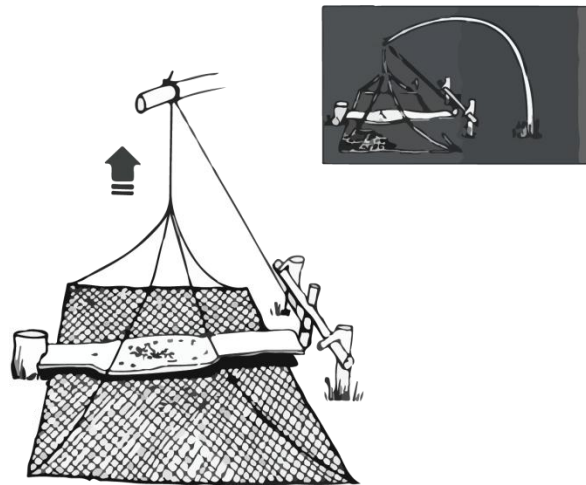


Toggle release net trap

A net laid on the ground and baited to attract birds has lines from the corners to a springy sapling overhead. A tension line extends to a toggle mechanism (see previous traps) notched on to a horizontal bar and operated by a flat bait stick. Set the bait stick off the ground and only just resting against the lower end of the toggle. This trigger mechanism needs to be extremely sensitive if a small bird's weight is to set it off.

Bait scattered across the net will attract birds which will be caught when one steps on the bait bar.

NOTE: If you set traps in a training exercise make sure that they are clearly marked so that they are not set off by other people. Spear and deadfall traps should be supervised to keep people away for they could inflict serious injury or kill. ALL traps should be dismantled when the exercise is over.



SURVIVAL CASE STUDY

Monsoon weather is always bad, but in 1963 it broke all records. In this year I was deployed in Borneo to gather topographical information and intelligence. **We** were coming to the end of a long operation when our base camp was washed away by the torrential rain. Most of our personal kit and equipment was lost, except for what we were wearing. Low clouds made air re-supply impossible and the tropical storms affected our radio communication. We had to seek higher ground as the whole area became flooded. Moving was very difficult because of the swollen rivers and landslides. It took us 5 days to reach a safe landing zone (LZ) where **we** awaited a helicopter to lift us to safety.

During these 5 days, the only food **we** had was our meager survival rations. This consisted of a hard biscuit, nuts and raisins, a tube of honey and a 2oz meat block. **We** shared everything between the four

of us. Even under normal conditions wild food is scarce in the jungle. Fishing is probably best, and collecting various palms, roots and shoots is next best. But the weather washed all these sources away, and most animals fled the area before we did, so we didn't pick any food up on our route.

What we found at the LZ were large white snails. We baked, steamed, poached, and even ate them raw, but however **we** ate them they still tasted the same. Nevertheless, they were an excellent source of nourishment. We had come to the stage of eyeing each other up - and I think these snails even prevented cannibalism!

Lessons learnt:

Carry survival kit at all times

Eat anything you can find

Pool your resources

Know and practice your survival skills.

Water was not a problem in this case; in fact we had too much. Caught rain is the only water we don't treat. But if at all unsure of water quality, then boil it. Also boil all meat, insects and roots until tender, then reduce to a simmer before adding herbs or plants as constant boiling destroys vitamin C content which is essential to good health.