The Alligator Trip Snare: A Live Capture Method

Construction And Use
The Alligator Trip Snare

The alligator trip snare is especially useful in live capturing nuisance alligators when time and manpower are limited. It is also useful in capturing alligators that have become light shy due to previous capture using a light.

A list of materials suggested for constructing an alligator trip snare is included in this brochure, along with illustrations and instructions for construction. Suggestions are also given for setting the trip snare so it may be used efficiently and with a minimum of effort.

Construction Details:

1. Cut: 1 - 1" x 2" x 84" for upright, 2 - 1" x 12" x 36" shelf board for the side boards, 2 - 1" x 2" x 36" for forward legs, and 2 - 1" x 2" x 24" for back (or landward) legs.

2. Drill: 1 - 17/64" hole in each 1" x 12" x 36" side board 4" from what will then be the front edge of each side board, and 6" down from the top edge (see Fig. 1).

3. Drill: 1 - 17/64" hole in 1" x 2" x 84" upright directly in the center and 6" from one end (this will then become the bottom end of the upright).

4. Attach: the 1" x 2" x 36" front legs 12" back from the front edge of each side board so that the top of the leg is flush with the top of the side board. The legs should be attached so that the nails pass through the side board first and then through the legs (Fig. 1). Attach the 1" x 2" x 24" back legs 6" from the rear edge of the side boards. The legs are now affixed to the outside face of the side boards.

5. Place: the side boards with the inside face up (legs underneat), so the 3 electrical staples for the trigger may be correctly positioned. Insert 1 - 1" electrical staple 2" from the top of each side board directly centered over the back leg. Drive the staples in 3/4 of an inch, leaving 1/4" clearance between the crossmember of the staple and the side board (Fig. 1). The crossmember of the staple should be parallel to the back edge end of the side board. Insert 1 - 1" electrical staple 2 1/2" from the top edge of each side board and 5" from the front edge end of the side board, and the third electrical staple 2 1/2" down and 6" from the front edge end of the side board. The staples should be 1" apart with their cross members parallel with each other and the front edge end of the side board (Fig. 1 and 2). Note Figure 2 is not detailed to scale.

6. Drive: a 16 penny finishing nail in about 1" centered in the narrow edge of the 1" x 2" x 84" upright about 42" from the bottom; slant the nail upward (Fig. 1). Make a smooth notch across the top of the upright (Fig. 1 and Insert Fig. 3). A rat tail rasp works well for this. This notch prevents the surgical tubing from being stretched over the sharp corners when the trip snare is set. Drive an 8 penny common nail through the center of the upright 6" from the top of the upright (Fig. 3 and Insert Fig. 3). Trim the excess from the point end of nail to leave about 3/4" protruding beyond the wood.
7. Bolt the upright to the outside face (same side as the legs) of either of the side boards with a 1 3/4” x 1/4” box head bolt. Put the bolt through from the inside face of the side board using washers on either end of the bolt. The upright should be bolted tightly enough so that it won’t fall, but not so tightly that it can’t be moved when setting the trip snare.

8. Cut surgical tubing 32” long, and cut 2 - 3/16” x 3” wooden dowels. Using a pencil sharpener, partially sharpen one end of each dowel. Drill hole in the opposite end of each dowel pin using an undersized bit compared to the diameter of eyelets (see list of materials). Screw eyelets into drilled holes until eye is flush with the end of the 3” section of dowel. Push dowel’s sharpened end first in each end of the surgical tubing. If the dowels are submerged in rubbing alcohol first they will slip into the tubing easier (Fig. 2 and Insert Fig. 3).

9. Place a 3 1/2” saddle on a 6’ Kleflock #2 standard animal snare. Attach a 20’ section of 3/8” braided nylon rope to the saddle, and tie one end of the surgical tubing, to the saddle with nylon string (Fig. 2).

10. Tie a 4’ length of nylon string to a 2 1/2” to 3” cotter key placing the knot several inches away from the cotter key. Pass the string through the rear (single) electrical staple on the side board (Fig. 2). Make a loop with a slip knot at the opposite end of the string from the cotter key. The loop is to hold the bait and the cotter key is used as a trigger device. The length of the string is best if there is a minimum amount of slack left in the string once the bait is attached and the trigger is set.

Suggestions for Setting the Baited Alligator Trip Snare:

A baited trip snare should be set in a location that is highly visible to an alligator. Usually good locations are on canals and waterways that are used by alligators as travel lanes or on the edges of open water. Feeding areas and basking spots are also especially good locations for setting trip snares. Many forms of bait may be used in baiting the trip snare. Fresh fish have been found to be an excellent bait. It is readily taken, usually easily obtained and can be compactly frozen until needed. Care should be taken to avoid areas where obstructions are present to avoid the chances of a captured alligator fouling the anchor rope and drowning.

To set the snare up a few simple steps may be followed, and with a little experience the whole operation will only take a few minutes.

1. Set the two side boards at the edge of the water. Position them beside each other at an angle. The back (landward) edges should be about 8” apart and the front edges should be about 20” apart (Fig. 3). The bottom edges of the side boards should be positioned below the surface of the water. Care should be taken to position the side boards so the alligator is not encouraged to go behind them to get to the bait. Make sure the side boards are firmly in place by pushing the legs into the mud.

2. Slip the bait in the trigger string loop (Fig. 2). Position the bait in such a manner as to be highly visible to the alligator. Once the bait is attached make sure the cotter key at the opposite end of the string will reach through both of the forward staples.

3. Slip the eyelet on the free end of the surgical tubing over the protruding 8 penny common nail at the top of the upright (Insert Fig. 3). Be sure the tubing is attached to the outside face of the upright and then passes over the top of the upright and then down the inside face of the upright to the cotter key trigger (Fig. 2 and 3).

4. Stretch the surgical tubing down the inside face of the upright until the eyelet on the snare end of the surgical tubing is between the two staples at the forward end of the side board, secure the stretched tubing in place by passing the cotter key through first the rear staple then through the eyelet, and finally through the forward staple.

5. Place the snare at the forward end of the side boards as shown in Fig. 3. Make sure the snare and attached rope pass in front (toward the water) of the upright. Once positioned, the snare can be kept in place with some fragile twigs.

6. Position the upright in a vertical position in relation to the
side board, and adjust the trigger for quick release by pulling the cotter key rearward until its forward end just protrudes beyond the first staple.

7. Securely tie the end of the 20' x 3/8' rope to a tree or strong stake. This is to hold the alligator once it's caught, so be sure it is attached to something strong.

8. Coil excess rope on the finishing nail half-way up the upright (Fig. 3). The rope should be coiled so that it won't tangle when the surgical tubing is released.

9. Check the trip snare to make sure that the snare and attached apparatus won't hang on anything when the bait is taken and the trigger released.

It is best if the alligator trip snare is set in late evening and checked early the following morning; however, it may also be set and checked during daylight hours.

List of Materials Required for Construction of One Baited Trip Snare Used to Live Capture Alligators

1 - 1" x 2" x 84" wooden stake for upright
1 - Kiellock #2 Standard Animal Snare 6' length
2 - 1" x 12" x 36" wooden shelf board for side boards
2 - 1" x 2" x 36" wooden stake for forward legs
2 - 1" x 2" x 24" wooden stake for back legs
1 - 32" minimum length of surgical tubing #204, 1/4" ID, 3/32" wall thickness for the snare setting mechanism
2 - 5/16" x 3" wooden dowels to secure eyelets at ends of surgical tubing
2 - 3/4" x 3/8" eye eyelets to be screwed into ends of 3" dowels
1 - 20' length of 3/8" diameter braided nylon rope to secure the snare to a tree or anchor post
6 - 1" electrical staples (3 for each side board) for holding the cotter key trigger and bait string
11 - 8 penny common nails for attachment of side board legs and to hold surgical tubing eyelet at the upper end of the 1" x 2" upright stake
1 - 48' length of braided nylon string, 120 lb. test for attachment to the bait and cotter key trigger. Decoy twine works well
1 - 16 penny finishing nail for coiling excess nylon rope out of the way on the 1" x 2" upright
1 - 1 5/8" cotter key for trigger mechanism
1 - 1 3/4" x 1/4" box head bolt, nut and two washers for attaching the upright to a side board

1 - 3/16" shackle; optional, but recommended when trapping large alligators for attaching nylon rope to snare
1 - 3' anchor rod; optional, use tree or shrub if available for attaching nylon rope and snare which hold the alligator when caught

Snares available from:
Woodstream Corp.
R.O. Box 327
Lititz, PA 17543

Surgical tubing (Latex):
Rubber Latex Products, Div.
Reichold Chemicals, Inc.
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio
or from
Medical Supply Distributor

The Alligator Trip Snare
T. Murphy, P. Wilkinson, J. Coker, M. Hudson
Div. of Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries
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