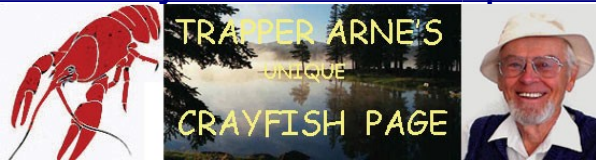


Trapper Arne's Crayfish Newsletter for April 2011



the CRAYFISH TALE

THE END OF AN ERA?

End of the Trapper

The Coming of the new JUMBO

On April 1, 2004, I advertised and sold my first Trapper on the Internet. Today, on April 1, 2011, I may be selling my last. After selling thousands of crayfish traps from my web-site on the Internet, I am not hanging up my hat. No, I am just making an adjustment in my business to make sure I am responding to what business demands.

I was very proud of my handcrafted addition to the field of crayfish traps offered on the then rather new market, the Internet. Of course, I had made traps for myself for several years and had spent wonderful months up in the mountains checking on the crayfish populations in their lakes.

But while browsing the net, I ran into Terry Bullard, who was selling home made traps from his web site. I had just given up commercially growing organic vegetables and garlic after several years in that field, and after just becoming established in a new house in town, I soon began looking for something else to do. After all, retired persons are not all happy with nothing much to do.

So when I saw his web site crawling with crayfish information and traps and how to make them, sell them and advertise them, I knew I had found my new retirement hobby. I was going to make crayfish traps.

To my great delight, and my wife's surprise, the trap business caught on, and after a few years I was selling lots of Trapper traps. But I had difficulty keeping up with the demand. Although I was also selling three other varieties of traps, all imported from Sweden, it seemed that my home made, handcrafted crayfish trap had become the choice of an increasingly large portion of my crayfish catching customers.

So what was my problem? That sounded like a manufacturer's dream. Right? Well, it had an unexpected side effect that started to intrude on my personal life. The problem with the Trapper crayfish trap was simply that it took too long to make. It took too much of my personal and private time to prepare all the parts for the trap and then to assemble them. What especially took a long time on the Trapper was the funnel. And there are two of them. As they are made from fish netting, it involves a lot of hand manipulation before you have a funnel that performs the way it is supposed to. I found myself increasingly stuck each day to my work bench making Trappers and fish net funnels.

Some of you may remember my first Jumbo traps. They had twice the volume of the Trapper and were also made from hardware cloth with net funnels. They caught crayfish like crazy, but had the same drawback as the Trapper. They took forever to build, and

the heavier wire construction made it cumbersome to produce. After a while I decided I did not have enough time to spend making Jumbos. So I discontinued the first series of Jumbos.

But then I introduced the Trappy XL. As you can see on my web site, the XL has a large and sturdy, separate, plastic funnel at one end and a smaller one at the other. I liked that design, and the trap is performing and selling well. But the more I looked at its large funnel, which could also be purchased separately, the more I began to realize that here, I may have the solution to my Trapper labor dilemma. As I had already been sold on the size of my first discontinued Jumbo, it dawned on me that maybe I could make a Jumbo trap using two large, but labor saving, XL funnels.

Thought and done. I made some Jumbo prototypes from hardware cloth – same as the Trapper – but with an XL trap funnel at each end. No netting involved here and the plastic funnel added stability to the large trap. The following summer I brought both some of the old – discontinued – Jumbos as well as some made with the new XL funnels. In all other respects, the new Jumbo was the same large size as the discontinued Jumbo and as such had about twice the volume as the Trapper. (Why crayfish seem to prefer entering a large trap over a smaller one, is still a mystery to me. Maybe they don't like crowds.) And to really test if the yellow color of the funnel would have any influence on the Jumbo ability to attract crayfish, I painted the funnels black in one of the Jumbo traps.

Every time I pulled up a Jumbo trap with the yellow – or black – funnels, I was amazed. While the old Trappers usually ended up with about 30 crayfish in each, the Jumbos came up with an average of 50 in each, no matter what funnel color. The lake was obviously one with a hefty population of crayfish. It was my old and trusty Hawley Lake in Arizona that produced as usual.

Later that summer I went to another AZ lake, reputed for large populations of crayfish. I brought all my Jumbos, even a Bullard commercial of the same size, and the results were astounding. During the one night sessions of the Jumbos, baited with fishy cat food, I averaged more than 50 in every trap. And those crayfish were large, around 8-10 to the pound. One of the jumbos even topped off at 80 crayfish, my record as of then.

With this experience of catching big amounts of crayfish using Jumbos, it did not take long for me to come to a final decision. I simply had to discontinue the laborious Trapper in favor of the simpler but more productive Jumbo.

Said and done. Today is the 1st of April, 7 years after introducing the Trapper, and today I have sold my last Trapper and will in a few days start offering the new Jumbo. Take a look at my web site for some detailed information as well as several pictures of the new Jumbo.

P.S. The Jumbo is large. Some states may have size restrictions that make it too large. Check your state regulation before choosing.

Trapper Arne