

Cabin Beaver

by Scot H. Dahms

"I think there are ten to twelve beaver in the pond," the pond owner said over the phone. Although I hoped his estimate was correct, I knew that people often overestimate the number of beaver in an area because of the large amount of sign that they leave behind.

The pond was two hours away. Since most of the other seasons were closed and I had already trapped the beaver on the private property I had permission to trap, I decided to make the drive and enjoy a weekend trapping excursion before beaver season closed.

During the discussion with the pond owner, I was able to use Google Earth to get an aerial photograph and directions to the pond. The pond owner said I could meet with him on Friday and stay in his cabin on the pond over the weekend. According to the pond owner, the pond was seven acres in size and no one

else had tried to trap the beaver.

There was a walking trail on the south side of the pond on which I could drive my ATV to tend to the traps. The pond owner also said he had a forestry company working on his property. He would have them clear the walking trail of fallen trees, so I could get my ATV to the far end of the pond where the main lodge was located.

I did not know the area or the amount of sign, but I was determined to bring plenty of equipment. Since I would be two hours from home, I would rather have too many traps along than not enough.

My preference for trapping beaver is with bodygripping traps. When the goal is to remove all the beavers in an area, I will place a 330 in every run I am able to find. I will set lodges, bank dens and feeding dens. Since I was only going to be there over a weekend, this was crucial as I only had a small window of time to catch the beaver. I did not know what to expect for possible set locations, so I also brought footholds and snares. I would have all the tools available to me that were legal in Indiana.

I took a day of vacation from work on Friday. My goal was to get there Friday morning and set. I would check the traps on Friday night, Saturday morning and night, and pull on Sunday morning. I would get four checks out of three days

I arrived at the pond at 10 a.m. and met the forestry workers just as they were finishing

clearing the trail. As we talked, we noticed a muskrat swimming along the shore. The forestry workers followed the muskrat as I started loading my ATV. The forestry workers said the muskrat went into a bank hole below where my truck was parked. I would check the hole later as it may have been a beaver sized hole that the muskrat dove into for cover.

After talking, and seeing my traps, the forestry workers volunteered to help me make some sets. I never turn down assistance, especially when beaver trapping.

The forestry workers and I arrived at the lodge on the far east end of the pond. We took four 330s and a MB1216 along with H-stands and wire. I was in my chest waders and gauntlets in the water. The forestry workers carried the equipment down the bank and they handed me equipment as I needed it. I found four entrances to the lodge and set a 330 in each run. One of the runs was shallow and continued away from the lodge. The run ended after passing under a log. The MB1216 fit perfectly in the run just under the log.

One of the forestry workers asked me how many beaver I thought were in the pond after seeing the main lodge and most of the pond. My guess was five or six; two adults and their kits. I also told him that sometimes my guesses are accurate, other times the beaver make me look like a fool when I catch a lot more or less than expected. At this point, the forestry workers had to leave, so I set the rest of the traps by myself.

I knew I would be able to catch most of the beaver at the lodge, but since I had limited time, I wanted to set every beaver-sized hole I could find on the pond. I found an older lodge on the south side of the pond. The lodge had some signs of recent activity, but not much. I decided to set up all three entrances with 330s. I also found a bank hole on each side of the old lodge which I also covered with 330s.

I was back at my truck and decided to check the bank hole the muskrat had entered. I found three beaver-sized bank holes which I also covered with 330s. I had twelve 330s and a MB 1216 set. I could have set footholds in a couple of spots but did not because I had plenty of bodygrippers set.


The pond owner arrived a 6 p.m. I asked if he wanted to check the traps with me and he eagerly responded that he would. The active lodge was the first place we checked. An adult and kit beaver were waiting for us in 330s. Seeing the catches, the pond owner started asking many questions about beaver and trapping as I reset the traps.

It was getting dark and the landowner wanted to go back to the cabin and get his belong-

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ings unpacked. It had been a couple of minutes since the landowner started walking back to the cabin and I was preparing to start the ATV. I heard splashing around the active lodge. I could see water movement and I knew I had caught another beaver. I went back to the active lodge and waited for the water movement to end and the beaver to expire. I removed the adult beaver, reset the trap and continued to check.

The traps at the old lodge and bank holes were undisturbed. The three bank holes below my truck produced a kit beaver.

I unloaded the ATV and called it a night. I moved my belongings into the cabin and claimed one of the bunk beds. I found that the cabin was nicer than my house inside and out. My definition and his definition of a cabin were on opposite ends of the spectrum.

The pond owner let me know that the water heater was not working, so there would be no hot water. I was not concerned as I had expected to stay in a cabin with no running water and marginal heating.

Eight siblings combined the earnings and holdings of their parents to construct the cabin and the pond. I told the pond owner that if I owned the cabin, I would be living in it. He said that it was nice to have, but the family had grown considerably from eight siblings to include many grandchildren. The family used a website for scheduling use of the cabin for specific time periods. The family also has rules set that no one is allowed to permanently live in the cabin.

On Saturday morning, the pond owner accompanied me to check again. The active lodge and the holes below my truck each produced a kit beaver. I had caught two adults and four kits. I did not expect to catch any more, but I had two more checks to make sure I had caught them all.

When at the active lodge, the pond owner found his canoe that had gone missing some time back. We got his two-person bass boat with an electric motor and we traveled along the shoreline on the way to and from getting the canoe. I was able to look at the shoreline where it was inaccessible from land because of the steepness of the bank. I found I had set traps in all the active holes and runs in the pond, so I was confident I had caught, or would catch, all the beaver.

I had a few hours to do some sightseeing around the area. I toured a couple of the local lakes. I returned to the cabin at five p.m. and found the pond owner ready to check the traps again.

A quick check found no additional catches. Based on the age and number of beaver caught, I did not think I would catch anymore, so the pond owner and I pulled the traps on Saturday night. As we were pulling, the landowner stated he understood why I had been so interested in using my ATV while trapping the beaver. If I had not been able to use my ATV, I would have set fewer traps and spent more time hauling equipment and catches back and forth to the cabin. I may not have caught as many in such a short time period.

Overall, I enjoyed my trapping weekend. It gave me an opportunity to trap a few more beaver before the season ended and to visit some of the lakes in that area. I also met some good people who assisted me with hauling equipment and beaver around, not to mention the free room in a better than average cabin.



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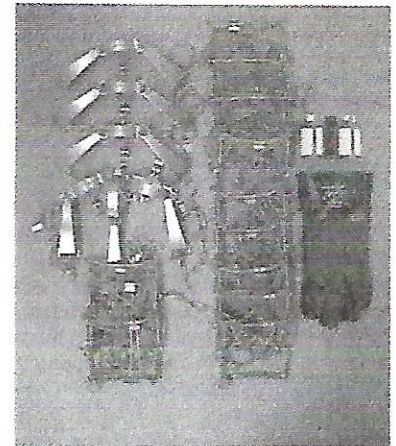
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