Fishing Bait Trap Project

This project build will feature building a minnow/crayfish cage trap from wire mesh. It is expected that adult supervision is provided to run any power equipment and safety glasses are worn.

**Materials Needed:**

- Safety Glasses
- Tin Snips
- Side Cutters
- Needle nose pliers with wire cutters
- Black Markers
- Tape Measure
- 16 or smaller gauge wire, 4 feet length
- 2- four-foot length of 2 foot wide wire mesh screen.

~Mesh is ¼ inch or less, small enough to hold minnows and crayfish

**Bait Trap Construction**

The bait trap will be a rectangular shape 9 inches wide and high by 12 inches long. It will have one entrance slanted at 45 degrees with an entrance for bait to climb and be trapped. The back panel will be used to place bait and empty the trap.

1. A piece of 24 inch by 48 inches of wire mesh is needed. The four foot length of wire mesh is stretched out and formed so it lays flat. Next, the width of the sheet is marked at the one foot mark on each end and a straight edge is used to draw a line with a black marker on the screen the full 48 inches. The sheet is cut in half with a tin snip. One should be sure to stay on the same row of wire squares while cutting across the piece. The finished sheet is one foot by 4 foot in size.

2. Next, the width of the wire is marked at nine inches along the length in four places on both sides of the sheet to start bending to form the four corners of the cage. Then, a straight edge is placed on the matching marks and a straight line is marked down the middle of the width of the mesh. One should be sure to mark and follow in the same row of mesh squares across the width of the sheet.

3. To form the trap, 9 inches is marked along each side of the cut sheet. There should be four marks on each side of the sheet and some of the mesh will overlap at the bottom. Next, four square edges are shaped at each of the marks to form a square box with each end open. A 2 inch by 2 inch board or table edge can be used to form the edges or anything that will allow one to get them square. The cage is worked over shaping it to be perfectly square. Finally, the 16 gauge wire is wound through the trap’s bottom side in the mesh overlap to fasten the cage frame together.

4. The entrance to the trap is now cut. It will be slanted for the bait to climb into the entrance and have a hole cut in to enter. From the second sheet of mesh, the door is cut. A mark at 10 ½ inches is made on both sides of the sheet and a line is drawn across on the same mesh square. Next, the tin snip is used to cut the piece from the rest of the sheet. This makes a square 10 ½ inches in width and 12 inches in length. Two marks at 4 inches from the end of the sheet are made and a bend is made across the piece of mesh to form a 45 degree angle on the ramp into the trap with the top piece vertical.
5. Next, a half inch lip is formed on width of the piece to allow the piece to fit in the trap with some trimming in the bend. The entrance is pre-fit to make sure the ramp is approximately 45 degrees and the bend will form to be fastened to the roof of the trap. The entrance must fit snugly to hold the catch in the trap.

6. Once pre-fit is successful, the entrance is removed and an entrance hole is cut into the screen above the bend in the ramp and in the middle of the vertical screen. A side cutter can be used to cut the one-inch diameter hole. Finally, the entrance is secured in the trap by weaving the 16 gauge wire into the mesh or securing in a twist tie manner with smaller wire if desired.

7. Next, the back of the trap is made by cutting another 10 ½ inch piece off the extra mesh and trimming it to 10 ½ inches. The back should be 10 ½ by 10 ½ inches square. A half inch lip is formed around the entire square with some cutting required to fit the corners.

8. Once the lip is formed, the piece is pre-fit into the back of the trap. The back is secured by weaving or tying the back into place. One should leave a convenient way to remove the catch and place bait through the top of the back door. A couple twist ties at the top of the back door and only weaving wire or fastening through the mesh approximately half way up the back door leaves enough room to accomplish this.

9. Attach a string or wire to the cage for a float to be attached so one can find the trap when it is fishing. It’s done!

How to Catch Bait

Bait for fishing can be caught with this trap with a couple different baits. Minnows can be caught with bread or weiners. Crawfish and leeches can be caught with fresh fish. Legally, fish used for bait cannot be gamefish. Carp, bullheads, and suckers work fine with the skin or scales off of them. Pollock from the grocery store also works. It is good practice to put some of the bait in a nylon sock as the catch will work to leave as soon as the bait is consumed.

Location is important in success and might take some trial and error to find the best places. One should mark your trap with a stake or tied to a float. Also, people are curious and may pull your traps to look at them. The water should be a couple feet deep and located by some cover like weeds or rocks. The trap should soak for a couple hours before checking it. You must release any gamefish caught in your trap. Leeches and minnows are common in marshes and stock ponds. Crawfish like lots of vegetation or rocky cover in knee deep or deeper water. Many of the rivers and lakes have crawfish.