

Fur Taker Magazine

Writer's Guidelines

Lets begin with some general observations:

First, I want to go on record as having said that a good storyteller is probably a good writer. If people listen when you tell anecdotes of your trap line, I'm betting you will write well also. Secondly, punctuation, spelling, and grammar are important, but they are not writing. It is like the paint job on a great car. It is important, and directly impacts the overall value, but it really has nothing to do with how well the car runs. As editor, I am happy to fix spelling and grammar problems. If you have good information for our readers, it is worth every minute. (Sometimes I even enjoy "native voice" such as that of our southern friends, who are ".fixin to commence what ya'll call trappin'.) Third, some are reluctant to submit articles because they don't have a computer-or don't like to type. Now I have a serious problem if I can't read what somebody writes, but I have said many times, I will happily accept crayon on a brown grocery sack if it is good material. It is much easier for me if materials are submitted by e-mail so I don't have to type them over, but good material is appreciated-I will happily accept it in whatever form it arrives, so long as it is legible.

A good story:

Teaches something-gives trapping information. It doesn't have to be brilliant or brand new. Many of our readers are young people or beginners who are not so young. Still others have been at the game for a long time. Give readers something to take to their trap line and use.

Includes photos of people doing what the story talks about. (Please put name and address on the back-taking care not to damage the photo. I suggest tape or sticky labels) Most photo errors come from too little light, or being too far away from the subject. Crowd close and use the flash, even if it doesn't seem necessary.

Touches our emotions-we might laugh, be sad, be angered-It just connects with us emotionally.

Is honest. Tell the truth. When I first considered this job, I consulted Tom Krause, who has been editing for years. "Tell the truth," was the first bit of advice he offered. I share it with you. If the idea came from someone else, give him or her credit. If you only caught seven 'coons, please don't make it seventy.

Has some organization. Try the old fashioned outline to start. Divide the information up into its significant parts, and write a paragraph or two about each part. Chronological order is also fine for some subjects. Write an intro that "invites" a reader, and write a conclusion that lets us know clearly that you are done. A simple plan is, "Tell 'em what you're gonna do, do it, and then tell 'em what ya did."

Gets specific. Articles about wanting to trap, or having a good attitude are O.K. occasionally, but mostly I like to read specifics; even if I don't trap that particular animal. "Trapping is fun" is a title I would certainly agree with, but I would probably not read the article it refers to. "Urine Application For Fox Sets" or "Improved Drowning Locks For Beaver" or "Making Possums Pay" are much more attractive. Details are critical. A snare article should, for example, explain clearly the cable choice, lock style, support system, etc. New or unique sets, different tools, specific applications that most trappers may not know. these are the things people will learn from, and enjoy reading.

Comes from a writer who knows what he is talking about. I once had a creative writing teacher tell me, "Don't write 'Pauline in the Penthouse' stories-you've never been in a penthouse apartment, and you don't know anyone like Pauline." Write what you know firsthand, and what you have done often enough that you are confident that it is "tried and true."

The best writing model I know was created by Vicki Spandel, called the "Six-Trait Writing Model."

She identified the following six critical traits:

- 1) Ideas.
- 2) Organization.
- 3) Sentence Fluency.
- 4) Word Choice.
- 5) Conventions (Punctuation, etc.) and
- 6) Voice.

The Fur Taker does not pay for articles. We are a not-for-profit organization; we understand that good writing has value, but it just isn't our mission. Our magazine is to meet the needs of our member/readers.

A good article that is selected as a feature, with photo support, can earn the writer a year's membership. Many of our best writers elect not to take the membership, or if they do, they give it to an aspiring young trapper or a school library. We also trade articles for ad space. Please inquire to the editor for details.

Feel free to inquire about an article you would like to have considered for publication, or submit the article itself, but please include a self-addressed envelope and appropriate return postage. Be especially careful about labeling all parts and photos with name and address.

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Spend some time and put your ideas in writing!

You'll get a kick out of seeing your material in print, and you'll be doing a great service to the Fur Takers of America!