

Adventure Auction Item: Trapline Ride-Along with Earl Thompson
Earl's brief trapping autobiography:

Back in the '70s, I began fooling around with Daddy's old traps that had been hanging in the shed for years. I heard that a trapper fur buyer was paying pretty good money for coons, so I caught coons along and along, and I shot a few while deer hunting. At that time, head shots on coyotes would bring \$11, same as a coon.

At this time I was farming. In 1980, I had a drought and lost all the money I had, which left me in a financial disaster. The banks would not finance me for another year. So, I applied for a F.H.A. (Farmers Home Administration) loan. It took forever to get one filled out. It was papers after papers. We got down to almost nothing for money. I took what we had and first bought food. I took most of the rest of the money and bought a dozen traps (#2 Victor long springs). I got the traps about dark and by midnight had them set. Next morning, I had caught one gray fox and one coon. The two animals brought \$45.00. I had made most of my money back. With no money and very limited trapping experience I managed to trap over six hundred dollars in furs in two weeks. Then trapping season went out.

That's pretty much how I got started at becoming a trapper. I continued to farm and trap for several years. No one would tell you anything about trapping back then. That I knew anything about. So, trial and error is the way I had to go. I finally got an old man that lived a few miles away to show me a cubby set. I got a Hawbaker's book and was off and running.

By 1983 I had out over 100 traps and doing good. The DNR asked for trappers to save otter and bobcat skulls, which they paid \$3.00 for each. I saved the skulls and called the furbearer biologist to pick them up and he was impressed by the number. When the BMP studies came out Greg Waters was in charge of that. I was asked to participate and I did so in four or five of the studies.

A few years later Canada called and asked me to help them with their B.M.P. studies. They wanted to try their traps in dirt and not snow. I will say now, I wonder how they found me in Georgia. I asked and was told they looked at the United States records and I was the only trapper to catch his designated number of animals in allotted days to trap each year. One time I had to catch 28 cats in 21 days. As luck was with me I made it and more. Then came the live market. I had heard about it and tried it a few times, but did not have the right traps. One year, Georgia Trapper's Association held their convention in Cordele, Ga. There was a pen owner there looking for someone to supply their game. A friend introduced him to me and we talked. He told what he was willing to pay and it was game on. I came home, made some cages for fox and coyotes and bought new traps. Then I waited on trapping season to open. While I was waiting, I was scouting everyday along with farming. December 1st finally arrived and I was off to trapping. I knew where the animals were and how to catch them. In ten days, all pens were full. I was excited and have been excited every day since. After that came depredations. Before that people started calling when a calf got killed or a fox in a chicken coop, skunks under a house and so on.

One day the light came on and then I was in the nuisance business. Nuisance business led up to depredation jobs. Now I had to produce or someone else would have my job. Pressure was on and I haven't lost a job yet. I have six clients and trap for two weeks for each one. I have been doing this for eight or nine years and as long as God lets me, I will be out there just loving it.

I have 41 years of trapping behind me and hope for 40 more. My son, Brian, asked, "How long are you going to trap, Daddy?" My reply was, "Just as long as God will let me drag myself out of

that pickup and make a set with a walker if needed.” You know, it just dawned on me, I may have an addiction. But don’t be alarmed, rehab starts again December 1st and lasts until I can’t anymore. I have made some big catches for myself, but I won’t get into that. I will say that if I had studied my Bible as much as I have coyotes, I would be a preacher not a trapper.

I will send one picture of Donnie (trapping partner until he went to heaven in 2014) and myself. Six weeks of fur is in this picture and that’s not all we caught. We caught over 100 coyotes and only finished 35 Ga. Coyotes. We just skinned the best of the coyotes. I have trapped in South Carolina, Texas and Oklahoma. They are all different. I know I’m not the best trapper in the South, but just maybe I can show you a little something.

I have trapped for 41 years for every furbearer in Georgia. Come help set up, if you have the experience or ride along for three days of trapping mostly for coyotes, cats and egg eaters. We can touch on most any species you would like and have done them all. Beavers and otter are hard to come by in West Georgia. I am in West Georgia from January to March. You can pick my house or West Georgia. At my house you will be in a motel that is 12 miles away in Cordele Georgia. In West Georgia we stay in a cabin. You pick a date and together we will make one work. You start when I do and stop when I do. Can take photos and record if you would like at my discretion. Bering your trapping tools or I’ll have some you can use. The only dumb question is one that is not asked. Come on down south and I’ll treat you so many different ways you’ll like one of them.

Thank you,
Earl Thompson.

P.S. Can pick you up at Macon Airport in December or Columbus when I’m in West Georgia during January and February. If driving call for directions. 220-443-0281