

## SNARING

By Oliver Cameron  
with Ole Wik

When the rabbits were plentiful, I used to make tip-up snares to catch them. Here we go again—how to describe them....

When it's cold and you're fooling around with something like this, you need something that's simple to work with—no tying and untying knots.

The principle is that you fasten the tip-up to the standing tree in such a way that it can pivot. You fasten the snare to the thin end, and position it close to the ground. When the rabbit trips the trap, the heavy butt falls and the thin end lifts the rabbit off the ground.



Example of a tip-up or lifting pole snare. Image:

[http://www.trapperman.com/forum/ubbthreads.php/topics/4362741/Re:\\_Ol'\\_school\\_lift\\_pole](http://www.trapperman.com/forum/ubbthreads.php/topics/4362741/Re:_Ol'_school_lift_pole)

Here's how to set it up:

- Find a standing tree with a rabbit trail close to it.

- Cut off a fairly heavy stick from a Christmas tree-type tree, six or seven feet long—something with a small top and a big butt. This becomes the tip-up. Sometimes if I couldn't find a stick that was large enough, I'd nail a stick of stove wood or something to the butt end so that it would have enough weight to lift the rabbit.
- Position the tip-up tree with the butt end on the ground, in such a way that it touches the standing tree at a point that is maybe a fourth of the way from its thin end to its thick end. That shows you where the fulcrum point will be.
- Take loop of twine, go around the standing tree at the fulcrum point, and pass the loop through itself. You now have the loop hanging securely from the tree.
- Reposition the tip-up so that the loop is under it, and wrap the twine around the tip-up at least once.
- Adjust the length of the hanging loop so that it will reach around the tip-up and cross over the part of the twine that is coming from the standing tree. My loops of twine are quite long to start with. I can shorten them by wrapping extra turns around the standing tree or around the tip-up, in preparation for the next step.
- Separate the free end of the loop, lay it across the twine coming from the standing tree, grab that twine, and pull it up through the free end of the loop. Then put a twig or dead branch in there to act as a toggle and keep the twine from pulling back down through the loop. The loop has to be short so that the stick draws up tight, and must be loose enough that the stick can pivot.

Your tip-up stick is now ready. At this point the butt end will be on the ground, or resting on something. The thin end will be up in the air.

How high you position the loop on the standing tree depends on the length of the tip-up stick. It has to be long enough that after it trips and the butt end hits the ground, the snare doesn't end up close to the standing tree. The snare should be at least a couple of feet above the ground, and the thin end has to be high enough that the rabbit can't get ahold of anything. Otherwise, it prolongs the agony.

I make the snare loop 4 to 4-1/2" in diameter. A rabbit's neck is only 2" at the most, so when that snare draws up around the rabbit's neck, the end of the tip-up needs to be high enough so that it'll lift the rabbit off the ground.

I fashion the trigger from another loop of cord that's fairly long. I wrap it around the base of the standing tree and pull it up tight. Then I pull the thin end of the stick down and hook the free end of the loop over its tip. That holds the tip-up with the heavy end up in the air, but not straight up. In that position it doesn't have a lot of leverage to start with, so the trigger can be rather delicate.

I use a knife to whittle down the thin end of the tip-up to bare wood so that it tapers for 1-1/2" or so, depending on the size of the stick. It's not whittled to a point—it's tapered just enough to make sure that the loop wants to pull down easily off of the flat end.

If the taper is too short, the end will be too steep, and then the cord will release too easily. It doesn't have to be too easy to pull off because a rabbit will raise a lot of Cain when it gets caught in a snare, and it'll pull down on the snare quite a bit.

I attach the snare to the pole above where that loop comes around the tip, maybe a couple of inches from the end of the pole, just back of the taper. Then I tie a simple wire hook to the snare. It goes over the trigger loop that's holding the end of the tip-up down, with enough slack there so it doesn't take too much struggling for the rabbit to hit the end of the snare.

When the rabbit struggles a little bit, it pulls that hook down, and the hook pulls the trigger loop off the end of the tip-up. The tip-up then pivots and lifts the rabbit off its feet.

If I make the setup with some care, I very rarely miss. I usually come back to find that there's a rabbit there, hanging a foot or two above the ground.

All of this takes a little bit of judgment. You want the snare loop to be up maybe 2 or 3" from the ground. You put a stick across the trail that causes the rabbit to duck his head to go under it.

At the same time, you don't want the rabbit to stick his foot through it before he gets his neck in it, so sometimes I'll also put a little twig or something underneath the loop. When he's hopping down with his nose down, you want him to lift his head up a little bit to put his head through the opening.

I also put two or three little sticks vertically on each side, so that the rabbit sees a hole big enough to jump through. He sticks his head in there, and the snare pulls up around his neck.

Did you use any kind of bait?<sup>1</sup>

No. In the wintertime, I just set on a well-beaten trail.

In the summertime, rabbits don't necessarily follow a beaten down trail, although they do have some even then. They wander around looking for something to eat. But in the wintertime, they have main trails that they'll travel, and almost every rabbit that's around there will eventually use that trail. You can reset that thing and probably catch two or three rabbits in the same place.

If I don't get something after a couple of days, I take the snare down and go someplace else. I don't want to decimate the whole rabbit population.

As the snow builds up, rabbits will eat the bark off things higher and higher. If it gets to the point that they've got the snow tramped down and can't reach any more, it gets to be too hard for them to find trees that are comfortable to girdle. I've known them to leave that area. They go someplace else and start over again.

I once made a pair of rectangular frames out of lath, about 18" long and 9" high. The pieces on the short ends extended down another 6" or so, and were sharpened so that I could stick them down into the snow. I stapled chicken wire to the frames to make two little fences. I positioned one frame on each side of a rabbit trail and set my snare between them, with no tip-up or anything.

I had noticed that rabbits often fed on spruce tips where I'd cut the branches off a tree and left them on the snow, so I sprinkled some of those on the trail on both sides of my setup.

Sure enough, there was a rabbit in the snare the next morning. However, it had jumped through the loop and had gotten caught by the hind legs. It thrashed around so much that both legs had compound fractures, and the poor thing had frozen to death. I could see where it had scratched the snow with its front feet to try to burrow down and get warm.

That was the first and last time I ever set a snare.

If I'm cutting a birch tree, I'll sometimes leave the tops. I'll make a pile of birch limbs on one place, and another ten or twelve feet away. Then I'll make a little bit of a fence separating the two, and set two or three snares in it. Sometimes I'll just fall a small tree across there, cut holes through the branches underneath the tree, and set my snares in those openings.

When the rabbits smell those fresh cut branches, it draws them over there. When they run back and forth between those two piles of feed, they get caught in the snares.

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1) This essay stems from a series of telephone conversations that Ole Wik had with Oliver between December 2007 and February 2008. Highlighted text indicates remarks made by Ole.