

Floyd Gibbons'

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"Death Traps the Eeler"

By FLOYD GIBBONS
Famous Headline Hunter

A FISHERMAN takes his living out of the water, and at times the water is pretty generous. But it's a treacherous element when it wants to be, and there are times when it takes back more than it has given. Sometimes it drives a mighty hard bargain.

Judd O'Rourke made his living for eight of nine months by wheedling it from the Saco river in Maine. Judd didn't take any too much from the river. Darned little more than he needed to live on. But when the river came around to collect, it wanted Judd's life in payment for those few months of subsistence.

It was in the spring of 1929 when Judd started to wrest a living from the river. He was digging clams and fishing for eels, down at the mouth of the stream. Eel fishing took quite a bit of equipment. One set line alone cost about eight dollars for material and a day's work putting it together.

A set line is a long rope, with weights on it every twenty feet to keep it down at the bottom of the river, and three or four hundred shorter lines attached to it at intervals. The shorter lines are baited to catch the eels which swim along near the bottom of the stream on their way out to sea with the ebbing tide.

Old Man River Presents His Bill.

Judd's set line stretched clear across the river. It was anchored by concrete blocks a few feet out from either shore, and at one end there was a float that told Judd where he could find it when he wanted it. You never take a set line entirely out of the water. When you want to gather your catch, you haul the line up at the buoy and work your way along it in a rowboat, pulling the line up in front of you and letting it fall back in the water behind.

All through April and May, Judd made his living digging clams and tending his set lines. And then, on the morning of June seventh, Old Man River presented him with a bill for what he had taken. The bill was for one human life, and Old Man River didn't pull his punches when he started collecting it.

That morning, Judd and his friend George Croft were rowing out to some mud flats for bait. On their way, they passed one of Judd's set lines and stopped to see if there was a stray eel or two on it. Judd caught the line at the buoy, pulled it up, and started working along it toward the other side of the river. He worked along until he was about half way across, and then the line stuck.

When It Looks Safe, It Sometimes Isn't.

Judd figured it was caught on a snag on the river bottom. Try as he would, he couldn't pull it up, so the two men gave up and rowed on to get



George was hauling him down—down to his death!

their bait. But on the way back, Judd began thinking that he didn't want to lose a new eight dollar set line and decided to have a try at diving for it.

The river was only about fourteen feet deep at low tide, and all the clothes Judd had on were his boots and a pair of old pants with legs cut off at the knees. He took off his boots and then tied the boat's anchor rope to his waist and gave the other end to George Croft to hold. That rope was for safety's sake. The waters on the Maine coast are ice cold, even in June, and if Judd got a cramp he wanted George to be able to haul him up. But sometimes the contraptions we rig up for our safety are the things that do us the most harm.

Judd dived. He found his line and began working his way toward where it was snagged. He found the place. An old water-logged tree stump, rolled downstream by the current had lodged on top of it. Judd couldn't budge the stump. His lungs were bursting, so he rose to the surface. The only thing he could do now was to cut the line on each side of the stump and save as much of it as possible. Taking his fishing knife, he dived again.

Trapped Beneath Surface of Icy Waters.

He reached the bottom, but the line on one side, and then, after rising to the surface for another breath of air, he went down again. But this time, he miscalculated his distance. He reached bottom on the wrong side of the stump and had to work his way around it. "That took a few precious seconds," says Judd, "because now the current was becoming stronger and it was getting increasingly hard to hold my feet on the bottom. But at last I found the line. I cut it quickly, doubled my knees under me and shot toward the surface."

But Judd didn't reach the surface. He shot up about five feet, and then stopped with a jerk that took the air out of his lungs. That jerk scared Judd. "The first thing I thought," he says "was that a large squid had me. To this day I don't know why I should have thought that, for the largest squid I have ever seen weighed only a pound and a half. Then I looked down and saw that it was the anchor rope, tied to my waist, that was holding me. I knew it must be caught on the bottom, so I grasped it and hauled myself downward, hand over hand."

Judd's lungs were aching now. The air was gone out of them, and he knew it would be a long time before he could untangle that rope and get to the surface. Would he make it? Well—he was doing his best. That ten feet of rope seemed like five hundred. His heart was beating and his head was spinning. At last he reached the point where the rope was snagged, and then—calamity!

As he reached the snag, the rope suddenly tightened, drawing him up close against the stump. Up in the boat, George Croft had picked that moment to become alarmed and try to haul Judd out of the water. And with the rope caught in the snag, George was hauling him down instead of up—down to his death!

Judd began to struggle. But the rope only pulled him closer to the stump. It was so tight that Judd couldn't possibly free it from the snag, and there weren't many more seconds left in which he'd be able to free it. His lungs were bursting and his stomach felt as if it were turning inside out. He began swallowing water—and at that moment he thought of the knife he had brought down to cut the set line. It was his belt. He got it out, cut the rope—and that was the last Judd remembered.

When Judd woke up, he was lying in the bottom of the boat and George was giving him artificial respiration. George had had the scare of his life when the rope suddenly went slack and Judd's body had come to the surface and then started to go down again. He had fished Judd out with a gaff and then worked over him until he brought him around again.

It's Hog-Killing Time In Carolina

"Hog-killing time. How this expression stirs the activity of the farm family as cold weather arrives!

"It means plenty of hard work, but it also means fresh pork, sausage, spare ribs, liver pudding, cracklin's corn bread—filling the smoke-house," said Prof. R. E.

Nance of State College.

A moderately cool day, with the weather above freezing, is better than a bitter cold day for hog-killing, he continued.

Stop feeding the hogs 24 hours before they are to be slaughtered. It is easier to clean and dress the carcass when the digestive tract is empty. And when the system is not gorged with food, the blood will drain out more readily.

Don't overheat or excite the ani-

mals before killing. Getting the hog wrought-up produces a feverish condition that prevents proper bleeding and causes the meat to sour while in cure.

For scalding the carcass, Professor Nance said that water at a temperature of 150 degrees is best. In cold weather, add a bucket of cold water to half a barrel of boiling water, and this will give about the right temperature.

Or dip the finger into the water quickly. If it burns severely the first time, it is too hot. But if the finger can be dipped in three times in quick succession, with the water burning severely the third time, the temperature is about right.

A vat sunk into the ground beside a platform close to the ground level provides a convenient place to scald the carcass and scrape off the hair.

Tools that will aid in dressing the carcass are: A common six or eight-inch butcher knife, a six-inch skinning knife, a smooth steel for sharpening knives, several hog gambrel sticks, two bell shaped hog scrapers and a 28-inch meat saw.

Says Dairy Cow Needs Plenty Feed

With a capacity of 40 to 60 gallons in her four stomachs, the dairy cow is no nibbler, said John A. Arey, extension dairy specialist at State College.

Her digestive organs function best when well filled with good feed, he continued, and that is the reason why roughage is an important item in her diet.

Good roughage not only provides nutrients in itself, but it also makes possible a more complete digestion of the grain in a cow's ration.

Arey pointed out that a pound of nutrients can be produced more cheaply in roughage than in grain. Therefore, it is considered a good feeding policy to give a cow all the roughage she will eat.

Legume hay such as alfalfa, soybeans, lespedeza, cowpeas, or clover is unquestionably the best hay for dairy cows, Arey stated. Mixed hays such as legume and a grass, or legume with oats and barley are also good.

Besides hay, cows need a succulent feed. Silage is recommended for winter feeding; it is nutritious and has a laxative effect that helps keep the digestive tract in good condition.

Where winter cover crops are available, they too make a good succulent feed.

Arey said a common rule is to feed three pounds of silage per day

for each 100 pounds the cow weighs. Silage in the ration increases a cow's capacity for digesting feed, and the more feed she can digest and convert into milk, the more profit the dairyman can make.

Farm Questions And Answers

Question: What is the smallest number of cows that will pay a profit from sales of milk and cream?

Answer: While the number of cows must be determined by the amount of good roughage, feed, and pasture grown on the farm it is not advisable to keep less than five animals. The return from less than five cows will not justify the expense of the simple equipment needed to handle the product and the cost of delivery of a two or three cow herd will be practically double the larger unit. In planning the herd, however, be sure that all animals can be fed largely from home-grown feeds.

Question: How much fertilizer should I use on my tobacco bed?

Answer: Two hundred pounds of a 4-8-3 mixture for each 100 yards of bed is sufficient. However, if a lower grade fertilizer is used it should be supplemented with 50 to 100 pounds of cottonseed meal provided the meal is thoroughly mixed with the soil. Broadcast the fertilizer and thoroughly mix it with the upper three or four inches of soil. If manure is used be sure that it contains no tobacco leaves, stalks, or bed roots and do not place any tobacco trash on the beds as this will carry diseases such as mosaic, black root rot, and Granville wilt.

Question: When should grain be fed the laying hen for maximum production?

Answer: Most poultrymen in North Carolina are getting high production by feeding a small

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amount of grain in the morning and the remainder at night while some are feeding a small amount at different intervals during the day. This latter practice overcomes idleness in the bird and increases the activity. Where grain is fed twice a day about one pound of the grain is fed in the morning and eight to ten pounds for each 100 hens fed late in the afternoon. There is a growing tendency to feed the grain in troughs in the afternoon and this is a good practice especially where infectious diseases or internal parasites are present. Care and attention to details in feeding are essentials for high production.

Terraces Alone Can't Stop Erosion

Terracing a farm is not the only thing that is needed to stop it from washing away and improve the soil, said I. O. Schaub, director of the

Agricultural Extension Service of North Carolina State College of Agriculture.

While terracing and contour cultivation is the foundation of any good erosion control program in most North Carolina farms, he pointed out that something needs to be done to take care of the water at the end of the terraces, and that farming methods need to be adopted that will check erosion between the terraces and put every acre on the farm to uses to which it is suited.

Actual tests at the Soil Conservation Service Experiment Station at Statesville show that tons of rich topsoil wash out the ends of the best terraces that can be built, where farming methods that check erosion between the terraces are not followed.

As long as water runs down unprotected slopes soil will go with it, Dean Schaub said. Experience in erosion control demonstration areas in North Carolina, however, show that farmers can do much to protect their fields by terracing them, farming on the contour so that each row is a little terrace, keeping the land covered with close-growing soil-holding building crops as much as possible, rotating crops, planting badly eroded fields and bad strips across good fields to close-growing soil-improving or hay crops, vegetating outlets to safely carry water

from terraces, developing meadow strips to protect natural draws in the field, contouring and improving pastures, putting badly eroded land back to trees, and planting vegetation in gullies.

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