

J.T. – Kid Trapper

By Jennifer Baumgartner

My son (J.T.) has been trapping with his step-dad Zeb for the past two seasons. J.T. has been a member of the Alaska Trappers Association for just over a year and looks forward to receiving each magazine in the mail. Zeb introduced J.T. to the trapper's Code of Ethics and taught him how to ensure personal safety while doing what they can to minimize an animal's suffering. This has been important, because J.T. loves all animals.

J.T. was born with several physical problems. He has had numerous surgeries to correct these disabilities. His left side is smaller and less strong than his right side but he always finds a way to compensate. Setting a trap is challenging for J.T. However, he doesn't let it discourage him. He loves trapping so much that it gives him the incentive to strengthen his left hand.

J.T. has always been quite passionate about his interests, and for the past couple of years trapping has dominated his thoughts. At just 11 years old, J.T. is immersed in maintaining a trapline with Zeb. On most days during the trapping season, the first words he utters in the morning have to do with the weather or the daylight or if we think he may have caught a wolverine overnight. When he's not on the trapline, J.T. is often learning how to skin and stretch his animals. J.T.'s goal is to be able to work his trapline by himself.

J.T. is also a hard worker around our family business. Last winter, he managed to save enough money to purchase his own 4-wheeler.

Last year, J.T. was told, "Real men trap wolves." It didn't take him long to decide that he needed bigger traps. Not because he wanted to be a "real man," but because the bar had been raised and he now saw that trapping a wolf was a real possibility for him. Like

most trappers, he's always thinking of the next challenge. We see trapping as a positive force in J.T.'s life.

J.T.'s adventures are described on his website www.kidtrapper.com. It chronicles his adventures along the trapline and during the fall moose hunting season in McGrath. The website has also given J.T. a way to show other kids that disabilities can be overcome. In addition,



J.T. with a nice big Interior lynx from his 'line

it provides an outlet to sell his furs. A recent entry details one of his most surprising catches:

pper, McGrath



J.T. showing a fox from his 'line

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Yesterday, Zeb and I checked our trapline. I was so excited to see that I got a marten! Marten have a lot of value and are mostly used locally for hats. My hat is going to be made out of the fox that I got last season. Maybe I'll have a marten tail on it for good luck.

The most exciting part of yesterday was when I found a Glaucomys sabrinus (northern flying squirrel) in one of my marten traps. We were very surprised that there were any of them in the McGrath area. We might post a photo of it soon, but for now we'll post a photo that we found on the internet. I'm going to get up early tomorrow morning and bring it to Roger (the Fish &

Game guy) before school. I like to ask him lots of questions about hunting and trapping and I can't wait to learn more about this FLYING SQUIRREL!

We're glad that J.T. enjoys trapping so much. As a parent, it's wonderful to watch him involved in a healthy outdoor activity, rather than more passive indoor activities. We give him all of the support and encouragement we can. Our local wildlife biologist has helped motivate him, too. J.T. is learning a lot about wildlife and the wilderness right outside of our small town. We hope that his passion for trapping continues to grow for years into the future.



J.T. with his first marten of the season