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ZION DEER

Submitted: October 27, 1938

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ON MICROFILM

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ZION DEER

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October 15 to October 18 was spent at Zion National Park supervising the operations of deer trapping and their removal.

October 15 was spent in company with Chief Ranger Jolley inspecting deer traps that had been constructed, the first of which was located well back in the maple grove at the old Wylie Camp below the Lodge. This trap had been constructed from used lumber under a CCC project. It is octagonal in shape - about forty feet across - with walls eight feet high, and has two vertical sliding doors - one serving as the entrance and the other as an exit to the loading shoot on the opposite side. The enclosure had been baited for several days with alfalfa hay, salt and oats, so that the deer had become somewhat accustomed to entering and leaving the trap by both entrance and exit. The doors, meanwhile, had been propped up since the door release had not yet been installed.

A second, portable type, trap - which had been so constructed that it could be taken down into three sections, transported and then reassembled in any new desired locality - had been placed at the old "horse camp" above the Lodge. This latter trap consisted of a wood frame over which heavy galvanized two inch mesh wire had been stretched and fastened with cleats. This trap has the advantage that the release is automatically operated by the deer.

In addition to the two traps, six shipping crates had been constructed - so that the deer can be crated and transported to the new location as fast as they are trapped.

By 10:30 o'clock on the morning of October 18, these two traps had been fitted with triggers and releases, and set. The larger trap was watched over by a CCC enrollee - who was hid near the trap in reach of a wire, whereby the trigger was manually released. Within two hours, in the middle of the day, this large permanent trap caught four Rocky Mountain Mule Deer - one adult doe and her two, this year's, fawns and soon after the trap was reset another old doe entered.

During this time, the automatic demountable trap captured one doe making a total of five deer caught during a period of two hours.

Some difficulty was encountered in inducing the trapped deer to enter the shipping crates, however, it was found that if a small screened opening was left uncovered in the front of the crate that the deer would see it and, seeking to escape, would enter the crate readily. In fact, one of the fawns made such a hurried attempt to escape that he struck the screen with enough force to temporarily knock himself out. However, no serious or permanent injury resulted and the fawn soon regained his feet and was as lively as ever.

Six of us were able to pick the crate, which contained the adult doe, up and to slide it into the waiting truck without any difficulty. Experiments showed that four men could easily unload the deer.

There was some discussion regarding the best locality in which to release the trapped deer. The point of release which had formerly been designated was the Johnson-Kanab Canyon area. However, the local park authorities felt that since this was sixty miles distant and since the cost of trucks to transport them was high that the expense of this one hundred and twenty mile journey would be excessive where only one or two deer were caught at a time. Since there was no way provided for keeping the deer after they were caught, I suggested that in cases where only a single deer was trapped and available that they transport and release it at Coalmine Wash on the Mount Carmel highway about twenty miles distant from the point of traffic. But, when possible, a full load of four or five deer be baited, trapped and transported at one time - so as to make a full pay-load - and that they be released at the Johnson-Kanab Canyon area as had been previously agreed upon. I pointed out that there might be some danger of the trapped deer returning to Zion Canyon if they were released too near to the point of capture. For this reason, I advised that not only each deer captured be ear-marked by a suitable aluminum ear tag but that each tag be stamped with an individual number, and that a full record be kept, and submitted to us, of the capture and release of each individual deer - which could readily be kept track of by its individual serial number. In other words, that they employ the regular method used in bird banding to get the individual number record of each deer trapped and released.

The CCC enrollees and all the men engaged in this work showed not only outstanding interest but sympathy and consideration in capturing and handling the deer, so that I feel sure no unnecessary rough handling or injury will result. Because of the fact that the trucks used to transport the deer will be necessarily engaged in other work, it is planned to coordinate the deer trapping with the other work. It will be readily possible to spend several days baiting the deer into the trap after which it will be possible, in the case of the larger trap, to place a man who can select, or pick out, and capture any given deer which has become accustomed to entering the trap.

The automatic trap is non-selective but has the advantage of not requiring an attendant. It is readily transportable and can be used to capture individual deer which may not go near or enter the regular permanent trap.

CCC Foreman Johnson, Chief Ranger Jolley, Assistant Superintendent Davis and I all felt that an excellent start had been made in trapping, crating, transporting and releasing the deer. I do not anticipate any serious complications will be likely to arise.

Since the permanent trap is well built and well hidden amid the maple trees, I suggest and recommend that it be left standing and kept for future use because I feel that it will be only a question of time when the deer will again increase on the floor of Zion Canyon, and it will again become necessary to trap and remove the excess deer population.

Joseph S. Dixon  
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