Cat Tip of the Day: Making a Better Bullhead Trap

I should probably wait until I've tried using my new bullhead trap before I publish this Cat Tip of the Day about how to make it but then you won't have time to make one before it is trapping time. I guess we will both have to trust that the trap is going to work. I just ordered a couple of catfish trap throats to make 2 more traps so I am all in on it. Another reason to build more traps is that I'm locked down waiting to get my Covid-19 vaccination so building two more bullhead traps will help the time go by.

The reason I am building these new traps is that I don't like the 5 standard cylindrical minnow traps that I currently use for trapping bullheads. They work and I can catch bullheads but the problem is I know that I am losing a lot of bullheads that enter the trap, eat my bait and then swim back out. I did a lot of research online about fish traps and what is on the market for different types of fish traps. The traps that intrigued me the most were Catfish Slat Traps. There are a lot of YouTube videos out there showing the effectiveness of those style traps but the trouble is that they are too large and are not legal in Minnesota. The major component of those traps is the trap throat that allows the fish to enter the trap but also captures them and prevents them from leaving the trap once they have entered and that is exactly what I needed to make an effective bullhead trap. My online search led me to the Miller Net Company in Memphis, Tennessee. I bought one of their plastic throats for catfish traps and then flying by the seat of my pants built my first ever 5 – Gallon Bucket Bullhead Trap. It actually turned out pretty good and its major selling point is that it is easy to open and close and should make baiting and emptying the trap a simple process.

Here is what you will need to make a "Better Bullhead Trap"

Two 5-Gallon Buckets: Your traps may not exceed a width of 30 inches and a length of 30 inches and height may not exceed 15 inches. You will need to nest your two buckets together so that they do not exceed those dimensions for them

to be legal. You are also going to be needing a bucket lid to attach your trap throat to. Make sure that the bucket lid you select will fit on the buckets you are using for your trap. Not all 5-gallon buckets are the same.

One bucket lid: I got mine from Menards SKU# 6482907 cost is $1.12

One Plastic Throat for Catfish Traps: From Miller Net Company, Inc. Item # PT-1 cost is $8.75 plus shipping. link is https://millernets.com/plthforcat.html

<u>A bunch of assorted stainless-steel bolts, nuts and washers</u>: I just dug through my garage bins for what I needed.

Here is the build with some photos:

Step #1 Mount the Trap Throat on the bucket lid. When you get the Trap Throat it is 10 inches square. It is not going to fit directly onto the bucket lid without a bit of modification. Lay the throat on the bottom of the lid and then eyeball how much of the throat you need to remove so that you can fit the lid with the throat attached onto the bucket. I used a saw to remove some of the throat and also used a tin snip to cut out some of it. You are going to have to attach the throat to the bucket lid so look for good attachment points so they are as solid as you can get. You are not done yet. You need to make the entrance hole for the bullheads to enter into the trap. I took one of my wife's round tubberware lids which was about the same size as the throat entrance and used that to draw the entrance hole on the top of the lid and used that as a template to cut out the hole. Using several stainless-steel nuts and bolts attach the throat to the bucket lid. Here are photos of that:

Step #2: You need to cut the bottom out of the top bucket. This is pretty simple to do. A lot of the area of the top bucket gets eaten up by the trap throat.

Step# 3: Nest the two buckets together. Your trap can legally be 30 inches in length and you want to use all of that 30 inches as possible because when you put the lid on the trap the throat fills up a good chunk of the top bucket. Line it all up as best you can and then attach the two buckets together. This is not as simple as that sounds. There is a bit of play between the two buckets. I used some bigger bolts and added washers to take some of the play out of the connection points. I made 4 connection points around the trap and really snugged up the bolts. It feels pretty solid. If you look into the bucket in this photo you can see the 4 black bolts around the inside of the bucket – those bolts tie the two buckets together.

Step#4: Drill holes all around the trap so it will fill up with water and so your bait can leach out of it to attract bullheads. I used a ½" drill bit and just made holes all over including the bottom of the bottom bucket.

This is the completed Bullhead Trap: