

Tools of the Trade: Nets and Surveys



Pennsylvania-style Trap Net

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A trap net is the tool biologists use the most to **survey** lakes and ponds. Trap nets are shaped like a funnel. A long section of the net, called the “lead,” guides fish into a “trap” at the end, called the “pot.” The entrance to the “pot” is small and shaped like a funnel. Fish enter through the wide end of the funnel and can’t find their way out. Biologists use trap nets to sample muskellunge, walleyes, northern pike, catfish, yellow perch, bluegills, crappies and other panfish.



Pennsylvania-style Trap Net



Hoop Nets

Hoop nets are specialty nets primarily used to catch channel catfish. Biologists bait the hoop nets with a smelly cheese bait to attract catfish. Three hoop nets are tied end-to-end to make a set. Hoop nets also have netting inside that guides the fish into a pot.

Hoop Net



Benthic Trawl

Biologists use benthic trawling to sample small, bottom-dwelling fish species such as darters, chubs and madtoms. The funnel-shaped trawl net is attached to a boat that drags it along the bottom. Biologists have begun to use electrified benthic trawl nets. An electric current is used to stun the fish so that they move off the bottom and into the net. Benthic trawls are used in the deeper waters of large rivers and Lake Erie.



Benthic Trawl



Gill Net



Gill net in water.

Gill Net

A gill net is a flat net that is set in the water. The size of the openings in the netting determines what size and type of fish can be captured. Fish swim into the net but can only fit partly through the opening. When the fish tries to back out, the net catches behind the gill cover and traps it. Biologists use gill nets to sample walleyes, yellow perch, trout and shad.

Creel Survey

Sometimes PFBC interviews anglers. This is called a creel **survey** or angler **survey**. Anglers are asked questions about the length of time they fished that day, the number and species of fish kept and released, fishing methods used and targeted species. We may also ask anglers questions about their age, where they live and how much money they spent on their fishing trip. In addition, the number of people fishing, both on the water and from the shore, will be counted.



Creel Survey