Grade: 9th – Adult (overnight only)
Time: 1- 3 hours
Season: spring, summer, fall

Small Mammal Trapping

National Science Teaching Standards

A. Science as **INQUIRY**
C. LIFE Science
E. Science **TECHNOLOGY**
F. Science in **PERSONAL** and **SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE**

Background Information:

Censusing wildlife populations is very important. Hopefully, this exercise will enable you to learn censusing techniques while you become more knowledgeable about wildlife resources. It is essential that these living creatures be treated ethically and respectfully.

Objective:

To get into the field and explore methods of locating and studying small mammals by

- Assessing mammals found in the area (nest, runways, tracks, etc.)
- Determining abundance and numbers of mammal species found in trap sites.
- Studying mammal distribution in forest, grassland, meadow, prairie and shrub communities.
- Studying activity patterns of the mammals found in trap sites.

Pre Activity:

Have a class discussion on ethics and respectfully treating wild animals that are captured: in nets, captured for zoos, in fields of study, etc.

Equipment:

- Bait
- Sherman live traps
- Museum specimens
- Cotton
- Flag
- Clipboard (1 per group)
- Pencil
- Worksheet

Procedure:

1. Each group will set up a trap transect line in a specific habitat.
2. Each student will be given a trap to set along their groups' transect.
3. Traps should be baited with a peanut butter oatmeal mixture so that the bait can be rolled into a ball.
4. The ball is then placed inside a 3" by 3" paper towel scrap and then into the trap. The towel keeps the traps cleaner and provides the small animal with a warm nest on chilly evenings.
5. Traps should be checked to determine which small animals live in the study site.

6. Observations:
    - Trap type_____
    - Trap spacing _____
    - Habitat traps are set in _____
    - Conditions of vegetation_____
    - Weather conditions_____
    - Placement of traps (i.e., base of tree, runways, logs)
    - Species captured_____ (Use field guide to mammals for identification purposes.)

Post Activity:

In teams, make a list of what you learned about small mammals at Springbrook. Share with the class.

Post Discussion:

- Review what was trapped.
- Why are some animals found in only one area?
- Do you think this is the only area your animal is found at Springbrook? Explain.
- What are some predators at Springbrook that may rely on these animals for a food source?
- What would happen to these predators if the trapped population decreases or increases significantly?
- How is the balance of nature maintained? How is it interrupted?
- As a scientist, are the results of your experiment conclusive? What do you need to do to make them more accurate? What do you need to do make them accepted by the experts in the field? (repeat the experiment many times, do other studies that correlate with your objective, confer with other scientists on the issues)