

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS

Two letters from Kevin Silva, Pisik Central School, Lou Island, Manus, New Guinea, make an interesting sequence. The first dated 18.11.64 finds him just beginning:

"There are hordes of Shining Starlings nesting at the back of my house at the moment but they are hard to entice down. I have the 40 ft. net suspended between two 40 ft. high bamboo poles but the weight of the net keeps the apron out on the middle blocks in the net. They hit it but there is no apron to catch them — only on the bottom one. Any advice here would help.

"There are a few nesting islands of the Black-naped Tern in this area, but the natives play havoc on the eggs and the nestlings and the parents are rather frightened."

The second, dated 10.3.65, reports progress: "I tried another idea on the Shining Starlings. They are very fond of paw-paw. During vacation when there were not many students about the garden area one of my teachers who comes from the Duke of York Islands just outside Rabaul, showed me their method of catching Shining Starlings. They build a lean-to about 3 ft. by 3 ft. The frame is made of thin pliable sticks pushed into the ground at about 20° from the vertical.

The frame is covered on the top side by large flat leaves — banana or types similar so that there are no holes at all. Close to the base of the lean-to cut up ripe paw-paw is put to attract the birds. Soon they come to eat the

paw-paw and the watcher hiding about 20 yards away creeps out. When near the trap he forms his arms into a circle and quickly knocks the lean-to over trapping the birds inside.

Rainy or cool days are the best, as on hot days the birds rarely come down to ground level. We worked this idea on three days catching a total of 67 birds. None of those captured showed any apparent damage and when released flew very freely."

WHODUNIT?

We have received a request for help in establishing the source of a mystery band. On December 20, 1965, on the property of Mr. Tom Griffith, of Boyanup, Western Australia, a Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) was shot, bearing an aluminium split-ring band stamped with the word "WAINERING".

Mr. A. J. Fraser, Director of the Department of Fisheries and Fauna of Western Australia, is anxious to obtain information on the origin and banding details of this bird. He states: "The marking of fauna in this State is, of course, restricted to approved programmes, but the originator of this banding might not have known that. Alternatively, it is possible that this was an interstate or even an international movement."

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