

ELEVATED NETS FOR CATCHING HIGH FORAGING SPECIES

At one time or another, most banders wish they could put a net closer to the foliage. In certain circumstances, this is not difficult.

The original reason I used an elevated net was an attempt to catch a Pacific Baza *Avicida subercrest*, several of which were using the eucalypts in my banding area. Needless to say I did not catch one. I have caught a number of blossom and foliage feeding birds, from thornbills to the larger honeyeaters. One bird which I have not caught elsewhere was the Crested Shrike-tit *Falcunculus frontatus*.

The following method can be used as a one-day operation or can be used as a permanent position. The ideal situation is a food tree with a tall anchor tree at either side (see Fig. 1).

Equipment required:

- 2 poles (one piece poles) — any small timber will do.
- 10 clips — I use line or shark clips purchased from the local Fish Co-operative.
- 2 rings — about 75 mm diameter. I use plastic net rings also from the Co-operative.

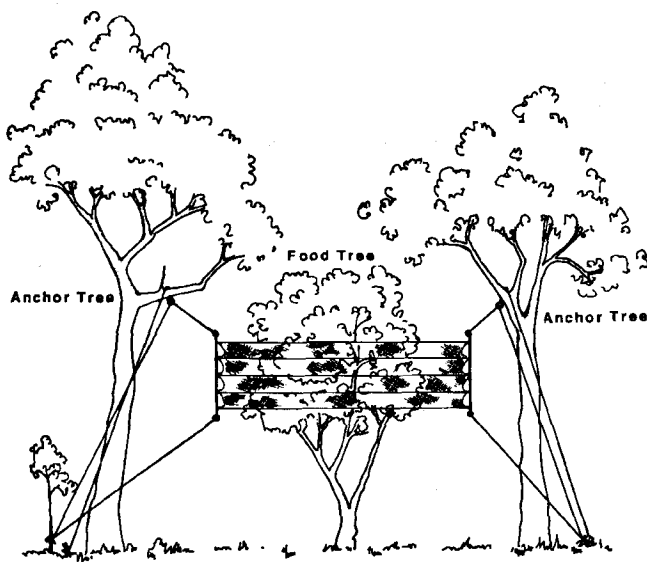


Figure 1.

- Rope — about 100 metres of 6 millimetre silver rope which can be left in position and will not deteriorate in the sunlight.
- Bow and arrow or shanghai and sinker.
- Fishing line on spool — about 15 kilogram breaking strain.

I use an old bow and arrow to shoot a fishing line over a branch which will be one anchor point for the rope which elevates the net. Tie the fishing line to the front of the arrow, and fire the arrow over the target branch. When the line is over the selected branch and the missile is back to the ground, untie the line and tie it to a ring. Also, tie the end of the rope (rope A) to the ring. Haul on the line until the ring and the rope come over the anchor branch. Pull this down until you can reach the ring. Thread a rope through the ring (rope B), untie the line and pull rope A until the ring is just below the branch with both ends of rope B hanging down to the ground. Tie off rope A. Repeat for the other end of the net (see Fig. 2).

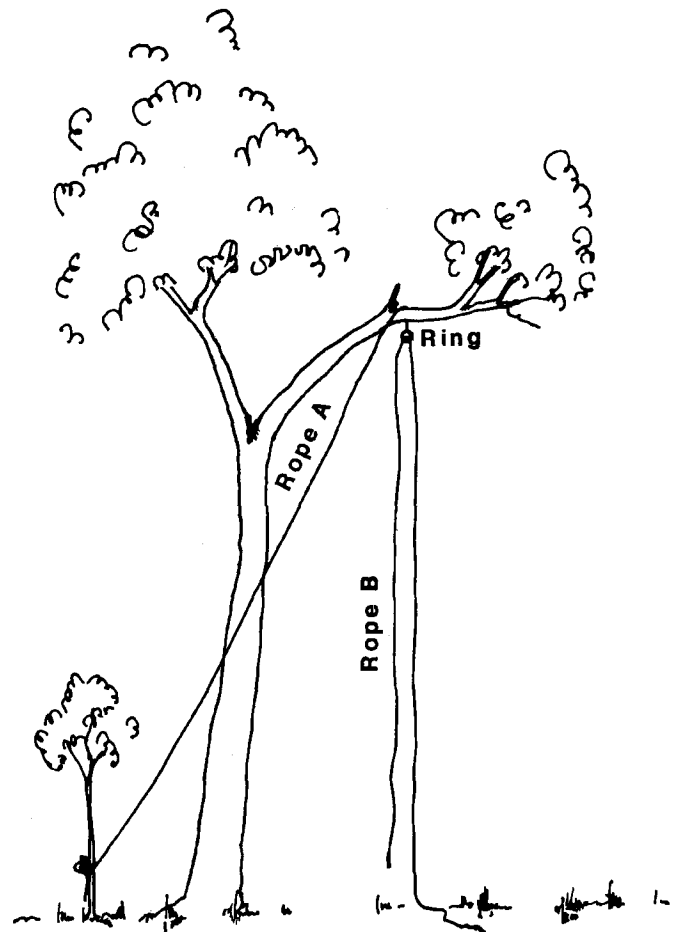


Figure 2.

The poles, having been prepared before, can now be tied on with both ends to rope B. Any light timber can be used for poles. I use saplings. I drill a small hole in each to take a loop of fine wire to which the rope ends are tied. Tie the line clips to the pole at suitable shelf spacings (see Fig. 3).

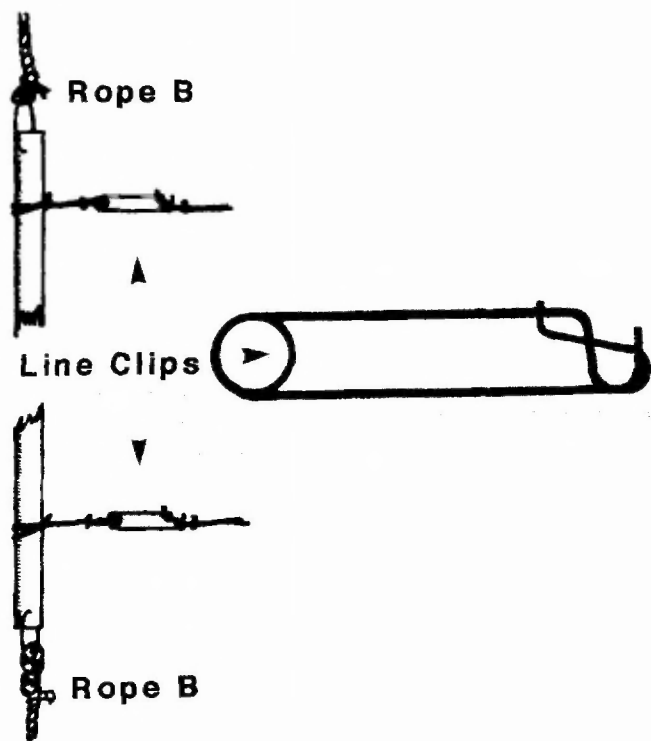


Figure 3.

Haul up the pole, using rope B, just clear of the ground and tie off the rope. Repeat on the other end of the net site.

With a bit of practice, one person can clip on a net and haul it up bit by bit without getting into trouble, but it is so much easier with a helper. The net is easily lowered to take birds out. It is important to have plenty of rope. A net can be placed quite high in the canopy in this way.

Although I have not done it myself, I can see no reason why nets cannot be stacked. I would not attempt it on my own but it could be a proposition at a co-operative banding site with plenty of helpers (see Fig. 4).

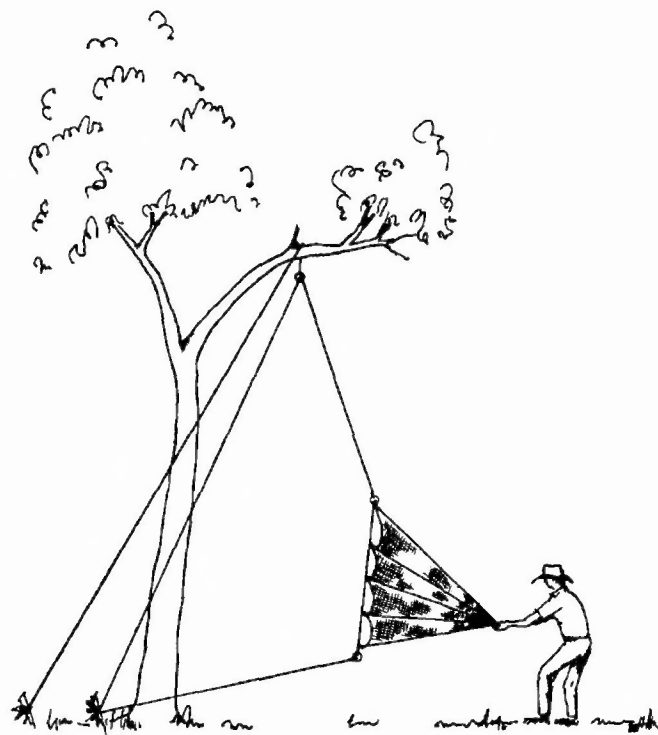


Figure 4.

One net, elevated, looks very small and I must emphasize that they are only useful in special situations such as described earlier, which are not as plentiful in a forest as one might think. I would imagine a net placed near foliage of a fruiting fig could bring some interesting results.

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