

A DESIGN FOR A PORTABLE, SAFE TRAP FOR BIRDS

Most "walk-in" traps designed to catch birds are made of metal or wood covered with wire mesh (Davis 1981). Unless they are very small, these traps are heavy and awkward to transport. Furthermore, birds may damage themselves by running or flying into the wire mesh. We describe a design for a walk-in trap which avoids these problems.

The structure of the trap is similar to that of a hoop tent, except that netting is stretched over the hoops rather than material, and webbing holds the bottom of the hoops together (Fig. 1). We used fibreglass hoops, which were made for use with tents, and fish netting (ca. 3 cm diagonal mesh size), which we dyed dark green. The three hoops are guyed out with two major guy lines, which run the length of trap, spacing the hoops out, and holding the trap up by being tied to pegs in the ground at each end. Three webbing tapes, with eyelets at each end, hold the bottom of the hoops in position. The netting (not shown in the Figure) is stretched over the hoops, tied to the door frame and pegged to the ground to prevent birds from escaping under it. The base of the trap is about 1.6 m wide and 2 m long.

We used a wire sliding-door entrance at each end, although the Figure does not show the door fitted to the back of the trap. On each door there was an inner bar welded by short struts to the frame around the area which is open when the door is raised. The netting is tied to this bar, therefore allowing the door to slide freely on the main door frame (on the Figure, the bar behind the mesh door is not drawn in). The door frames had extensions at the bottom (shown as dashed lines in the Figure) so that they could be pushed into the ground for stability. The doors were triggered manually and simultaneously, but other mechanisms could be used (see possibilities in Davies 1981). Having two open doors meant that the birds could see through the trap, and seemed more likely to enter compared with having one door.

The "tent trap" can be erected in about 5 minutes, and is light to carry and compact for transport when it is collapsed.

We used the trap, baited with grain, to catch Dusky Moorhens *Gallinula tenebrosa*; up to nine birds were caught at one time. Moorhens have a soft, fleshy shield on their foreheads (Marchant and Higgins 1993), and in no case was the shield damaged during capture. An additional advantage of soft netting is that the birds became restrained as they tried to escape, making it easy for us to grab the birds when we crawled into the trap.

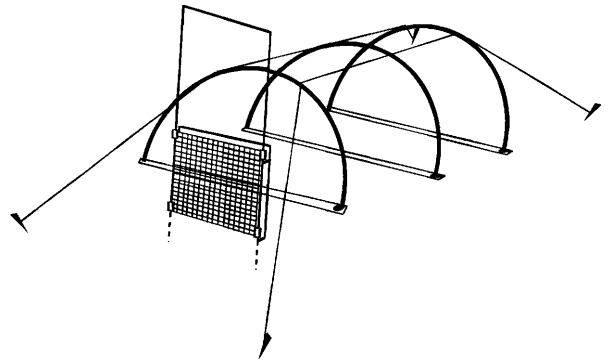


Figure 1. The "tent trap".

REFERENCES

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 Marchant, S. and Higgins, P. J. (1993). 'Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds: Raptors to Lapwings.' (Oxford University Press: Melbourne.)

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Received 13 June, 1995.