

TRAPLESS BANDING

As a by-product of a study of Arctic Terns on Machias Seal Island, N.B., during June and July of 1947 and 1948, Oscar Hawksley banded 46 adult passerine birds without a single trap! On his arrival on June 13, 1947, he found migrating Warblers still going through. The island has no woody plants and thus almost no place for small birds to roost or feed. Consequently the birds seemed to seek out the buildings as roosts and were forced to feed among the stems of the herbaceous plants. Since many of the buildings such as the barn, chicken coop, and whistle house had doors that were left ajar, birds seeking shelter, or perhaps even insect food, would enter and become trapped. The island buildings thus made very effective house traps and once he had discovered this fact he watched them carefully to obtain the birds as soon as he noticed them fluttering against the windows.

During 1947 he caught one Northern Water Thrush, two Barn Swallows, a Yellow-throat, and a Black-Poll Warbler in this way. The Warbler migration was about ended or he would have caught more. During 1948 he captured 1 Black-billed Cuckoo, 1 Chimney Swift, 4 Savannah Sparrows, 1 Slate-colored Junco, 2 Barn Swallows, 2 Parula Warblers, 3 Yellow Warblers, 3 Magnolias, 1 Chestnut-sided, 2 Black-polls, 3 Mourning Warblers, 11 Yellow-throats, 3 American Redstarts, 2 Catbirds, 1 Red-breasted Nuthatch, and 1 Olive-backed Thrush. The Savannah Sparrows were flying juveniles which had been raised on the island but the others were all migrants. Mr. Hawksley suggests that there may be many other coastal islands where many migrants may be taken in this way, with an unusual possibility for returns.

Dr. C. Brooke Worth recently banded his eleventh Burrowing Owl in a somewhat similar fashion. He writes that during the winter they frequently roost in empty sheds and if one enters quietly but quickly, closing the door behind him, they can be taken by hand. He reports that they are very docile. Your Editor has captured several birds in a shed which is entirely open on one side--among these birds was a Winter Wren.

All of which suggests that permanent buildings might be more useful as "house traps" than has been generally considered.