

THE VERBAIL POLE TRAP FOR HAWKS AND OWLS

Almost every bander has felt the need of a trap to catch a hawk or owl which frequents the vicinity of his station yet at the same time has been reluctant to use a padded steel trap of the type frequently used on game or chicken farms to control hawks or owls due to the frequent injuries which such traps inflict.

The Animal Trap Company of America, Lititz, Pennsylvania, a number of years ago began the manufacture of a modification of the Verball trap invented by Vernon Bailey. While it is possible to make a trap of this type for one's own use, the difficulty of obtaining the proper type of steel for the bow of the trap, etc., make it much more satisfactory for the average bander to obtain the trap directly from the manufacturer for \$6.00.

This trap is suitable for large and small predators alike, and the chances of injuring a bird are very small.

TABLE 1.—ANALYSIS OF EIGHT BEST POLE TRAP LOCATIONS.

No.	Habitat	Type of trap	Days in operation	Total catch		Percentage
				Hawks	Owls	
1	Center of marsh bordered by shrub swamp	Steel	28	0	1	3.6
		Verball	90	7	8	16.7
2	Hill overlooking lake	Steel	—	—	—	—
		Verball	116	10	1	9.5
3	Abandoned orchard between deciduous woods and dwellings	Steel	32	0	2	6.3
		Verball	40	1	3	10.0
4	Marshy meadow with series of small artificial ponds	Steel	—	—	—	—
		Verball	60	3	2	8.3
5	Edge of wheat field, 25 ft. from brook with hedgerow	Steel	—	—	—	—
		Verball	117	6	2	6.8
6	Wet spot in unharvested soybean field bordered by bottomland forest	Steel	60	0	1	1.7
		Verball	46	3	3	13.0
7	Center of 1/4 acre marsh bordered by forested swamp and abandoned fields	Steel	41	1	1	4.8
		Verball	77	1	4	6.5
8	1/4 acre broomsedge field between winter wheat field and forested swamp	Steel	49	1	1	4.0
		Verball	44	3	0	6.8

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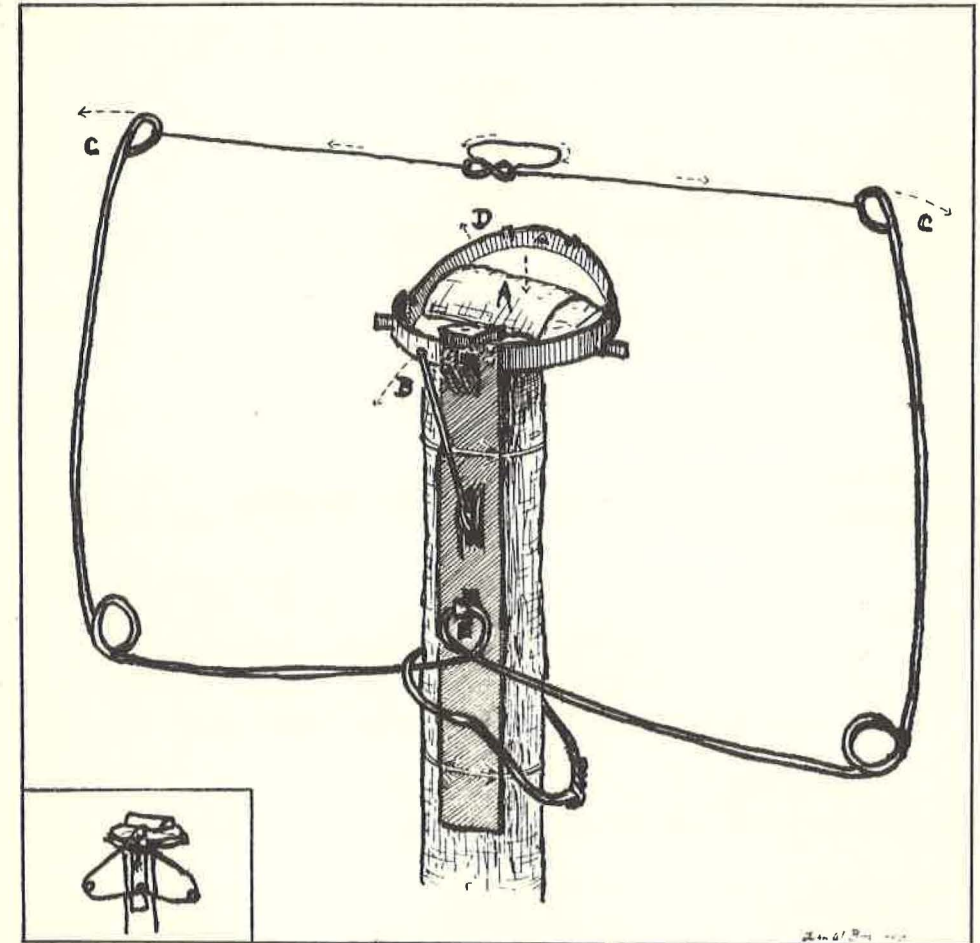


Fig. 1. Structure and action of the Verball leg-hold trap used for hawks and owls. Pressure of the bird's feet on the wooden pan (A) tips the lever and disengages the pin (B) which has been holding ends of the wire spring (C) on projections beneath the lever. The ends of the spring move outward and upward, lifting the noose off the supporting ring (D) which is hinged in the middle to aid in throwing the noose off and upward around the bird's legs. At the same instant the noose constricts, drawing the legs snugly against the figure 8 (of wire) which rested against the outside of the pin when the trap was set (see inserted figure). The spring lifts off the hook (E) and slides down the pole with the noose and the bird, so that the latter does not dangle when trapped.

TABLE 3.—SUMMARY OF CAPTURES IN ALL TYPES OF TRAPS.

Species	Totals	Number of captures <sup>a</sup> in				
		Verbail	Padded steel	Bow-net	Small bird <sup>b</sup>	Misc.
Sharp-shinned hawk	2	1	0	0	1	0
Cooper hawk	7	4	0	2	1	0
Red-tailed hawk	7	0	0	6	0	1
Red-shouldered hawk	37 (9R)	32 (8R)	4	0	0	1 (1R)
Broad-winged hawk	2	1	1	0	0	0
Sparrow hawk	25 (4R)	17 (3R)	0	0	8 (1R)	0
Barn owl	3	3	0	0	0	0
Great horned owl	1	0	0	0	0	1
Barred owl	31 (17R)	22 (13R)	9 (2R)	0	0	0 (2R)
Long-eared owl	1	1	0	0	0	0
Saw-whet owl	1	1	0	0	0	0

<sup>a</sup> Repeats, in parentheses, not included in the totals.

<sup>b</sup> Automatic traps set on ground for passerine birds.

#### SUMMARY

1. Hawks of six species (80 individuals) and owls of five species (37 individuals) were trapped for banding from November 1, 1943, to May 26, 1944.
2. In general, pole traps proved better than hand-operated traps or automatic traps using live bait.
3. Verbail pole traps proved very efficient, and were much more humane than padded steel traps because they rarely injured a captured bird.
4. Unbaited Verbail traps took a variety of raptors, in rough proportion to their local abundance, although slightly more of beneficial species were caught than of harmful types.
5. Hawks and owls were retrapped more readily in Verbail traps than in other types tried.
6. The number of song birds caught in Verbail traps was negligible.
7. Crows and vultures were not taken in Verbail traps, but possibly could be caught with bait.

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