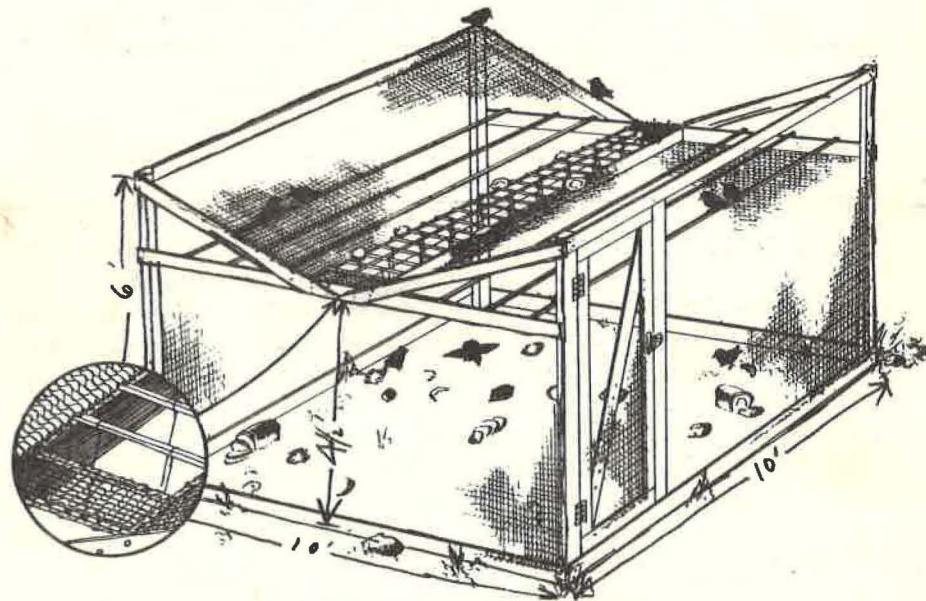


THE AUSTRALIAN CROW TRAP

The following article is from a mimeographed publication¹ of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The trap is actually an automatic top-opening trap of the funnel type. By varying the sizes of the openings in the 'ladder' section of the trap, it would appear to be suited for capturing even smaller birds than Starlings; in its original form, larger openings were used for capturing Crows.

It is easy for the birds to alight on the ladder and then jump down into the trap. However, when they attempt to get out, their wings, spread for flying, prevent their doing so.



Australian Crow Trap

¹Kalmbach, E.R., "Suggestions for Combating Objectionable Roosts of Birds with Special Reference to Those of Starlings", Wildlife Leaflet 172, United State Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, revised July 1945, pp. 1-19.

More ambitious programs of starling control, however, call for traps large enough to capture 100 to 200 birds without undue crowding. To this end a modification of the Australian crow trap, used in this country for capturing crows, white-necked ravens, and magpies, may be employed. This trap is simple in principle, the birds entering it between the slats of a ladderlike opening extending down the center of the V-shaped top (fig. 1, D). Once inside, they endeavor to make their escape by going to the closed outer walls rather than to the openings in the middle of the inward-sloping roof.

There is no set rule with respect to the dimensions of such a starling trap, except that it is highly desirable to have it tall enough to permit the operator to capture and remove the imprisoned birds without discomfort. A trap 10 feet square and 6 feet high at the outer corners, with the slatted entrance across the middle 4-1/2 feet from the ground, will be satisfactory. The sides of the ladderlike opening should be 18 inches apart and the slats spaced at 4-inch intervals. Two wires should

be stretched lengthwise of the ladder so as to make the size of each of the apertures through which the birds enter about 4 to 6 inches. In addition, one or two pieces of stiff wire about 8 inches long may be attached to each of the slats, so that their ends, hanging downward, will tend to obstruct attempts of the birds to fly upward through the openings. At the ends of the ladder the space up to the first slat should be covered with wire screen or a board, to prevent the birds from escaping by clambering up the end wall of the cage. A number of perches should be installed lengthwise of the trap and at a height at least equal to that of the ladder, so that birds flying from one side to the other will tend to pass by the openings rather than to fly up through them. A door should be built in one corner to permit access to the interior for the removal of captured birds.

The materials for the trap frame can usually be obtained at little cost. The wire poultry netting used should be of 1-inch mesh. A knock-down trap that can be readily shifted from one place to another can be constructed at some extra expense for material and labor. This movable trap has each of the four sides, the two parts of the top, and the ladder constructed as separate units--the sections being fastened together with screws.

Operation of trap.--The trap should be placed in a locality well populated with starlings that come there regularly to feed. The vicinity of city dumps, poultry yards, stables, and pastures where livestock is being fed will be found advantageous. Elsewhere some prebaiting will have to be done to accustom the birds to feeding in the area.

Table scraps, overripe fruit, stale bread, and almost any kind of inoffensive garbage will serve as bait. Grain also may be used, although as a rule it is less attractive to starlings than the garbage suggested. The bait should be placed not only beneath the top opening but also next to the outer walls of the trap. A few crusts of bread laid on top of the trap, next to the ladder, will lure wary individuals to the openings, where they can see the bait within. When removing captured birds, several should be left in the trap from day to day as decoys.

During the winter of 1935-36 a trap on the ground of the National Soldiers' home in Washington, D.C., similar to the one described, captured more than 1,500 starlings in a period of 2-1/2 months. On each of several unusually cold days catches of more than 100 were made. The birds captured were largely from flocks on their way to or from an enormous roost a few miles away in the business section of the city. Because of these large numbers passing, the results obtained were probably better than would ordinarily be the case.

Most of the birds captured were banded and released, and it is of interest to note that, of 1,269 starlings so tagged, not one returned to the trap for a second visit. Whether these birds merely avoided the trap or whether they shunned the entire vicinity could not be ascertained.

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