

from a shoemaker. The leather should be good and stiff and the grooves cut so that the wires and bolts will squeeze into them tightly. The other end of the box is used to contain supplies such as pliers, pencil and magnifying glass.

The bands are opened sufficiently to place on a bird's leg and are then slipped onto the wires or bolts in the reverse order of their serial numbers so that the band with the lowest number will be slipped off first. The band numbers are printed on top of the block adjacent to each wire or bolt.

A stenographer's note book fits between the band holders and the lid of the box so that the whole business can be carried around in a shoulder bag. The outside and lid of the box are covered in cellophane or plastic so that it can be laid on wet grass without damaging the box.

The threads of the stove bolts should be filed down somewhat so that they do not roughen the bands in the process of sliding them off. Mr. Detwiler's apparatus is much smaller than this, but the Pell-Whitman device has plenty of room for one's record book and implements, and is easily constructed of inexpensive materials.

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TO NET OR NOT TO NET  
Rev. Garrett S. Detwiler

The articles appearing recently in EBBA NEWS have been informative, challenging, and, to me a relatively new bander, intensely interesting. Especially is this true concerning the recent articles on the use of Mist Nets.

The article entitled, "Mist Netting - Some Notes and Observations", by John V. Dennis (Ebba News, 19: 53-56 and 60-63), was exceptionally well written and should prove exceedingly helpful and valuable to all banders no matter how well experienced they may be in that particular practice.

The article, "Nets: More Harmful than Beneficial?", (Ebba News, 19: 74-75), was one that should cause each bander to do some very serious thinking about the whole matter of banding in general and his own methods in particular. For here is an article expressing the sincere convictions, on one particular practice employed in banding, by a group of outstanding banders whose collective banding experience would exceed more years than any one of us can ever hope to live. Such

a thought-provoking article, written by so formidable a group of notable banders, cannot be lightly set aside.

After reading and re-reading the article many times, I have come away with the feeling that its implications and conclusions can not possibly be based on the rule but rather the exception.

I am firmly convinced that the average bander bands birds because he is a lover of birds and genuinely interested in their protection and conservation. I further believe that he would not willingly or knowingly do anything to jeopardize the welfare and safety of any bird that might come into his possession, no matter how obtained. Therefore, I believe that the first premise of this article, dealing with the absolute necessity of employing every care in trapping and banding birds, is well founded and of primary importance. However, I do not believe that the article is factual when it concludes that a bander cannot net birds without causing them to suffer harm.

It would appear that the harm arises not from the net used but from the carelessness of the user of that net. Such irresponsibility in the use of nets is inexcusable and should not be tolerated. However, the misuse of the nets, by certain irresponsible individuals, should not prohibit the use of nets by those who practice care in netting birds. Mr. Dennis states the matter succinctly and completely when he says, "Nearly all of these difficulties may be overcome if the cardinal rule of the netter is observed, and that is that the nets must be attended constantly." Any bander who makes a practice of leaving his nets unattended should be made to show cause why his banding permit should not be taken from him.

Then there is the fear and dread of public opinion. Personally, I wonder at the advisability of all the secrecy employed by the bander in relation to the use of nets and the general public. I am convinced that the public can be educated to accept netting just as they are being educated to accept the trapping of birds. It is a foregone conclusion that a bird must be captured before it can be banded. The means employed to secure the bird, whether it be a trap or a net, would seem to be immaterial to the average person IF it is properly understood and known that the net is under constant observation and all birds are quickly and carefully removed when they become enmeshed. A public that knows of the bander's concern for the safety of the birds he traps, will not be too critical of either netting or trapping once it is known that such care is employed.

Netting, in my short experience with it, has proven to be very rewarding. I have found that, by attending the nets regularly, and using only that number that one can handle properly, the birds are not difficult to remove and that one can do so without injury to the birds in any way.

Inasmuch as most of my netting has been done with Juncos, I have found that instead of the bird sustaining injuries, netting enables me to speed up the release of the bird which appears to be more quiet than those taken in traps. I have also found that netted birds remain in the area to appear and reappear in my nets from time to time, thereby allowing me to study the duration of the period of residence in my area.

With all due respect to the authors of the article, "Nets: More Harmful than Beneficial?", I would sum up by saying 1. Birds need not be harmed by the use of Mist Nets. 2. Regardless of the original use to which Mist Nets were put, it does not follow that nets should be abolished because of the carelessness of a few, anymore than the automobile should be taken from our highways inasmuch as it is a number one killer in our country. 3. Greater control should be employed in issuing netting permits; more instruction should be made available by banders and banding associations. 4. The practice of netting need not, and should not, be carried on surreptitiously. The bander is not employed in any nefarious practice when properly using a net. 5. The bird watcher whose opinion some fear so much should be cultivated rather than feared by the bander for he can be the greatest assistant the bander can possibly find, if he is acquainted with the whys and wherefores of banding and its methods. For the bander to allow a bird watcher to observe any one of a number of species "in the hand", will bring its own reward as the bander sees the bird watcher's eyes light up upon seeing the birds close up, perhaps, for the first time in his life.

The question, after all is said and done, is not "to net or not to net". The whole matter revolves around the absolute necessity for every bander to employ the utmost care in the handling of the birds that come into his possession for banding, whether trapped in wire traps or netted in Mist Nets. Carelessness with either trapping method can destroy birds.

We owe these North Jersey banders a vote of thanks for bringing the carelessness of certain netters to our attention. We would do well to remember what they have said as we continue with banding but let us not stigmatize the conscientious, careful bander who uses Mist Nets.