

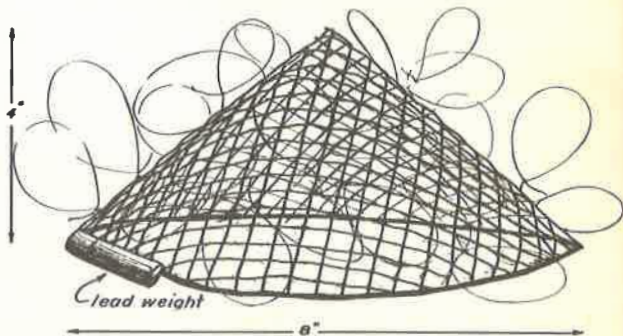
A BAL-CHATRI TRAP FOR SPARROW HAWKS

By W. K. Kirsher

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Some time ago in the News (Vol. 31, No. 3) we offered some notes on trapping Sparrow hawks and Shrikes in which we described a trap that consisted of netting covered hoops that closed over the bird as it tried to get at the bait. Since then we have had much better success with a modified Bal-Châtri Indian hawk trap. The nice thing about the Bal-Châtri is its simplicity - it is nothing more than a small cone-shaped wire cage with nylon nooses distributed over its surface. As the hawk thrusts and grabs with its talons to get at the bait it becomes entangled in the nooses and is held fast. The cage is weighted sufficiently to hold the bird.

The trapping procedure is generally the same as previously described. Drive carefully along country roads that have power lines running along side. Upon spotting a perching hawk ahead approach to within 50 or 60 yards, quickly drop the cage on the shoulder of the road and back away a hundred yards or more. Usually the bird will respond within two or three minutes and successfully catch itself. Sometimes, along roads where the birds are accustomed to cars, it is practicable to drive along under the bird, slowing down just enough to drop the cage lightly, then continuing on.



The effectiveness of this trap . . . depends to a great extent on the activity of the bait animal. It is movement that attracts the bird. Much the best bait is the common house mouse, Mus musculus. . . Specifications of trap and instructions:

Materials, hardware cloth, 3/8" mesh. Height about 4"; diameter of base about 8". The nooses, numbering about 25, are uniformly distributed over the face of the cage. Nylon fishing leader of four to eight pound test is cut in lengths sufficient to make a loop of 1 1/4" to 2" in diameter. Tie a simple slip knot leaving a half inch or so of the end for a finger hold which will be found to be very handy in disengaging the noose from the bird's leg. It is essential that the shafts of the nooses project outward from the cage; to accomplish this, place a drop of Duco cement on the knot where the nylon attaches to the cage and extend the noose normal to the surface of the cage until the cement sets.