

A BANDING APRON  
By Mrs. Robert W. Patterson

A bander working alone with four or five mist nets can sometimes be almost overwhelmed by birds. Any steps, and any motions, that can be saved will also save both time and the bander. I have found that a banding apron saves all four, and that it has other advantages as well.

The apron idea developed from my discovery that small birds lie quietly and unruffled in a jacket pocket, where I put one occasionally to keep it separated from the others for one reason or another. It always came out in good shape, not only unruffled, but clean - conditions that even the best-kept single-cell gathering cage cannot guarantee. Cleanliness did not extend to the pocket, however, since the absorptive quality of the cloth seemed to be the thing that kept the feathers from being soiled. Another minor disadvantage of the jacket pocket, in addition to the major one of cleaning it, was that hole-dwellers such as chickadees would crawl to the top and escape. The logical answer was a series of pockets designed to prevent escape, and made of a material woven to give ventilation without letting in too much light. The construction has to permit thorough cleaning in a washing machine.

The apron that evolved from these requirements is made of dark green denim that has been satisfactory on all counts. It has been used constantly through two netting seasons with complete success, no injuries of any kind, and the saving of much time and effort. The gathering cage is left at some central spot and not lugged to every net (where it usually is on the wrong side or at the wrong end) and is seldom needed except when the nets are unusually full. Birds are banded, weighed, and so on, directly from the apron in most cases, and the 6-pocket model shown here can accommodate 12 small birds of non-hole-dwelling species with no evidence of hardship. The construction of the pocket flap retains the hole dwellers successfully, but because they do move around somewhat, it is probably best to have only one to a pocket. Almost all other species lie quietly, even in pairs.

Each pocket is a piece of cloth doubled on itself and sewed at the two edges with French seams, wrong side outside, so that the inside of the pocket is perfectly smooth. Attached to the apron only at their tops, they do not constrict the birds, and they are easily turned inside out for washing. The flap must be stitched to the apron between the pockets, as well as at both ends.

The drawing shows the finished dimensions of my apron, but obviously they can be modified to suit the size of the user. Banders with large hands will want wider pockets.

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