

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ANSWERS to Don Varner's question appearing in the last issue of EBBA NEWS, "How can one safely get a skunk out of a four-cell Potter trap with a bottom?" were readily forthcoming and appear below.

By Carol Rudy:

I feel qualified to answer this question, since I had a skunk caught in my Potter trap last year. I had a lot of trouble with skunks dragging my traps around the neighborhood trying to get the bait, until finally one got caught. If you are a married woman, you get your husband to cope with the skunk; otherwise, you could do as my husband did. He used a long, stiff wire to reach out and lift the trap door. A pole several feet long would also be a good tool. The skunk did not seem to be at all upset, and allowed me to walk right up to the trap before realizing he was in it. I do not believe he would have done anything unless deliberately agitated. Putting my traps in the garage every evening at dusk finally solved all my skunk problems.

By Daniel Smiley:

The way to get a skunk out of a four-cell Potter trap with a bottom is to open the door! In August 1964 I found a half-grown skunk in one of the above traps beside my house at Mohonk. Even though not mature this animal had the capacity to shoot if he became agitated. Therein lies the secret of releasing skunks. Do not do anything to excite them. As part of that you must control yourself.

I first cut two small saplings about $\frac{1}{4}$ " diameter at the small end and five feet long. The trap was approached quite slowly. While doing this it may make you feel better and calmer to talk to the skunk in soothing tones. When within stick reach (with one in each hand) I very slowly placed the blunt end of one stick against the keeper latch which holds the door down, and pushed it back. Equally slowly the end of the second stick was placed through the mesh of the door, near the middle. Then very slowly the door was eased upward. Next, the first stick was slid through the door and trap mesh to hold the door open. Once this is achieved your end of this stick can be laid on the ground. The next move is to exit gracefully but not hurriedly. The skunk which was the basis of this report did not choose to come out immediately. Finally, he nosed his way out and turned into the flowerbed, thus avoiding having his picture taken.

I think Don Varner will have no problem if he remembers - no haste, no smell.



By G. Hapgood Parks:

Perhaps I can help Don Varner re his "skunk question", for I have twice successfully solved the problem that seems to be worrying him. In each instance my only tools were: (1) an empty burlap sack which originally contained 100 lbs. of sunflower seeds, from which all of the machine stitching had been removed, and (2) a broom handle with a finishing nail driven firmly into one end.

On each occasion I grasped the sheet of burlap by two sequential corners and held it out in front of me like a curtain so that my person was hidden completely from the black and white beauty in the trap. Then, emulating one of the trees in Macduff's forest (or was it Macbeth's?) I approached the trap very slowly until the burlap could be lowered to cover the trap completely with the trap's handle near the burlap's middle point. Releasing the corners of the burlap I lifted the trap by its handle, allowing the burlap to hang down around it on all sides, and placed it gently in the trunk of my auto.

A drive of 5 miles found us in an unpopulated woodland area where the burlapped trap was removed gently from the trunk and set very cautiously on the ground at a respectable distance from the car. Lifting the burlap curtain by one edge in such a manner as to remain hidden as much as possible from the skunk and using the broom handle with its finishing-nail "finger" to lengthen my arm I lifted the trap door.

On both occasions the animal left the trap promptly and, with its aromatic potentialities under complete control, strode majestically away toward the underbrush. Judging from the emphatic swagger in its gait and the appreciative expression on the angular little face that glanced back at me neither of my skunks enjoyed city living any better than I do.

QUESTION by Ted S. Pettit - Who is color banding finches, without using Fish & Wildlife Service Bands?

On December 16, Mrs. Gosta Brunnstrom of Somerville, N.J. reported a yellow finch, resembling a House Finch, at her feeder, banded with a green plastic band on the left leg. Mrs. Brunnstrom lives about a mile from me as a finch flies. On December 17, a male Purple Finch, yellow where the usual Purple Finch is red, turned up in my trap along with several House Finches. The Purple Finch was banded on the left leg with a green plastic band bearing only the number 15. Elise and Stanley Dickerson confirmed identification. There was no Fish & Wildlife Service band on the bird. I attached F.&W.S. band 74-57629, and both Stanley and I took color pictures. Presumably the same bird appeared on December 18 and was observed at ten feet for ten minutes. Both the aluminum band and the green plastic band were clearly visible.

QUESTION by Ruth A. Lof:

I am wondering if some reader of EBBA NEWS could supply information on a Bluejay that had a tan colored band on its right leg and a black one on its left, but no Fish & Wildlife Service band. It was trapped October 26, 1966 in Storrs, Conn. by John McDonald of the Natchaug Ornithological Society. Not wishing to interfere with another's color marking, but feeling the Bluejay should have more definite identification, he placed band no. 813-47665 on the bird's right leg below the tan colored band.

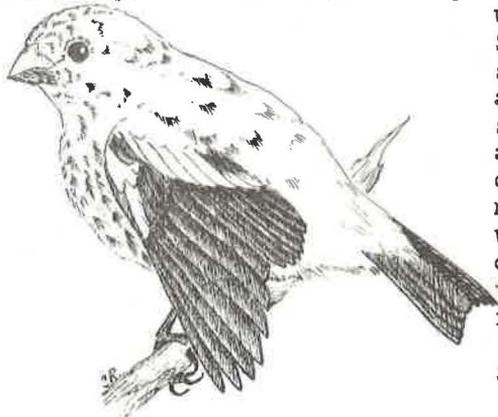
QUESTION by Carol Rudy:

I am privileged to catch Purple Finches most of the year, and have encountered a puzzling problem. During the summer I was doing a study in our sphagnum bog, and found that the juvenal Purple Finches frequently sustained hemorrhages while struggling in the mist nets. Usually it had the appearance of a bruise where bleeding had occurred just under the skin in the shoulder area, and these individuals had great difficulty in flying. Occasionally the hemorrhage was somewhere else; one had a blood-filled sac the size of a pea protruding from one ear, another had bleeding behind both eyes, causing them to protrude grotesquely. In all the cases I kept under observation, complete recovery was attained in a few days. I have never observed this in any other young birds or in adult Purple Finches. I wondered if anyone else has had this experience or if anyone knows what could cause it and how it might be prevented. Could it have anything to do with diet? The young finches were feeding almost exclusively at the time on berries of Mountain-Holly, Nemopanthus mucronata, but the adults would not eat them, and other species ate few if any.

A PARTIALLY ALBINO PURPLE FINCH

By Carol Rudy

Last spring while banding a number of Purple Finches I encountered an unusual specimen: #70-60351 is a partial albino. Its general appearance while sitting and flying was that of a Snow Bunting, but close examination showed the wings and tail to be dark, and the body generally white with the stripes of normal color for immatures and females. All wing primaries, secondaries and the retrices were of normal color. Most secondary coverts were white, while all primary coverts but one on each side were dark. To top off this unusual appearance was a yellow rump. Eyes, bill and feet, normal.



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