

CATCHING COLONIAL SEABIRDS FOR BANDING

BY R. L. EDGAR

Techniques for taking puffins (*Fratercula arctica*) at St. Kilda (Lockley, 1953) and flightless wekas (*Gallirallus australis*) in New Zealand (Phillips, 1955) by means of a noose on a pole have been described. In each case the noose was tightened by the efforts of the birds and since they were caught for food physical damage was of little consequence. The writer has seen a similar device, with an adjustable noose made from a leather thong drawn through a length of tube, used to control a vicious dog; and Wodzicki and Stein (1958) used thick copper wire in an iron conduit pipe to capture live gannets (*Sula bassana*) in New Zealand. As this was heavy and could injure the birds, an improved version was designed for capturing adult or young gannets alive; but with small modifications it could equally be used for other birds or mammals. Two of these devices, in regular use for the last seven years at Cape Kidnappers, New Zealand (Wodzicki, 1967), have proved specially valuable for lifting birds selected for banding from a crowded colony without unduly disturbing their neighbours.

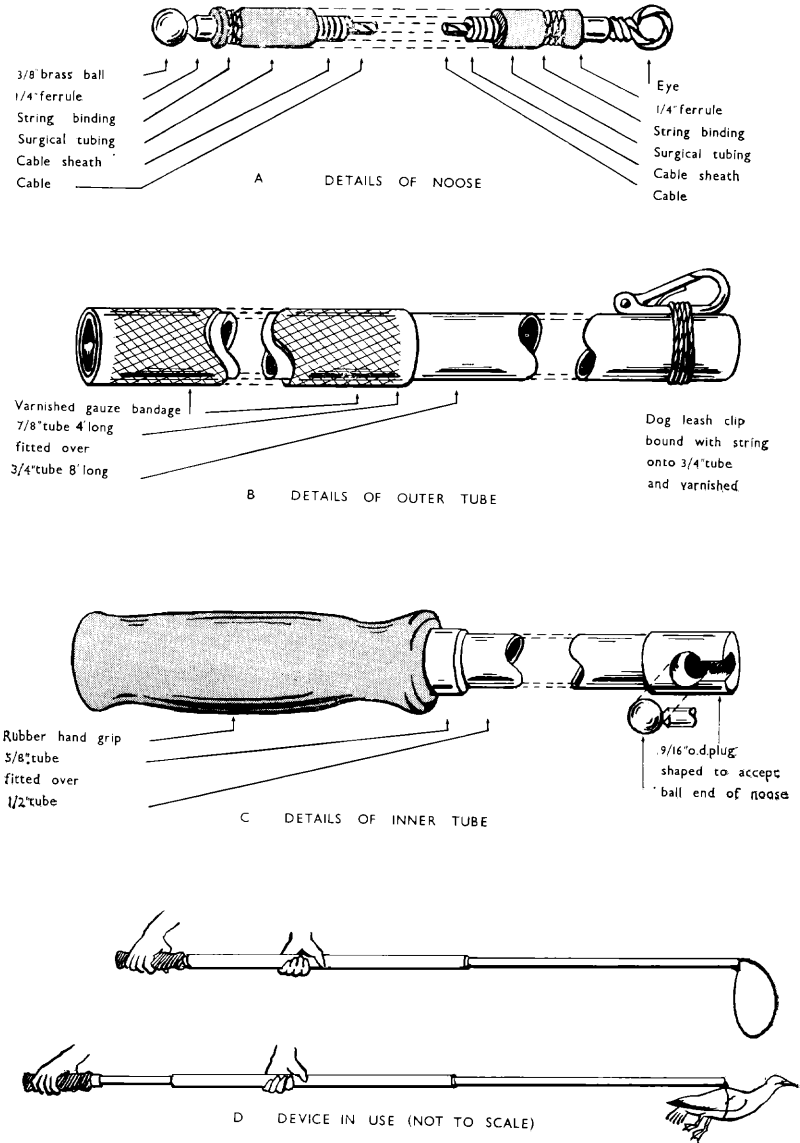
The special feature of this device is a noose that can be adjusted continuously by the operator (Figure 1). The noose is padded, and is made from a motor-cycle brake cable supported and adjusted by two light alloy tubes sliding one within the other. The brake cable is just sufficiently rigid yet flexible, and does not stretch.

To make the noose, a 3/8 inch diameter ball is soldered to one end of the twisted wire cable which passes through a wrapped wire sheath (Fig. 1A). The cable, 3 ft. long, is drawn to its maximum tension and an eye formed on the other end snug against the sheath (Fig. 1A). Surgical rubber tubing is then stretched over the sheath and bound firmly at each end. The result is a flexible, springy cable about 3/8 inch diameter with a reasonably soft surface.

The two sections of the pole are made from hard aluminum alloy tubing with 17 gauge walls. For the outer section an 8 ft. long, 3/4 inch outside diameter tube is strengthened by sliding a 4 ft. length of 7/8 inch outside diameter tube onto one end and fixing with cement. Tubular gauze finger bandage, stretched over the outside and varnished, makes a convenient hand grip. A small dog-leash clip is bound to the outside of the small end of the tube (Fig. 1B). The inner tube is 1/2 inch outside diameter and 8 ft. long. One end is enlarged by the addition of larger diameter tubes and a rubber hand grip (Fig. 1C). The other end is fitted to take the ball end of the noose. The finished inner tube must slide freely in the outer tube. An earlier model using 5/8 inch outside diameter inner tube gave trouble due to corrosion and grit.

To assemble, the eye of the noose is pushed into the larger end of the outer tube and the inner tube fitted to the ball on the noose then pushed to its limit through the outer tube. The protruding end of the noose is fastened to the clip.

Fig. 1. Device for catching colonial seabirds. Details of construction and operation.



In use the device is held in both hands (Fig. 1D). By drawing the hands apart the noose is adjusted so that it can be passed over the head of a bird to a point posterior to the carpi of the folded wings. The noose can then be tightened gently to grasp the bird, so that it can be lifted and swung clear of the nest. For weighing and banding an assistant is needed to take the bird from the end of the pole.

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A TECHNIQUE FOR MIST-NETTING IN THE
FOREST CANOPY

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Since January 1963 we have been mist-netting birds in a tropical rain forest study area on the property of the Instituto de Pesquisas e Experimentação Agropecuarias do Norte (IPEAN), Belém, Brazil. One of the few frustrations in our field work in this region has been our inability to sample the avifauna of the forest crown. The stratification of birds in the forest is discernible but difficult to measure. Mist-netting on the forest floor is highly selective for low-foraging species and does not adequately sample the middle story or canopy.

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