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A Simple Trap for Catching Birds in Nest Boxes.—Hole-nesting birds can be easily caught inside a nest box with the use of traps. A variety of traps have been described (Cohen and Hayes, *N. Am. Bird Bander* 9:10-11, 1984; Dhondt and VanOutryve, *Bird-Banding* 42:119-120, 1971), including a radio-controlled device (Lombardo and Kemly, *J. Field Ornithol.* 54:194-195, 1983). We describe a simple automatic trap that is useful for catching birds without monitoring the nest box.

This trap consists of a square plate of aluminum (5.8 × 5.8 × 0.2 cm) with smooth edges that weighs approximately 20 g (Fig. 1). The plate is affixed with 2 short (8 cm) strips of masking tape to the inside of the box just above the hole, such that the tape acts as a hinge to the top of the plate. The plate is then propped up with a thin stick or stiff piece of grass. The innermost edge of the plate should be raised high enough that it is not visible from the front of the box. When the bird enters the nest box, it knocks the support stick aside, and the plate drops on its hinge to cover the hole. The trap takes very little time to install (<20 s), so is left in the box only when attempting to catch birds.

We have used this trap extensively to catch Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) in two populations near the Queen's University Biological Station, 50 km north of Kingston, Ontario. We have also caught several Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) nesting in the area. We often had 15 traps set simultaneously, and moved traps from box to box after catching the residents. Boxes with traps set in them were left unattended for a maximum of 30 min. Automatic traps must be monitored regularly, and removed at the end of the day so that birds are not trapped in the nest box for long periods.

In the 1985 breeding season we made a total of 263 captures of Tree Swallows, including recaptures, with this trap. These consisted of 51 males, 201 females, and 11 birds of unknown sex. The bias toward females is due to the higher likelihood of females entering the nest box during nest building and incubation, and our own banding effort in which we deliberately caught many females several times during the season. We had no difficulty in catching males, and provided them with feathers to induce them to enter nest boxes during the incubation period (Cohen, *N. Am. Bird Bander* 10:18-21, 1985). Both males and females readily entered the nest box, and few seemed disturbed on approach to the box. We caught 35 individuals at least 3 times during the nesting period, which suggests that most birds do not become wary of the trap over time. There were no fatalities or injuries caused directly by the trap, nor was there damage to nest contents. Females rarely abandoned their nest after capture, and we avoided catching females during egg-laying since this can decrease their reproductive success (Burt and Tuttle, *J. Field Ornithol.* 54:319-323, 1983). Our method of trapping was effective until the nestlings became large enough (about 15 d) to activate the trap.

This nest trap is very inexpensive, simple to make, portable, and can be modified to

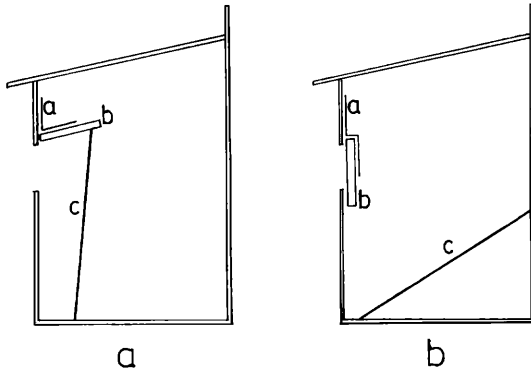


FIGURE 1. a. Nest box with automatic trap set: (a) masking tape hinge, (b) aluminum plate, (c) support stick. b. The plate covers the nest hole after the bird enters and knocks the support stick aside.

fit nest boxes of any shape by varying the size of the plate and support stick. It is quick to install, requires little monitoring relative to observer-triggered traps, and is particularly useful for catching large numbers of birds over a short time.

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