
Trap casualties

Merrill Wood

Occasionally the lid of a Chardonneret trap falls on the head of a bird and the resulting death makes the bander wonder if this efficient type of trap is too dangerous to use. Small birds like wrens and warblers may be killed and large birds like jays and grosbeaks may injure forehead or wings. For comparative purposes I kept records at State College, Pennsylvania, on trap-caused injuries on the next 1,000 birds caught after 6 June 1974 in each of three types of traps, Chardonneret, Potter, and All-Purpose.

Seventeen modified Chardonneret traps (*EBBA Workshop Manual* 2:14, 1963), fastened one meter above ground to a backyard fence or side-yard stone wall, were baited in April through November with a pan of water and in December through March with Loft's Audubon Park Wild Bird Seed Mixture and occasionally, during winter, with white bread and fat. Of the 48 species caught, 2 birds (a Common Yellowthroat and an American Redstart) were killed, 31 birds (23 Blue Jays, 4 Gray Catbirds, 1 Brown Thrasher, 2 American Robins, 1 Swainson's Thrush) injured their foreheads but apparently recovered, 2 birds (Evening Grosbeaks) injured their wings, but not enough to impair flight. Birds killed seem to be those which tried to escape before the lid fell.

Ten one-cell Potter traps (*EBBA Workshop Manual* 2:15, 1963), placed on wooden platforms 1.3 meters above ground, were baited with Wild Bird Seed Mixture and occasionally with white bread and berries. Of the 25 species caught, none were killed, 2 birds (American Robin and Purple Finch) injured their foreheads, 7 birds (3 Mourning Doves, 2 Common Grackles, and 2 Evening Grosbeaks) injured their wings, and 1 (Mourning Dove) injured a foot.

One modified All-Purpose trap (*EBBA Workshop Manual* 2:16, 1963), located on the ground, was baited with Wild Bird Seed Mixture, occasionally with white bread and berries, and in April through November with a dripping water bath. Of the 41 species caught, none were killed, and 5 birds (1 each: Brown Thrasher, Swainson's Thrush, Common Grackle, Evening Grosbeak, and Chipping Sparrow) injured their foreheads although the trap was equipped with two perching bars.

Casualties are regrettable, but the death of two birds per thousand is so low that the Chardonneret trap should be continued in operation. A spring to cause faster closing is not recommended.

An anonymous reviewer gave helpful suggestions for improving this paper.

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Recent Literature

Edited by Richard W. DeHaven

Banding Equipment and Techniques

A new method for restraining live birds. E.R. Schreiber. 1976. *Bird-Banding*, 47:165. (A cardboard tubular container for birds of different sizes.) LD

Standardization of mist net captures for quantification of avian migration. C.J. Ralph. 1976. *Bird-Banding*, 47:44-47. (A method of using net-hours broken down into 12 equal periods of daylight is suggested for banders who wish to compare mist-netting results seasonally and among each other.) LD

Possible impairment of nest-building of hummingbirds by acetate leg tags. N.M. Waser and W.A. Calder. 1975. *Condor*, 77:361. (Based on two

nest failures among 14 leg-tagged female Broad-tailed Hummingbirds.) LD

Trapping and marking of shorebirds at Humboldt Bay, California. R.H. Gerstenberg and S.W. Harris. 1976. *Bird-Banding*, 47:1-7. (Eighteen species were trapped using three techniques; numbers captured per trapping technique and per unit effort are given. Two marking techniques are evaluated.) LD

Minimizing the dangers of nesting studies to raptors and other sensitive species. R.W. Fyfe and R.R. Olendorff. 1976. *Canadian Wildl. Serv., Occas. Paper*, 23:1-17. (A handy catalogue of the sources and kinds of disturbance, with recommendations for minimizing them if nests have to be visited.) CC