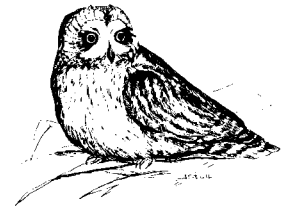


Tips on constructing monofilament nylon nooses for raptor traps

M. Alan Jenkins



After reading Kahn and Millsap's article on Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) trapping (1978, NABB 3:54), I thought it might be useful to relate my experiences with monofilament nylon nooses for raptor traps. Kahn and Millsap stated that only 4 of the 10 owls that landed on their trap were noosed. I have been using a running slip knot with noose traps — primarily bal-chatris — for over a decade and it, along with other techniques, has increased my capture success.

Non-fluorescent colors of monofilament nylon fishing line must be used, but camouflaging the nooses with paint destroys the usefulness of the noose knot described here because of the increased friction. If some camouflage of the nooses is desired, the nylon line will take water-soluble cloth dyes; black is the best color. The test strength of the monofilament line used in constructing the nooses is important. Nooses made of the weaker strengths of line close more easily and are preferable for small birds. Four lb. test line forms an easily closed noose that will hold an American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*); line of 20 lb. test will hold large buteos if the trap is weighted but not anchored.

The best point for attaching the noose on wire mesh is diagonally across the junction of two wires as illustrated in Figure 1B. The line is fastened to the trap with the same knot that is used to form the noose. To attach the line (best done before forming the noose) and make the noose, proceed as follows: Cut a length of monofilament nylon fishing line of the proper strength to 4.5X the desired diameter of the noose. (It is easiest to cut many lengths of the line simultaneously by coiling the line around a cylindrical object which has a diameter equal to the desired line length, slipping the coils off and cutting at one point.) Then tie a small overhand knot in the length of line leaving approximately 15% of the line's length as an end. Thread the unknotted end through the overhand knot and pull the overhand knot as tight as possible to form a loop as shown in Figure 1A. Pass the unknotted end of the line around the point of attachment on the trap (a small crochet hook is useful during this operation) and through the loop. Pull the loop as tight as possible, then pull the unknotted end upward — tightening the line around the trap. The result is a line tightly attached to the trap which will remain upright without tedious gluing. This

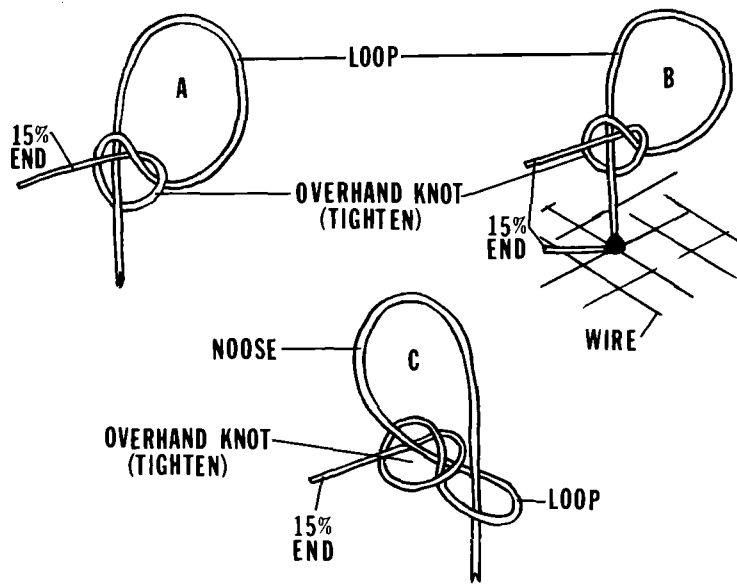


Figure 1. Running slip knot

upright position is important, as the noose loses its effectiveness if it lies flat.

To form the noose from the free end, tie another overhand knot (again, leave about 15% of the length as an end) around the upright portion of the line and pull the overhand knot tight to form a loop (Figure 1B). Invert the loop over the upright portion of the line (Figure 1C) and make the loop small while still allowing enough space for it to slide up and down the upright portion of the line with minimal friction.

The advantage and disadvantage of the running slip knot arise from the same characteristic — it tightens closed when pulled and does not reopen. This means a better capture rate, but it also

necessitates replacing or retying every noose that is pulled closed during a capture. The knot of a tightened noose can be cut off at the distal end and retied at least once; however, this results in a smaller diameter noose.

This knot is useful on bal-chatris, noosed pigeon harnesses, or any other noosed trap such as the one described by Kahn and Millsap.

I thank Scott W. Sawby for initially showing me how to construct the noose and Charles P. Stone, Pete Bloom, and Charles T. Collins for critically reading earlier drafts. ♣

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Round-trip journey of a Brown-headed Cowbird

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Foreign recoveries of banded birds are not an uncommon occurrence; However, when a banded bird is recovered by another bander, returns the following season to the original banding site and is again recaptured, this is a rare occurrence. In a brief survey of the banding literature, I found only one other instance of this type of recovery to have been reported. Amelia Laskey (1973) reported a Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*) she banded on 24 February 1972 at Nashville, Tennessee. This bird was recaptured in Connecticut on 8 May 1972 and returned to Nashville on 15 January 1973.

During the summer the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation conducts a trapping program for Mourning Doves (*Zenaidura macroura*) as part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's webless migratory game-bird program. The Foundation is located in northeastern Illinois near Dundee (420-0881). As part of the normal operation I band most other passerine species that are captured in the 1" x 2" mesh funnel traps. In addition, most of those captured are weighed to the nearest 0.5 g using Pesola scales, and wing chord is taken.

On 9 June 1971, I banded an SY male Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) (Wood 1969, p. 145) (band no. 69-153262). At capture this bird weighed 48.0 g with no visible fat, and wing chord

was 105 mm. No repeats are recorded for this bird, but on 30 August 1971, Harold Mathiaek captured this individual at his banding station in Horicon, Wisconsin (432-0883). On 27 June 1972, I recaptured the bird again. On the last date it weighed 51.5 g, had 0 fat class, and the wing chord was 109 mm.

While homing to breeding and wintering areas is not unusual, the fact that this individual made a flight of almost 100 miles northwest and returned to its breeding area the following spring is a rarely reported event. I was able to find only one record of a similar round trip.

If you have similar records in your files, please share them with others. Only by publication of your data can our knowledge of the biology and movement of birds be increased. ♣

Literature cited:

- Laskey, Amelia R. 1973. A longevity and round trip record of Purple Finches. *Bird-Banding* 44:27.
Wood, Merrill. 1969. A birdbander's guide to age and sex of selected species. College of Agric., Penn. State Univ. 188 pp.

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