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News, Notes, Comments

A Quick, Inexpensive Trap for Use with Nest Boxes

Stutchbury and Robertson (1986) describe a simple and effective trap design for capturing cavity-nesting species in artificial nesting boxes. Their trap consisted of a square aluminum plate that is affixed to the inside of the nest box using strips of masking tape (diagrams contained in Stuchbury and Robertson 1986). To set their trap, the plate is supported upright by using a stick or shoot of grass. Here, we present a modification of this original trap design, which allows for easier field use and is also more cost effective.

Our trap is designed specifically for the side-opening style nest box promoted by The North American Bluebird Society (Fig. 1; for box plans see http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org). This style of box allows easy access for installation of the trap within the box and subsequently for access to captured birds. Our innovation involves replacing the aluminum plate with a piece of 1/4-in hardware cloth, which is both more cost efficient (approximately $0.01 ea) and more easily affixed within the box. Additionally, traps can be manufactured within seconds in the field, allowing for a flexible trapping schedule. Hardware cloth is constructed of stiff, interwoven wire and is available at most hardware stores. The hardware cloth is cut into a square (6.5 x 6.5 cm) and duct tape (5.8 x 6.5 cm) is folded around the bottom to provide additional mass to the mechanism. A second piece of duct tape (5.8 x 6.5 cm) is used to affix the trap to the inside of the box, immediately above the entrance hole (Fig. 1). The trap is light (about 4 g), allowing for the use of a thin shoot of grass to support the trap within the box.

During the course of our studies, we captured about 500 male and female adult Eastern Bluebirds *(Sialia sialis)*. The trapping technique is similar to that described by Stuchbury and Robertson (1986). Trapping was most effective during morning hours (0600 - 1100 h), and when chicks were between 3 and 12 d old. During this period of the nesting cycle, nestlings have the highest energy demand and both the male and female are intensively provisioning. Additionally, nestlings are sedentary, minimizing unintentional trap tripping by nestlings. Individuals were usually caught within 20 min of installing the trap; however, if unsuccessful, the trap was used on a box for a maximum of 1 hr.

The trap is inexpensive and proficient use requires minutes of training, unlike mist-nets. Trapping was 90% effective when used within the suggested time frame, and no injuries were incurred while using the trap. The original design by Stuchbury and Robertson (1986) is effective, yet we believe these modifications provide a substantial increase in efficiency and adaptability.

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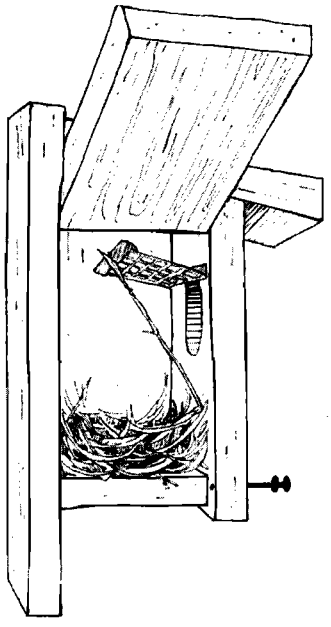

Fig. 1. Side-opening nest-box design with trap set within the box.

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Recent Literature

BANDING HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHIES

A lark or two. W. E. Lanyon. 1993. *Amer. Birds* 47:1050-1057. Box 531, Keene Valley, NY 12943 (Color-banding helped author determine relationships among Eastern and Western meadowlarks in Wisconsin field, show stability of song patterns of individuals from year to year and other social details in classic 1950s study that showed that these two species almost never hybridize in spite of their nearly identical plumages. Further field and captive studies in New York, Wisconsin, and elsewhere demonstrated that males learned songs from birds surrounding natal sites and that rare instances of hybridization produced a high rate of fertile young, but that the eggs of such young are nearly all infertile.) MKM

BANDING EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES

Automated doors for waterfowl banding traps. E. P. Ashley and N. R. North. 2004. *Wildl. Soc. Bull.* 32:273-275. Can. Wildl. Serv., Ontario Region, Big Creek Natl. Wildl. Area, R.R. 3, Port Rowan, ON N0E 1M0 (Describes modifications to baited swim-in waterfowl traps to reduce predation and prevent escape. This automatic door, made of readily available materials, can be programmed to open and close at specific times so that the amount of time captured animals remain in the trap is reduced, as is the potential for escape through an otherwise open funnel door.) SG

Radiotelemetry studies: are we radio-handicapping Northern Bobwhites? F. S. Guthery and J. J. Lusk. 2004. *Wildl. Soc. Bull.* 32:194-201. Dept. Forestry, 008C Agric. Hall, Oklahoma State Univ., Stillwater, OK 74078 (This is a re-analysis of data from previously published papers that estimated bobwhite survival rates through radio-telemetry. The authors determined whether populations would reach a stable age distribution using published survival rates. Most previously published survival rates appear to underestimate true survival rates. Consequently, the authors suggest that survival rates based on telemetry data be interpreted cautiously and that telemetry may not be the best approach for a given research question.) SG

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