

SOME DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED USING THE BAL-CHATRI HAWK TRAP

By J. Douglas Whitman

In using the Bal-Chatrri hawk trap I have encountered several problems which perhaps other banders have had also.

The first and perhaps the most serious is the fact that the house mouse (*Mus musculus*) being so active has a never ending search to escape from his confined quarters within the trap. With the two traps I am using the mice have a tendency to bite anything available, the wire, fingers but most seriously the monofilament nylon nooses. Even though they are secured with duco cement they seem able to get a hold of one or several and bite them off.

One such case was one day when I had to leave the mice in the traps for an hour or so without using them. I put the traps in a dark box and returned to find only four of thirty-five nooses still intact. To remedy this situation I have added an extra layer of hardware cloth above the trap itself on which the nooses are placed. Here they are out of reach of the mice and apparently the trap is just as effective as before.

Another problem I find is that when a hawk comes in to the trap he often alights next to instead of on top of it. To remedy this situation, perhaps a series of nooses could be placed around the outside of the trap so as to make the chance of capturing this type of alighting hawk greater.

Still another problem is that of the trap sinking into the snow in winter. This often renders the trap out of sight to the hawk and is thus wasted energy in dropping it.

When using the trap in winter I suggest placing a thin aluminum bottom in it and painting it white. This would not only stop the traps sinking into the snow but also would facilitate the hawk in seeing the mouse.

One dangerous aspect of the Bal-Chatrri trap is that of causing an accident to a pedestrian or motorist due to the traps rolling into the road or being drawn there by a hawk. This may seem like a negative approach but it could happen. As of now I know of no instance where it has happened but a word of caution might prevent this.

For further information on the construction and use of the Bal-Chatrri I suggest looking in EBBA NEWS for November-December 1957 or the January 1959 issue of Bird-Banding.

Jordan, N.Y.