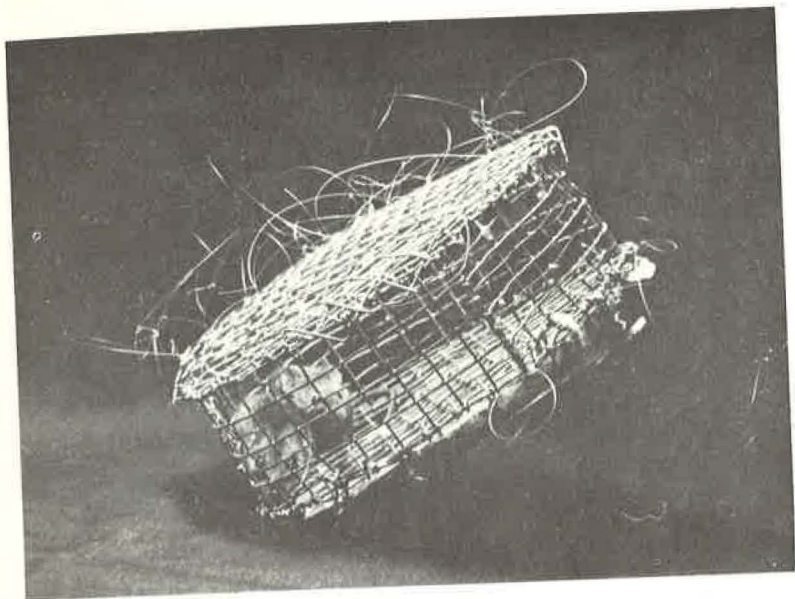


SPARROW HAWK BANDING WITH THE BAL-CHATRI TRAP
By J. Douglas Whitman

My Bal-Chatri hawk trap is of cylindrical shape, being about six inches in diameter and three inches high. It is constructed of one-half inch hardware cloth and weighs one pound. Weights of lead are so arranged on the bottom so that when the trap is dropped from a moving vehicle it will come to rest in an upright position on the ground. The weights also prevent the trap's departure with the hawk! A small door on the bottom of the trap is necessary for admitting the mice.

I have found that additional lengths of wire cemented around the trap halfway between the normal mesh will prevent the escape of small mice. Three-eighths inch hardware cloth would eliminate the necessity of these extra wires, should it be locally available.

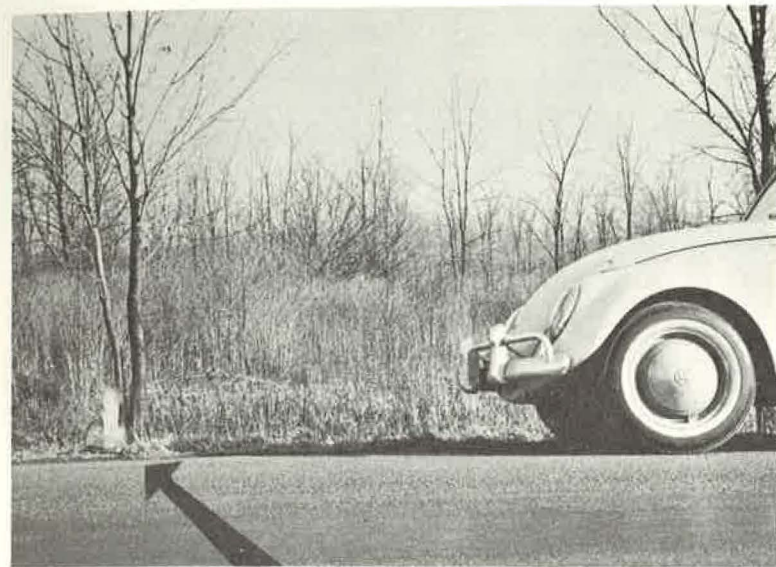
Because of the biting ability of mice I use an "over-top" to protect and hold the nooses. This is no more than an additional piece of hardware cloth fastened to the top of the trap. The nooses are then placed on this instead of the trap proper. It need only be one quarter inch above the top of the trap.

The nooses can be made quite simply. Start with pieces of monofilament nylon ten inches long. Fold one end over about one inch and tie the folded end into a common hard knot. Pull it very tightly and place the remaining single end through the loop just made. Now tie the end to the



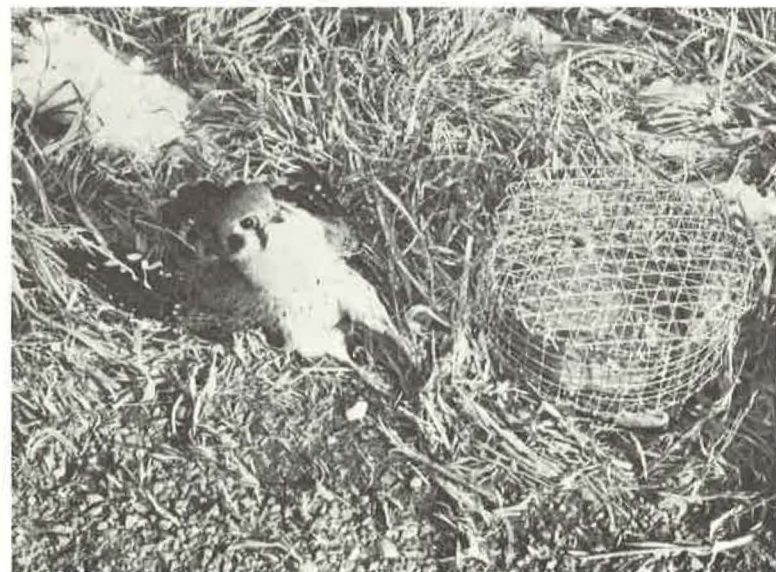
The Sparrow Hawk prefers poles, wires, trees...

...toss the trap...



Drive up quickly...

...so it will keep the noose taut.





A large crochet hook will aid...

Sparrow Hawks are not usually fierce...



The bird is banded...

...and released.



"over-top" with three half hitches and Duco-cement the noose-trap connection to secure it to the trap and in a vertical position. Thirty or so nooses will be sufficient.

For winter use of the trap I find that a plastic bottom prevents it from sinking into heavy snow and it also helps to keep the mice dry. A plastic cottage cheese box top works well.

For catching mice alive I use the "Ben Matlack Mouse Trap". This is a common mouse trap bolted to the side of a one quart oil can. Hardware cloth is placed on the bail so that the trap springs, throwing and trapping the mouse in the can. It is baited in the usual way. I find peanut butter effective.

For bait in the Bal-chatri I use two or three mice which prove to be more effective than one. I might add that the trap also works well on Shrikes.

The winter months seem to be most favorable for banding Sparrow Hawks and Shrikes, due apparently to the reduction of their food supply, causing their appearance at road-sides.

The Sparrow Hawk prefers poles, wires, and trees in fairly open country such as weed or corn fields. When a hawk is spotted, slow the car and toss the trap from the side away from the hawk, giving it a circular spin to aid its upright landing. Keep driving on, turn around and await the attack. When you feel certain the hawk is caught, drive up quickly, to flush the bird so it will keep the noose taut. A large crochet hook will aid in the removal of the noose from the bird's leg. Sparrow Hawks are not usually fierce, however they have very sharp talons. The bird is banded in the normal way and released.

Should a bird fail to attack the trap, make a note of its general location and return to it at a later time (they usually prefer the same location all winter). It could be that it had just eaten so it is not hungry. Several times I have tossed the trap for a bird that was eating and no interest was shown. I have at a later time, however, returned and caught the bird.

The Bal-chatri is about 90 per cent effective, depending on the bird's hunger, traffic, dogs, people, etc. Re-tracing roads already covered many times still seems to produce new birds not seen before. I have seen many which seem to have feeding areas elsewhere and yet show up on wires now and then. In one weekend I travelled 275 miles, never being more than fifteen miles from home.

Being too attentive to trees, poles and wires and not enough to the road can be dangerous. Also, dogs and cats find you and the trap or hawk

very interesting, and people sometimes find your presence near their property disturbing - so a bit of caution is helpful.

(See Bird-Banding, Jan. 1959, pp. 18-26, and EBBA NEWS Sept-Oct 1960, pp. 104, for more information on this trap. Photographs for this article are by the author, with the assistance of M. Fenno. -Ed.)

Jordan, New York

HIGHWAY GOING THROUGH By Mabel Warburton

Am I old-fashioned? Outdated?
Almost ready for the shelf?
Unprogressive? Unrealistic?
Thinking only of myself?
'Cause I want that marsh and meadow
Where the Redwings dip and sway
And the powers-that-be have stated
That it's only in the way.

Would I stop the wheel of progress?
Would I stay the hand of time?
So that I could keep the marshland
For those many friends of mine?
Yes. It's here the steel-grey marsh hawk
Gives my eyes a wondrous thrill
And it's here the long-billed marsh wren
Sings her gurgling little trill.

Looking out upon the meadow
With it's little meadow folk
I know all these trusting creatures
Have a Lord that they invoke.
One who knows what they have need of,
Such as food and nesting place,
But are slowly being pushed back
By the thoughtless human race.

So I'll take a stand to save it
And I'll have my speech and say
Though the powers-that-be have stated
That it's in the right-of-way.
No, I may not win the battle,
But I'd rather try than not,
Lest the grinding wheels of "progress"
Rip away this heavenly spot.
