

NOVICE NETTING NOTES

By David Bridge

(Adapted from the Workshop Manual)

The Beginning Work with an experienced netter and have him teach you the various techniques before applying for the special permit required. If there is no netter living near you, plan to work with an operation recovery station. Members of the team will be glad to help you if you plan ahead.

Terminology

Trammel: Taut horizontal strands, supporting the loose netting.

Loops: The loops at each end of a trammel, used to string net.

Netting: The meshed part of net which catches birds.

Vertical Spacer: The string between the ends of two trammels.

Pocket: The vertical slack in the net, determined by the vertical spacer.

Where to Place Nets Some good spots include: The edge of a habitat area; a hedge row; near food (special bushes or bait); water. Study your area so that you will be able to place your nets across known flight paths. For census taking nets are placed at random.

Erection of the Net Net lane should be cleared of everything that will catch in net. Poles can be of wood, steel conduit, bamboo, aluminum, a convenient tree, etc. Loops: Rubber (either rubber bands or strips of inner tubing -- bicycle tire or small foreign car tire tubes are ideal -- should be connected to the loops. This in turn is attached to the poles by nails, hooks, tying, etc. The rubber will give the net more elasticity, preventing injury to the birds.

Removal of Birds from the Net. Standard method (written by authors of Manual, Vol. 1, 1962): "Free the legs and feet. One way is to hold the thighs (the feathered upper part of the leg) between the thumb and first two fingers. A leg may be broken if held by the tarsus (the bare lower part of the leg). After untangling the legs and feet, the wings must be freed by easing the net strands over the wing. It sometimes happens that a bird will get the net caught in behind its tongue. After tension has been released from the net strand, a pencil or similar instrument can be used to work the strand back and off the cleft." (Ed. - See also Dennis, Mist Netting, EBBA NEWS Vol. 19, No. 5, P. 63.)

Dater method (written by Eleanor E. Dater, EBBA NEWS, 23(1): 18-19, Jan-Feb, 1960): "Ascertain from which side the bird entered the net. working from that side, place your thumb, either right or left, on the

bird's back, at the same time slipping your two middle fingers under the breast with the tail pointed toward your wrist; your little and first fingers will automatically slide under the bird's wings. With the other hand work the mesh off the bend of one wing. Then ease the mesh from the second wing and lastly from the head. By the time the wings are released the bird feels free to fly and usually automatically releases his own feet."

(Ed. - You will find, as you gain experience, that the method you use in the removal of birds from the net will depend on the species you are working on, how badly the bird is enmeshed, etc.)

Precautions Nets must be tended much more closely than traps, as birds in them are particularly vulnerable to predators and weather. In areas where dogs and cats are a problem, nets should be raised, even if at the expense of missing some ground birds.

Wind is dangerous since it can push the netting along the trammel lines, thus tightening the mesh around a bird's neck and choking it. Over-exposure to the hot sun, or rain, can do harm to birds in the net. If birds are caught in a downpour, keep them in gathering cages until they are dry.

Public Relations Have your area well posted with signs. Always answer the questions of visitors. Explain about banding and your project. Be sure that people leave happy and interested.

Where to Buy Nets After you have your netting permit, send proof to any of the following and order your nets:

Mrs. John Y. Dater, Box 111, Ramsey, New Jersey (for prices and other information, see elsewhere in this issue)

Mr. E. Alexander Bergstrom, 37 Old Brook Road, West Hartford 7, Conn.

Mr. Don Bleitz, Bleitz Wildlife Foundation, 1001 North McCadden Place, Los Angeles 38, California.

