WOODPECKER TRAP

By John Fiske

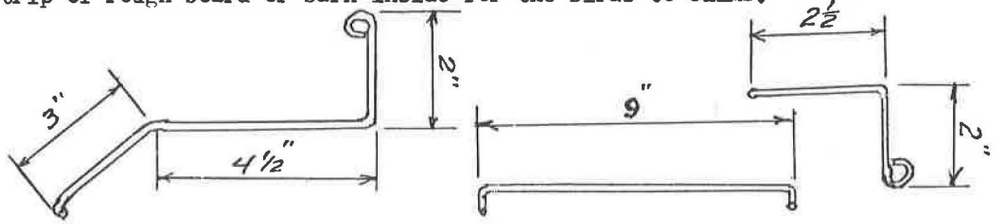
My wife and I made a woodpecker trap that has operated successfully with Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers and occasionally with Nuthatches. It is an adaptation of Dr. McCamey's chickadee trap but instead of having a treadle for the birds to step on, it has a wire basket containing suet mounted on an axle so that it can swing like a pendulum. This is connected, as shown in the diagram, by a linkage system to a hook holding up a gate at the bottom of the trap. When a bird climbs up inside and pecks at the bait, the basket swings slightly, the hook rises and the gate drops. A description of the materials, tools, etc. appears in Bird Banding Vol. 32, No. 1 (1961) and EBBA News Vol. 29, No. 1 (1966).

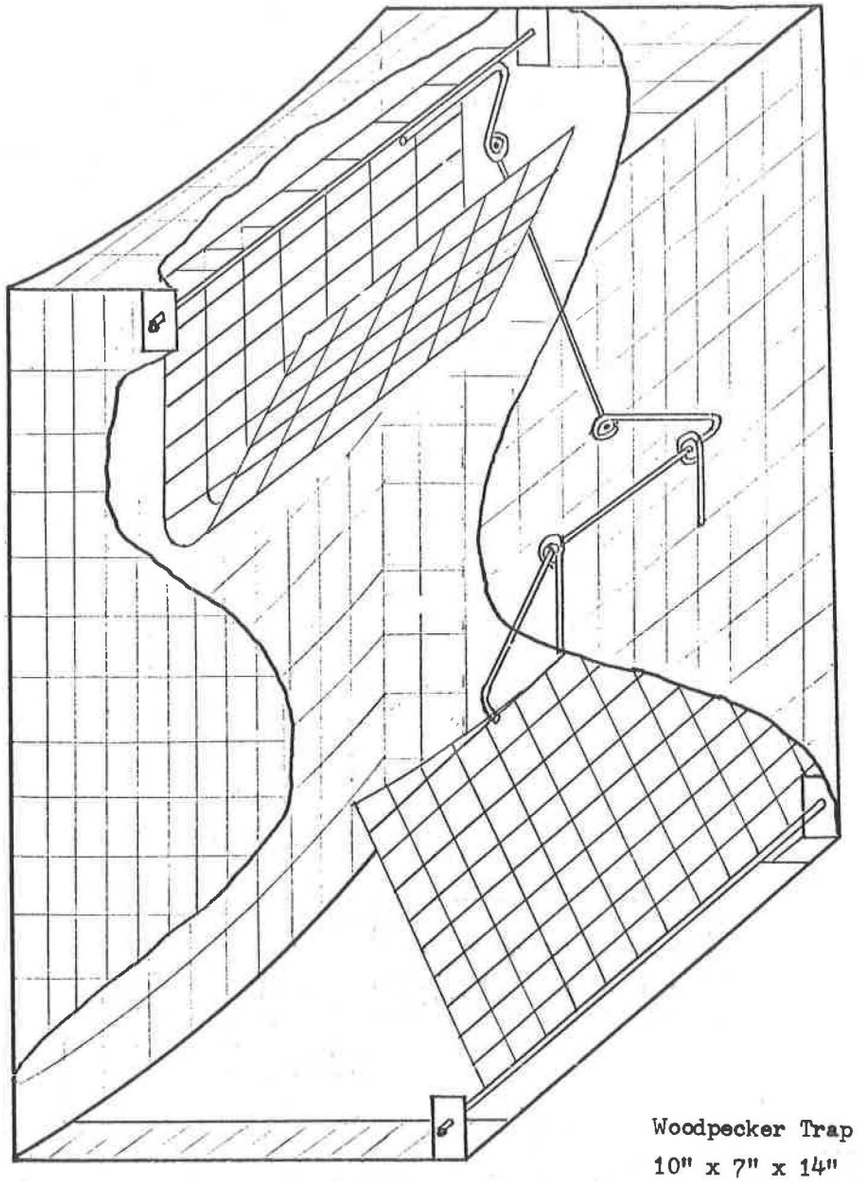
This is a very sensitive mechanism which can operate smoothly. The secret lies in Dr. McCamey's ingenious design of the linkage arrangement and depends on careful workmanship. All the holes must be drilled accurately and the tolerances close so that there is no slack or play at the various joints.

The basket should be designed with about ½" clearance at the ends and with about ¼" to 3/4" for it to swing backwards. If there is more space, the birds can get up behind it, which makes it hard to remove them. Also, a little wire should be woven back and forth about one inch in from each end of the basket to prevent the bait from drifting to a point where the birds can reach it from outside. Not shown in the diagram is a small access door on the top secured by a hook that can be opened to put bait in the basket.

The trap is attached to the trunk of a large elm tree near our house where we can keep an eye on it. When we do not want to operate it as a trap, the bottom gate is held open by a safety hook or a piece of wire, so that the birds can move in and out freely. Thus, it serves much of the time as a feeder.

The curved back can be designed to fit the size of tree selected, or can be flat if it is to be attached to a fence or side of building. Birds have no difficulty climbing inside, since the wire is tight against the bark of the tree. In some other situations it might be useful to put a strip of rough board or bark inside for the birds to climb.





Woodpecker Trap
10" x 7" x 14"

Petersham, Massachusetts 01366