

5 × 5 cm at the most. Larger meshes permit some birds to escape. We caught Ruffs during spring migration at day roosts (pools where they drank and bathed).

From March–August 1977 we caught 1,023 waders of seven different species in 33 days:

Oystercatcher	880
Lapwing	2
Little Ringed Plover	1
Whimbrel	24
Redshank	9
Black-tailed Godwit	5
Ruff	102

We also caught Oystercatchers successfully with the wilster-net at coastal high water roosts. In our opinion it must also be possible to catch other wader species at high water roosts.

## References

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## A simple rapid method of moving a set cannon net with minimal disruption

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**Citation: Clark, N.A. 1980. A simple rapid method of moving a set cannon net with minimal disruption. *Wader Study Group Bull.* 28: 32.**

In response to the cannon-netter's nightmare of unpredictable tides a new method of setting or re-setting a cannon net was sought. This has now been developed to the point at which a two-cannon net can be set or re-set by five experienced people in less than five minutes.

The method involves the use of a "stretcher" made of hessian or polyester sacks, 13 metres long and ½ metre wide. Three 5½-metre-long bamboo mist-net poles are threaded through channels on each side, and these poles must overlap to make the entire structure rigid.

The net, which is 13 metres long, is set in the usual way, *on top of the stretcher*. If it becomes necessary to move the net, the cannons and projectiles are lifted and placed on top of the net on the stretcher with the electrics still connected (N.B. see 1, below). The pegs connected to the jump ropes are also placed on the net, as are spade, mallet, decoys, etc. The five people are spaced out at regular intervals along the stretcher to move the net.

There are several very important points to be remembered:

1. As loaded cannons are being moved with cables attached, the firing box must be **disconnected** before the team starts the move. It is **not** sufficient only to switch off.
2. Each person must be allotted a particular job before starting the operation, so that it can be carried out as quickly and quietly as possible.
3. When cannons and pegs are lifted off the net, care should be taken to ensure that the net is not twisted.

4. New cannon holes must be dug and the cannon weighted down properly so they are not displaced when fired.
5. All normal safety precautions must be taken when positioned cannon, and all members of the team must be behind the net when circuit-testing.
6. The stretcher poles in front of the net must be below the trajectory of the net, otherwise the net will not extend properly.

We have found this method extremely successful. It has proved very useful for catching on sites which are exposed on the falling tide; birds seem to have no hesitation in landing with the decoys, in front of the very obvious stretcher, perhaps as they have learned that cannon nets can be set below high tide!

This method may also prove useful for catching species such as Sanderling *Calidris alba* and Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* on sites where it is possible to make several catches over the high-tide period.

If any further information is required, I shall be happy to provide it.

## Reference

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## Safety note

Some groups may contemplate using the “stretchers” principle to enable them to catch on a rising tide, with the idea of gathering both net and birds onto the stretcher, and carrying the catch to dry ground in this way. There could be many possible dangers in using this technique (see [UK] *Cannon Netting Code* – page 8, Beach catches para. b.), and any experiments should be conducted with the very greatest care. In particular, it is suggested that experiments should start with small numbers of medium or larger sized species; that care be taken to avoid too great a weight of net and birds on any part of the stretcher; and that a team of at least ten experienced people should be involved to gather the net onto the stretcher, to control it while being moved, and to spread the net and extract the birds after moving to higher ground.

*The Editors*

## Rocky shores

When a cannon net is set on a rocky shore there is considerable risk that it will become entangled on rock projections and torn when fired. We therefore set nets on rocks on hessian strips about 1 m wide using the procedure developed for catching gulls on rubbish tips ([UK] *Cannon-netting Code of Practice* pp. 13–16). This method is entirely satisfactory. The hessian may also be folded forward over the furled net to prevent birds standing on it if the cannons are set *under* the furled net (see [UK] *Code of Practice*). Obviously the stretcher principle described above could also be used.

*G.H. Green*

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## A glossary of cannon netting terms

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**Citation: Minton, C.D.T. 1980. A glossary of cannon netting terms. *Wader Study Group Bull.* 28: 46–47.**

*(The following glossary reminds the editors of youth (especially GHG) and the heady, early days of wader catching near The Wash, England. In those days (late 1950s) Clive Minton first cajoled the Wildfowl Trust into using their goose-catching rocket nets in the 1960s (now MWP is feeling aged too), again by Clive Minton and the Wash Wader Ringing Group, hatched many of the others and they are now receiving an Australian twist! Fascinatingly Clive has now exported himself (temporarily), the methods, terms and his enthusiasm for waders to Australia and he is obviously enmeshing (or mesmerising!) Australian wader ringers (banders) in much the same way as he fixed us years ago! Beware, our southern friends, beware – God knows where it will lead you! The uninitiated may find what follows boring but please bear with those of us who appreciate the irony. Ringing totals show that we do catch waders now and then – who counts the failures, the lost sleep, the biting cold, the discomfort and the slave-driving leader so expert in apply psychological pressures to attain his own ends? Cannon-netting has taught us much about waders and is responsible for the world-wide coterie now using apparatus similar to that designed at the Wash years ago – not surprising as the Wash Wader Ringing Group now sell the stuff to the unwary! – Eds.)*

1. **Air shot or near miss** – net fired but zero catch. Not counted in statistics in order not to spoil average.
2. **Buttercup** – a bird dyed yellow with picric acid (gradually turning orange brown with age). May flower in all seasons. The majority are sedentary and seen regularly; those which migrate do so to areas uninhabited by man or populated only by colour blind birdwatchers.
3. **Cannon** – steel tube from which projectile is propelled forward when electrically ignited cartridge is fired. In soft ground the reverse may happen.
4. **Catching area** – the 30 m × 15 m areas in front of a net avoided by birds at all times. An area occupied only by decoys. Birds often prefer to roost in similar area immediately behind the net.
5. **Chocolate blocks** – the electrical connectors used for joining dropper cable to electric fuses in cartridges. Inedible. Original version brown, but now usually grey or white.
6. **Circuit tester** – the sensitive instrument which tells you when someone has tripped over a wire and broken the

