

Curlew, cramp and keeping cages

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The increased success in recent years of catching such waders as Curlew *Numenius arquata* and godwits, both in mist nets, and in larger numbers in cannon nets, has focused attention on the problem of leg cramp which can occur in these birds.

The reason for cramp is unknown, although it seems likely to be caused by the confinement of the birds in a space too small or too low to allow them to stand upright – such as a large bird bag, sack, or even a standard sized cannon net keeping cage. Obviously if the birds are caught by mist netting on saltings, a sack has to be used to transport the birds back to the base, but the use of high keeping cages can solve the problems of keeping them for longer periods, as is necessary with larger catches.

This newly designed keeping cage, which has been in operation on the Wash this autumn, appears to eliminate or at least greatly lessen the problems of cramp in long-legged waders. It is made from a standard hopsack (72 inches × 36 inches), slit lengthways to give a piece of material 144 inches × 36 inches. The ends are sewn together to form a circle of material 36 inches high. This forms the rectangle of the keeping cage – sides 48 inches, ends 24 inches. A 12 inch-cut is made down to the mid point of each end of the cage and the top 12 inches of each side are then folded over, as shown in Figure 1. This forms the roof, which is stitched down at the sides, and in the middle if necessary, to give either one or two slit entrances of the standard keeping cage types (Figure 2). The cage is held up by four 30 inch-poles, one at each corner, which may need to be guyed.

If preferred one or two partitions may be sewn into the cage, although for Curlew this is thought to be unnecessary as they do not fight. Up to 25 can be held safely in a keeping cage.

At the [1975] Wader Study Group AGM it was recom-

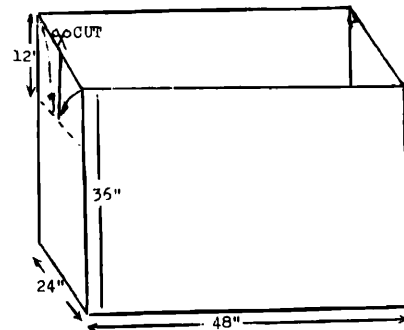


Fig. 1.

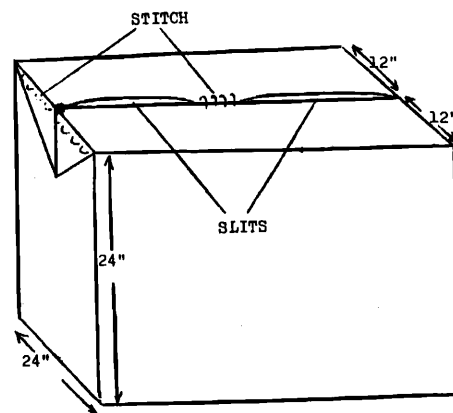


Fig. 2.

mended that anyone likely to catch Curlew in any numbers should be properly equipped with these higher cages, in order to avoid the cramp problems that have caused concern to Curlew ringers for so long.

Leg paralysis in captured waders

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Citation: Green, G.H. 1978. Leg paralysis in captured waders. *Wader Study Group Bull.* 24: 24.

A recent note by J. van Heerden (108 Pretorius Street, Hatfield, Pretoria 0083, South Africa), 'Leg paralysis in birds' *Ostrich* 48: 118–119, 1977, is of interest to wader ringers. He describes leg paralysis following excessive chasing, over-exertion, unnecessary disturbance, excessive handling, fear and shock which may lead to death and he calls the whole syndrome 'stress myopathy' or 'over straining dis-

ease'. Wader ringers may well have experienced problems with long legged waders 'going off their legs' after capture and the species most seriously affected in UK is the Curlew *Numenius arquata* but similar problems occasionally arise with Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*, Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* and even Redshanks *Tringa totanus*. Curlews may be affected very quickly so that netted birds

