

No. 284R

Boston Soc. of Nat. Hist.  
Boston, July 3, 1886

"The Boston Society of Natural History, having received satisfactory evidence that A. C. Bent of Taunton is engaged in the scientific study of Ornithology and in the collection of wild birds, birds' nests and eggs for scientific purposes, does hereby, in accordance with Chapter 92 of the Public Statutes of Mass., grant him a certificate to the effect that he is so engaged, on the condition that he will faithfully observe his written promise to the Society to obey the letter and spirit of the laws enacted for the "Preservation of certain Birds and other Animals;" and in case of wanton destruction of birds or birds' eggs, or killing birds for merely ornamental purposes, or of any other breach of said promise, by the said Bent, this certificate shall be revoked, and notice of such revocation given in any manner the Society thinks best."

This expired on 1 May 1887, and Bent made application to the Inland Fish and Game Commissioners of Massachusetts for a new permit to collect birds and their nests and eggs. This Commission consisted of E. A. Brackett, E. H. Lathrop, and Frederic W. Putnam. In making a study of the Putnam papers, the writer came across Bent's application for a collecting permit, which reads as follows:

"To the Inland Fish and Game Commissioners of Mass.: I hereby respectfully submit my application for a permit to collect birds and their nests and eggs, which are now under the protection of the law. Of course, I should collect only for purely scientific purposes, as I have no motive or desire to destroy our native birds through a spirit of wanton destruction, for mercenary ends or for purposes of ornamentation. And should, as I always have done, observe the spirit and the letter of the law. I have collected in past years under the auspices of a permit granted me by Mr. Burgess of the Boston Society of Natural History, which you will please find enclosed. My small collection, consisting of slightly over 100 species of eggs and between 50 and 60 species of birds, has been made and arranged in a scientific basis; my specimens are labelled with full data containing all particulars of locality, identification, dates, and attending circumstances. I have also started a collection of the skeletal parts of birds to study the affinity between different genera and species and also individual variations in the same species. By careful and systematic study in this branch, I hope to be able to prove the fact that variations in species give rise to new varieties and perhaps to new species and genera. Of course, an extended and careful investigation is necessary to determine anything in this line; but as I intend to devote more or less of my life to this subject, I may disclose some facts of interest to science. At present, I am interested in writing a brief work on the birds of south-eastern Massachusetts, which is the only field in which I have had much experience. I intend the work to be merely a simple and truthful account of the birds occurring within the limits of Bristol and Plymouth counties, and have collected as much data on the subject as I could procure. I am a member of the Bristol Ornithological Club, in whose interest *The Ornithologist and Oologist* is published. If necessary, I can refer you for testimonials of character to the Mayor of Taunton, to Mr. J. Russell Reed of Boston, and to Mr. William Brewster of Cambridge, all of whom were of influence in obtaining my former permit."

This permit was acted upon favorably by the Commission. The word "granted" is written on Bent's letter in the handwriting of F. W. Putnam.—Ralph W. Dexter, Department of Biological Sciences, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

**New Trap Available.**—Bird banders and all others who attract birds, have been consistently plagued by flocks of House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) feeding on seeds designed to attract other species. As all banders know, House Sparrows are not the easiest bird in the world to catch, hence it was interesting to read the following item in *Bird News of Western Massachusetts*:

"... Paul Woodruff . . . writes . . . his farm is completely rid of House Sparrows. He is now host to nesting Bluebirds, Purple Martins, many Tree Swallows, Barn and . . . Cliff Swallows. All credit goes to a very effective Sparrow Trap made and sold by Johnson's, Waverly, Kentucky."

A visit to the farm in question in Lunenburg, Massachusetts to verify this remarkable piece of news proved it essentially correct. It was learned at that time that other bird species had been caught also.

The manufacturer, with House Sparrows in mind, makes the following recommendations:

1. Prebait, especially on top of the trap. A flat, shallow pan is suggested.
2. Trap works as well on the ground as off the ground. However, an off the ground location is recommended for House Sparrows. Off the ground is also good for Purple Finches, Evening Grosbeaks, and Goldfinches.
3. Leave one or two live birds in the trap to attract others. Water-soaked bread will keep captives alive.
4. The best time of year is the middle and late summer when the young sparrows are shifting for themselves, but leave the trap out all the time for it will catch sparrows throughout the year. To reach full effectiveness the trap should be weathered, the newness of wire detracting from a trap's effectiveness. (In this connection, the results of Merrill Wood's testing of various materials should be mentioned. He proved flat (dull) black paint as most efficacious for painting the wire of bird banding traps.) This material can be bought in spray cans.

Price: 1 for \$9.95 or 2 for \$17.50, postpaid.

This new sparrow trap was tested by Mrs. Jeptha H. Wade, a bander in Bedford, Massachusetts, and by myself. It is fair to say that the standard model will catch any small songbird, up to and including the cowbird. It would seem birds larger than the cowbird would be too large for the entrance mechanism. Banders no doubt will want to experiment with a similar top entrance for larger birds. It is also hoped banders will test the Johnson trap alongside other designs and report back. It could be anticipated it would be especially valuable for catching purple finches set off the ground on a feeder or table arrangement. —Edwin A. Mason, Massachusetts Audubon Society, Lincoln, Mass.

*Ed. note:* we have obtained one of these traps, but have not yet had opportunity to test it. In addition to the points noted by Mr. Mason, we suggest (1) smoothing any sharp ends of wire; (2) cutting a door in the end of the trap away from the entrance, perhaps 5" wide and 6" high, for use with a gathering cage (cover with a piece of welded wire or heavy-gauge hardware cloth 2" wider than the door, and as high as the trap, fastened with 2 or 3 loose loops of wire at the top, so that it will lie flat on top of the trap when the trap is not in use; when the trap is to be used, a small block of wood against the door is better than a more rigid device to keep the door shut, if squirrels or other mammals may get into the trap); (3) when the trap is to be left open, open the entrance as far as the pivot will allow, and fasten the other end of that piece of wire to the top of the trap with a loop of wire or battery clamp, so that birds can enter freely and become more accustomed to the trap.

**Golden Eagle 509-50214.**—The recovery of this band, from a Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) "found long dead" south of Quarryville, Pa., on November 5, 1963 is the first from an eagle banded as a juvenile from a known Appalachian nest. This bird was banded as a 10-month-old eaglet in the nest on 10 July, 1963, in Maine. Since I discovered this pair of eagles in 1955, this is the third eaglet raised, each of the others (banded in July, 1957 and July, 1960) being as yet unreported.

Since Snyder reviewed the evidence, that Golden Eagles have probably been nesting at remote sites in Quebec since first reported by Edwards in 1743, it has been suspected that the small contingent of eagles migrating past Hawk Mountain each autumn were from this source. Since the more recent discovery of a remnant few breeding in our own northern Appalachians it has seemed possible that some of the variously 30 to 83 birds which pass each fall may be from south of the St. Lawrence River. Whether this more southern population is regularly migratory has not been established. Varying Hare, a staple food item, and grouse *sp.* are available all winter, but many other food items such as marmot and bittern are not. It may be suspected that in regions of intermediate winter severity, some eagles may migrate and others not, and presumably the relatively unskillful juveniles and immatures without home range of their own would be likely to migrate to more southern wintering grounds. It has been reported elsewhere that small numbers of Golden Eagles appear during winter in the "badlands" of the Cumberland, Tennessee.