

A RAFT TRAP FOR DUCKS

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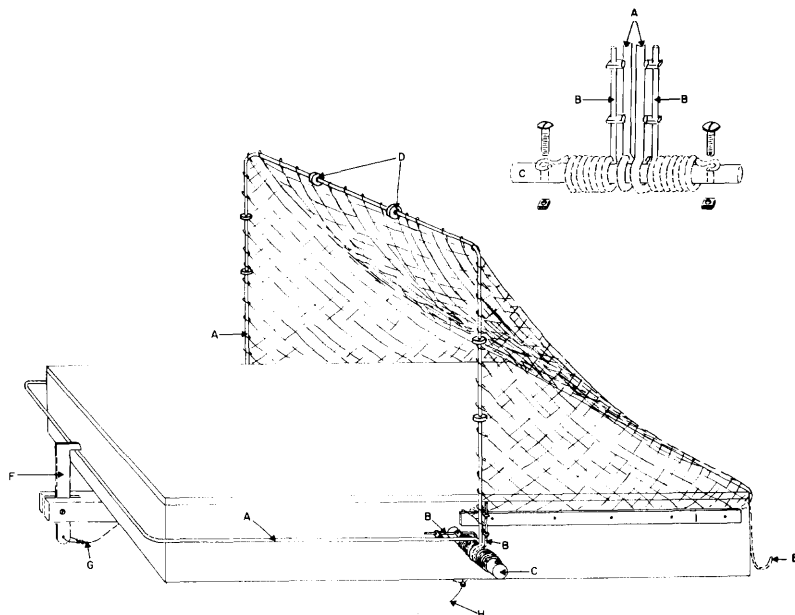
During a home range study of Shovelers (*Spatula clypeata*) we tried several methods for capturing ducks capable of flight. One was a loafing raft trap which, though not particularly useful for trapping Shovelers, showed promise for some other species.

The trap operates on the same principle as a beaver live-trap, successfully modified for trapping incubating Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) by Atwater (1959), and is similar in construction to the bow-net trap described by Salyer (1962). Materials and machinist labor for one raft trap cost about \$12.

A raft, 16 x 30 inches, is made with 5/8-inch plywood nailed to a frame of 2 x 4 inch lumber (Figure 1). Two 16 x 27 inch bails (A), made of 3/8-inch rolled steel, are attached to combine pick-up teeth (B) on a 1-1/8-inch steel axle (C) which protrudes 7 inches on each side of the raft. The bails turn on the axle between the coil springs.

Fish netting is tied to each of the bails and fastened to the raft with wooden slats. Rubber washers (D) on the bails prevent the

Figure 1. Diagram showing construction of raft trap. Left bail (without netting) is in cocked position, and right bail in closed position.



net from being cut when the bails snap together. Metal supports (E) on each corner (only one shown) hold up the netting when the trap is set and prevent the net from catching on the raft when the bails close.

Each bail is held in cocked position by a hook (F) made of 1/8-inch flat iron and pivoting in a slotted two by four on a 1/4-inch bolt. The bails are tripped with cord or light wire (G) tied to each hook (F), threaded through a metal eye on the bottom of the two by four and joined to a single line (H) leading to the trip site. Because small mammals sometimes chew a cord, the trip line is best made from wire.

The raft was fastened to four stakes driven into the mud bottom of a pond, and positioned so that the top was about 1 inch above the water surface. Periodic maintenance was necessary because fluctuating water levels either flooded some traps or left too much exposed.

Shovelers used the rafts so seldom that we abandoned the method after three trapping attempts, two of which were successful. The raft traps seemed particularly attractive to pairs of Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*), Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) and Blue-winged Teal (*A. discors*), and we are confident that we could have had good success trapping those species.

Were we to use the trap again, we would modify the release mechanism. During the unsuccessful attempt, the heavy pull needed to trip the bails moved the raft before the bails released, causing the ducks to flush. A more sensitive catch, perhaps released by a spring mechanism, would overcome this fault.

LITERATURE CITED

- ATWATER, MELVIN G. 1959. A study of renesting Canada geese in Montana. *J. Wildl. Mgmt.* **23**(1): 91-97.
- SALYER, JAMES W. 1962. A bow-net trap for ducks. *J. Wildl. Mgmt.* **26**(2): 219-221.

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