A Simple Trap for Capturing Nesting Wilson's Phalaropes.—From 12 May to 26 June 1975, I studied Wilson's Phalaropes (*Phalaropus tricolor*) at the Audubon National Wildlife Refuge, McLean Co., ND. I concentrated my efforts on the phalaropes nesting on a 5.2 ha (12.8 acre) island in Lake Audubon, 1.4 km from shore. Here I describe a simple and effective trap for capturing nesting Wilson's Phalaropes.

Previous investigators used several methods to trap waterfowl and shorebirds at the nest, including the Coulter trap (Coulter, 1958), manual-drop box traps or weighted nets (Bohlken, 1934; Sowls, 1949; Hildén and Vuolanto, 1972; Graul, 1975), funnel traps (Griffin, 1943; Graul, 1975), spring-loaded, manual-release nets (Oring and Knudson, 1972; Graul, 1975; Howe, 1975), thrown hoop nets (Harris, 1952; Schamel and Tracy, 1977), and self-releasing box traps or nets (Griffin, 1943; Weller, 1957; Schamel and Tracy, 1977).

From 12 May to 1 June, I attempted to catch phalaropes in feeding areas with a horizontal mist net (Johns, 1963), standard mist nets, thrown hoop nets, and a funnel trap. At nests, I tried Schamel's spring trap, thrown hoop nets, and a manual drop net. I used these methods a total of about 62 hours but trapped only four birds, two nonbreeding females with a horizontal mist net, and two incubating males with a drop net and Schamel's trap.

I began using a new method on 2 June when my field assistant inadvertently caught a male with a long-handled fisherman's landing net. She placed the net over a nest to mark its location; when we returned the male had crawled under the net's edge. The bird flushed as we approached and was immediately entangled in the cotton 2 cm^2 mesh. Thereafter, we placed the flush (landing) net over a nest so that it was in contact with the ground except on one side, where a space of about 8 cm allowed the bird to crawl under the rim. The mesh was held off the ground by vegetation and the crawl space could by made by propping the rim on a clump of grass. Nineteen phalaropes (15 males, 4 females) were caught during egg laying or early incubation stages in about 27 hours of effort.

The flush net uses the same principle as traps described by Austin (1938), Martin (1969), Weaver and Kadlec (1970), and Burger (1971), and appears to have several advantages over more bulky or complicated nest traps. The phalaropes usually returned to their nests within 0.5 hr after we set up the net, and seemed to respond as if the mesh were part of the grass around the nest. The net could be made without a handle from a metal hoop and cotton or nylon netting, and the mesh dyed to reduce further its conspicuousness. The birds were not alarmed and did not become entangled until they flushed as we approached. Thus, the net did not have to be monitored continuously and was checked every 15 min through binoculars to determine whether the bird had returned.

Because the flush net did not disturb surrounding vegetation or keep males off their nests very long, it should not cause desertions or increase nest predations. However, I did not gather sufficient comparative data to verify this.

The flush net is a simple and effective method for capturing nesting Wilson's Phalaropes. It may be a useful technique for other species, especially those that nest in grasslands or tundra and enter their nests by walking through the surrounding vegetation.

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Play by Ring-billed Gulls.—Following upon Jarvis and Southern's account (*Wilson Bull.,* **88:** 621–631, 1976) of the food habits of the Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*), Ficken's review of avian play (*Auk,* **94:** 573–582, 1977) prompts me to report activities of this gull that appear to be play. The activities seem adaptive as practice of catching or retrieving prey.

Jarvis and Southern found that fish comprise 76% (volume) of the diet of Ring-bills at two Michigan breeding colonies. Ring-bills use a pond at Woodlawn, Baltimore County, MD, as a daytime loafing place in winter, and from 1969 to 1972, when Southern was color-tagging at his colonies, individuals from both were among the birds at Woodlawn. At this pond fish 4 to 33 cm long are commonly caught by herons in summer and by Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*) in winter, yet in 10 years of visiting the pond I have never seen Ring-bills make a catch, although occasionally one picks briefly at a carcass abandoned by a Herring Gull. (Where they do their feeding, I do not know.)

Nevertheless the Ring-bills, both subadults and adults, do a great deal of diving. Sometimes they lunge forward from the surface, sometimes rise 1 m or more in the air to plunge vertically into the water, which is probably nowhere more than 30 cm deep. When they bring up anything, it is always trash (sodden leaves or twigs), but most often they bring up nothing at all. Several times, when their diving has been persistent at a particular spot, a Herring Gull has been attracted but after swimming about the area, has gone away, confirming that no prey was there.

It would seem, then, that this diving is a mere pastime. This must also be true of the chases that occur when a gull flies up with a piece of trash; the chases are so close and twisting that the pursuer must surely see that it is not food the other bird is carrying. And still a third activity consists of dropping things from the air and catching them before they reach the ground or water; examples from my notes are:

9 March 1970: From heights of perhaps 13 m above the water an adult Ring-bill was dropping a small object resembling a bottle cap and then making practically vertical,