
Aerial net assembly

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Watching birds flying over your mist nets can be frustrating. This is a common problem with many banders who band in deciduous woodland.

As new banders confronted with this problem, we sought someone whom we knew was using aerial nets. We traveled from our home banding station in Bucks County, PA to Ulster County, NY to visit fellow bander, Valerie Freer, who was using aerial nets to catch migrating songbirds. (Her net plans were derived from those used at Point Reyes Bird Observatory, CA.) We noted the setup and went home to make one of our own similar to hers.

We brought this net to the EBBA Conference at Pocono Environmental Center in 1979. Some of those in attendance requested assembly instructions; the following directions should help those wishing to set up such an aerial net. (Alterations can be made to suit one's own needs.)

Material needed:

- Two tethered nets (we use 12-meter)
- Approximately 75 feet (22.9 m) of nylon rope
- Four sections of electrical conduit pipe (10- or 12-foot [3 or 3.6 m] section)
- Two pulleys to fit the diameter of the rope
- Two bolts with an eye in the end (eye-bolts), which can be purchased or made

Procedure (best done in a large clean area, such as a blacktopped driveway, with an assistant):

1. Join two of the poles together by using a tight metal rod or a wooden dowel inserted in the center. A screw can be put through, but this interferes somewhat with the lowering and raising of the pulley line. If the insert is tight and long enough, no screws are necessary.
2. Attach a pulley at the top of each pole with an eye-bolt (Figure 1).
3. Take one length of rope, about 20 feet (6 m) long (hereafter called the pole rope). Starting at the bottom pocket line (or trammel line) of the lower net, make a 6-inch (0.15 m) loop in the pole rope and tie the colored net loop into the pole loop. (Note that the colored net loops are not

slipped over the net poles.) See Figure 2. Move up to the next loop using the proper length of the pole rope and repeat the above knotting and tying procedure. Do this until you reach the top of the first net. Here, the top colored net loop of the bottom net and the bottom colored net loop of the top net are placed in the same loop made in the pole rope. Now proceed in the same manner as above to finish knotting and tying the top net. Where the two nets join, tie the bottom trammel line of the upper net to the top trammel line of the lower net with black thread, at about 12-inch (0.3 m) intervals to make one solid net.

4. Now place the nets on the poles and push them together. Tie the pulley line to the top end of the pole rope. The pulley line should be twice as long as the entire height of the poles. This is to be certain that there is enough rope within reach when the net is pulled down and closed. Be sure to tie a knot half way along the pulley line so that the line is not accidentally pulled through the pulley in the wrong direction.

5. Attach a support line to the top of the pole, preferably below the pulley. Stand the poles up in their location. A larger diameter pipe hammered into the ground, with the net pole inserted in it, gives additional stability. Tie out support lines. Extra support lines can be added at the bottom, between the second and the third net sections. (By adding these support lines, one can pull the net closer to the ground and stabilize the poles by having the support lines a little higher.)

6. Test and work the net assembly several times to be sure it is working easily and properly before attempting to capture birds with it.

7. To collect the birds, start at the bottom and work your way up by pulling the net sections and pole rope down as you proceed.

We have used this setup for three years and find that it enables us to catch birds which we ordinarily would not get. When there is a large "flight" moving through, there are always more birds in the top sections than in the bottom. The initial time and effort needed to set up this net certainly are worth it. 🍷

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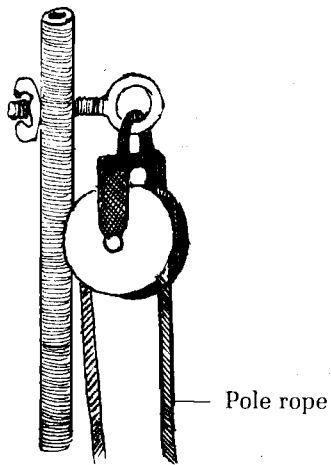


Figure 1

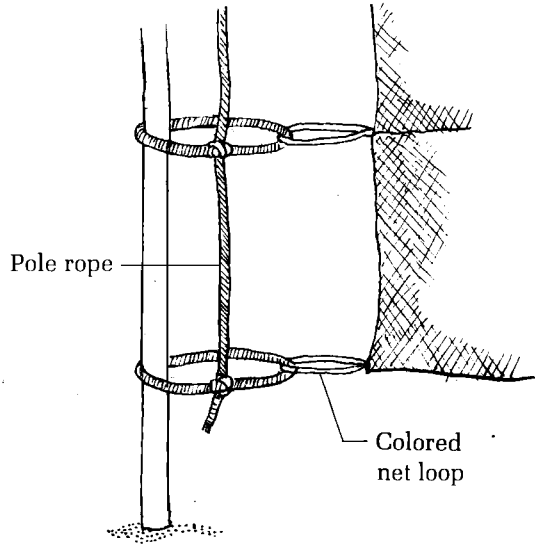
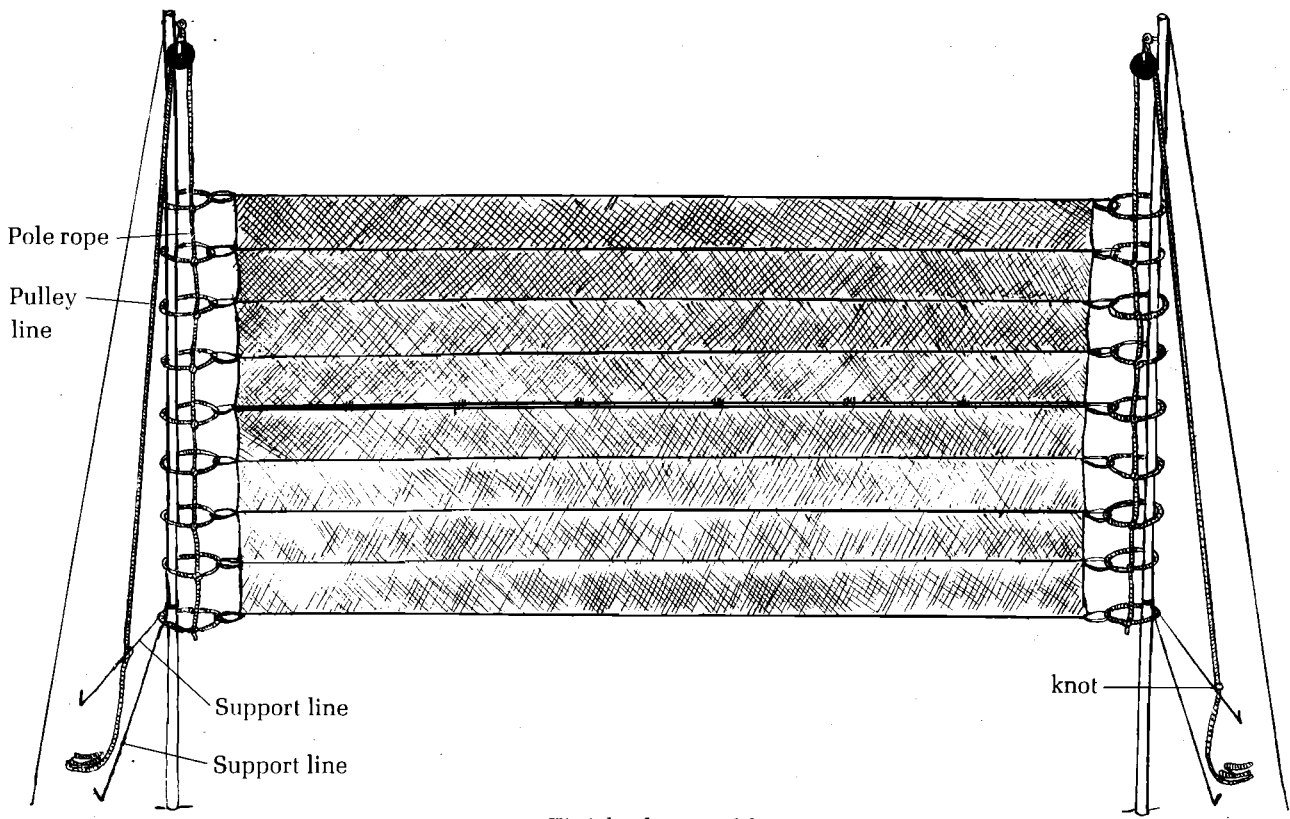


Figure 2



Finished assembly