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String Operated Repeating Shelf Trap

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String operated repeating shelf trap

Fred S. Hill, Jr.

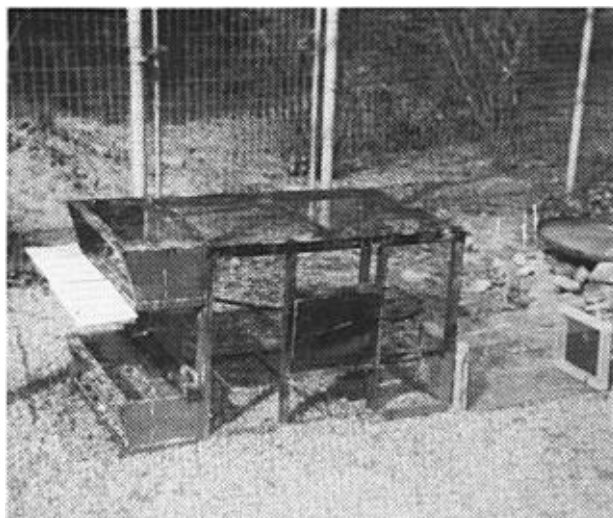
This trap is nothing more than one or more feeding shelves (equipped with gates at front and rear) attached to a cage. The gates are operated by pulling or releasing monofilament fishing lines which are attached to each gate. When the trap is not in use, all gates may be left open and birds will pass freely into and out of the cage. The area over each shelf (ABDC) may be covered with either wire or board. Both will work, but I prefer wire so that bait, generally sunflower seed, can be poured through the wire onto the shelf, and so that birds on top of the shelf can see the seed.

The rear gate is attached to a wooden rod which pivots between points A and B so that the gate hangs down flush against the back side of the shelf when there is no tension on the rear gate string. If the gate does not hang flush against the shelf, a 1- or 2-ounce fishing sinker may be attached to the back side of the gate.

The front gate is attached to a wooden rod which pivots between points E and F. It is activated by a monofilament line attached to the center of the front edge, passed through an eye ring at the midpoint of CD, and away from the trap.

The pull strings should be adjusted so that they do not rub against the frame of the trap and set up vibrations that scare the birds. The ends should be marked in some manner so that each may be readily identified. I have attached painted fishing sinkers to the ends of the strings for identification. The front gate to the upper shelf should be held in the horizontal position when the gate is open, and the gate to the lower shelf should lie flat on the ground.

When a bird enters one of these shelves, the front gate string is pulled to close the gate, and the bird is trapped. The string to the rear gate is then pulled to allow the bird to pass into the main cage. When the strings are released, the rear gate will close and the front gate will open. If a bird is reluctant to pass into the cage, it may be necessary to jiggle the string to the front gate until he is scared into the cage. If the front gate is closed slowly, the birds usually do not become alarmed but will sit and watch it close them in.



String Operated Repeating Shelf Trap (photo by the author)

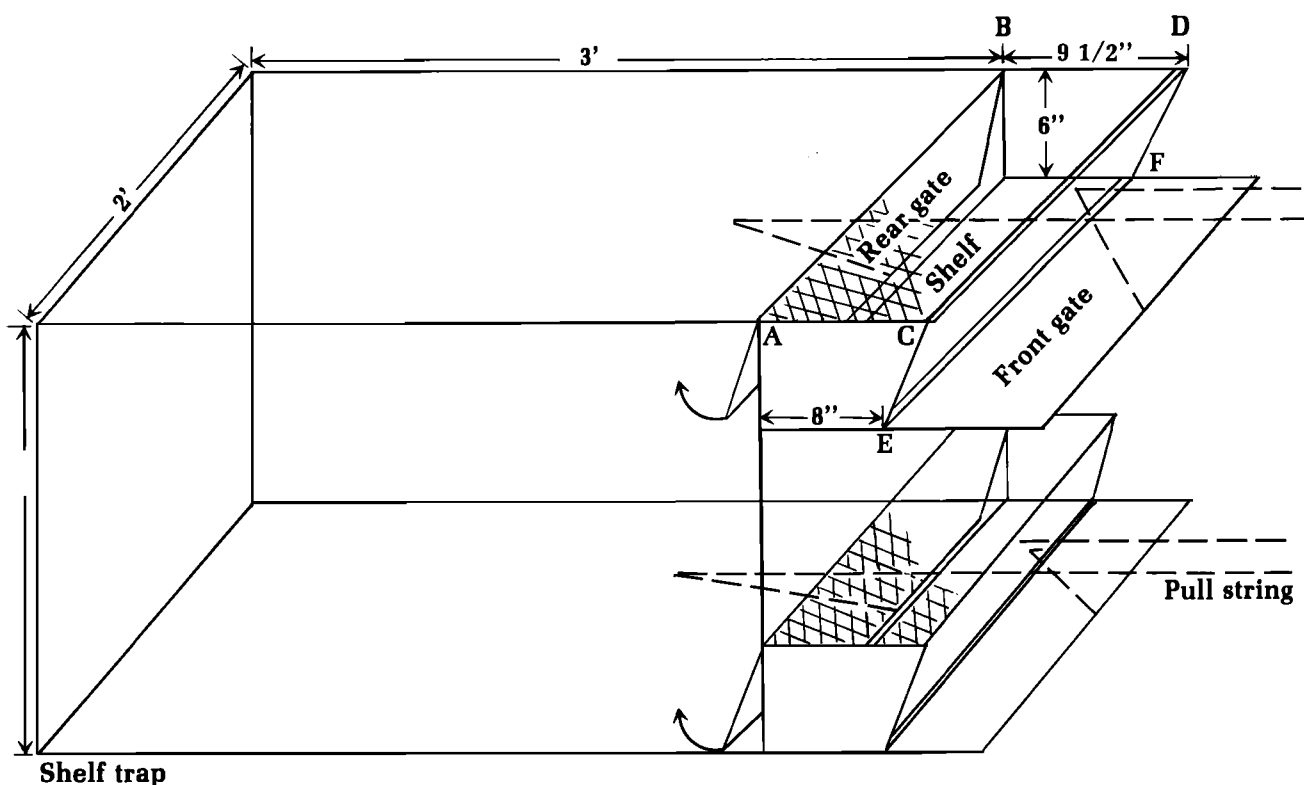
A collection cage should be used to remove the birds from the trap. However, I also use a side opening covered with overlapped tire tube for the removal of Evening Grosbeaks to avoid confining them closely in a collecting cage. It is easy enough to reach through and remove them one at a time and place each in a bag. It is convenient to suspend each bag from nails driven into the frame of the trap. It is better to have one or two perches inside the trap.

This trap has been most effective on Purple Finches, Goldfinches, Evening Grosbeaks, and Pine Siskins, but I have also taken Blue Jays, Carolina Wrens, towhees, Brown Thrashers, Tufted Titmice, chickadees, Cardinals, White-throated and Song Sparrows.

In the photograph, I have placed two sheets of paper on the front gate to the upper shelf so that it will show clearly in the picture, and I have placed the collecting cage in position to remove birds from the main cage.

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Originally submitted for use in one of the Bird Banding
Manuals — EBBA



A simple pole and mirror device

Dwight G. Smith and Douglas A. Spencer

In our studies of breeding bird populations of suburban developments in Hamden, Connecticut, we frequently needed to examine nests located on buildings, yard structures, or planted trees and shrubs. Parker (1972, *Bird-Banding* 43:216-218) solved a somewhat similar problem in his study of raptor nests by constructing a mirror and pole apparatus which consisted of six-foot sections attached to a telescoping unit. Parker's device is undoubtedly excellent, but we required an apparatus which was rapid, efficient, and — for backyard use — inconspicuous.

Ultimately we constructed a device consisting of a telescoping swimming pool pole, manufactured by Hunt-Wilde Corporation (price \$10) and a six-inch diameter shaving mirror purchased for \$3. The mirror is attached, magnifying side at a 90° angle facing downward, by a stainless steel clamp fasten-

ed with two holes drilled into the pole. We used colored tape to mark quarter-foot intervals on the pole, thereby allowing us to measure nest heights. The telescoping pole may be extended and twist-locked to a maximum of 12 feet. A normal sized individual is therefore able to examine nests to a maximum height of 21 feet. Although this proved fully satisfactory for our needs, longer poles are on the market for purchase.

We have successfully used this device over the summer breeding season. Disturbance of birds was minimal and most species quickly adapted to our weekly examination of nest contents. It also proved useful in determining when the young were suitably old enough to be banded.

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