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# Two methods of trapping adult Pileated Woodpeckers at their nest cavities

Evelyn L. Bull and Richard J. Pedersen

Field studies of cavity nesting birds will often necessitate trapping and banding individual birds. Various methods have been used to capture adult cavity nesters (DeHaven and Gaurino 1969; Kibler 1969; Fisher 1944). Fisher (1944) demonstrated three types of traps using shutter devices, wire boxes, and nets suitable for use on nest boxes and cavities. DeHaven and Gaurino (1969) modified a mouse trap to capture Starlings in nest boxes. The board trap described here is a modification of this technique.

We captured and banded 20 adult Pileated Woodpeckers (*Dryocopus pileatus*) at their nest cavities using two types of traps (Figures 1 and 2)<sup>1</sup>. Trapping was done during 1973-76 on the Starkey Experimental Forest, 40 km southwest of La Grande, Union County, Oregon. A list of materials and instructions for construction of the net trap and the board trap follows:

## Net Trap

rat trap  
30-m nylon cord  
two 8-cm screws  
one fence staple  
wire  
fiberglass tape  
metal framed fish net, 35 cm in diameter  
net, made of 5-cm mist net mesh; make net at least 1 m deep

## Board Trap

rat trap  
30-m nylon cord  
two 8-cm screws  
four fence staples  
board—21 cm x 12 cm x 1.5 cm

<sup>1</sup>Mention of product or trade names does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



1. Remove trigger from rat trap (Figure 3).
2. Net Trap: put net on metal fish net frame.  
Board Trap: cut 7 cm of board off lower end of rat trap (cut parallel to spring).
3. Net Trap: attach fish net frame to rat trap arm with wire and tape.  
Board Trap: nail rat trap arm onto board with three staples.
4. Drill two or three holes in rat trap for screws which will attach it to the tree.
5. Attach 30-m nylon cord to the top of fish net frame or board.

The rat trap is attached to trees with screws, positioned above the cavity entrance so the board or net falls over the hole when sprung. The trap is set by guiding the nylon cord through a staple positioned above and off to one side of the trap. The cord is dropped to the ground and tied to a tree to keep the trap set. When an adult bird enters the cavity, an observer cuts the cord, releasing the trap. If woodpeckers attempt to push the trap open, one can improve the efficiency of the trap by attaching a nylon line and weight to the board.



Figure 1. The board trap set and ready to be released.



Figure 2. The net trap after being released.



*Figure 3. The net trap set and ready to be released.*

Trapping should be initiated when the nestlings are 8 to 12 days old. At this age the nestlings are old enough to skip a feeding, yet young enough so the adults will still enter the cavity to feed them. It is wise to give an adult time to feed the nestlings before the trap is sprung.

The board trap may be used for Pileated Woodpeckers still feeding nestlings from inside the cavity because it subjects them to less stress. After the trap is sprung, the bird remains in the bottom of the cavity. The bird is easily removed by hand.

The net trap is best for catching woodpeckers with smaller nest openings that make it impossible to reach into the cavity and with woodpeckers that are feeding nestlings without entering the cavity (i.e., nestlings meet adult at nest opening). This trap is preferred in such cases as the bird need not enter the cavity to be trapped. If the bird is in the cavity, it usually flies into the net. This eliminates the problem of trying to remove a bird from a cavity with a small nest opening. The rate of successful captures is less with the net because some birds are quick enough to fly before the net hits.

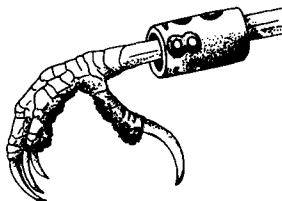
## Acknowledgments

We wish to acknowledge Howard Cooper, a U.S. Forest Service smoke jumper, and the other climbers for their advice and assistance in the trap design and actual trapping.

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## Life expectancy of newer-issue size 1-A bands

Roy S. Slack

Mr. L.R. Pharo recently noted that Evening Grosbeaks seemed to remove newer-issue bands at a higher rate than older bands (1978, NABB 3[1]:5). He attributes this to the seemingly "slightly greater metal content" of the older bands. This note presents a case where excessive band wear may also be a result of the use of newer-issue bands.

I banded an AHY F Cardinal (861-88046) on 4 April 1978 at my banding station in Phoenix, NY. The bird was recaptured on 26 April 1978 and wear on the band was so excessive that she was rebanded (861-88047). While the numbers on the original band were still easily legible, the band was pitted and scarred, and the central numbers (880) seemed to be rapidly disappearing. The band rotated freely on the bird's leg so there would seem to be no

apparent reason for these particular three numbers to be worn down. If the rate of wear continued as it had during the first 22 days, I would suspect that the band would have been illegible within several months.

Since a number of Cardinals at this station have been wearing older-issue bands for several years and none has had to be replaced, Mr. Pharo's comments concerning the difference in new and older issue bands appear logical. Now it would appear that we should be concerned with excessive band wear of new-issue size 1-A bands in addition to higher rates of removal. 🐦

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