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A Mist-netting Technique for Use with Low Bridges and Deep Water

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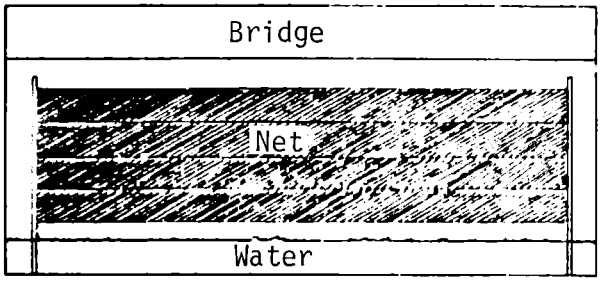
As a result of participating in a study of bridge-nesting swallows, it was necessary to devise a successful method for capturing adult Barn and Cliff Swallows, as they flew beneath bridges. Standard mist-netting procedures worked well for higher bridges and for those that traversed water shallow enough to wade with hip boots, however, such procedures were quite unsatisfactory for capturing swallows beneath very low bridges which crossed very deep water (e.g. irrigation canals).

To capture swallows beneath these lower bridges, a mist-netting technique was devised and implemented that, to the author's knowledge, has not been published elsewhere. Rather than stretching a mist-net between two poles, the net was suspended betweeen two lines which were weighted and separated by five, 1.2 m sections of interlocking, 2.6 cm galvanized pipe (Figure 1). The weight of the assembled pipe and the resulting tension of the lines provided a suitable framework for attaching a mist-net. A standard four-shelf mist-net was cut horizontally to produce two smaller, two-shelf nets. (Prior to cutting the net into two smaller sections, it is advised that a sixth shelf-line be added to the standard net. This line, made of black button thread, is threaded and secured two or three cm either above or below the third shelf-line. The horizontal cut is made between the third and new shelf-lines.) One of these nets was attached to guidelines (Figure 2) after the guidelines had been passed through pulleys attached to the guardrail of the bridge (Figure 3). Once attached, the net and apparatus could be lowered over the shaded side of the bridge and secured, so that the assembled pipe was parallel to, but not touching the surface of the water.

A hook-shaped stick, similar to a cane, allowed one, when lying prone on the bridge, to lift portions of the net to a level where ensnared swallows could easily be removed. For net lengths greater than 5.5 m, it is recommended that a third or fourth guideline be used to keep central portions of the assembled pipe from bowing excessively.

FIGURE 1

A Conventional Method



B Hanging Net Method

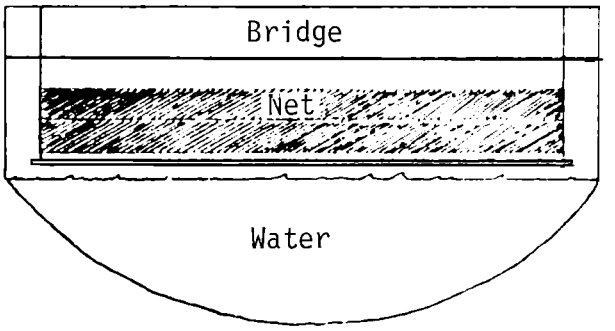


FIGURE 2

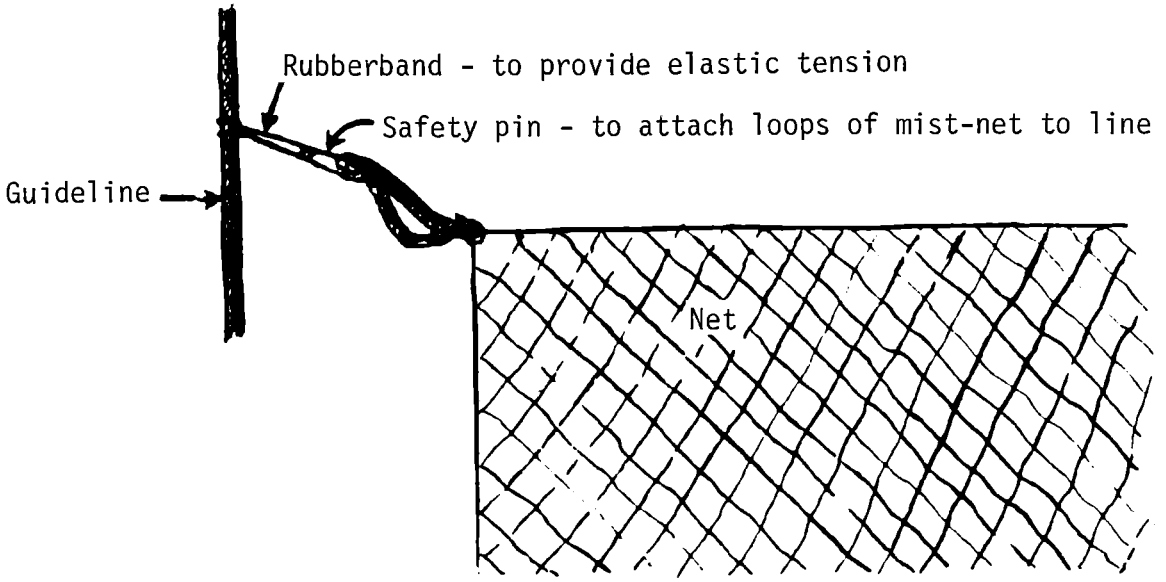
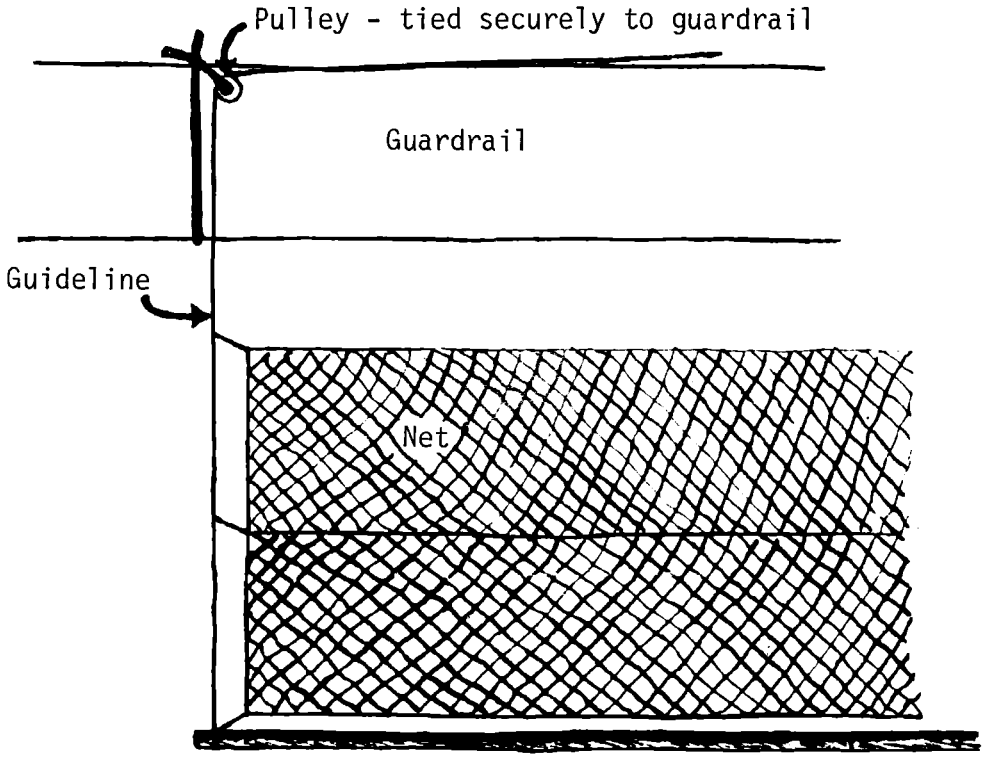


FIGURE 3



Assembled interlocking pipe