

1985

A Trapping Technique for Trap-wary American Kestrels

Brian Toland

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/nabb>

Recommended Citation

Toland, Brian (1985) "A Trapping Technique for Trap-wary American Kestrels," *North American Bird Bander*. Vol. 10 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/nabb/vol10/iss1/6>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by the Searchable Ornithological Research Archive at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in North American Bird Bander by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

A Trapping Technique for Trap-Wary American Kestrels

Brian Toland

Department of Fisheries and Wildlife
University of Missouri
Columbia, Missouri 65211

Numerous trapping techniques have been used to capture American kestrels (*Falco sparverius*). Stationary traps have been used successfully at raptor banding stations where concentrations of migrating kestrels were predictable. Of these, the dho-gaza (Phillips 1978, Clark 1981), bow-net (Tordoff 1954), and Swedish goshawk trap (Meng 1971) have been the most successful for the capture of kestrels and other raptors.

Mobile techniques, usually in association with a vehicle, are most efficient when trapping resident territorial kestrels in the field. The bal-chatri is the trapping technique used most frequently and successfully for the capture of kestrels (Berger and Mueller 1959, Berger and Hamerstrom 1962, Ward and Martin 1968).

I used bal-chatri traps to capture kestrels in central Missouri from 1980 through 1983 with a success rate of 58%, similar to the 2-year success rate of 52% reported by Berger and Mueller (1959). However, I found that kestrels became wary and suspicious of bal-chattris during mild weather, when they were not hungry or "sharp set," or when they escaped after an initial contact with the trap. These shy individuals were captured by using a method derived from the fundamental tool of the modern-day falconer, the noose-harness pigeon (Beebe and Webster 1964). I used the harness design illustrated by Beebe and Webster (1964:155-158) and reduced it in size to fit a house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*). This design entails placing 15 monofilament slip nooses on a leather harness (Fig. 1). Two small holes and 2 larger flaps are cut in the harness through which the legs and wings of the sparrow are inserted. One end of a monofilament line is attached to a wooden dowel or stick and the other end to the trailing edge of the harness. This functions as a drag when a kestrel attempts to fly away with the captured noose-harness sparrow. With this I captured 7 kestrels that had become trap-wary of the bal-chatri during field studies in 1981-83.

Dave Scarbrough assisted me in the field and helped in designing the sparrow noose-harness. This was accomplished during an American kestrel study funded by the Natural History Section of the Missouri Department of Conservation and guided by William H. Elder.

Literature Cited

- Beebe, F. L. and H. M. Webster. 1964. North American falconry and hunting hawks. World Press Inc., Denver, Colorado.
- Berger, D. D. and H. C. Mueller. 1959. The bal-chatri: a trap for the birds of prey. *Bird-Banding* 30:19-27.
- Berger, D. D. and F. Hamerstrom. 1962. Protecting a trapping station from raptor predation. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 26:203-206.
- Clark, W. S. 1981. A modified dho-gaza trap for use at a raptor banding station. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 45:1043-1044.
- Meng, H. 1971. The Swedish goshawk trap. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 35:832-835.
- Phillips, B. 1978. Hanging a dho-gaza. *Inland Bird Banding News* 50:211-216.
- Tordoff, H. B. 1954. An automatic live-trap for raptorial birds. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 18:281-284.
- Ward, F. P. and D. P. Martin. 1968. An improved cage trap for birds of prey. *Bird-Banding* 39:310-312.

Fig. 1. House Sparrow fitted with noose harness and drag line.

