

1990

News, Notes, Comments

North American Bird Bander

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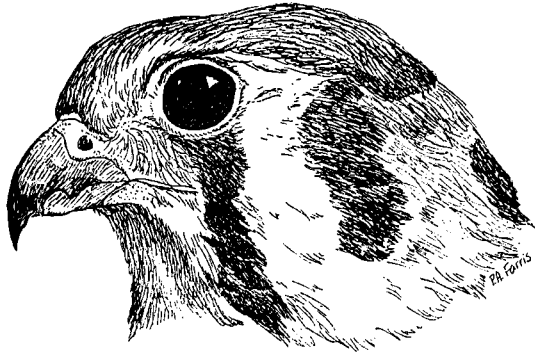
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News, Notes, Comments



Annual Meeting Scheduled and A Call for Papers

The annual meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation will be held Wednesday, October 24 through Sunday, October 28, 1990 at the Allentown Hilton, Allentown, Pennsylvania. This year's conference is hosted by the Pennsylvania Raptor and Wildlife Association. Although the conference is dedicated to the conservation of the Great Horned Owl, papers are solicited on any aspect of raptor rehabilitation, biology, ecology, migration, toxicology, conservation and educating the public about raptors. Presentations should be 20 minutes long, with an additional 10 minutes for questions. Films and videos are also solicited. VHS and 16mm formats are preferred. Abstracts are to be a titled paragraph summary of the presentation topic and major supporting evidence. Abstracts are 150-200 words, typewritten and single spaced. The deadline for abstracts is July 2, 1990.

To receive a conference brochure or submit an abstract, write to:

Judy Wink, Program Committee Chairperson
Carbon County Environmental Education Center
P.O. Box 7
Jim Thorpe, PA 18229

or

Hope Carpenter,
Conference General Chairperson
PRWA
R.D. #1, Box 1470
Mt. Bethel, PA 18343

Improvement in Bal-Chatrri Trap

Raptor trappers are aware of the usefulness of the traditional bal-chatrri trap consisting of wire cage and monofilament nylon nooses. These traps are usually sprayed with dark, flat paint to reduce the cage's visibility to a raptor. The shiny monofilament nooses, however, often betray the trap's placement, increasing the target bird's wariness, especially in the case of experienced adults.

An improvement to the traditional bal-chatrri can be made by soaking the nylon monofilament in a strong solution of fabric dye. A loose coil of stock monofilament is soaked for a day or so in a solution of black Rit (or other) fabric dye, available at fabric shops and other retail stores. One packet of the powder dissolved in one or two liters of warm water is effective. The nooses are then made from this dyed nylon and attached to the painted wire cage. The shiny spray of nooses disappears, rendering the trap essentially indiscernible in the landscape. The trap becomes so invisible that it may be difficult to retrieve, having visually melted into roadside or vegetation.

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Surprise Sightings at Deep Woods Feeder

In May of 1989 we were surprised to see a male Northern Cardinal, followed by a male Northern Oriole, followed by a male Scarlet Tanager on our feeders within a four-hour period. None were banded, unfortunately.

In our location deep in a forested area at 413-0744, we rarely see an oriole or tanager and had never seen a cardinal here in the 13 years we have been at this location. We also had another first last year--Fox Sparrows digging around in the fallen pine needles.

In 1990, the surprises continue . . . on March 28, one of two Carolina Wrens was banded (#890-26541). They had been observed off and on for several months. And on April 13, one of two Pine Warblers was banded (#1690-21661). They stayed for several days. Both of these species seem to be feeding on bird seed; however, there may have been some insects in the seed.

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Two Climbing Aids Useful in Wildlife Research

During the spring of 1980, it was necessary to collect information about Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) nesting behavior and success. Nest status data often were collected at 24 or more nests per day under extreme weather conditions. Height of nests ranged from 0.6 to 24 m. Tree spikes or other equipment that would injure trees could not be used on most study areas. Thus, safe, simple, and efficient methods were needed for ascending trees. Two climbing devices allowed me to view and record data at 100 percent of the nests encountered.

One device is the portable stand used by deer hunters, consisting of a wooden platform with aluminum braces. The weight of the climber holds the stand to the tree. Most stands fit trees from 100 to 460 mm in diameter. To climb, one attaches the stand to his feet, grasps the tree as high as possible, and raises his knees (Figures 1 and 2). The stand again locks into position when weight is applied to the platform. To descend, one grasps the tree as low as possible and then straightens his legs. This device allows quick ascent/descent and is useful on trees that lack low limbs. Once accustomed to the stand, most researchers can climb 14 m in two minutes. Many different brands and models are available in sporting goods stores. I used the Baker "Mighty Mite," produced by the Baker Manufacturing Company, Valdosta, GA 31601.¹ It weighs 5 kg and retails for about \$60.

The other climbing device is the ascender, used extensively by mountain climbers and spelunkers. Ascenders grip onto climbing rope when weight is applied and slide freely upward when weight is alleviated. Two ascenders, with web stirrups attached to each, are used. By alternating the ascender and stirrup that support bodyweight, while the opposite arm, leg, and ascender are raised, one walks up the rope (Figure 3). A more detailed description of ascender technique may be found in various mountaineering/rock climbing books. Several methods can be used to get the rope over a desired limb; each is up to the researcher's discretion and ingenuity. Be sure the limb will support the researcher's weight or serious injury may occur. Ascenders are useful on trees with diameters too large for the platform or those with numerous limbs. Once accustomed to these methods, most researchers can climb/descend 15 m in four minutes.

Ascenders, along with rope and webbing, can be purchased at most stores that sell mountain climbing gear. I used C.M.I. 5000 ascenders, manufactured by Colorado Mountain Industries Corp., Franklin, WV 26807, and retailing for about \$40. Sixty m of climbing rope costs about \$70. Four to five

m of webbing is needed and this sells for \$0.54/m. Total weight of all materials required to ascend is about 9 kg, and most of this is the climbing rope.

Both climbing devices are time-saving, efficient methods for gathering data that might otherwise go unrecorded. Because of their light weights, they can be packed in and used in remote areas. Many studies of an arboreal nature may benefit from their use.

I thank Dr. D. H. White and C. A. Faanes for helpful comments and review of this paper and B. J. Fancher who typed it.

¹Use of trade names does not imply U.S. Government endorsement of commercial products.

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Figure 1.



Figure 3.



Figure 2.