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An Improved Method of Net Handling and Storage

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Aside from taking birds out of mist nets, the toughest part of banding is handling the nets. Nets get tangled and twisted in their bags. Trammel lines become mixed and ends dropped as nets are put up.

Several years ago, I began using the plastic grocery bags from the supermarket checkout for my nets. I have been teaching this method of net handling whenever I can with good response. The method is learned quickly and is nearly foolproof.

TO BEGIN

You need one bag per net. Start with a net already mounted on poles, closed and rolled. Before removing the loops from the first pole, slip one bag handle through these loops, lift them off the pole, and pass your left arm through the handle above the loops. This secures trammel loops in sequence (Fig. 1). Hold the empty bag handle with a few fingers on your left hand, permitting some use of your left hand when bagging the net. Next walk slowly toward the other pole, using your left hand to gather and maintain tension on the net, while your right hand loads the net into the bag. (Left handers can reverse the procedure.) When you reach the end of the net, take the unused bag handle from left fingers, passing it through the loops, still on the pole (Fig. 2). Remove the bag handle from your left arm; then, BEFORE removing loops from poles, tie the two handles together in a gentle square knot. Finally, remove the loops from the second pole. The net is now securely bagged with trammel loops locked in sequence. It is ready for transport or, with a few mothballs, for storage.

PUTTING UP A NET

Using this method, putting up a net is done easily by one person. However, until you are comfortable with the method, an assistant may help avoid tangles and debris in the net.

Start by erecting one pole. Plan ahead for the other end of the net by placing the second pole in its approximate location, along with whatever tools you need to secure it. Untie the bag handles carefully, and without disturbing loop sequence, place one set of loops on the erected pole. For security, place both handles, one still holding loops, over your left arm. Feed the net from the bag as you go, backing slowly toward the other pole location. An assistant can help in locating the other pole site. At the end of the net, you should have the now empty bag with loops still on one handle hanging from your wrist. Carefully remove the bag handles from your wrist, place the loops over the pole, and slide the bag handle free. If all steps have been followed without twists, the net is ready to open.

Practice will enable you to take down and put up nets quickly, and even interdigitation, two nets attached to the same pole, can be done by solo banders. In time, you can perform this technique with unrolled nets, allowing even faster set up and take down.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Fig. 1 Securing trammel loops in sequence

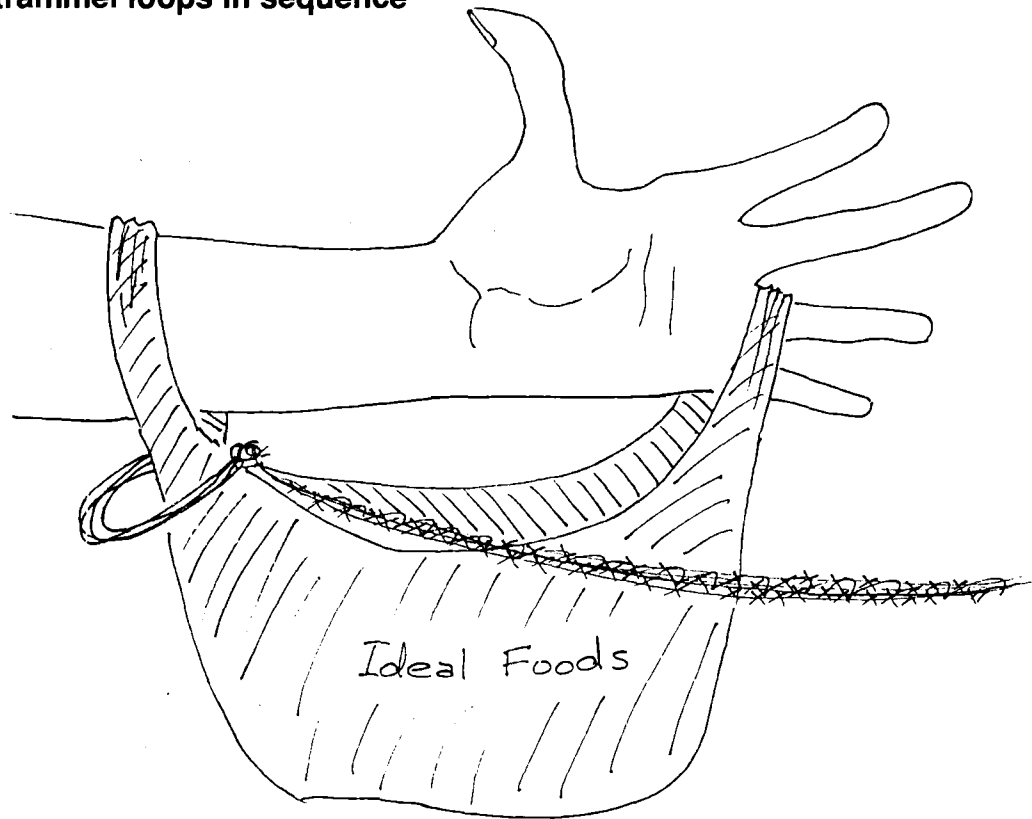


Fig. 2 Pass bag handle through loops still on pole.

