

Setting Snares. The use of wire neck snares is prohibited in some states, but where their use is allowed, they can be effective in removing problem animals that go through or under fences. In preying on domestic animals, coyotes and other predators often must enter fenced pastures. It is under these conditions and during winter months, when trap sets are difficult or impossible to maintain in working order, that snares are most useful. As a rule, they are more effective at woven wire fences than at those made of barbed wire, unless weeds or brush tend to restrict the animal to a specific point of entry. Snares can be set under the fence or between wires where animals pass through.

Figure 30 shows a neck snare set at a coyote crossing under a woven wire fence, where weeds and grass used to camouflage the snare have been removed. Several companies sell snares similar to the one shown here (a 30-inch Kleflock Number 2 with swivel for attachment) produced by Woodstream Corporation. The snare should have a swivel on the anchor end to prevent twisting and breakage.

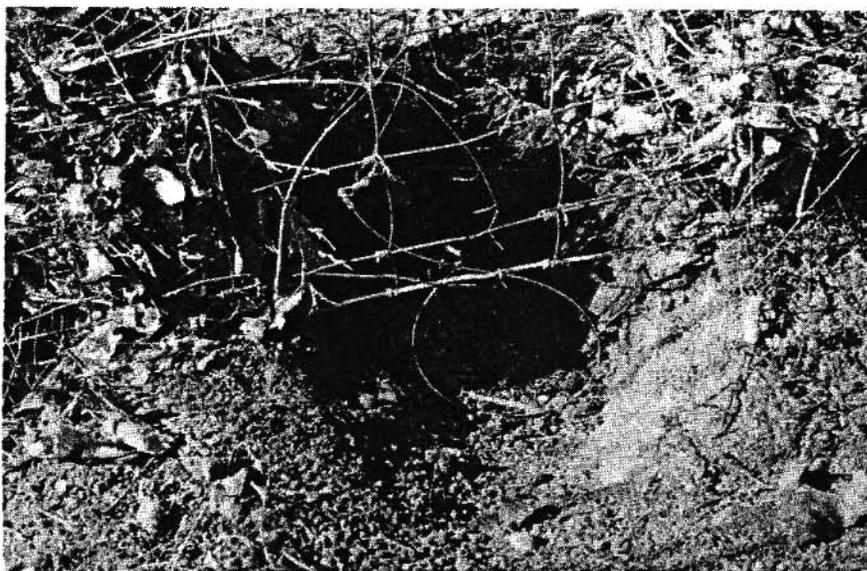


Figure 30. Number 2 Kleflock neck snare in position at a coyote crossing under a woven wire fence. Note that the swivel end is anchored with wire to the fence and camouflage has been removed for this photo. Some states prohibit this type of snare.

The swivel end of the snare is tied solidly to the fence with wire and a 6- to 7-inch loop is formed and held in place with light thread. The loop must be camouflaged, and some trappers spray the snare with white paint when the crossing is snow-covered. The loop should be large enough and placed correctly to allow only the animal's head to enter. The animal tends to jump forward when the snare hits the shoulders, causing the snare to tighten and lock around the neck. Unconsciousness occurs rapidly as asphyxia begins.

Because the neck snare kills the animal rapidly, it must be used with caution. Placement sites should be carefully selected to avoid nontarget animals and it must be set correctly. The snare should not be used where other methods are effective.

Trapping Foxes

The red fox is the species normally involved when the farmer loses poultry, lambs, or pigs to foxes. Red foxes are smaller than coyotes, averaging 10 to 15 pounds in weight, although individuals over 20 pounds have been reported. Foxes mate somewhat earlier than coyotes and produce young about 9 weeks later, usually from mid-March to mid-May. Their denning habits are roughly similar to those of coyotes although they may den much closer to humans. Foxes are usually less sensitive than coyotes to human disturbance at dens and are less likely to move litters, but care should be taken in approaching a fox den if adults are to be trapped before pups are removed.

Trap sets similar to those employed in catching coyotes are also effective in taking foxes. Trap sets without scent should be placed at all den entrances after pups are removed, and two or three sets should be placed in the surrounding area to insure capture of the adults. Trails approaching the den are good locations for trap sets with scent. Calling is also effective in taking adult foxes.

Trapping Bobcats

Bobcats are considered a sensitive species by many state wildlife management agencies. Before conducting a trapping effort the concerned state agency should be consulted.

Although bobcats rarely develop the habit of killing larger domestic animals, they do become involved in taking sheep or poultry and in killing domestic cats. Calling is not as effective in taking bobcats, but trapping is relatively easy and one of the most effective methods of removing the problem animal. Bobcats are much less sensitive to errors in trapping and may be readily taken in trap sets that would not take adult foxes or coyotes. Trap sites similar to those selected for coyotes are suitable, in addition to sites around rocky rims.

Bobcat urine, oil of catnip, and fetid scents are all effective in trapping bobcats. In addition, they are easily trapped when they return to feed on a kill. Trap sets should be placed off the trail and several yards from carcass baits.

Baits sets made with rabbit or rodent carcasses hung on trees have been used effectively in the past, but because of danger to eagles and other nontarget species, they are not desirable sets. In addition, scent sets are equally as effective.

Bears and Mountain Lions

Bears and mountain lions are game animals in some states and may be fully protected in others. Since regulations are often different than those covering coyotes, bobcats, and foxes, it is best to notify the state wildlife management agency when these animals cause damage. The agency can provide necessary information regarding control procedures.

Sparrows and Starlings

The English sparrow and the starling often become numerous enough to cause serious losses and problems. Ways to discourage or control them become essential.

Noisy and hardy, the English sparrow adapts quickly to most any situation and is found throughout the United States and Canada. It reproduces at a high rate and tends to suffer only slight losses to natural enemies.

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Starlings have spread throughout the northern United States and Canada from coast to coast. Larger and chunkier than blackbirds, with which they are sometimes confused, starlings differ further by their yellow beaks and short tails, which give them a triangular appearance in flight. Starlings have a glossy, purple-green plumage with numerous white flecks in summer. In winter, the back feathers become darker and edged with light brown and the beak turns bluish black.

Habits

English sparrows defile buildings, ornamental trees, and shrubs with excrement and sometimes with bulky nests. More than 95 percent of their diet consists of various kinds of grains, weed seeds, garden products, and poultry and livestock feeds.

English sparrows eat large quantities of weed seeds, which is one of their desirable habits. They also have been of value in some localities by destroying certain insect pests through mass action of a dense bird population. This is particularly true during the nesting season when young are fed insects as the main constituents of their diet for about the first 10 to 12 days. The young then become as vegetarian as the adults.

The English sparrow does considerable damage to cherries, grapes, berries, and other small fruits. It also attacks the buds and blossoms of cultivated trees, vines, and shrubs. The species is also a pest in gardens, destroying tender garden plants as they come up and eating large quantities of seeds as they ripen. It also interferes with some desirable songbirds by taking possession of their nesting sites.

Activities of individuals and flocks are usually confined to a rather restricted range, even though the species is widely distributed. This is favorable to control, for when an area has been cleared of the birds, considerable time usually elapses before it is reinhabited.

Starlings, unlike English sparrows, almost always feed a relatively great distance from their roosting areas. They are important predators upon many soil-dwelling insects but also will feed heavily on berries, grapes, cherries, seeds, and stock feeds. Winter flocks will often concentrate at feedlots—2,000 will easily consume one to two tons of feed per month. These characteristics have made the starling a serious agricultural pest in the West.

Starlings are both aggressive and prolific. In the spring when the nesting season begins, the birds scatter to suburban and rural areas. They make rather coarse nests in tree holes, birdhouses, and crevices and cracks of buildings. One egg a day is laid until an average of six or seven have been deposited. They have at least two broods per year.

Starlings are also objectionable because of their habit of roosting together in large numbers on or near buildings. These roosts are the source of considerable noise and filth. Since starling control is largely preventing the birds from using buildings and certain trees as roosting areas, some knowledge of roosting behavior may be beneficial. Normal roosting behavior is such that during the breeding season when the mated birds are dispersed and caring for their young, a few unmated birds travel together between feeding grounds and roosts. As the young of the first brood learn to shift for themselves, they join the unmated birds. Later, the parent birds and second brood join these roosting flocks. The size of the starling flocks greatly increase about midsummer as a result of the parent birds and second brood joining the roosts. From this time until late fall, the summer roosts are utilized by large flocks.

Migration sometimes occurs as birds leave the summer roosts, but many individuals remain. Those that remain usually shift their roosts to city or farm buildings which they use throughout the winter.

The daily movement cycle is such that starlings leave their roosts very quickly about sunrise. They then fly in large flocks over fairly well established flight lines and for distances up to 50 or 70 miles. In the evening, those which are the greatest distance from the roost begin their return flight first so that all reach the area of the roost at approximately the same time. The schedule for leaving and returning to roosts is apparently controlled by light intensity.

Prevention of Damage

English sparrows and starlings are attracted to certain conditions. Reasonable time and effort to prevent damage frequently save on labor spent for control operations. Careless handling of poultry feeds and grains furnishes the birds with an abundant food supply. Crevices, copings, and ledges in and about buildings, vines on buildings and trees, evergreen hedges, trees, and ornamentals provide nesting sites and roosting shelter for the birds. Some of these may be decreased or eliminated.

Methods of Control

Where control is needed, elimination of nesting and roosting sites may offer the best permanent solution. To prevent recurring infestations, it may be necessary to remove vines from certain buildings. Coping and ledges of some buildings may require wood or sheet-metal strips placed at an angle to eliminate the roosting space. Steeples, towers, poultry houses, barn lofts, garages, and the like can be protected by screening openings with wire mesh which is no longer than 3/4 inch.

Destroying Nests

Local English sparrow populations can be greatly reduced or even eliminated by destroying nests and eggs at intervals of 10 to 12 days during the spring and summer. Fasten a hook to the end of a long pole to tear down nests under eaves, on rafters, and the like. Birdhouses of suitable size for English sparrows and starlings may be erected at convenient locations and visited regularly to destroy the nests and eggs.

Shooting

The most effective results are obtained by inducing the birds to feed at certain places by baiting with grain. Scatter the grain in long, narrow lanes along which shooting may be directed when the birds flock to feed. Number 10 shot is the most suitable. Shooting is a selective method and will eliminate infestations if persistently used. Destruction of English sparrows and starlings by shooting with low-power guns is hazardous in many locations and should be entrusted to those who are extremely careful. Shooting is usually prohibited by law in urban areas and therefore it is recommended that local regulations be checked.

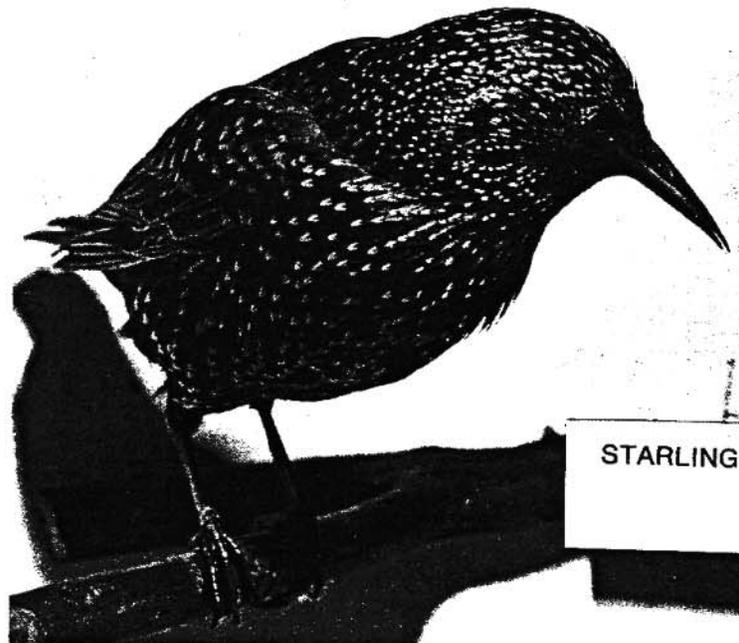


Figure 31. English sparrow (top), starling (bottom).

Trapping

Sparrow traps may be homemade, and anyone with a moderate degree of skill can make traps that cost very little and operate successfully. Traps are of two basic types: nesting-box traps which have had considerable success in reducing local populations during the nesting season, and bait traps which can be used any time.

Nesting-Box trap. A nesting-box trap, as the name implies, look like an ordinary nesting box. The weight of the bird upon entering such a trap puts into operation a mechanism that catches the bird and sets the trap for another. In designing and constructing nesting-box traps, the builder should keep in mind that English sparrows and starlings, like other birds, dislike drafty quarters. Also, a mechanism delicate enough to be operated by a sparrow's weight is apt to be inefficient and subject to breakdown unless parts are few, simple, and well-protected from the weather.

One of the simplest nesting-box traps is illustrated. This trap is a modification of a design by Charles H. Tesch of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The essential parts of the trap are (1) a house, (2) a tipping chamber within the house, (3) a downspout below the tipping chamber, and (4) a receptacle at the end of the downspout to hold the captive birds.

The house is made of wood, the tipping chamber of tin, and the downspout of wood or tin. The receptacle can be either a detachable box with a door to open and close over the hole for attachment to the downspout and removal of captive birds, or a bag. Keep in mind that drafts should be avoided, so materials for building this receptacle should be nearly airtight. A nesting-box trap can be easily converted to a standard nesting box by inserting a stop-action pin which prevents the tipping chamber from working. This can be done when the English sparrow or starling population has been controlled to allow use by more desirable birds.

In building the trap, the front wall is the last piece to go on and should be fastened with screws for easy removal. A few feathers and pieces of straw can be glued to the floor of the tipping chamber near the rear to be more enticing.

Fasten the nesting-box trap to a pole or post or the side of a building. Place it where it is accessible so that sparrows can be removed frequently.

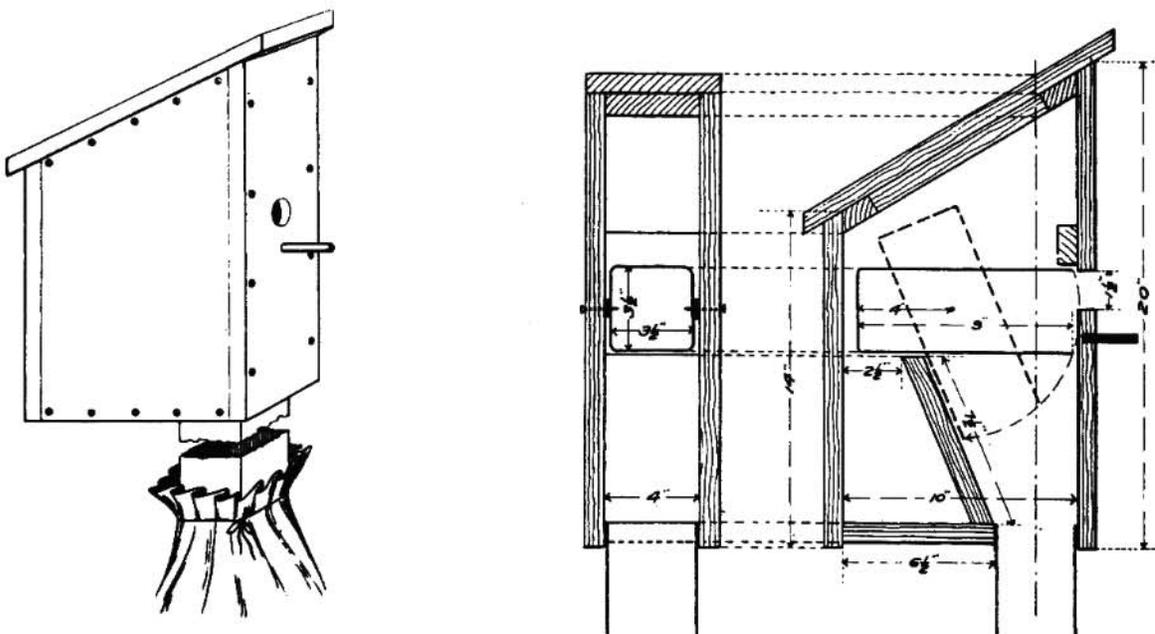


Figure 32. Nesting-box trap (left) and sections showing construction of nesting-box trap (right).

Sieve Trap. One of the simplest English sparrow traps is built similar to a sand sifter with a frame 4 feet square or larger and 6 inches deep. One side is covered with 3/4-inch mesh poultry netting or similar material. Make a small opening near a corner to permit removal of trapped birds. It is well to prebait for several days in a spot to attract the birds. To operate the trap, place it over the bait, raise and place an 18-inch stick (with attached cord) under one edge surmounted by a small chip to permit its easy withdrawal. Run the cord to a blind some distance away. The trap is sprung by pulling the cord. Two stakes at the back edge of the trap will keep it in alignment.

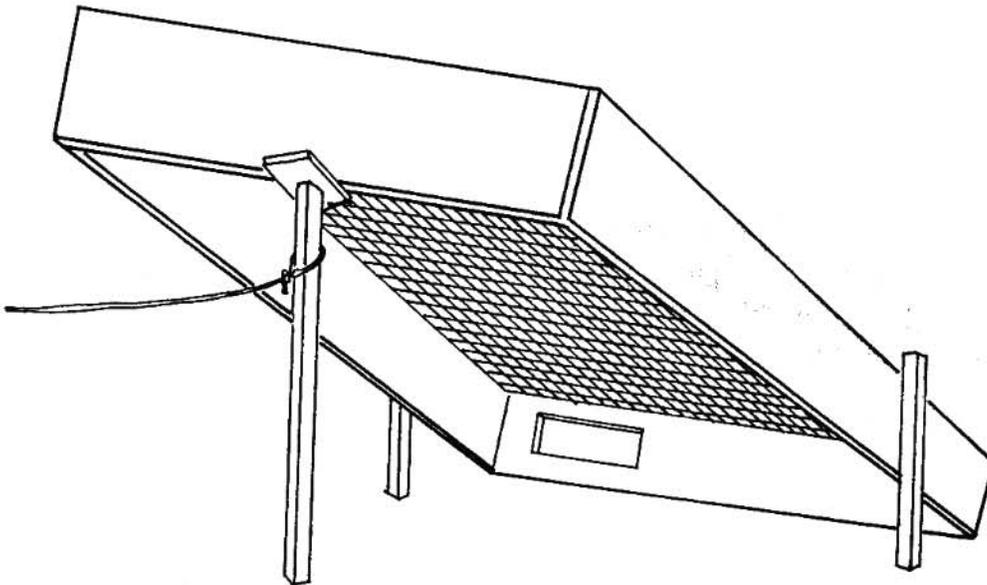


Figure 33. Sieve trap for sparrows.

Bait Traps. Selection of a bait trap depends somewhat upon the conditions under which it is to be used. Where food is plentiful, English sparrows as well as starlings have little incentive to enter a trap. Under these conditions, to be effective, a trap must be simple so as not to provoke suspicion. If extensive trapping is attempted, traps must be certain and prompt in action, portable, and inexpensive. All of these requirements are met by the "funnel trap," which has no loose parts and requires no special tools to set up and keep in order. It is somewhat bulky but is light, and when painted either gray or green is inconspicuous.

The funnel trap (Figure 34) is a development of the Newton trap used for birds and rats in Europe. The principle involved is very simple but effective. The birds are attracted by bait scattered in front of and inside the trap, and they enter the first of two chambers by passing through a small opening at the apex of a half-funnel which is the entrance (Number 15 of Figure 35). The size of the entrance can be adjusted by means of a set of five or six flexible wires woven into or soldered to the tip of the half cone. In their efforts to escape, the birds will find their way through the small opening at the apex of the second funnel (Number 16 of Figure 35) which is located above the floor surface. When birds drop to the floor of the second compartment, escape is nearly impossible since they will find the opening only by chance. A small door in the second chamber permits removal of the captured birds.

Figure 34. Funnel trap (side raised to show interior).

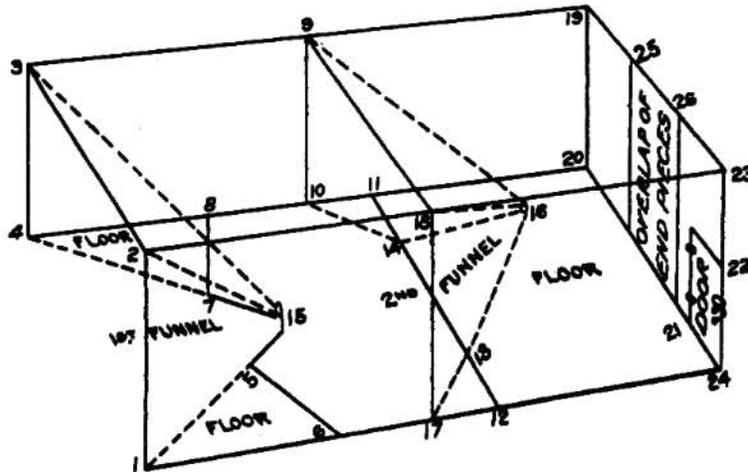
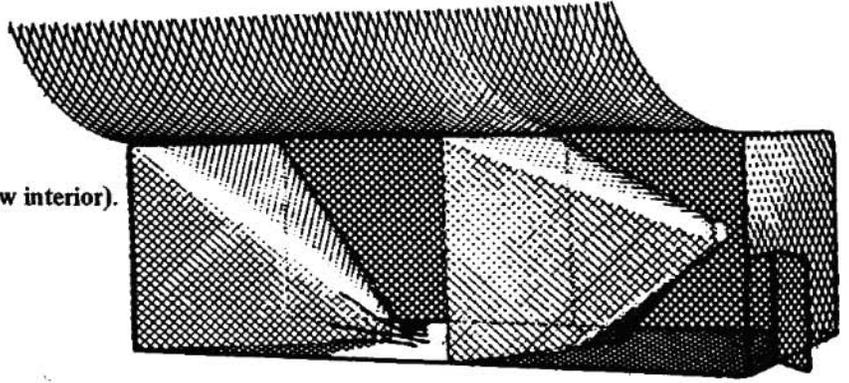


Figure 35. Diagram of funnel trap.

The funnel trap is easily constructed by anyone moderately handy with tools. Use 3/4-inch mesh, galvanized poultry wire and No. 8 or No. 10 wire for reinforcement along the edges and about the door to make it rigid. Figures 36, 37, and 38, along with the following description, give instructions for constructing a funnel trap either 3 or 4 feet long. The patterns in Figures 36, 37, and 38 are for making a trap 3 feet long, 1 1/2 feet wide, and 1 foot high. Make paper patterns for the two funnels by first drawing concentric circles, as shown in Figures 36 and 37, then lay off the straight lines beginning with the longest. The wavy outlines indicate that the pattern should be cut a minimum of 1 inch outside the straight lines to allow an overlap for fastening the cones to the sides and top of the trap. The second chamber and the angles between the first funnel and walls of the antechamber are floored with wire mesh.

The numbers at the angles in Figures 36 and 37 correspond with those in Figure 35 which shows the outline of the various parts when assembled. Figure 38 shows how a trap 3 feet long may be cut from a piece of wire mesh 6 feet long and 4 feet wide. The full lines indicate where the wire mesh should be cut and the broken lines indicate where it is to be bent.

Where English sparrows or starlings are abundant, a larger trap is recommended. A funnel trap 4 feet long, 2 feet wide, and 15 inches high can be made from a piece of wire mesh 10 feet long and 4 feet wide as shown in Figure 39. Paper patterns for the funnels are produced in the manner as those described for the smaller trap.

Figure 36. Pattern for first tunnel of a trap to be 36 x 18 x 12 inches.

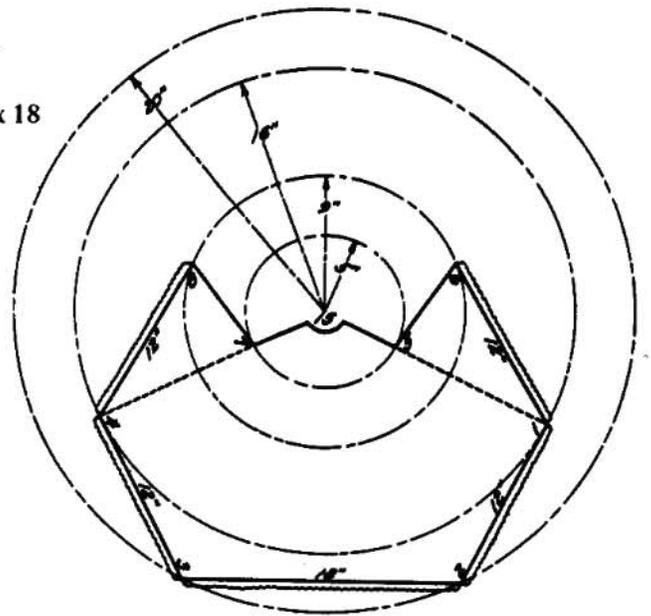
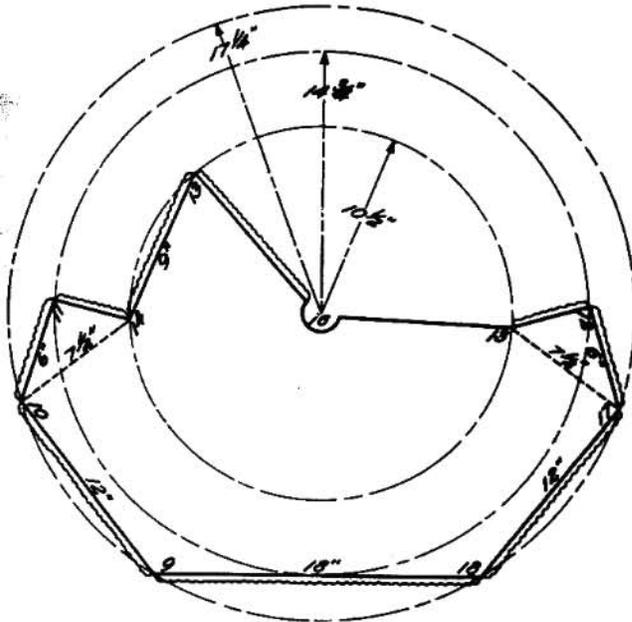


Figure 37. Pattern for second funnel of a trap of same size as in Figure 36

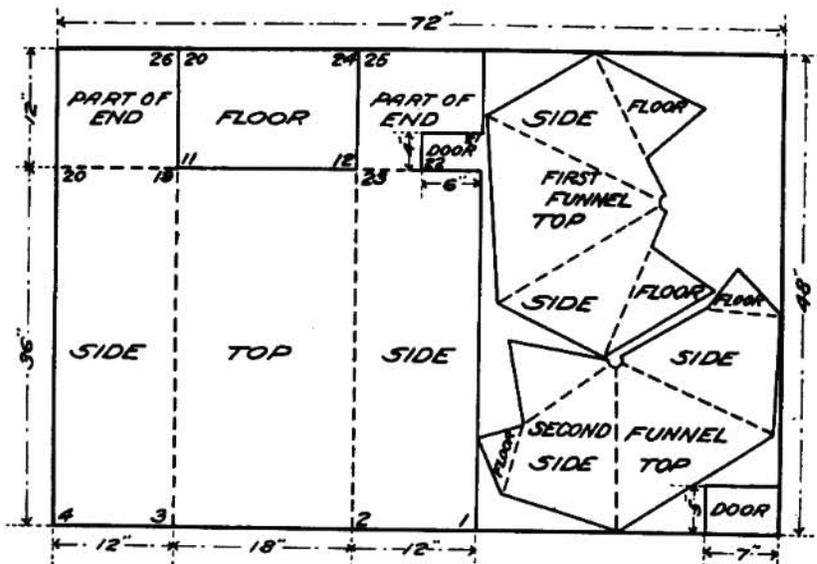


Figure 38. Diagram for cutting out from poultry wire parts of a funnel trap 36 x 18 x 12 inches.

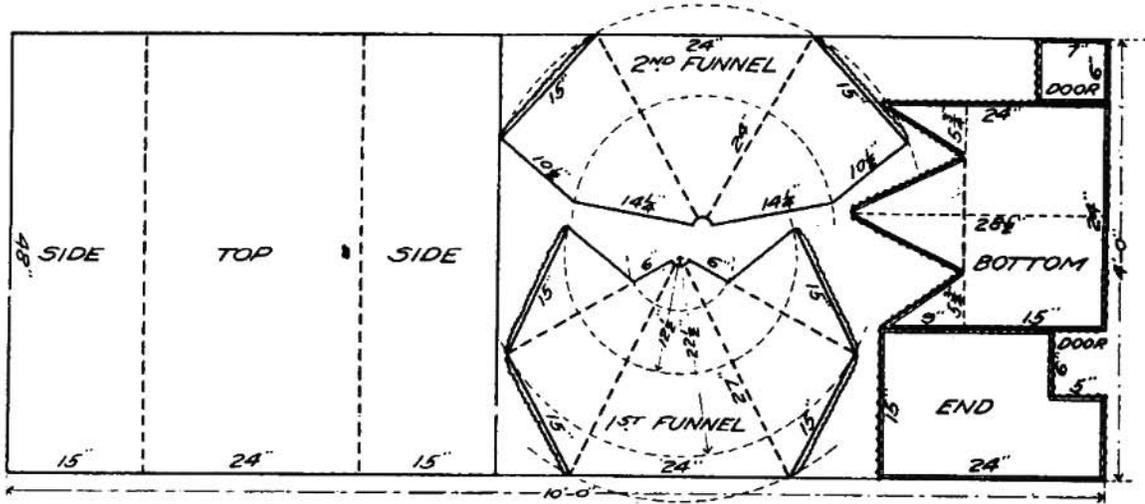


Figure 39. Diagram for cutting out the parts of a funnel trap 48 x 24 x 15 inches.

To remove the birds from the funnel trap, the receiving box shown in Figure 40 could be useful. It should be about 6 to 10 inches square and about 18 inches long. The door, which is hinged at the bottom and made to turn inward, is controlled by an extension of the wire frame that forms into a handle. The box is placed in front of the door on the funnel trap and the birds are driven into it.

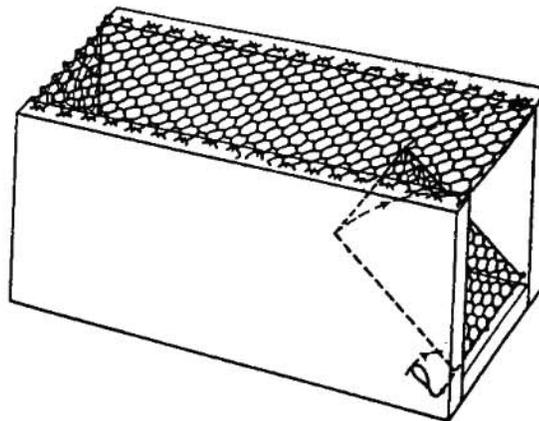


Figure 40. Receiving box for removing sparrows from traps.

When English sparrows infest an area, they usually gather in specific places on the ground or in low shrubbery on a regular basis. At or near these places, scrape the ground clean of vegetation and level so the trap will set firmly. As trapping progresses, the birds will oftentimes become suspicious and the trap should then be placed at another favored spot. Prebaiting is often helpful. Scatter bait on the inside of the trap in liberal quantities and rather sparingly in front of the entrance. Replace the bait in front of the entrance at frequent intervals. Bait, such as cracked grains, whole kernel grains, commercial poultry scratch feeds, weed seeds, and bread crumbs, are all excellent. In damp or rainy weather, replace bait both inside and in front of the trap frequently.