WELDED MESH - A USEFUL MATERIAL FOR TRAPS

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Rectangular and round baited and walk-in traps are often difficult to construct, and once assembled, are bulky and clumsy to transport. The normal method of making such traps, that is, to construct a frame of mild steel rod and then to cover the frame with wire mesh is costly and time consuming and requires specialized equipment and certain skill with metalwork. For these reasons, traps are not often used by the amateur ringer.

At Barberspan Ornithological Research Station we make extensive use of baited traps for catching doves, sparrows, weavers, queleas and bishop birds. Walk-in traps are used for waders. Recent experiments with welded mesh as a trap material have proved satisfactory. The use of welded mesh can solve many of the problems in making light portable traps. The material can be made up into a trap or holding cage using the minimum of hand tools with very little skill. Welded mesh can be cut into panels (using side cutters, pincer type wire cutters or tin snips) and the panels can then be joined together at the edges by means of "C" clips to form a box. The intrinsic strength of welded mesh obviates the need for any frame to be made and the resulting trap or cage is light and strong.

Several designs, plans and instructions for constructing fold up and fixed welded mesh traps may be found in a publication by H.M. Reeves, A.D. Geis and F.C. Kniffin (1968, Mourning Dove Capture and Banding. U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries & Wildlife Special Scientific Report. Wildlife 117).

Welded mesh is available in mesh sizes from 5 mm x 5 mm to 8 cm x 8 cm and wire thickness varying from 22 guage to 12 guage. Two grades are available from the supplier, the cheaper mesh is galvanised before welding and is suitable for traps used mainly in dry situations, and the more expensive mesh is galvanised after welding and can be used for wader and marsh traps. If traps are used extensively in water they can be protected by plastic coating (as is done to dish drying racks) but this is expensive.

Costs of welded mesh traps should be well within the means of the amateur ringer. A 30,5 cm square trap, 20,5 cm high costs less than R 2,00 to make and can be made in an hour. Ringing pliers are used to crimp the "C" clips and the only other tool needed are wire cutters.

We tested the trapping success of the two types of trap. Three welded mesh traps caught 31 waders in the same period as five frame traps caught 13 waders. We conclude that the new traps are both more economical and more efficient.