

EXPERIENCES WITH A GARDEN WELDED-MESH TRAP

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As suggested by W.R.J. Dean in Safring Vol. 5 No. 2, I have been using a trap made of welded-mesh for catching and ringing Thick-billed Weavers in my garden in connection with a study I am making of this species. I have found this material ideal for experimenting with and making traps.

I am concerned with this species only, but the birds do not know this and doves, robins, mossies, canaries, frets, Olive Thrushes and even a Boubou Shrike have all gone into my trap, though most of these have come out fairly soon disappointed to find that the only bait I use is sunflower seeds. The Boubou Shrike was in immature plumage and we did not know at first what it was. So I caught it, photographed it and let it go and later was able to identify it from the photos.

I prefer to operate the traps at a distance myself and at first used a length of fishing line to release the catch on the door. A snag was that our three dogs sprung the trap on many occasions. Once the Alsatian puppy got so tangled up in the fishing line that when I got to him he was lying helplessly on his side and looking up at me, more in sorrow than in anger, as if saying "why does this sort of thing have to happen to me?"

Now I operate the trap electrically using electric flex slung up well away from the dogs. A 9-volt battery and small condenser supply the current to a solenoid on the trap roof which releases the catch. The battery by itself was not strong enough, but charging the condenser from the battery and then discharging it through the flex and solenoid springs the trap every time and has proved much better than the old fishing line.