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Trapping English Sparrows

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service
trapping English Sparrows

Local control of English sparrows can be accomplished by trapping. It presents no danger to protected species as they can be released.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS
To draw birds to a trap use poultry scratch feed, fine cracked corn, grain sorghum, wheat, bread crumbs or their combinations. Bait several locations even though only one trap is used. As some untrapped birds associate unpleasantness with a particular location, move the trap to another baited area when results at the first location diminish. The best trap sites are generally near low shrubs or hedges. The trap should be covered with 3/4 inch mesh wire as some birds will escape through a larger mesh. Leave one or two birds in a trap to act as decoys. Larger numbers tend to frighten other birds away. Keep the trap compartment well supplied with food and water.

Various ready-made traps are on the market. One automatic type uses a delicately balanced elevator which drops into a depositing chamber as the sparrow alights on it. The elevator swings back into position in readiness for another bird. This trap is effective but needs frequent adjustment.

SIEVE TYPE TRAP
This simple trap requires close attention for good results. A box is set on an upright stick. A pull on the string attached to the stick lets the box fall over the unwary birds. While the dimensions can vary, the box should be narrow enough so that a person can reach inside to remove the birds. The trap should not be raised more than 6 inches off the ground to permit a bird even the size of a grackle to enter. If it is higher, sparrows can take alarm and escape before the cage falls down.

FUNNEL TRAP
This trap is somewhat difficult to build. The birds are decoyed by baits scattered in front of and inside the trap. They enter the apex of the funnel forming the entrance. Adjustable stiff wires woven or soldered to the tip of this cone will discourage attempts to back out. The birds go through the opening at the apex of the second funnel above the floor into the second compartment from which escape is almost impossible.

RAT TRAPS
Inside buildings where only sparrows are apt to be present, wooden base rat snap traps can be used. Traps nailed to rafters and baited with pieces of bread tied to the triggers will soon discourage roosting inside.

CONSULT STATE AND LOCAL LAWS BEFORE APPLYING CONTROLS
NEST BOX TRAP
This trap (Right) looks like a bird nest box. The weight of a bird entering the trap operates a mechanism that drops the bird into a bag and resets the trap for another. Collecting bags should be of tight weave. The front wall should be the last piece to go in place. Fasten it by screws so the trap can be easily overhauled. Glue bits of hay and feathers to the rear of the tipping chamber. Fasten the trap to a post or side of a building so the receiving sack hangs free and is easily accessible.

CENTER-DROP TRAP (Below)
One of the simplest and best traps. Birds drop through openings in the center to feed and cannot fly out. Build the trap 6' wide x 6' high x 9' long. Use 2 x 2" material with 1 x 2" or 1 x 4" for cross braces and door. Cover trap with 3/4" meshed wire. Make the throat frame 1-1/2' wide and cover with chain-link fence with 2" openings, or use 1/2 to 3/4" wire mesh and cut out a number of 2 to 3" openings in the center.