

The Latest Plague?

In the last issue of this magazine I mentioned that I was being plagued by collared doves, which come in to my feeding stations and consume an *immense* amount of feeding. These birds, once unknown in this country, are rapidly developing into a major agricultural pest.



They have the rapid breeding capacity of all pigeons, but they are less wary of people than wood pigeons are, and because of their small physical size, many sportsmen don't consider them a worthwhile quarry, so very few are shot.

I have been experimenting with various methods of getting rid of the blighters, especially the flock which virtually lives in my garden. I have free-range poultry, and the doves are eating more than the bantams!

The photographs illustrate a live-catch trap I have been using with great success over the last few months, and it is currently catching two per day on average. It works on the same principle as a Larsen Trap, but is much more effective for doves than the Larsen. The overall size of the trap is about 30 inches square and 36 inches high. The bottom compartment is the full size of the trap and takes up around 8 – 10 inches of the height.

The power to close the door to the catcher is provided by part of an old bicycle inner tube, although 'bungees' or even commercially sold Larsen springs would do just as well.

The attraction to get the wild birds into the trap is also simple – a couple of collared doves in the bottom compartment is all you need. There is no aggression as there would be if one was using magpies – the birds seem to be just inquisitive. I have also found that two doves work far better than one – a single bird just sits about, whereas a pair tend to keep moving,

attracting more doves. To catch your first doves to use as decoys, put a wide tray of grain in the *top* compartment.

Exactly the same legal requirements apply as would to a Larsen trap – the decoys must have fresh food and water, a perch and shelter from the weather, and the cage in which they are kept must be large enough to allow them to move around freely and stretch their wings. The trap must be checked at least once each day.

Warning

Because of the live doves in the base of the trap, it is not uncommon for sparrowhawks or other birds of prey to enter the trap and become caught. ***IT IS STRICTLY ILLEGAL TO DELIBERATELY CATCH OR ATTEMPT TO CATCH BIRDS OF PREY. IF YOU DO ACCIDENTALLY CATCH ONE, YOU MUST RELEASE IT UNHARMED IMMEDIATELY.***