

MONITORING BIRD POPULATIONS USING MIST NETS

C. John Ralph and Erica H. Dunn, Editors

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CONTENTS

LIST OF AUTHORS	v–vi
PREFACE	vii
INTRODUCTION	
The use of mist nets as a tool for bird population monitoring	
..... Erica H. Dunn and C. John Ralph	1
BREEDING SEASON EVALUATIONS	
The effects of mist-netting frequency on capture rates at Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) stations	
..... Kenneth M. Burton and David F. DeSante	7
Monitoring productivity with multiple mist-net stations	
..... C. John Ralph, Kimberly Hollinger, and Sherri L. Miller	12
The influence of mist-netting intensity on demographic investigations of avian populations	
..... Grant Ballard, Geoffrey R. Geupel, and Nadav Nur	21
Methodological considerations of the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) Program	
..... David F. DeSante, James F. Saracco, Danielle R. O’Grady, Kenneth M. Burton, and Brett L. Walker	28
Current practices in the British Trust for Ornithology Constant Effort Sites scheme and comparisons of temporal changes in mist-net captures with changes in spot-mapping counts at the extensive scale	
..... Will J. Peach, Stephen R. Baillie, and Stephen T. Buckland	46
The relationship of juveniles captured in constant effort netting with local abundance	
..... Chris R. du Feu and John M. McMeeking	57
Estimates of adult survival, capture probability, and recapture probability: Evaluating and validating constant effort mist netting	
..... Nadav Nur, Geoffrey R. Geupel, and Grant Ballard	63
Estimating adult survival rates from between-year recaptures in the British Trust for Ornithology Constant Effort Sites scheme	
..... Will J. Peach and Stephen R. Baillie	71
EVALUATION OF MIST NETTING OUTSIDE THE BREEDING SEASON	
A European example of standardized mist netting in population studies of birds	
..... Andreas Kaiser and Peter Berthold	75
Determining productivity indices from age composition of migrants captured for banding: Problems and possible solutions	
..... David J. T. Hussell	82

An investigation of productivity indices derived from banding of fall migrants	Erica H. Dunn, David J. T. Hussell, and Raymond J. Adams	92
Optimizing the allocation of count days in a migration monitoring program	Len Thomas, Geoffrey R. Geupel, Nadav Nur, and Grant Ballard	97
The use of mist nets for monitoring landbird autumn population trends, and comparison with other methods	Peter Berthold	112
A comparison of three count methods for monitoring songbird abundance during spring migration: Capture, census, and estimated totals	Erica H. Dunn, David J. T. Hussell, Charles M. Francis, and Jon D. McCracken	116
A comparison of constant-effort mist netting results at a coastal and inland New England site during migration	Christopher C. Rimmer, Steven D. Faccio, Trevor L. Lloyd-Evans, and John M. Hagan, III	123
Mist netting trans-Gulf migrants at coastal stopover sites: The influence of spatial and temporal variability on capture data	Theodore R. Simons, Frank R. Moore, and Sydney A. Gauthreaux	135
Bird population studies in Puerto Rico using mist nets: General patterns and comparisons with point counts	John Faaborg, Wayne J. Arendt, and Katie M. Dugger	144
Coping with capture rate bias: Canopy height and several extrinsic factors	Elizabeth P. Mallory, Nicholas V. L. Brokaw, and Steven C. Hess	151
The use of mist nets for study of neotropical bird communities	Andrew A. Whitman	161
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS		
Some consequences of using counts of birds banded as indices to populations	John R. Sauer and William A. Link	168
On the use of capture–recapture models in mist-net studies	William L. Kendall, John R. Sauer, James D. Nichols, Roger Pradel, and James E. Hines	173
The effectiveness of informal banding training at three western Canadian banding stations	Brenda C. Dale	182
RECOMMENDATIONS		
Recommendations for the use of mist nets for inventory and monitoring of bird populations	C. John Ralph, Erica H. Dunn, Will J. Peach, and Colleen M. Handel	187
LITERATURE CITED		197

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PREFACE

Mist nets were introduced to North America about mid-way through the 20th century. In the decades since then, they have become a widely adopted and indispensable bird-capturing tool for the scientific study of birds. At first, mist nets were an inventory tool, allowing in-hand comparison of species previously scrutinized only over the barrel of a shotgun, but in the early 1970s, netting began to be used for monitoring population trends and demographic composition. Early users had to develop protocols for mist netting based on their own experience. Some 30 years later, there has still been relatively little evaluation to determine the effect of different mist netting methods (or of extrinsic factors) on the numbers and kinds of birds that are captured, and the degree to which demography of captured birds represents true population characteristics.

Recognizing the need for greater evaluation of mist-netting and the need for standards on the use of this technique, a workshop was held in October 1993 entitled "The use of mist nets to monitor bird populations." The workshop took place at the Marconi Conference Center on the shores of Tomales Bay, California, and was sponsored by the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian Wildlife Service, and the Institute for Bird Populations.

The objectives of the workshop were to examine the strengths and weaknesses of mist-netting for a variety of population monitoring purposes, with a primary focus on passerines, and to develop recommendations on the best methods for using mist nets as a population monitoring tool. The conference attracted 40 participants from Canada, Costa Rica, Germany, Great Britain, and France, as well as from all across the United States. The majority of papers presented at the workshop are included in this volume, as well as several prepared as follow-up. During

intensive breakout sessions, all participants reached consensus on recommended standards, reflected in the final chapter of this volume, "Recommendations for the use of mist nets for inventory and monitoring of bird populations." All manuscripts underwent extensive peer review as well as review by editors. During this process, delays made it possible for a reevaluation of all the manuscripts. All the authors enthusiastically participated in this process, and as a result many new data were brought forward, and updated analyses were incorporated into manuscripts during 2001–2003. As well, several new manuscripts were submitted that were not presented at the workshop. The co-editors completed the final editing in late 2003.

Both the manuscripts and the recommended standards for mist netting were greatly improved by comments from authors of all the papers in this volume, as well as from Bob Altman, Doug Barnum, Jeffrey Brown, Deanna Dawson, Sam Droege, Joseph Engler, Denise Hardesty, Daniel Hernandez, Jane Hicks, Stephanie Jones, Joe Kaplan, James Karr, Martin McNicholl, Bill McShea, Rhonda Millikin, Nicolle Mode, Bert Murray, Glenn Olsen, Peter Pyle, John Rappole, Dan Reinking, W. John Richardson, Christian Vansteenwegen, Dennis Vroman, George Wallace, and Richard Weisbrod. The editors are also indebted to Kim Hollinger and Linda Long, for their dedicated and extensive work as editorial assistants, to John Rotenberry for his help in finalizing this volume, and to Keith Hanson for the very topical artwork that appears on its cover. Finally, we thank the Canadian Wildlife Service for its contribution to the cost of publication.

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