

## Live Trapping Wild Birds under General Licence A Code of Practice

Compliance with this Code is a condition of using certain Natural England licences.

The activities described by the Code are only lawful if you are entitled to act under a relevant licence and comply with its terms and conditions.



The Code	What you must do	Important advice
1. Trap specifications & construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traps must be constructed of suitable materials so that decoy and trapped birds cannot injure themselves</li> </ul>	<p>Wood, metal, wire/welded mesh etc, which are in a good state of repair with no sharp edges are recommended materials.</p>
2. Trap location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not set traps:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on or near public rights of way or areas of public access used by persons exercising domestic animals.</li> <li>where livestock could get access to the trap.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Reasonable efforts must be taken to avoid trapping of non-target species.</li> </ul>	<p>Where traps consistently capture non-target species then the trap should be moved to a different location.</p>
3. Trap Inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traps must be physically inspected (see <i>Definitions</i>) when in use at least once every day at intervals of no more than 24 hours.</li> <li>At each inspection, any dead animal (mammal or bird, other than any food item for any decoy bird(s)) caught in trap must be removed.</li> <li>Non-target species which have become confined in a cage trap must be released immediately upon discovery at the site of capture) or as close as it is safe to do so), unless they are unfit for release or their release is prohibited.</li> </ul>	<p>Traps should only be set if you are confident that you will be able to inspect the trap within the required period. Cage traps should not be used during extreme weather conditions (hot or cold), or when such conditions are reasonably anticipated.</p> <p>It is good practice for traps to be checked twice daily; once in the morning and once in the evening, especially in the event of adverse weather conditions.</p> <p>Any animal caught in a trap is afforded protection under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and it may be an offence to leave an animal in a cage trap without food, water or shelter for a period of time that exceeds the requirements of this Code. If an animal actually suffers as a result of non-compliance an additional offence of causing 'unnecessary suffering' may be committed.</p> <p>Certain non-native species may not be released if caught, but should be humanely dispatched. The most likely such species to be caught in traps are grey squirrels and mink. [Link to be provided to Schedule 9 and/or explanatory text]</p>

<b>4. Dispatch of trapped animals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trapped target birds must be dispatched immediately upon discovery in a humane manner.</li> <li>• Birds must not be dispatched in view of either the decoy bird or other trapped birds.</li> <li>• Where decoy birds are used trapped non-target species are not to be dispatched unless they are unfit for release or their release is prohibited.</li> </ul>	<p>Birds should be removed from the trap and dispatched with a sharp blow to the back of the head using a suitable stick, or dedicated 'priest' or equivalent.</p> <p>As far as is practicable, avoid these actions being witnessed by the public or others.</p> <p>It is only lawful to use a live decoy to catch birds of species permitted to be caught by the licence under which you are operating. Non-target species are to be released unless they are a non-native species whose release is prohibited (see section 3 above).</p>
<b>5. Traps not in use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any trap not in use must be incapable of holding or catching birds or other animals.</li> <li>• Trap doors must be secured in a fully open or closed position or the doors must be removed completely.</li> <li>• Bait, food, water and decoys must be removed.</li> </ul>	<p>When not in use traps should be removed from the trapping site if this is practicable.</p>
<b>6. Treatment of decoy birds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decoy birds must be provided with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) adequate food</li> <li>(ii) water at all times</li> <li>(iii) appropriate shelter</li> <li>(iv) suitable perch (see <i>Definitions</i>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Decoy birds must not be wing-clipped.</li> </ul>	<p>Decoy birds are afforded protection under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which means that any person setting and operating a trap is responsible for the welfare of the decoy bird, ensuring that it has sufficient food, water and shelter, and protection from pain, suffering, injury and disease.</p> <p>Decoy birds are not to be winged clipped because if they escape or are released from the trap then they would be highly susceptible to predation or to attacks by territorial birds.</p> <p>It is good practice to replace decoy birds at regular intervals. This is also likely to improve trapping success.</p>

### Definitions used in the Code

*'Decoy bird'* means a bird of a species permitted by a Natural England licence to be placed deliberately in a trap to attract other birds of the same species. Any caught bird or other animal that remains in a trap in excess of 24 hours (the maximum trap checking interval) is considered to be a decoy bird in respect to its treatment (see section 6 of the Code) and continued containment (Note: except where permitted by licence the use of live decoys is unlawful).

*'Physically inspected'* means being close enough to be able to handle the trap to check that it is not damaged, that there is sufficient clean water, that the food does not need to be replenished, and that the health of any decoy birds is satisfactory. It is not sufficient to simply view the trap from a distance, even if you are using a pair of binoculars or similar.

*Adequate food* - means sufficient, palatable food, which is of a type suitable for the decoy species to sustain the decoy bird(s) between checks by the operator. Dried pet food can meet these criteria. If carrion is used for Corvid species (such as magpies and carrion crows) then this should be fresh and include sufficient meat on the carcass to meet the needs of the bird. Food provision will not be considered 'adequate' if the decoy bird(s) cannot readily access it, if other birds or mammals could deprive the bird

of its food or there it is insufficient in terms of quality and quantity.

*Water at all times* – water in sufficient quantity must always be available to decoy birds and must be drinkable; it should be free from chemical additives and changed regularly to ensure that it is clean. During the winter the water needs to be kept ice-free during day-light hours. If this is not possible, then the conditions are not suitable for using a decoy bird in a trap. Suitable receptacles to hold water include 500ml plastic drinks bottles (with the bottom half of one side cut away) turned upside down and attached to the side of the trap. Although bowls of water can be placed on the ground to permit Corvids to dunk their food, it is likely that the water will become dirty or spilt in the confined space of a trap. Water must be presented in a way that is accessible to birds

*Appropriate shelter* - decoy birds are to be provided with shelter that provides effective protection from rain and direct sunlight under the prevailing and anticipated weather conditions. For this reason, transparent Perspex is not considered suitable. What is appropriate will be influenced by the location of the trap and its exposure to the elements. The shelter provided must be sufficient for the total number of decoy birds present in any trap

*Suitable perch* - the perch must not cause injury or discomfort to the feet of the decoy bird(s) and must be of sufficient length to accommodate the total number of decoy birds present in any trap. The perch must be located within the sheltered area of the trap.

#### Contact details for Natural England

*For licensing enquiries:*

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*Out-of-office hours Duty officer (emergencies only):*

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**Feedback and Complaints:** we welcome and value your compliments, complaints, suggestions and comments about our services. Please see our 'Contact us' section for more details.

[http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about\\_us/contact\\_us/default.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about_us/contact_us/default.aspx)

**Legislation:** visit the Office of Public Sector Information website to view the full text of the legislation referred to in this licence ([www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/about\\_legislation](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/about_legislation))

## Trap types commonly used under licence

### Larsen Traps

These traps are specifically designed to catch territorial Corvids (mostly magpies but also crows) alive & unharmed, using a captive bird (the decoy) of the same species as a lure. They usually consist of a decoy compartment and two catch compartments (one for each of the pair). Birds enter traps via doors in the roof or the side depending on the design (Crows prefer to approach from the ground).

It is not essential to catch the pair as a single bird will be unable to defend its territory and must either find a new mate or be driven away by another pair. By operating Larsen traps during spring and early summer, it is possible to disrupt the establishment of territories and ensure that no young are hatched off.



Decoy birds can be obtained by baiting the trap with an artificial nest containing a few eggs. The use of carrion is not recommended as it is likely to attract non-target species such as raptors, foxes and badgers. There is little point in using a bird as a decoy in the area where it was caught as its effectiveness relies on territorial intrusion.. If you do not catch target birds within a specific place a few days the trap should be moved to a fresh site. Larsen traps work better if set in the open so that the decoy is visible. A fence post can be driven into the ground beside the trap to give a higher perch or the trap itself can be raised by placing it on a straw bale. If there is a risk of vandalism the trap should be placed discretely inside woodland. Although less suitable, the decoy bird will usually reply to calling Corvids and consequently draw the target birds to the trap.

### Multi-catch Traps (Ladder and Funnel Traps)

These traps are employed predominantly to catch the flocking Corvid species such as Jackdaws and Rooks; but can also be effective against Carrion Crows. They are usually permanent structures but can be semi-portable with an overall dimension of 8ft (W) x 8ft (L) x 4ft-6ft (H). Birds are attracted by food or the presence of other birds of the same species already caught in the trap or placed as decoys. The birds find the 'ladder' or funnel and drop into the trap and are then unable to fly back out.



These traps should be visited at dusk to avoid remaining Corvids becoming wary of the trap. Any birds left in a trap are to be treated as decoys.

**Please note** that only hand-held or hand-propelled nets are permitted for use under General Licence and that the use of **flip-over crow/magpie traps** (pictured below) requires an individual licence.

