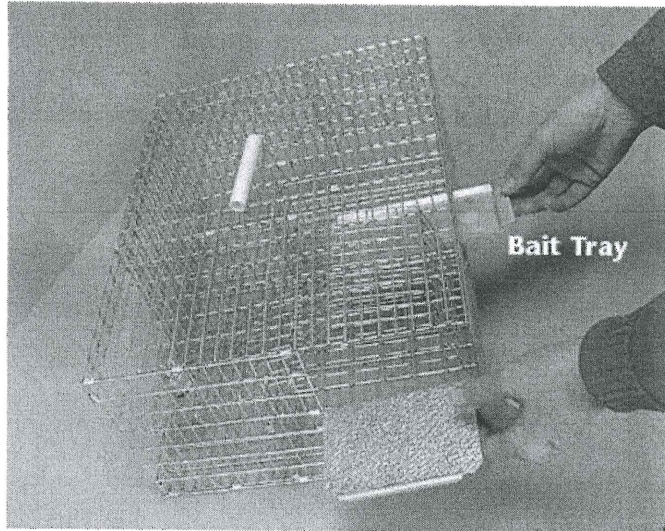


# PMCA's Repeating Bait Trap

*This is the Purple Martin Conservation Association's Repeating Bait Trap. It is a highly efficient device for capturing House Sparrows and European Starlings, two major, nonnative pest species responsible for the decline of the Purple Martins, bluebirds, and several other native cavity-nesting birds. Thank you for purchasing this product from the PMCA. Your purchase helps support our education, conservation, and research projects!*

**Assembly:** This trap requires minimal assembly. The handle is already attached to the top of the trap. Remove the two parts wrapped in newspaper and packed into the pivoting chamber. Enclosed are two items: the bait tray and the porch. Slide the metal bait tray into the bait slot behind the pivoting chamber. Then slide the porch lip down into the slot at the lower edge of the entrance to the pivoting chamber (see photo).



**How the Trap Works:** Bait lures hungry House Sparrows and starlings to the general proximity of the trap. After bait on the ground and the aluminum porch is consumed, the birds are forced to walk across the pivoting trap chamber to reach the bait in the removable bait tray. When a bird steps onto the mesh of the pivoting chamber, its weight causes the chamber to drop and stay down until the bird exits into the holding cage part of the trap. After the bird steps out of the pivoting chamber and into the holding cage, the chamber pivots back up, ready for another capture.

**Baiting Instructions:** Proper baiting of the trap is essential. To capture House Sparrows, use 1/2" square chunks of white bread placed liberally on the porch, the bait tray, the holding cage (inside the trap), and the ground just in front of the trap (near porch). Red millet and cracked corn may also be used as bait, but might attract native birds. For starlings, break a slab of suet in half and place one half in the bait tray and the other half in the holding cage. White bread chunks, popcorn, or small pieces of suet can be also be used to bait the porch and ground. IT IS IMPORTANT to bait all four locations until the House Sparrows or starlings discover the trap and gain confidence feeding on and around it. After birds have been lured to the trap, stop placing bait on the porch and ground. This will force them to enter the trap. Keep the bait fresh, especially after a rain.

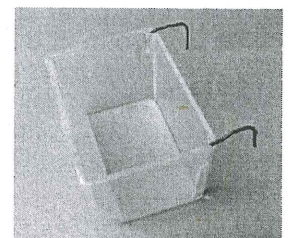
**Checking the Trap's Counterweight:** Before placing the trap, make sure the counterweight on the pivoting arm is properly adjusted by setting 5 quarters (taped together) on the center of the pivot trap chamber. It should fall fairly rapidly (five quarters weighs the same as an average House Sparrow—28 grams). If an adjustment is needed, loosen the wing nut on the counterweight and slide the large nut towards or away from the pivot point until the arm just

balances in the highest "up" position possible. The ceiling of the pivoting trap chamber should be touching the mesh of the trap's ceiling, but be able to pivot down quickly when a House Sparrow steps onto it. Once the correct counterweight position is determined, tighten the thumbscrew. Note: After a rain, and before the raindrops have dried, the weight of these droplets may cause the pivoting arm to balance in the down position.

Eliminate this problem by shaking the water off the trap after each rain. Whether you are trapping House Sparrows, starlings, or both species, use the House Sparrow weight for setting the trap.

**Trap Placement:** This trap will work best if you place it on the bare ground, on a sidewalk, driveway, garden, or other area that has no grass. Nearby cover is usually a plus. A spot on the ground right beside your regular bird feeders is also ideal, as is a spot directly underneath martin housing, if sparrows have taken up residence there. You can also place the trap in any area where House Sparrows or starlings frequent for dust bathing, feeding, or roosting. If you need to place the trap in a grassy area, set it on top of a large square of plywood so the seed you spread inside the large holding cage is quite visible. Regardless of where you place the trap, it should be placed close enough to your residence so that it can be easily checked many times each day.

**Using Live Birds as Decoys:** Keeping birds in the holding cage makes the trap dramatically more effective. The hopping, chirping, and fluttering of the trapped birds attracts others. Once you have captured one or more House Sparrows or starlings, leave them in the trap's holding cage for as long as you can (several days) by supplying them with food and water. It is not necessary to keep more than 2 starlings or 2 sparrows in the trap. Water may be placed in a dish but a cage-bird watering cup that attaches to the inside of the holding cage is best. These cups can be purchased at pet stores (see photo).



Caution: chilly, rainy nights can cause the decoys to die of exposure. Also, raccoons, cats, and rat snakes may be attracted to the trapped birds and try to extract them at night. Therefore, if you are keeping birds as decoys overnight (which is highly recommended), cover the trap with an old blanket and bring it into a barn, shed, garage, or basement at night (place newspaper underneath to catch droppings). The better you treat the trapped birds, the longer they will live to lure others.

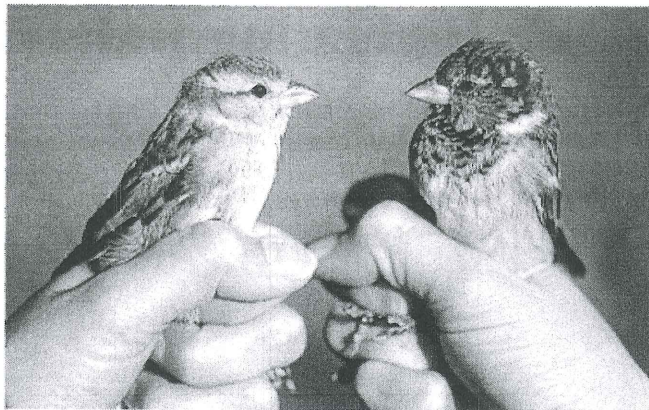
### Removing Trapped

**Birds:** Don't be afraid to handle the birds. To remove a trapped bird, open the door in the back of the trap and reach in while using your other hand to block the cracks around the entrance. Be careful! They are very sneaky and "slippery." You can grab birds in your bare hands, but sparrows can pinch you with their beaks, so you may choose to wear a pair of thin work gloves. Carefully remove one bird at a time, then re-latch the door.

### What To Do With Trapped House Sparrows and

**Starlings:** As you capture new starlings and House Sparrows, remove the ones that have been in the trap the longest. They start to look poorly after several days. Once you have removed a captured House Sparrow or starling, you must decide what to do with it. We recommend that you destroy them. Some people choose to transport and release them. This latter option, while easier on some people's conscience, is ecologically unsound. They have great homing ability and will fly back in a matter of hours. If not, they may harm the native birds in the area where they are released. To humanely destroy the starlings and House Sparrows, you can choose among the following:

- 1) Inhalant anesthetic: place them into a small container then spray ether (engine starting fluid) into it. Be sure to work in a well-ventilated area.
- 2) Cervical dislocation: grip their body in one hand, their head in the other, then twist quickly and firmly in opposite directions. It is important to kill them as quickly and painlessly as possible. Certain wildlife rehabilitation centers will accept the birds, where they are fed to recovering wildlife. (If you plan to take the birds to a rehab center, DO NOT use the inhalant



A female House Sparrow (left), and a male (right).



A European Starling in the hand.

method to kill the birds. Place the dead birds into plastic zip-lock bags and freeze immediately.)

### Monitoring the Trap:

Check the trap frequently. Never leave it unattended for more than a few hours. This bait trap can occasionally trap native birds, so you must know how to identify native species and release them quickly when trapped. If you are not absolutely positive of the identification of what you have captured, release it immediately! It is a federal offense to kill any native bird species; House Sparrows and starlings are not protected. If you can't distinguish female House Sparrows from other common seedeaters, such as House Finches, we suggest you purchase a field guide.

### Best time of Year for Trapping House Sparrows and Starlings:

This bait trap will have the highest capture rate in late summer when fledgling

House Sparrows are about, looking for food. It will also have a high capture rate in the fall, winter, and spring, while insects are dormant. It will have a slightly lower capture rate during summer months when House Sparrows have insects available to supplement their diet. You can, however, use this trap all year long.

**Training Birds to Come to Your Trap:** Before this trap can lure large numbers of starlings or House Sparrows to it, you should make every effort to remove alternate sources of food. Eliminate all other birdseed and spilled grain. Make sure you are not offering millet, cracked corn, or bread anywhere else in your yard. If you are on a farm with lots of spilled grain, chances are less likely that House Sparrows will take notice of the seed, bread, or suet in your trap. In such cases, you should also be employing some nestbox traps.

Purple Martin Conservation Association  
301 Peninsula Drive, Suite 6 • Erie, PA 16505  
814-833-7656 (phone) • 814-833-2451 (fax)  
[www.purplemartin.org](http://www.purplemartin.org) • [info@purplemartin.org](mailto:info@purplemartin.org)

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