Local control of crows by trapping

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THE common crow seen frequently around farms in the South-West is the raven (Corvus coronoides) whilst the pest of pastoral areas is the true Australian crow (Corvus cecilae). Farmers and pastoralists, although recognising the importance of these birds as scavengers and destroyers of insects, particularly grasshoppers, sometimes for one reason or another, wish to reduce their numbers over a localised area. Baiting with phosphorus has been used in the past, but the purpose of this article is to describe and illustrate a type of trap which has become universally known as the “Australian Crow Trap.”

CROW SPECIES

There are three species of crow to be found in W.A. (Occasionally another species—the “Ceylon” Crow makes a brief appearance but so far has not, to our knowledge, become established.)

The Australian Crow

(Corvus cecilae)

Found all over the State except the South-West. It probably does not exist where the raven is found. It is the pest species in the northern and inland parts of the State.

The Little Crow

Found over the region from Hall’s Creek, North-West and as far South as Victoria Plains. Is not usually considered a pest.

The Raven

(Corvus coronoides)

This bird is confined to the South-West Land Division. This is the main crow species against which our efforts are directed. I have already stated that this bird is a useful scavenger. However, at certain times of the year, farmers experience a little trouble from this pest. This is most apparent at lambing time when...
the newly born lamb and even the lambing ewe herself, are sometimes attacked. The birds will take eggs from the farmer’s poultry run also.

None of the crow species are protected in W.A. and farmers may take whatever steps they consider necessary to control them. One way which has been used successfully to control this pest is by the use of the crow trap described hereunder:

**AUSTRALIAN CROW TRAP**

This trap has been tried and tested over the years in all parts of Australia having proved both humane and effective under a wide variety of conditions. How effective it is can be seen in the accompanying photographs taken of an actual trap on the property of Mr. Bruce Boxsell of Narrogin. This is a cage type trap of the self operating type, carrion being used as a lure. The principle of its operation is simple. The birds enter the trap through any of three openings each nine inches square, in the depression at the top. In trying to escape they will go to the outer walls rather than the openings in the middle of the roof.

There is no set rule in regard to dimensions except that it is desirable that the trap should be high enough to permit the operator to capture and remove the imprisoned birds without discomfort. The trap illustrated with a base six feet square, and a height of six feet at the corners, with the centre apertures four feet six inches from the ground, will be found satisfactory. The central supports for the openings are nine inches apart. The space between the openings should be covered with board or rabbit netting and the openings can be funnelled to a depth of six inches for extra safety.

A door should be built into one corner to permit access to the interior for the removal of the captured birds.

Material for the frame work of the trap can be obtained from the farm scrap heap. The trap illustrated was constructed out of scrap half inch diameter piping and has the advantage of being light enough for one man to load on and off a truck.

**OPERATION OF TRAP**

The crow trap should be placed near pig pens, fowl yards, lambing paddocks or any place to which the birds are partial. It may be baited with offal such as dead sheep, rabbits or poultry. It is well to provide perches and to avoid unnecessary suffering, a water tin should also be provided.

When the trap is in operation, it is important that the birds should be removed at night when there is no danger of other crows in the vicinity being frightened. It is well to leave two or three crows alive in the traps for the next day so as to provide an attraction for the intended victims.

If the trap described and illustrated here is used and operated wisely, it will materially assist farmers and pastoralists to reduce unwanted crows from around homesteads from feed sheds, poultry houses and other places where these birds tend to congregate.
It should be borne in mind that these birds serve some purpose and play an important role in scavenging the countryside. The removal of those birds which frequent habitation should however, not materially upset any natural balance that exists.

CALTROP

The Director of Agriculture (Dr. T. C. Dunne) stated that Caltrop had appeared, both in the Agricultural districts and the metropolitan area.

Commonly known as Puncture vine in America, the burrs of this trailing plant, as the name implies, puncture bicycle tyres, but more important to the farmer, can cause lameness among stock by penetrating their hoofs. Although no cases of poisoning have been reported so far in Western Australia, South African investigations have shown that the plant has harmful properties and losses of sheep in New South Wales and Queensland have been attributed to eating it.

Even city dwellers cannot disregard Caltrop for, besides the risk to bicycle tyres, the burrs can be just as uncomfortable as those of Doublegee.

Dr. Dunne said that care should be taken to prevent the introduction of seeds, especially with stock, fodder and rubber tyres. If plants do appear, they should be destroyed promptly as seeds can mature in a few weeks, and then may remain in the soil in a viable condition for a number of years. Isolated plants should be pulled and any seeds present destroyed by burning. Patches can be killed by spraying with oil. Diesolene or power kerosene is suitable and can be mixed with old sump oil. 2,4-D is also effective but must be used with care in the vicinity of gardens. It is important to spray before the seeds have formed.

During the past two years the Agriculture Protection Board, in co-operation with local authorities, has operated a number of mobile spraying units. In the country districts these have concentrated on infestations from which spread was most likely to occur, particularly railway and stock yards and street verges. Despite many difficulties, especially a series of germinations due to summer rains, the results obtained must be regarded as satisfactory.

Towards the end of last summer a limited survey was carried out to ascertain the extent of the weed on private properties and control measures being taken by farmers. Ninety properties were visited in a district where Caltrop has been known to occur for a number of years. The weed was present on more than half those inspected. In most cases it was growing mainly around the homestead but on nine farms was spread over more than 20 acres, and on one of these the area exceeded 200 acres. Some control measures had been carried out on 20 holdings, but in only eight cases could the results be regarded as effective.

Dr. Dunne said that it would appear some farmers do not regard Caltrop very seriously. He pointed out, however, that the work carried out by the mobile spray units would lose much of its value unless control measures were undertaken on the farms, themselves. A more concerted effort against this weed is necessary if it is to be kept within bounds.
Boiled Bake Fruit Cake

\[\frac{1}{2}\text{ lb. butter or margarine}\]
1 cup of sugar
1 cup of boiling water
1 cup of sultanas
1 cup of raisins
1 cup of currants
Add little lemon peel or grated rind of orange and lemon
1 teaspoon mixed spice
1 teaspoon cinnamon

Method.
Boil all these ingredients together for three minutes. Allow to cool.
Then add the following ingredients—
2 cups of S.F. flour.
\(\frac{1}{2}\) teaspoon of carb. soda.
2 well beaten eggs.
Juice of half a lemon and half an orange.

Beat all well together, place in a well-greased cake tin and bake in a moderate oven for one hour.

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