

# Martin Gourd Insert Trap Operating Instructions

*Thank you for purchasing this product from the PMCA. Your purchase helps support our education, conservation, and research projects. We hope this product will give you many years of use. We are glad to have you as a partner in martin conservation.*

Using the Martin Gourd Insert Trap (MGIT), you can quickly catch any House Sparrows or European Starlings that venture into your SuperGourds and Excluder Gourds. This metal insert trap is specially designed for use in SuperGourds and Excluder Gourds only; it will not fit in any other plastic or natural gourds. Note: purchaser should check the edges of metal trap for burrs or splinters before handling.

**Before you begin: Nest Identification.** This trap is not meant to catch birds at random; use it only on a gourd that has a House Sparrow or starling actively building a nest, or has a male sparrow or starling trying to attract a female to the gourd. House Sparrows and European Starlings are not protected by law; you may remove their nests, eggs, and young, and it is legal to destroy the adult birds as well. House Sparrow nests typically contain lots of straw and feathers, and are built to fill the entire nest cavity. Try to confirm that a House Sparrow or starling is nesting by watching the gourd before placing the trap. This will help you avoid accidentally capturing Tree Swallows, bluebirds, Purple Martins, or other native species. Federal law protects all native birds and their eggs, young and nests.

**Mounting the trap:** After determining that a gourd is being used by a House Sparrow or starling, lower the gourd rack, unscrew the access door, and remove some of the nest material from the gourd so it won't interfere with the trip wire or shutter operation. You can leave the gourd hanging on the rack while inserting the trap. With your left hand at the entrance hole, insert the trap through the access door as shown in photo #1. Photo #2 is taken from the inside of a cutaway gourd, showing how the trap is oriented once attached inside the gourd; its shutter is set. Note that the red shutter is uppermost, and that the trip wire is holding the shutter up in the set position. For shipping purposes, the perch arm may be pushed down close to the trap shutter. Before using the trap, check the perch arm, and if necessary, pull it out (while holding the trip wire against the trap) so that there is a distance of

approximately 2-1/4" to 3" between the perch arm and the trap shutter. The outer face of the trap has two nylon clips. One is full (long) and one is cut (short). To mount the trap to the gourd's entrance hole, slide the long nylon mounting clip onto the far edge of the entrance hole first, then push the trap firmly towards the long mounting clip so that the long clip flexes slightly (see photo #3 on back). Then, simultaneously pushing towards the long clip and out the entrance hole of the gourd, push on the trap until the cut (short) clip snaps into position on the near edge of the entrance hole (see photos #3 and #4). Check that both clips are anchored securely, and rotate the trap to vertical before setting the trap. You will know the trap is vertical in the gourd when the clips on the outside are horizontal in the entrance hole (i.e. at the 3 and 9 o'clock positions).

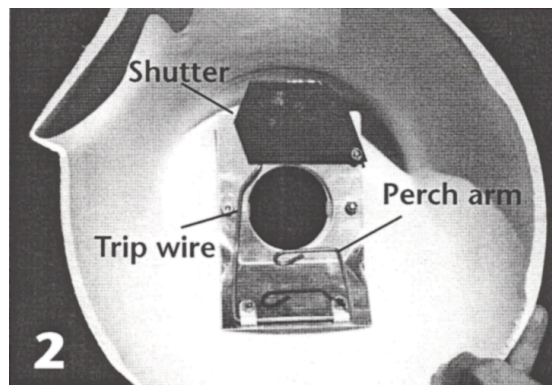
**Setting the Trap:** To arm the tripping mechanism, drop the trip wire to the bottom of the gourd, raise the red shutter to horizontal and then pivot the trip wire back up to vertical. Release the shutter; the weight of the shutter will hold the tripping mechanism in position and vice versa. When a bird enters the trap, it will land on the horizontal perch wire and its weight will pivot the trip wire. This will cause the shutter to fall rapidly, trapping the bird. Make sure the trap is vertical and that all parts move freely. Test the trap mechanism to make sure it's operating correctly by pushing on the perch wire; the shutter should fall quickly.

Occasionally, you may need to tighten or loosen the lock nut holding the shutter. Arm the shutter and replace the gourd access door. Gently raise the gourd rack back up, being careful not to jar the gourd. Note: If you are trapping House Sparrows and starlings early in the spring before any martins have returned, you can leave your gourds lowered and operate the trap without raising and lowering your system.

## Responsible Trap Operation:

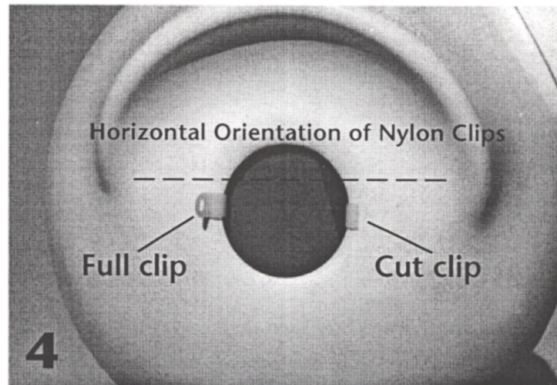
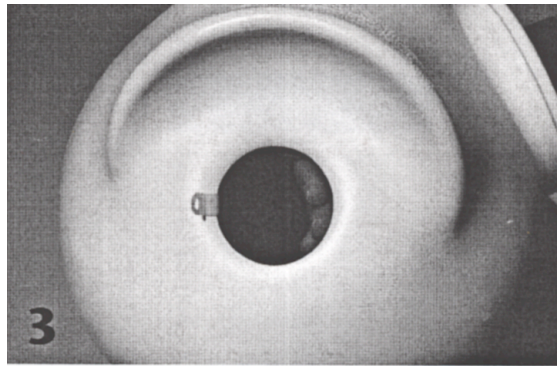
The trap should be visually checked every one to two hours

(or more often). Visually checking the trap is as simple as looking (from the outside) to see if the red shutter has been tripped closed. This can be done from a distance. If you have to be away from home for longer than a few hours, it is a good idea to remove the trap. The insert trap can attract nontarget species such as bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Great Crested Flycatchers and Purple Martins. A trapped bird can die of starvation if it is left in the trap too



long on a cold day, or overnight. There is nothing more disturbing than finding a dead, nontarget bird in the trap because you forgot to check it regularly. Operating this trap is a responsibility and must be done conscientiously. Traps can be left continually set (night and day) if you are there to check them frequently. The best time for capturing cavity-hunting starlings and House Sparrows is on sunny, warm, late winter and spring mornings.

**Removing Trapped Birds:** As soon as you see that the trap has been triggered, (the red shutter will be showing), check the trap immediately. Usually you will hear a bird fluttering inside, trying to escape. Lower your housing system and remove the gourd's access door by twisting the cap off counterclockwise. As you remove the cap, cover the hole with your left hand to prevent escape of the trapped bird. Peek in between your fingers to identify the species you have trapped and to ascertain its location. (If you've trapped a nontarget species, step away from the gourd and allow the trapped bird to exit through the open access door.) Reach into the gourd through the access port, while closing any escape gaps with your left hand. Take hold of the bird by grasping its body. There is no reason to fear the bird. Starlings and House Sparrows may latch onto your skin with their beaks, but the pinching action will not be painful or break the skin. An alternate method is to have a clear plastic bag and heavy-duty rubber band handy. Loosen the access cap, and slide the open end of the plastic bag over the access opening as you remove the cap. Fasten the bag onto the threaded collar of the access opening with the rubber band. The trapped bird will fly towards the opening to escape, right into the bag. You can then identify the bird and release it, if it is a native bird, or euthanize it, in the case of a House Sparrow or European Starling. If you cannot distinguish Starlings and House Sparrows from other common bird species, we suggest you purchase *A Field Guide to Birds* by Roger Tory Peterson, 1980, Houghton Mifflin Company.



**What To Do With Trapped Birds:** Once you have positively identified the trapped bird, you must decide what to do with it. Some people choose to kill the birds, while others take them for food to an animal rehabilitation facility. Still others transport them 10 to 20 miles away and release them. This latter option, while easier on some people's consciences, really serves no purpose other than to waste fuel. We do not recommend this option. House Sparrows and starlings have great homing ability and will fly right back in a matter of hours. Should you decide to euthanize the birds, we recommend either cervical dislocation or ether as the means.

Cervical dislocation is accomplished by grasping the bird's skull in one hand and its body at the base of the skull in the other hand. Pulling rapidly and firmly in opposite directions will separate the spinal cord resulting in rapid death. If you choose to use ether (engine starter fluid), place the bird in a plastic bag and spray ether into the bag.

**For Bluebird SuperGourd Insert Trap Purchasers (SGITB):** In order to use this trap in the Bluebird SuperGourd, remove the plastic J-clip on the right side of the entrance, and replace it with the elongated J-clip provided. This will reduce the circumference of the trap entrance, so it will clip securely onto the 1-1/2" entrance hole of the gourd.

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