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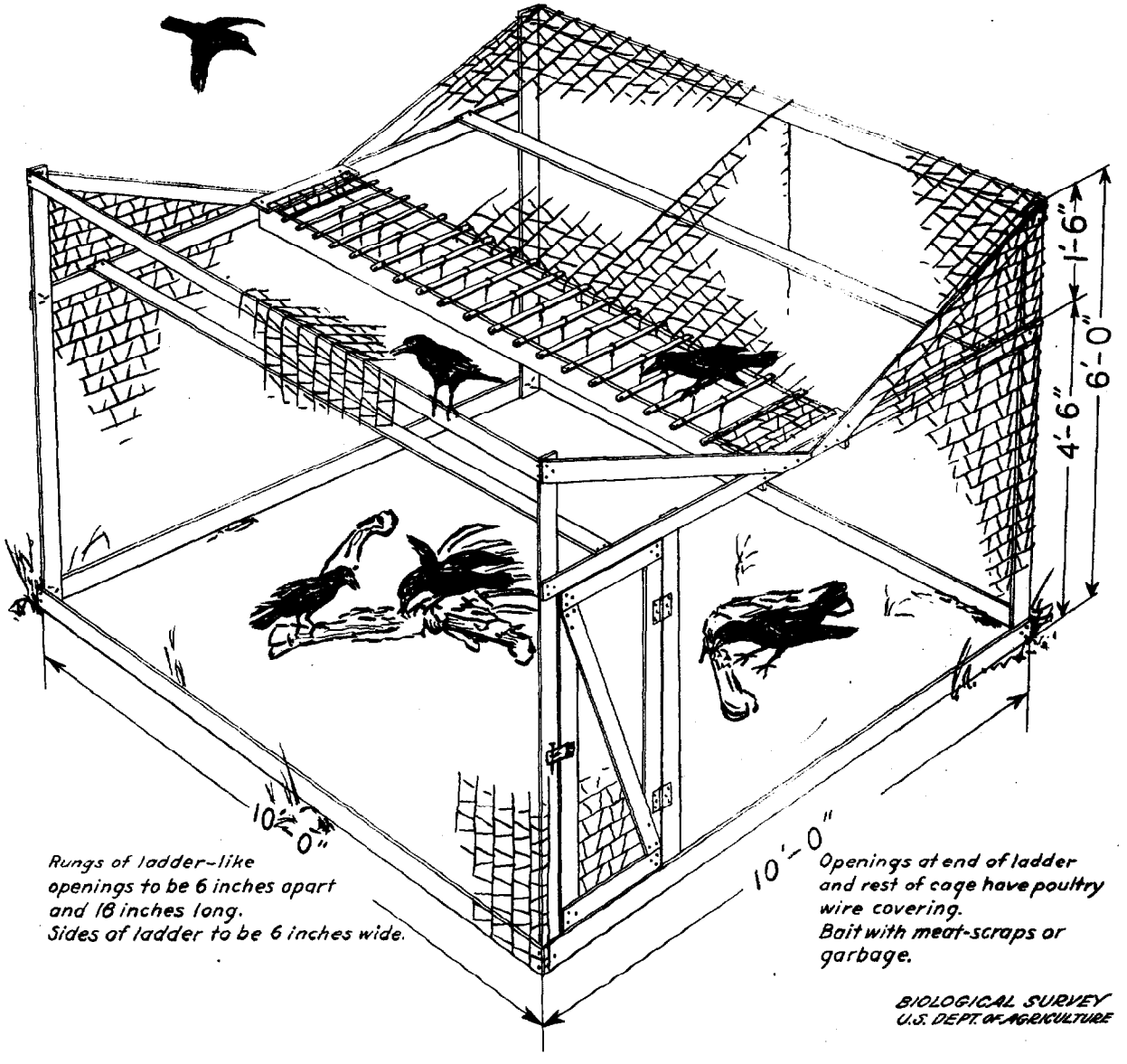
CAGE TRAP CAPTURES CROWS



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A cage trap that can be built from scantling and poultry wire offers one of the best answers for solving the winter-crow problem on the farm, says the U. S. Biological Survey. Wintering flocks of crows sometimes damage crops left

in the field and also consume some of the feed farmers put in livestock lots.

Two Oklahoma farmers caught 2,344 crows the last two winters in three cage traps designed by the Biological Survey and placed near each other in the vicinity of hog-feeding lots. The farmers, assisted by a Survey representative interested in testing the traps, attended them daily when the birds were in the vicinity in large numbers. In baiting the traps, they used left-over parts of livestock carcasses and garbage. A few crows were also held in the traps as decoys.

The trap is similar to one that has been successfully used in controlling white-necked ravens in Texas, and is practically self-operating. Crows attracted by bait enter the cage from the top through a ladder-like opening. The space between the rungs is large enough for them to drop into the cage, but too small for them to fly out. The only attention the trap needs is the supplying of bait, caring for a few decoy birds, and removing and disposing of trapped birds.

Plans and specifications for the raven trap are in the Bureau's Leaflet BS-27, copies of which may be obtained free from the Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. These plans may be followed in building the crow trap, but for the sides of the ladder-like opening the pieces of wood should be 6 inches wide instead of 4 and the rungs 6 inches apart instead of 9.

The Survey recommends the use of the cage trap in fall, winter, and early spring only in localities where crows congregate in large numbers and are doing damage. Even then the effectiveness of the trap depends largely on conditions of food scarcity. Often large flocks of crows are only on a single farm or on parts of the farm, and for miles around the traps would catch few birds, if any.

While crows are more or less clannish, their gregarious habit is most highly developed during the colder months, says the Survey. Large wintering flocks become a problem in some localities as the birds feed upon crops left in the field, and

if food is scarce they sometimes become regular visitors at livestock feeding lots.

"On the other hand," says the Survey, "the crow has many good qualities and the use of traps and other control measures should be resorted to only when it takes more than a fair share of the crops or feed. Extermination of the crow would take away a most effective enemy of certain insect pests as about a fifth of the bird's diet consists of insects. Many of these are eaten early in spring, when life cycles of insects are at their lowest ebb and when their destruction results in the greatest good. In some western States grasshoppers form nearly a fifth of the crow's food in August and September. Corn furnishes about a third of the bird's food for the year, but much of this is eaten from October to March, when waste grains often form a large part of the supply."

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