



**ANIMALHELPNOW®**  
FOR ANY U.S. WILDLIFE EMERGENCY OR CONFLICT, ANYTIME

# Waterfowl Capture

## Contents

Step 1: Determine whether or not the animal can fly.....	2
Step 2: Assess your human resources.....	2
Step 3: Identify your capture method .....	2
Capture Methods .....	3
Herding/Corralling .....	3
Materials .....	3
Steps.....	4
Important .....	4
Tips .....	4
Traps/Snares .....	5
Homemade Traps.....	5
Snares.....	5
Feed and Grab.....	6
Materials .....	6
Steps.....	6
Important .....	6
Tips .....	6
Cannon Nets.....	7
Miscellaneous .....	7

*Our thanks to Carolina Waterfowl Rescue and our many humane wildlife “control” business friends for their help in putting this document together. Any errors are attributable solely to Animal Help Now.*

## Step 1: Determine whether or not the animal can fly.

First off, by “fly” we mean can the animal get airborne, even if only for a short distance.

It’s usually obvious whether or not an animal can fly. It is easier to capture an animal who cannot fly.

Even if an animal is not injured, this does not mean he/she cannot fly. For instance, once a year, usually at about the same time, geese go into molt. During this time they find it difficult if not impossible to fly.

## Step 2: Assess your human resources.

How many are with you? If your numbers are small (two or three or maybe even four), your options are limited.

## Step 3: Identify your capture method

Use the info you determined in steps 1 and 2 (Situation column) to identify your method. If one method fails, you can try it again, or you can try another.

SITUATION	RECOMMENDED CAPTURE METHODS		
	Herding	Feed and Grab	Traps/Snares
Animal Can Fly Many People Helping		Yes	Yes
Animal Can Fly Few People Helping		Yes	Yes
Animal Cannot Fly Many People Helping	Yes	Yes	Yes
Animal Cannot Fly Few People Helping		Yes	Yes

## Capture Methods

### Herding/Corralling

This is the preferred method for capturing unflighted animals.



A still from a video on capturing waterfowl using the herding method. See the video at <https://youtu.be/V2mRuRASLFO>.

### Materials

- Blankets or towels
- Net (available at most sporting goods stores)
- Carrier

## Steps

1. Get prepared. Everyone should have a role. Key roles include:
  - Herder – You are part of the “wall”
  - Capturer – You have a net and will capture the animal
  - Assistant Capturer – You are part of the wall and you will assist with the capture
  - Carrier – You have the carrier and will ensure the animal is safely placed into it
2. Herders/Capturers: Surround the animal, holding up the blankets and towels and nets. Imagine you are creating a movable wall.  
*Note: The carrier should be positioned outside the circular wall.*
3. Herders/Capturers: Moving slowly, herd the animal toward the net.
4. Capturer: When the time is right, bring the net down on the animal.
5. Assistant Capturer: Throw a towel or blanket over the netted animal. Be as gentle as possible and try to ensure the animal’s wings are folded in to the body.
6. Carrier, Capturer, Assistant Capturer: Carefully get him/her into the carrier.  
*Note: DO NOT try to carry the animal to the carrier or box – bring the carrier to the animal. Slide the animal and containment sheet/blanket into the carrier.*

## Important

Never chase an animal. This can cause an often-fatal condition called “capture myopathy”. Capture myopathy is indicated when a fleeing animal suddenly sits down and allows capture.

## Tips

The best time to approach waterfowl is when they are not near the water. *You must block the animal from entering the water, or the capture will not succeed.*

If you have captured a larger animal (such as a goose), support the animal’s feet with hands or a piece of cardboard; this will minimize stress and struggle.

Boats, including remote-control boats, can be used to help get unflighted birds onto land again.

## Traps/Snares

### Homemade Traps

Homemade traps can be effective. Here's an example:



### Snares

A snare on the ground can effectively capture waterfowl. Use parachute cord or braided fishing line - only the green, braided type so the leg doesn't get hurt)

A wildlife expert states: "If the animal can fly and won't come close, this is the only way I use to get them. It can take patience to get the right animal into the snare. I never use a net unless the bird is really incapacitated; it's in their DNA to be afraid of nets."

## Feed and Grab

### Materials

- Blankets or towels
- Bread
- Carrier

### Steps

1. Get prepared. Everyone should have a role. Key roles include:

- Feeder – You draw the bird to you with food
- Capturer – You will grab the animal
- Assistant Capturer – You will assist with the capture
- Carrier – You have the carrier and will ensure the animal is safely placed into it

*Note: It's possible for one person to capture an animal using this method, but having two persons is better, as one can feed and capture and the other can help get the animal in the carrier.*

2. Feeder: Provide small pieces of bread on the ground and lure the animal away from any water.
3. Feeder/Capturer: When you feel the time is right, tackle the animal. When tackling, don't be rough, but don't be gentle, either. Once you have the bird, be as gentle as possible and ensure the animal's wings are folded in to the body.
4. Assistant Capturer: If possible to do so quickly, throw a towel or blanket over the captured animal.
5. Carrier, Capturer, Assistant Capturer: Carefully get him/her into the carrier.

*Note: DO NOT try to carry the animal to the carrier or box – bring the carrier to the animal. Slide the animal along with any blanket or towel into the carrier.*

### Important

Never chase an animal. This can cause an often-fatal condition called "capture myopathy". Capture myopathy is indicated when a fleeing animal suddenly sits down and allows capture.

### Tips

Bread can be used as bait when employing this method, but **BREAD SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN TO BIRDS ON AN ONGOING BASIS.**

Boats, including remote-control boats, can be used to help get unflighted birds onto land again.

The best time to approach waterfowl is when they are not near the water.

If you have captured a larger animal (such as a goose), support the animal's feet with hands or a piece of cardboard; this will minimize stress and struggle.

## Cannon Nets

**WARNING!** Cannon nets should be used only as a very last resort. They are loud and forceful and can cause stress, injury, and death. Some humane experts are categorically opposed to their use.



Cannon nets tend to be expensive, but they can be acquired for less than \$1000. Many animal control agencies have cannon nets, and some are willing to lend them out.

They can be donated to a wildlife nonprofit or your local animal care agency when you are finished with them.

## Miscellaneous

Bread can be used as bait in certain circumstances, but

**BREAD SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN TO BIRDS ON AN ONGOING BASIS.**

Boats, including remote-control boats, can be used to help get unflighted birds onto land again.

Lost limbs: One wildlife expert states: "After doing quite a few of these with feet ready to fall off because of fishing lines and so forth, I think they actually will do fine in the wild with one foot. I know of one that lost her foot who was alive and thriving three-and-a-half years later. They seem to still have some good quality of life as long as the water does not freeze over."

