

## Code of Practice for the Responsible use of Larson Traps

Larsen traps are live-catch traps and were designed by a Danish gamekeeper in the 1950s. Larsen traps are targeted at corvid pest species (i.e. crows, magpies, jackdaws, jays, rooks) and the advantage of them being live traps is that any caught non-target species can be released unharmed. On Guernsey Larson traps can only be used to trap Carrion Crows (*Corvus corone*) and Magpies (*Pica pica*).

The original Larson trap design used a sprung door to the catching compartment which was held open by a 'split perch'. When a bird the size of a magpie or crow landed on the perch the perch gives way and the birds' momentum carries them into the trap and the spring door flips up and closes behind them.

Modern Larson traps have a separate decoy compartment adjacent to the catching compartment into which a 'call-bird' or 'decoy bird' can be placed to attract other birds to the trap.

In Guernsey an approved Larsen trap is:

- a trap that conforms to the design of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust ([https://www.gwct.org.uk/media/208824/larsen\\_trap\\_construction.pdf](https://www.gwct.org.uk/media/208824/larsen_trap_construction.pdf) )
- a twin catch top entry magpie Larsen trap,
- a twin catch top entry magpie centre decoy Larsen trap, or
- a twin catch side entry crow Larsen trap,

and for the avoidance of doubt, does not include a clam type trap, a Larsen Mate or a Larsen Pod trap.

The compartments for the decoy bird in the Larsen trap must be:

- large enough for decoy birds to stretch their wings out without touching the sides of the compartment, and
- no smaller than 762mm (30") long by 457mm (18") tall by 381mm (15") wide.



### **A Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust Larson Trap**

Larson traps are most effective when used between March and July.

A call-bird is a previously caught live magpie or crow, which is kept in the special decoy compartment of the trap. Uncaught territory holders think a single call-bird is an intruder, and will try to drive it away. A scientific study undertaken by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust in 1989 found that traps with call-birds were 15 times more efficient at catching crows, and 10 times more efficient for magpies.

Trappers have a legal obligation care for captive call-birds and a call-bird in good health will be move active and vocal in the decoy compartment which will catch the attention of territory holders. Trappers equally have a legal obligation care for captive caught birds which must also be provided with shelter, food and water.

The call bird must have a source of water, either contained in a heavy ceramic bowl or an inverted bottle with a nipple drinker usually used for rabbits and guinea pigs. Care must be taken to ensure that water bowls cannot tip, and that water doesn't evaporate or freeze. Soaked complete dog food, and firm tinned dog food are suitable foods for call-birds.

The call-bird must have a proper perch which must be adequately sheltered from hot sun, prevailing rain or wind. Call-birds in the decoy compartment of a Larson trap must be checked twice daily by trappers at intervals of no more than 16 hours. The check must be sufficient to determine whether there are any live or dead birds or other animals in the trap. Dead or sickly decoy birds must be removed immediately from a trap. Larson traps must not be used during severe weather conditions or when such conditions are reasonably expected, which would prevent twice daily checking.

When Larson traps are not in use the call-birds must be kept in a suitable aviary, it is not acceptable to keep a call-bird in a Larson trap when it is not in use. The aviary must be large enough to allow the birds to stretch their wings freely, and it must have shelter and several perches. Call birds kept in an aviary must be checked, fed and watered twice daily. Do not leave a call-bird in the decoy compartment of a Larson trap for more than 48hr. After 48hr the call-bird should be move to the aviary to allow it to recuperate for 24hr before returning to the Larson trap.

After a while call-birds get quite tame and it is probably best to keep one bird as a call-bird rather than replacing it with a recently caught territory-holder. You must not clip the wings of a call-bird because if it were to escape it would not be able to fend for itself.

When a Larson trap is in the open but not in use it must be rendered incapable of catching or holding birds or animals. Any food and water must be removed and the decoy must be kept in an aviary.

Captive birds must be taken from the compartments and dispatched by means of a concussive device that is specifically designed to stun and kill such a bird, or by means of a concussive device that is specifically designed to stun the bird so it can be painlessly killed by means of exsanguination or dislocation of the neck, whilst it is stunned. Captive birds must be dispatched out of sight of other captive birds.

The displaying of carcasses serves no useful purpose and may offend other countryside users. Carcasses should be disposed of responsibly.

Non-target species caught in a cage trap must be released if fit and unharmed immediately upon discovery in the area where they were caught.

Do not place traps in areas to which the public have access and only place traps on land where you have permission to do so. Your Larson trap must have the following details attached to it to identify it:

1. Your name
2. Your business name if appropriate (i.e. if you run a pest control business)
3. Your telephone number (for emergency contact)

Unidentified Larson traps may be removed and destroyed.

Larson traps must be firmly pegged or staked to the ground or securely tied to a tree when in use.

### Summary

- Larson traps must be of a good quality of construction an appropriate size and must have no hazards that may injury or harm call-birds and caught birds.
- Trappers must meet their duty of care to the call-bird in both the decoy compartment of the Larson trap and the aviary and caught birds in the catching compartment of the Larson trap. This means checking traps twice daily and providing birds with food, water and shelter.
- Quick humane dispatch of captive birds out of sight of other captive birds and appropriate disposal of carcasses.
- Larson traps must carry identification of ownership and emergency contact details.

### Further information



The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC); Trapping pest birds  
<http://basc.org.uk/cop/trapping-pest-birds/>



The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT); Hints for using Larsen traps  
<https://www.gwct.org.uk/media/372992/Larsen-use-guidelines-2014.pdf>

GWCT; Larsen trap construction

[https://www.gwct.org.uk/media/208824/larsen\\_trap\\_construction.pdf](https://www.gwct.org.uk/media/208824/larsen_trap_construction.pdf)