

EDUCATION

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Even though there are so many insects they can still be hard to catch. Most hide under a cover of darkness or in a disguise or camouflage.

BASIC EQUIPMENT

Small boxes with glass or transparent tops to hold and examine insects. A small hand lens for close examination.

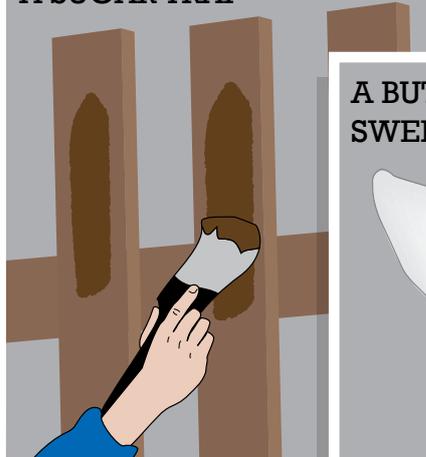
TRAPS

These are used mainly to catch ground-living invertebrates or flying insects. The most commonly used trap is the pitfall trap, a jam jar sunk up to its neck in the ground and charged with bait. Baited with meat, pitfall traps are ideal for catching the predatory and carrion-feeding ground beetles which are active at night. Once they fall inside the jar they cannot climb the smooth sides to escape. Care must be taken to check the traps at regular intervals – perhaps every hour or so – to prevent the beetles killing each other. Make sure that no sticks fall inside the jar as the beetles will climb up these and escape. A flat stone propped up above the jar prevents shrews from getting in and eating your catch. When not in use, traps should always be removed.

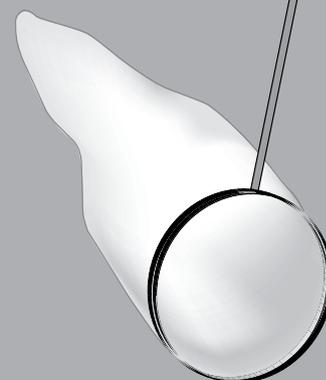
A PITFALL TRAP



A SUGAR TRAP



A BUTTERFLY OR SWEEP NET



NETS

Butterfly nets are one of the most useful tools for catching flying insects that you can possess. With practice, butterflies, moths and flies are easily caught and transferred to a pill box for examination at close quarters. Butterfly Nets with a toughened rim, usually known as sweep nets, can be swept through long grass and herbage to catch a mass of unseen creatures which would otherwise remain hidden from even the most careful searcher.

A variation on the butterfly net is the pond net or dip net. Pond nets are strong nets with a gauze mesh that offers little resistance to water but which strains out aquatic invertebrates that are then trapped in the bottom of the net. They can be swept back and forth in open water or pushed through beds of water weeds.

CATCHING INSECTS

SIEVES

Sieves are used mainly for sifting through leaf litter for snails or soil-dwelling invertebrates such as centipedes and millipedes. The leaf litter is passed through a series of sieves with a gradually decreasing mesh size and the animals picked out from the sieve which they are too big to pass through. Professional sieve kits are expensive but soil sieve kits from garden centres are cheaper. However, their use is limited as the mesh would not be fine enough to catch the very smallest creatures.

LIGHT TRAPS

Light traps attract night-flying insects, especially moths and flies, although beetles and bugs are also attracted. A fairly powerful beam is needed – a household torch is not bright enough – which is shone on to a white sheet to diffuse the glow. Insects flying on to the sheet are easily picked off or examined. Oil-fire Tilley lamps or camping-gas powered lamps are quite bright and easily carried but a small headlamp run from a car battery is most effective. For best results site the light trap where there is little interference from street lamps or house lights. More sophisticated light traps using powerfully attractive mercury vapour lamps can be bought from suppliers but they can be awkward and heavy to transport.

BEATING TRAY

A beating tray is a square of light-coloured cloth, or even a light-coloured umbrella turned upside down. It is positioned under a branch to catch falling insects dislodged by giving the branch a few sharp taps with a stick.

REMEMBER – AFTER EXAMINING THE INSECTS RELEASE THEM AND REMOVE TRAPS.

Having caught the insects you might want to try and identify them. There are a great variety of field guides available to help you.

Our aim is to protect, conserve and promote the natural and built environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

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