

Merlin Mist Nets – September 2021 update



A Merlin 18m, 70 denier, 2-ply nylon mist net, September 2021

Introduction

With the relaxation of Covid 19 travel restrictions, I returned to Portland Bird Observatory for a week's ringing in September 2021. After conversations with other ringers there and subsequent use in the field, it was immediately apparent that Merlin, in collaboration with their suppliers, have made considerable efforts to improve both the quality and consistency of their mist nets. The criticisms in my original 2017 review no longer apply and this brief update is an attempt to acknowledge and document the enhancements, which the Merlin website modestly fails to mention, perhaps relying on word of mouth to keep potential purchasers informed. Once again, I should just make it clear that that this review was unsolicited and that I have no personal or financial interest in anyone who manufactures or retails mist nets!

First Impressions

The most significant improvements relate to the quality and consistency of the tethering. Whereas the nets I purchased in 2017 were variable with each tethered on different shelves with rather crude, widely spaced and obvious knots, all of the current batch were uniformly secured on three alternating shelf strings at roughly 0.5m intervals and the knots were discrete with no loose ends. There were no noticeable manufacturing errors in any of the nets examined and the shelf strings were of equal length. All the net loops are black but this is easily rectified with coloured tape or twine on the top loop. The netting is still marginally less pliable than the

Ecotone equivalent but the finishing on the top and bottom shelf strings is much improved with no surplus net hanging from either.



Fig 1. Finishing of the top shelf

Cost

The price of mist nets has risen sharply in the four years since my original review and the full impact of import duties arising from Brexit has yet to be realised. The total purchase plus delivery costs of a variety of 18m, 16mm mesh, 70-75 denier, nylon and polyester mist nets in September 2021 are tabulated below. With price rises from other suppliers ranging between 20-50% since November 2017, Merlin’s increase of just 7% over the same period makes their nets an even more attractive proposition.

Manufacturer	Ecotone	Ecotone	Ecotone	North Ron.	Merlin
Denier	75	70	75	75	70
Mesh size	16mm	16mm	16mm	16mm	16mm
Material	Polyester	Nylon	Polyester	Polyester	Nylon
Retailer	NHBS	NHBS	BTO	BTO	Merlin
Cost	£141.00	£142.99	£115.00*	£123.25*	£37.50

Table 1. The purchase and delivery cost of an 18m mist net from various UK retailers as of September 2021.

* BTO prices include the ringer’s discount.

Conclusion

It was immediately clear that the quality and consistency of Merlin mist nets has improved significantly and that the current product has successfully eliminated the negative observations contained in my original review. In terms of visibility, catching ability, ease of extraction and durability I have been unable to detect any significant differences between the Merlin mist nets and their increasingly expensive nylon or polyester competitors.

At a third of the price of a net from their cheapest competitor Merlin mist nets represent a serious, value for money alternative for those on a budget.

Alan Pomroy, September 2021