

## GIVING A BANDING DEMONSTRATION

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Reprinted from the Workshop Manual, Vol. 4, 1965

Most new banders are extremely eager and intensely interested in developing their banding skills. Without this enthusiasm, an individual probably would not continue to be a bander. Invariable this enthusiasm is manifested by a desire to inform one's friends of the newly acquired practice of placing a numbered aluminum band on a bird's tarsus. In addition, one usually has neighbors who want to know what is happening. In any event, one is soon in the business of explaining the mechanics and ramifications of bird-banding. This leads to giving demonstrations before groups.

Perhaps, after giving a few demonstrations, and seeing his enthusiasm fall on dead ears, one then realizes that his demonstrations have been neither properly prepared nor effectively presented. If however, a demonstration is properly enacted, it can leave indelible impressions on an audience. It is essential to do a lot of preaching to promote the cause of bird-banding. When banding's aims and techniques are intelligently presented, they help to create a more informed and co-operative public, and help to dispel the fears and concern generated by those who are improperly informed and do not understand.

Hopefully, the list of suggestions that follow will help both beginner and "pro" to project a more effective representation of the value of bird-banding. The list is by no means complete and other banders could probably add to it. Perhaps at the 1966 meeting, time could be devoted to a discussion of personal experiences regarding demonstrations and public relations.

Basically there are three ways of presenting the story of banding:

- (1) A talk with or without displays
- (2) A film or slide program
- (3) A live field demonstration

Each way has its special place. However, I should like to consider mainly the talk and the field demonstration, preferable the latter, because it is generally the more effective. A film program is most difficult, because it usually takes several years of banding experience and quite an interest in photography or art work to collect satisfactory material.

First of all, be well prepared. Giving an effective demonstration or talk requires proper planning, good preparation, and some experience. The scope of the planning and preparation depends on the size, and kind of audience, the banding conditions, and one's resources.

The size of an audience should be kept manageable. For a field demonstration, no more than 10-15 people should be considered for one bander. If more people are expected, help should be solicited from another

licensed bander, or a friend who is well versed in the fundamentals of banding. In such cases, the group should be divided and each demonstrator cover certain aspects of the banding operation. Questions undoubtedly arise, and in a group much larger than 10-15, it is unlikely that one can answer the questions satisfactorily in a limited time and still tend to the banding. Generally when a talk not involving catching and handling live birds is given, a larger audience can be accommodated.

A knowledge of the kind of audience is very important, because an effective presentation should be geared to what an audience can and should assimilate. Talking to bird clubs, garden clubs, and groups of children require totally different tacks.

Regardless of the kind of group, try to keep everyone interested. In a field demonstration, one of the most effective ways to achieve and maintain interest is to allow people to participate. Most people have never seen a native wild bird in the hand. A bird's coloration, feather structure and demeanor in the hand arouse admiration. This admiration is intensified when a listener is allowed the privilege of holding a bird in his own hand. A word of caution - never allow the handling of a bird without proper instruction. Experience dictates that cardinals, grosbeaks and the like are best left "unadmired" in the hand of the uninitiated. Children get enormous pleasure out of releasing a bird. Placing a bird belly up in a child's palm and then waiting for the escape is an intense moment in a child's life and one not to be forgotten.

A somewhat amusing incident illustrates what kind of an impression can be left with a child. About a year ago, a fellow stopped one evening to watch me band shorebirds. After I explained to him what I was doing, he dashed home and returned with his three children, aged five to nine. I explained to them what I was doing and why. I stressed the point of reporting a recovered band to the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the importance of this, and how much fun it would be to know from where a banded bird had come. I let each child release a semipalmated sandpiper. Several weeks later, my father told me how he was talking to a fellow worker who asked if my father had a son who was a bird-bander. This fellow then related how I had explained the banding of birds to his children and how after that explanation, he could not drive anywhere with his children without their insisting that he stop the car and they be allowed out to inspect every dead bird along the highway. They wanted to find a band and report it. In a way those children were banded!

There are numerous other ways in which a group can be kept interested by participating. Allowing someone to carry a gathering cage, open a band, record a band number, photograph a bird, or assist in any other way that will not lead to confusion, is valuable. If it appears that an individual has the ability to band a bird properly, giving him the instruction and the opportunity lends to the success of the demonstration. This is not a generally recommended procedure. It is better to limit its practice to a small interested and apt group.

The banding conditions contribute also to the success or lack of success of a demonstration. Crowding and the inability to see what is going on do not help matters. While some people might hesitate to go tramping about, a group of Cub Scouts in limited quarters tends to make the place burst at the seams. Therefore, keep the accommodation angle in mind when choosing a demonstration site.

It is usually a good idea to make known the ground rules at the very start of a field demonstration, so that unknowing people do not attempt to remove birds from a net, or act in such a way as to scare birds - generally the very ones which sometimes prove scarce and difficult to capture when one wants them most.

It is mandatory to have permission to use a banding site should it not be one's own property. Being asked to leave by an irate owner, or forced out by an owner's bovine, equine, or canine friends can be difficult and embarrassing. Besides, a netted cow is not the easiest thing to band.

One must realize the importance of explaining matters at a slow and easy pace. To many of the listeners, a demonstration of this sort will be their first contact with banding. Therefore, a bander should resolve that he will not use a demonstration as an opportunity to band as many birds as possible. The banding of ten birds before a group of people who depart with the satisfaction of having learned a great deal about banding is worth more than the banding of fifty birds before a group that leaves bewildered and confused about what banding is actually meant to accomplish.

A banding demonstrator should have various display materials available for examination and allow the curious people to use these materials to their satisfaction. Make available some completed schedules, recovery forms, etc., to show that banding is a serious government regulated business. Explain fully what one should do with a recovered band. Have available a placard or some similar display of all the band sizes and a notation of some of the typical species that are banded with each. Show the tools of the trade.

By all means display the fruit of one's labor - the IBM recovery card. The U. S. Banding Laboratory provides a sample of this, so that even new banders will have at least one example. Explain its use and significance. The long time banders will have quite a collection of recovery data which can be used wisely by indicating the banding and recovery locations on maps, and showing some of the distances traveled by birds. Stress the fact that these birds were banded locally. It means more to people to know that some of these results originated close to home, rather than in the vague somewhere else. Therefore, be specific and give details.

Beside emphasizing the local aspect, make use of results published in EBBA News, Bird-Banding, IBB News and Bird-Banding Notes (the December, 1964, issue of which contained some most fascinating tabulations, and the continued publication of which will be eagerly awaited). There is no limit to the delicacies that one can extract from the literature and spoon-feed to the public to the benefit of everyone. In so doing, we present the message of the value of banding, and how there is still much to be learned.

Make liberal use of the banding poster, form 3-1155. It carries an impressive message. Having it placed freely about may save temporarily unattended nets or traps from destruction by some unknowing individual who, coming upon them, might feel that he is doing nature a favor in releasing the captured birds and destroying the devices.

When the bird is in the hand, go through the banding, measuring, identifying, aging, sexing, weighing process carefully, and answer questions. The bird in the hand is probably the best catalyzer, curiosity, and genuine interest.

Be sincere and truthful. There are times when due to circumstances totally beyond the control of the bander, a bird is injured or even killed. While the topic should not be the main point of discussion, if it comes up, by all means treat the subject openly. Do not merely tell people that you try to minimize accidents, but also show them by careful actions and by sound banding technique that accidents are rare. For example: a physician's intentions are certainly worthwhile, but unfortunately sometimes not completely effective. He does the best job that can be done; no one can expect more than that from any individual. Similarly, if a bander has stressed the fact that there is a job to be done, and that the job is worth a certain amount of unavoidable risk, and then demonstrates that he is doing a good job, it will help to overcome the emotional displays of some people who fail to face the daily and unavoidable casualties in nature. But remember, there is no place for carelessness in banding at any time and an individual should display the utmost care in the handling of birds. Lastly, the experience needed to give a meaningful demonstration that will impress people will be acquired only by trying.

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