

North American Banding Council (NABC) Update

The 2001 NABC meeting held 23-24 March at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland, was an important one: five training manuals have been finalized this year and are now available. These include:

- North American Banders' Study Guide
- Instructors' Guide to Training Bird Banders in North America
- Guide to the Banding of North American Passerines
- Guide to the Banding of North American Raptors
- Guide to the Banding of North American Hummingbirds

Trainers and banders who would like copies of the manuals can contact the NABC secretariat at: nabcsecretary@aol.com or at the Bird Banding Offices: BBL@usgs.gov or BBO_CWS@ec.gc.ca Specify if you want them in an electronic format or in paper copy. Manuals for shorebirds, seabirds and waterfowl banding are in preparation.

Protocols and materials for evaluating and certifying landbird banders have also been completed and will be used for all certification sessions.

NABC EXPECTATIONS FOR LANDBIRD BANDERS*

(*The following information is from the document: *North American Banding Council Expectations for Landbirds Banders, Evaluation and Certification Committee, 2001*)

The purpose of evaluation is to determine if the candidate can safely, efficiently, and accurately complete all tasks required for certification.

- "Safely" refers first to the safety and health of the birds the bander will capture and handle, but it also applies to the bander and others who may observe or assist the bander.

- "Efficiently" refers to the need to minimize stress on captured birds by processing and releasing them quickly.

- "Accurately" refers to the necessity to identify correctly and, where possible, sex and age each bird, take the correct measurements in a repeatable manner, record the data correctly, and complete and submit schedules in a timely fashion

The Bander level of certification indicates that the successful candidate has achieved a level of competence in capturing birds, identifying, sexing and ageing them, handling and banding them, taking appropriate measurements, keeping appropriate records, and supervising the work of others conducting the same tasks. The candidate should be familiar with the NABC *Banders' Study Guide*, the NABC *Passerine Guide*, the *Bird Banding Manual* and the first 40 pages of Pyle (1997). The candidate should practice the Banders' Code of Ethics (as presented in the NABC *Banders' Study Guide*) and have intensive "hands-on" training and experience in performing the above tasks.

Two or more NABC certified Trainers will conduct the evaluations, which consist of a written and a practical exam. The closed-book written exam will, wherever possible, take place at least one day prior to the practical exam. Candidates who fail the written exam may take the practical exam only at the discretion of the Trainers. Portions of the practical exam will use live birds but specimens and surrogates will be used in some situations. **Candidates for Certification should come prepared with all banding tools and reference materials (including identification guides) that they would normally use when banding.**

Candidates will be sent a list of the species typically encountered at the banding site where the evaluation will take place. A portion of the practical exam will call for the candidate to demonstrate familiarity with species, age and sex codes, and the data procedures necessary to produce a banding

schedule. Within the limitations of the group of birds for which the candidate wishes to be certified, she/he will be expected to demonstrate her/his competence in the following areas of knowledge or skill.

General:

1. Bander ethics.
2. Bird bands, their nature and use.
3. Knowledge of permit authorizations, restrictions and responsibilities (in general and for the candidate's state or province).

Areas where questions will be specific to the group of birds the candidate will work with:

4. Essential library resources.
5. External anatomy of birds.
6. Plumage and molt.
7. Parasites and disease.
8. Handling of injured, sick, or dead birds.
9. Behavior of birds (as related to banding).
10. Bander equipment.
11. Capture techniques.
12. Extracting, holding, and transporting birds.
13. Familiarity with species accounts in Pyle (1997)
14. Species identification.
15. Aging techniques.
16. Sexing techniques.
17. Standard measurements.
18. Applying, adjusting and removing bands.
19. Use of auxiliary markers.
20. Record keeping and schedule submission.
21. Supervising assistants carefully.

Passing grades will be 80% for written, 100% for species identification, and 80% for the remaining components on the practical.

However, evidence of a lack of awareness or skill that, in the opinion of the NABC certified Trainers, endangers the safety or welfare of the birds, can override scores and result in failure. Standards are high because the welfare of the birds and the quality of the data depend on the bander's knowledge and ability. In order to allow sufficient time for additional study and experience, unsuccessful candidates must wait for another

evaluation session before retaking the exam. An additional fee will be assessed for each re-examination.

Certification is valid for five years. It is NOT required to receive a permit from the Banding Offices nor does it guarantee granting of a permit. However, the Banding Offices will accept NABC certification as stand-alone proof of the permit applicant's competence.

Important reminder:

Several NABC participating organizations plan to hold certification sessions along with their 2001 annual meeting. For more information, contact your regional banding association, check the NABC web site, or send an e-mail to the NABC secretariat (see addresses below).

The expectations for banders, site requirements, and application for holding an evaluation session are all posted on the NABC web site. Groups interested in holding an Evaluation and Certification Session must apply at least 90 days in advance to the NABC secretariat.

NABC web site:

**<http://www.nabanding.net/nabanding/>
or contact Brenda Dale, NABC elected Chair for 2001, at brenda.dale@ec.gc.ca
or Mary Gustafson, NABC secretary, at nabcsecretary@aol.com**

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