

BANDING ETHICS  
By Frederick S. Schaeffer

In 1956 and reprinted in 1963, an article on banding ethics appeared in EBBA News, written by Dr. Paul H. Fluck. Since 1956, EBBA membership has grown from some 200 to 700. With so many newly licensed banders joining our ranks, it seems imperative that another, expanded article be devoted to ethics. Most banders, practically all insofar as EBBA is concerned, need not be reminded that ethical conduct is highly desirable because they are accustomed to conducting their operations with the utmost of discretion. But there are undoubtedly those who can benefit from an organized setting-forth of banding ethics and indeed may be reminded of points they had not thought of.

There are four relationships in which we, the banders, find ourselves. They are as follows:

- I. To the birds we handle.
- II. To the public at large.
- III. To other banders.
- IV. To the banding laboratory.

I. To the birds we handle.

1. Treat birds carefully. The premise of the entire banding program centers around the assumption that data resulting from banded birds reflect the characteristics of unbanded birds. If the manner in which you handle your birds causes them to behave differently or to survive at a lesser rate, then you have biased not only your data but that which will be analyzed by other researchers. The "humane" and "public relations" aspects of careful bird handling are too obvious to mention.

2. Never crowd birds in a holding bag or cage. Be sure birds awaiting banding are kept in a cool, well-ventilated place.

3. Keep mist nets under nearly constant surveillance. Birds should be removed as rapidly as possible.

4. Use caution in applying bands or other markers. Great care should be exercised to ensure the use of the correct size band and its proper application. If you have a bird for which you have no fitting band, it should be released unbanded. You should notify the banding laboratory of any improvements you feel should be made in their list of recommended band sizes.

5. Never leave mist nets up in the rain or in excessive wind. When leaving trapping areas, be sure that nets are furled and traps closed or held open so that no birds can be inadvertently caught.

II. To the public at large.

1. Banders should carry on their banding in an exemplary manner. Conduct your operations as if you had important visitors.
2. Always obtain permission to enter upon property not your own. Written permission is often required in the case of public property.
3. Discuss various aspects of the station with the land-owner, such as cutting net lanes, setting up tents, etc. What may be a weed to the bander, may be a cherished plant to the owner.
4. Use common sense and discretion in selecting banding sites - for example, avoid graves if banding in a cemetery.
5. Use only as many traps or nets as you are authorized to use, and never more than you can adequately handle. Nothing is more traumatic to visitors and the public than an unattended net full of birds.
6. Explain your activities fully to visitors, but discourage them from entering netting or trapping areas unsupervised, and discourage them strenuously from attempting to extract birds from nets. Visitors should not be allowed to handle birds except in some cases, such as children desiring to release a bird - under supervision.
7. Prevent traps or nets from falling into unauthorized hands.
8. Write letters of appreciation and explanation to people who recover your bands.
9. Where possible, give occasional lectures, lead field trips, and contribute to publications (particularly to your regional banding publication! -Ed.)

III. To other banders.

1. All banders should endeavor to reply to letters requesting banding data from other banders.
2. Help and encourage new or potential banders.
3. Obey rules of courtesy and other station rules when visiting another bander's station. Leave your bands at home unless the operation of the station you are visiting expressly invites you to use yours.
4. Cooperate with other banders in worthwhile studies and attend important banding meetings whenever possible.

5. Contribute your station records to banding publications which ask for them, for compilations.
6. Offer to assist incapacitated banders.
7. Check with other banders before starting a project, in order to ascertain that no other bander is conducting a study in this area.
8. Promptly turn in paperwork requested by the station leader at whose station you may be banding.

IV. To the banding laboratory.

1. Keep careful and accurate records.
2. Sending banding schedules and other paperwork in regularly and on time is particularly important.
3. Reply promptly to the banding laboratory's query cards. Return band issue receipt cards immediately.
4. Band only those birds you are able to identify. Never guess!
5. Acquaint yourself thoroughly with regulations concerning federally and state-protected birds, and other publications and banding manuals. If you have questions, write to the banding laboratory.
6. Do not road-run! For the uninitiated, a "road-runner" is a bander who bands one bird here, another there, and carries on no specific study.

There are countless other points worth mentioning; however, the foregoing are the most important. In all your banding operations, you should have a goal in mind, and your attention is invited to the short article in Atlantic Flyway Review in the last issue of EBBA News - "Bird banding - a hobby or a vocation?"

Banders should be very careful about selecting assistants. Many visitors, impressed with banding operations, will from time to time volunteer their service. Before allowing them to handle birds, you should make sure that they have the manual dexterity required to handle birds, and the inclination to do so with the necessary care.

Rarities should be photographed whenever possible and documented in your own records by accurate and complete field notes. Regional publications should be notified, particularly the regional editor of Audubon Field Notes. Many species are mist-netted which are not often seen with binoculars.



For assistance in preparing this article, I would like to thank Dr. Robert P. Yunick and Frank P. Frazier, Jr., but particularly Earl B. Baysinger, chief of the Bird Banding Laboratory, who has suggested many items covered in the above list of ethics. The section covering our relationship to the birds we handle was almost entirely written by Mr. Baysinger.

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A recent letter from Frank Neumann enclosed a leaflet describing the Pennypack Bird Sanctuary in Philadelphia, where he bands, and evidently conducts a fine educational program for the public. He writes, "Since the beginning of our 'shows' we have had 16,000 people from 15 states and five foreign countries visit us..." This

program "helps visitors to have a proper understanding of our work, and it wakes up the public and creates nature appreciation".



With a new batch of drawings (not used in this News in Brief as it's a bit shorter than usual and they won't fit) Dorothy Bordner writes from Island Beach (Sept. 4): "Banding has been pretty good. Caught a Blue Grosbeak day before yesterday...Merrill Wood comes sometime today - maybe that's why it is raining!" Hope it cleared!



Ralph Condee, whose paper on titmice appears in this issue, spent the summer as a Senior Research Fellow at Glasgow University, Scotland and will continue there for the coming year.



Jack Roberts sent, with his Annual Banding Report, a copy of an interesting recovery report: a Snowy Egret he banded as a young bird in Oklahoma on June 21, 1964 was reported (without details) from Bogota, Colombia on November 19, 1964 by a Mr. Alvaro Amaya, an engineer with the Colombian National Tobacco Institute.



Writing on the very attractive stationery of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, Lloyd Kiff tells us that he and his wife are going to Costa Rica to study and color-band Scarlet-rumped Tanagers, and to set up a permanent field station there for the Foundation. He has promised us an article on banding in Central America and we hope to hold him to it.



Hapgood Parks tells us that House Finches are "really taking hold here in Hartford, Conn. Never even saw one before 1966; in 1966 we banded 2; in 1967, 18; in 1968, 80! We banded 33 in January 1969 alone, though trapping had been sharply curtailed by inclement weather".

Deadline for the next issue is November 1. Please.....

