



RECORD KEEPING: IN THE FIELD
AND AT HOME.

By: Frederick S. Schaeffer

Banders' Shoftalk is an informal discussion among banders who wish to share their knowledge with others. Most of the time, it will consist of ideas, loosely put together, about equipment, identification, age, sex and general field methods. Each issue can consist of one long article, several shorter articles, or, even a few lines. The main purpose is to get banders to participate. You might call it a workshop

session on paper. Articles need not be typed and they will be printed pretty much as they are received. Won't you help?.....

* * *

Banders most familiar with the gruesome task of keeping records are usually those who band sizeable numbers of birds. We cannot really blame them for not wanting to write on this subject; as a matter of necessity, I'll attempt to do so myself.

Generalities

First, I believe in using loose-leaf notebooks, either with 8½" x 11" ruled (narrow) sheets with edge protector stripping, or, mimeographed or off-set printed forms of the same size, on thick paper. If you use a bound notebook and mess up a page (or rather, the birds do), you'll ruin the book by tearing out sheets. Also, additional sheets cannot be added or withdrawn at a later time.

Depending entirely on the project you are doing, you may a) record in chronological order of capture, or b) record in sequential or band number order. When working a spring/fall migration study, it is probably easier to work chronologically, and definitely more logical; however, some stations (e.g. Manomet) have fewer recording problems by keeping sheets in numerical order by band size. This is fine when you have ample space. When you are a "shoebox bander" - it can be a nightmare.

There are some definite advantages to using pencil. Mistakes can easily be corrected, and pencils do not freeze up or smear. I am told that pencil copy will outlast ballpoint pen copy. Notwithstanding the advantages, I've personally always used a pen.

Some people rigidly follow the Banding Laboratory's method (on their own paperwork) of recording dates. This is fine when ten years from now you'll still recall that the month comes first and the day second. To be doubly sure: spell out the names of the month, or, if you usually write it at the top, spell it out there. Do not forget to enter the year - many people forget this.

I shall describe two methods of recording in the field; in addition, we'll dwell on Bird Banding Laboratory Banding Schedules since the Banding Manual is not too clear, especially to beginners. There is no doubt in my mind that when a new Banding Manual is issued, submission of banding data, will improve 100% in a very short time. This telescopes; when banding schedules improve, less time has to be wasted on editing and correcting; hence, recoveries should be returned faster also.

Method A.

Let me emphasize from the onset, that there may be banders who disagree with my interpretation, though widely used, for in my short experience with bands and other banders, on two continents (12 years), I have yet to find one bander agree with the recording method of another. It is not that we are a stubborn lot, but that a record system modified for your own use is usually best, in practice. In other words, the methods and ideas given here are just samples. They are forms I have successfully used myself.

Figure 1- shows the field form I've used most, primarily for migration type banding. It is versatile - by circling a category in the masthead, it can be used for new bandings, repeats, returns and foreign retraps. While on the subject: a recovery is a bird which you banded at your station and which was either found dead or alive by somebody else in another location. A foreign retrap, is a bird you recovered, but was banded by someone else. If John Doe banded a Robin #123-456789 and it was found in the nets of Bill Jones in the next state, John Doe has had a recovery and Bill Jones has had a foreign retrap!

In the sheet presented in figure one, pages are numbered consecutively (some stations, such as Island Beach and others use their own sheets of which the bander receives the carbon copy. I think it is highly unfair to the bander to receive the carbon. He is doing all the hard work and has to make out schedules on his bandings- so he should at least be entitled to the originals. Since carbon copies "go sour" after several years, the result is that I am compelled to copy all these records on original sheets. When you band 6000 birds per year, that is a nightmare. It is however, one small price to pay for being allowed to participate - so it remains a mere matter of opinion.). I shall come back to the reason for consecutive numbering of the pages later.

Continuity lines are preferred over ditto marks. If the following entry is the same as the one above, continuity lines are used. Some stations do not allow the use of these lines in the age and sex columns, nor in columns marked "SO"(skull ossified) and "SNO" (skull not ossified) I have not used these columns since I insert the letter "P"(Plumage) next to the age designation if aged by plumage rather than skulling.

FIELD RECORD PAGE 432

-S-A-M-P-L-E-

ISLAND BEACH STATE PARK, N.J.
 ✓ NEW LAND RESEARCH RESERVE, N.J.
MONTH August 1971.....
 Banded by: Frederick S. Schaeffer, P.O. Box 3295, Grand Central Sta. New York NY 10017

(NEW).....REPEAT.....RETURN.....FOREIGN.....(Circle)

BAND NUMBER	SPECIES	A.O.U	AGE	SEX	DATE	TIME	WING	FC	WEIGHT	L	#
123-456715	Catbird	704	HY	U	14	1055	87	2	39.5	1	1
16	Wood Thrush	755				1100	105	0	-		2
17	R. S. Towhee	587	AHY	M		1500	83	1	38.5	1	3
											4

Fig. 1. Field form used for migration study

123-4567 _____ 1970

15-17 432/1 _____

18 N25 _____

Please note-- all records on this sample are completely fictitious!

Fig. 2. 3"x5" index card system (see bottom p. 257) (For N25 entry referring to a nest location, see p. 258, Method C.)

Figure 3. - field sheet used by Emil Berger (top)
Figure 4. - EBBA Record Sheet (bottom)

I

BAND SERIES

SPECIES	DATE	NO.	AGE	SEX	WING	TAIL	WGT	FC	REMARKS
		01							
		02							
		03							
		04							
		05							
		06							
		07							
		08							
		09							
		10							
		11							
		12							

FROM:		TO:		SIZE:			DATE ISSUED:	
BAND NO.	SPECIES	AOU	A	S	DATE	PLACE		
01								
02								
03								
04								
05								
06								
07								
08								

It is O.K. to abbreviate species names, but I would not recommend using AOU numbers instead of species names in the field, in order to save time. It is simply too easy to make a mistake that way. Age is denoted by HY, AHY, SY, ASY, TY or U only. The system which called for A, I, or U went out some years ago (still some people are using it). Sex should be expressed alphabetically, i.e. M, F, or U. Symbols such as ♂ for Male, and ♀ for Female are preferred but the problem is that there are very few typewriters which are equipped with them (Dr. Kenneth Parkes uses one). The Banding Lab prefers letters however. Date- as mentioned before, month is first, day second, year last. Time- is expressed in continental system of time recording: 6:55 A.M. = 0655; 3:45 P.M. = 1545; 7:35 P.M. = 1935; etc. Wing- Using one of Chris Rose's famous wing measures, use only the metric designations! Don't bother with .5 mm increments as no two banders measure alike and feather wear also biases your accuracy. Wing length is recorded in whole millimeters. Fat- see below. Weight- recorded in grams and increments up to .1 depending on the type of scale you use. It is important to note on your record which type of balance you were using. Above the column, I suggest you write: P, for Pesola, O, for the regular O'Haus triple beam balance, and, OT, for the latter equipped with a tare weight. The tare weight is a counterbalance weight which can be adjusted to compensate for the carrier (sock, bag) in which the bird is put on the scale, so that the direct weight of the bird can be read off the beams. It was a former O.R. practice to use four numerals for weight and three for wing length. I suggest using a decimal for weight and no decimal for wing- it makes so much more sense.

Fat- Let me go over the meaning of the four categories here so our newer members who do not have this in writing may be introduced to this method of recording fat on a bird.

- 0 - no traces of fat at all.
- 1 - Some visible fat, but hollow of throat not nearly filled.
- 2 - Hollow of throat nearly or completely filled.
- 3 - Hollow completely filled or bulging; heavy accumulations also obvious on other areas of the body.

Suggested reading: "The influence of fat on bird weight" by Robert C. Leberman. EBBA NEWS 30(4):181-2 (1967). This issue is however very scarce. We will eventually reprint it.

Page numbers- Since chronologically recorded records have one major disadvantage; records cannot easily be retrieved, it is necessary to make up an index. I use 3"x5" index cards, as shown in fig. 2. This is where page and line numbers come in. The page number is given as well as the first line on that page, on which we find the first number used on that date.

Method B.

We come now to the easiest system of recording in the field. Bearing in mind what you've just read in the previous pages, Method B is easy to describe. You can either use your own sheet (fig. 3, sheet used by Emil Berger) or an EBBA Record sheet (fig. 4) as sold by Bill Pepper (see Banders' Aids). On the EBBA sheets, there is a large open column toward the right side of the page. It can be divided in three smaller columns for wing, fat, and weight. If I use this method (generally for breeding season work), I merely write 68-2-13.2 which indicates wing, fat and weight, in that order. A great time saver. Since all the data are in banding schedule order, it is simple to transcribe.

Method C.

During the nesting season, banding is often employed. I use a mimeo'd sheet per box (or nest) which shows all data for this box during a given year. Nests are numbered. These sheets are in a standard notebook in numerical order. On the index card (see fig 2), the Nest number is indicated, instead of the page number to index these bandings.

BANDING SCHEDULES (see sample in figure 5)

Now we come to the meat of the problem. You have your system, either A-C, or B. Some people also add a species record (in species order). This is useful when doing wing or weight studies but otherwise it is a great deal of work. Using method B, makes using a species file less necessary. Another system is often used for repeats and returns. Mrs. Downs of South Londonderry, Vt., uses an index card system. One card per bird. It is a lot of work, but since she retraps vast numbers of repeats or returns, it pays off. For stations which get only 100-200 repeats per season, I think it's a grotesque waste of time. I do hope however that all of you are keeping data on your repeats/returns even though the Banding Lab., does not seem interested in these data.

Let's analyse the banding schedule in figure 5. The circled numbers are used to guide us:

	Manual Reference
1- Permit number (self-explanatory)	*MTAB 6, p. 9
2- Bander's Name (limit 17 spaces)	id.
3- Inclusive Band numbers	id. p.10
4- Locations	id.
5- Band prefix	id. p.11
6- Series designation	id.

Example: If the band number is 119-74101, 119 is the prefix, 74101 is the series. The series goes next to the first and last line used. If more than 50 used, it also goes next to 50, 51. If schedule completed, it is written adjacent to 00 also.

- 7- Common Name AOU list p. BEM-D-1400 etc.
 8- AOU number idem.(also see MTAB6, p.11)
 9-Status(S) See MTAB 6, p.11 and status code lists BEM-B-1314/15, and p. 44 of Bird Banding Notes, March 1966
 10-Age/Sex Age: MTAB 7, p.5-6; Sex: BEM-B-1311
 11-Flyway maps BEM-B-1326
 12-State BEM-B-1310
 13-Latitude/Longitude BEM-B-1321 (rev.)
 14-Location (Loc) see block 4.
 15-Date (explained in text of foregoing)

Please note: The above references to MTAB6 may be erroneous because I seem to be missing some pages here. The MTAB I am referring to here, was issued on January 1, 1967.

There is no doubt in my mind, that we need a new Manual. Without that, we could not be held responsible for filing incorrectly submitted banding schedules, it seems to me. If and when a new manual is issued, I hope it be issued in a format where individual pages or sections can be easily replaced by superseding, deleting etc. Although MTAB's were a good idea, they should have been so written that they could have replaced pages in the original banding manual. More times than not, they just didn't fill this purpose.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

THERE ARE MANY BANDERS WHO ARE MAKING ERRORS IN THEIR BANDING SCHEDULES. If there are things you do not understand, why not ask me about it? Don't feel ashamed that you do not know something. Let it be known that I am equally confused about some points, but banders who have been with the system a long time, and have been initiated before all the changes took place, generally have fewer troubles with banding schedules than do newly licensed banders.

A part of the purpose of having regional associations is that they form a liaison between the bander and the Banding Laboratory. It is for this reason, that we keep giving material on records and other topics as uninteresting to the established bander. We have however an obligation toward the newly licensed bander and recalling how banders fully acquainted with the system helped us when we started, we must now do the same for our newer colleagues.

We realize that with some of you, banding is nothing but a sport. I have frowned upon this in the past and still do, but to a lesser extent. As long as you endeavor to take as much data as you can, and make these data available to other banders (through Project AMFO for instance), we can learn from your data, even if, it is of no particular interest to you. For details regarding this project, please contact Mr. Edward T. Reed, Oakwood Gardens C-1, E. 3rd Street, Lansdale, Pa. 19446.

(see page 260 for Figure 5)

Permit No. 9144 (1) Banding Schedule 3-860 (Rev. 1968) **Bander F.S. Schaeffer** (2)

New Land Research Reserve, nr. A Hopewell, Mercer County, N.J.

 (4) —Banding Locations—

B E

C F

BAND PREFIX: 123
INCL. BAND NOS. 123-456715
(3) 456717
THRU

	COMMON NAME	AOU #	S	AGESEX	F	STATE PROV.	LAT-LONG	LOC	DATE
01									
02									
03									
04									
05									
06									
07									
08									
09									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15	Catbird	704	3:00	HY-U	I	NY-59	402-7440	A	08-14-71
16	Wood Thrush	755							
17	Rufous S. Towhee	587		AHY-M					
18		(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
19		(7)							
20									

Figure 5. Sample Banding Schedule, Form 3-860
As in Figure 1, these data are completely fictitious and were used for this sample only. You will have to imagine that these 3 bands were the only ones used during 1971 of this set of bands.