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Organizing a Talk On Bird Banding

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OBJECTIVE

Materials, sources and presentation techniques are described here that can be used by new bird banders to organize and present a talk about bird banding.

BACKGROUND

Early in 1991 Thelma Dalmas, a teacher in Lynchburg, invited me to give a talk about bird banding to a Longwood College summer ornithology class. A request was forwarded to the Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL) for guidelines, materials and sources since the author had not ever given a talk about bird banding. In reply, Kathleen Klimiewicz, a biologist there, offered suggestions that the topics chosen for a talk would depend upon the educational level and interest of the audience being addressed, but indicated that the BBL did not provide guidelines for a talk on bird banding. She sent copies of a BBL paper (1986) entitled, *Bird Banding (The Hows and Whys)*.

After the talk about bird banding developed and was presented to the Longwood College class on 8 July 1991, the presentation, written in travelogue style, was submitted for publication to the *North American Bird Bander*. A referee of the paper observed that occasionally at regional bird banding association meetings workshops addressed the topic of how to present talks and demonstrations on bird banding. One example is a 1964 presentation by Robert Yunick, "Giving a Banding Demonstration," at an Eastern Bird Banding Association meeting.

Following the referee's suggestion, an electronic literature search was made for recent articles on

the topic of organizing a talk/demonstration about bird banding. Dates covered by the search were 1969 to present. No recently published articles on the topic were located. The lack of recent articles indicates that a broader audience might find useful a general set of procedures for organizing a talk on bird banding.

METHODS

Initially, the talk was divided into two portions called presentation and demonstration; then work lists based upon these two portions were developed. These lists are the most useful items for new bird banders organizing a talk. The first work list addressed the topics to be included in the presentation portion of the talk. The second list described the materials needed to set up the bird banding demonstration portion.

List one, which included the history, background and purposes for banding birds, was developed from the references.¹ The topics in list one represented only one arrangement that could be developed to cover the subject of bird banding. (A topics list has the added advantage for some speakers in that it can be placed onto flip charts for use during the talk. Conversely, in lieu of using a flip chart, other speakers give a handout listing the topics covered in the talk to their audience.)

List two was developed as a materials check list. The size of the audience and the location (indoors or out-of-doors) of the talk govern the specific materials included on this list.

¹ An excellent text, *Bird Banding*, by McClure was discovered during the literature search. New bird banders should find it very informative on the subject.

The Talk

A talk is a teaching opportunity. Teaching has many definitions. One definition is the willingness of the speaker to share with the audience specialized knowledge and love for a specific field, such as bird banding. The steps used to organize a talk are outlined in a generic form since no two presenters use the same approach throughout a presentation/demonstration. The steps, including presentation suggestions, for organizing topics and materials for the presentation of a talk about bird banding are outlined as follows.

Step 1. Prior to the Talk

--The speaker's previously prepared work lists should be reviewed to identify content and demonstration materials needed for the talk.

--A talk scheduled for a location other than the regular banding station poses additional concerns for the speaker. After a visit to a new banding location, a presenter may determine that too much time will be required to set up mist nets on the day of the talk. Therefore, the mist nets are put up, furred and tied with fluorescent colored engineer's tape prior to the day of the talk. In the same situation, another presenter might choose to involve members of the audience in setting up the mist nets to demonstrate the process of preparing a working banding station.

Step 2. Set up of the Presentation and Demonstration Areas

--A demonstration area (the physical area set aside for processing and banding a netted bird) is set up according to the arrangement normally used by the bander.

--Mist nets are opened (before or after the audience arrives) at the option of the bander. Birds captured prior to the arrival of the audience can be placed in a holding cage.

--A presentation area (the physical area set aside for the speaker and the audience) is located far enough away from the mist nets to reduce the impact of noise and movement from the presenta-

tion area. (Noise will keep birds from flying near the mist net area.)

--Two considerations affect the arrangement of the presentation area. For an out-of-doors talk, use of available shelter or shade over the location offers comfort to the audience. Any flip chart used by the speaker should be placed where it can be seen by all members of the audience.

Step 3. The Presentation/Demonstration Portions of the Talk

--The demonstration portion of the talk must include emphasis on safe handling and constant concern for the well being and safety of the netted birds during the banding process. Early in the demonstration discussion, the audience should be warned of the remote possibility, in spite of all precautions, of a bird perishing in the nets.

--The order of the presentation and demonstration portions of the talk can be varied to suit the individual speaker. For example, initially the historical presentation portion of the talk can be given, followed by the demonstration portion which includes processing steps. These steps could include illustrating safe removal of a bird from a mist net, attaching the band to the bird, aging, sexing, measuring, recording data and ultimately releasing the banded bird. Alternately, the presenter can use a demonstration to highlight the processing steps used to band a bird and then follow with the historical presentation. Flexibility and experience of the presenter are the keys to making success whichever sequence is chosen.

Step 4. Conclusion of the Talk

--Talks that end on a positive note leave an impact on the audience. One technique to accomplish this goal is to illustrate a major ornithological research area to which bird banding has significantly contributed valuable data. The best example would be the speaker's own research. Alternately, recent issues of *North American Bird Bander* contain excellent examples of current bird banding research and can be used for this purpose.

--Handouts serve to reinforce the material covered in the talk. Copies of *Bird Banding (How and Why)* and a list of book titles used in the talk should be made available for everyone interested.

--A collection of field books selected from Peterson's *A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS*; Robbins, Bruun, Zim, and Singer's *A GUIDE TO FIELD IDENTIFICATION BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA*; National Geographic Society's *FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA*; Ehrlich, Dobkin and Wheye's *THE BIRDER'S HANDBOOK*; and local bird checklists can be displayed in the presentation area.

--A successful presentation will include strong evidence of the speaker's interest in and love for the subject of birds and bird banding and is the key to a successful presentation. Share that enthusiasm with your audience before, during, and after the talk.

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List One: Presentation Topics

1. History of Bird Banding
 - a. World
 - b. North America
 - c. U.S.A.
2. Purpose(s) of Bird Banding
3. The Role of Bird Banding Laboratory
4. Banding Permits
5. Bander's Responsibilities
 - a. Ethics
 - b. Limitations
 - c. Restrictions
 - d. Record Keeping
 - e. Safe Handling of Birds
6. Capture Methods
 - a. Traps
 - b. Mist Nets
 - c. Other Techniques
7. Mist Nets
 - a. Historical Background
 - b. Description
 - c. Use
 - d. Limitations
8. Bands
 - a. Size
 - b. How Band is Applied
 - d. Types
9. BBL Records
 - a. Annual Report
 - b. Encounters
 - c. Foreign Recovery
 - d. Returns
 - e. Use
10. Usefulness of Banding
 - a. Research
 - longevity
 - migration
 - population
 - range
 - b. Others

List Two: Demonstration Materials

1. The BBL Plastic Sign Posting the Banding Station
2. Mist Nets and Materials to Set Nets
(see Bleitz paper or McClure text for additional techniques that can be used to suspend mist nets)
3. Physical Demonstration Area for Banding and Processing
 - a. Your own Processing Set-up for Netted Birds
(bands, data notebooks, ruler, pliers, scales, magnifying lens, etc.)
 - b. Bird banding Organizer (see McClure's text and Underwood and Hansrote, 1990, for other setups)
4. Physical Presentation Area for Talk
 - a. Flip Chart or Portable Blackboard, etc.
 - b. Seating Arrangements
 - c. Rest Room Facilities
 - d. Bird Books
 - e. Handouts
 - f. Extras
 - snacks or drinks
 - clean-up arrangements for use after handling a bird (commercial wet towels)
 - first aid material in the event of a cut on the hand (bandaids and antiseptic)
 - a trash container

