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North American Banding Council News

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North American Banding Council News

Have you wondered what actually goes on at an NABC bander certification session? The following report should make certification less of a mystery and help future candidates feel less apprehensive!

On 12-14 Oct 2001, EBBA held its first NABC bander certification session, which was hosted by Braddock Bay Bird Observatory (BBBO), near Rochester, NY. Eight candidates passed their written exam and seven of them attended the BBBO practical evaluation (one deferred due to a last-minute work conflict).

BBBO invited all candidates and trainers to arrive the day before testing began in order to become familiar with the banding site. The session officially began on Friday, 12 Oct, with an evening of informal presentations by candidates and trainers on some aspect of their banding or research. This was not an NABC-required event, but was inserted in the program as a means of allowing everyone an opportunity to get to know one another and to learn from each other.

Bander evaluation at the mist nets and banding table was conducted on Saturday morning. The afternoon was devoted to various exercises involving species identification, anatomy, molt, band removal, etc. Saturday evening was used for trainers to conclude their scoring of the candidates and to conduct an open discussion on the pros and cons of the session with suggestions for future sessions.

Candidates were informed of their scoring results, along with suggestions for improvement, and afforded an opportunity to comment privately to a trainer on Sunday morning. Then the morning was devoted to further banding, mostly involving a third day of heavy Black-capped Chickadee migration. The session concluded at midday on Sunday.

NABC trainers conducting this session were Betsy Brooks, Mary Doscher, Mary Gustafson, Sara Morris, Hannah Suthers, and Bob Yunick. The seven candidates who successfully completed the

certification were: Jean Bickal, NJ; Allen Chartier, MI; Dave Cimprich, TX; Sue Finnegan, MA; Janet Huie, WI; Bob Pantle, NY; and Paul Wedeking, NJ.

The following are comments from several of the candidates:

"It was hoped that I would obtain an unbiased assessment by highly experienced banders/trainers of my current level of banding ability/proficiency. In addition, I hoped that I would be able to obtain some alternative perspectives on how other stations run their banding programs and the opportunity to meet and interact with some of the people that have been only names to me on publications. "

"The session was professional and courteous beyond my expectations. I feared that trainers might try to out-do one another in demonstrating how ethical they were. I also feared that trainers might feel compelled to demonstrate every task for a candidate after the candidate had done it (in effect, saying, "Now let me show you the right way to do it."). In essence, I feared that the session could be as much an ego trip for the trainers as it was a certification session. However, there was not the slightest hint of this. The trainers were excellent and everyone treated everyone else like colleagues. Such a uniformly excellent group of trainers deserve a lot of thanks. They have given me a lot of faith in NABC "

"The various parts of the certification seemed well organized. Although many of the tasks seemed to take a lot longer than planned, there was generous leeway in the time schedule to allow for this. I greatly appreciated that meals were organized for us during the certification. It was one less thing to think about during the busy and slightly tense days. It was also great not to have to leave the site to find food. Also, the food was wonderful."

"Being evaluated unavoidably creates a certain amount of anxiety. Several of the candidates, including myself, got fairly tense. Several aspects of the evaluation helped me to relax. First of these was the dinner and presentations the evening

before the actual session started. Another was that the candidates had the chance to do some banding without being under scrutiny on Friday morning. I greatly appreciated these opportunities to relax. "

"I felt the spirit of fairness was maintained by all of the evaluators throughout the evaluation, and interestingly, it was fairly obvious throughout the evaluation that every evaluator really hoped that each candidate would pass, but only if the candidate was able to meet the stringent criteria. I particularly appreciated the positive feedback I received when I provided correct responses to the various questions/situations and the willingness of the evaluators to consider (and sometimes accept) a rather obtuse explanation."

"I was very impressed with the skill levels and knowledge exhibited by all of the evaluators! Utilizing very different methods, each evaluator

was able to extract from us a significant portion of what we knew about birds and banding (i.e., gave us ample opportunity to relate to them what we knew) and then they subtly let us know that there was still more to learn/know about each aspect of banding covered during the evaluation. And at the same time, it was particularly gratifying to find that the evaluators were also using these interactions to learn from us. Providing this type of synergistic environment should be a goal for all future evaluation sessions. "

**News pages prepared by the
NABC Outreach Committee**

**Session summary by
Betsy Brooks and Bob Yunick
Session comments
from participants by permission**

Photo's from EBBA's first NABC certification session at Braddock Bay Bird Observatory.

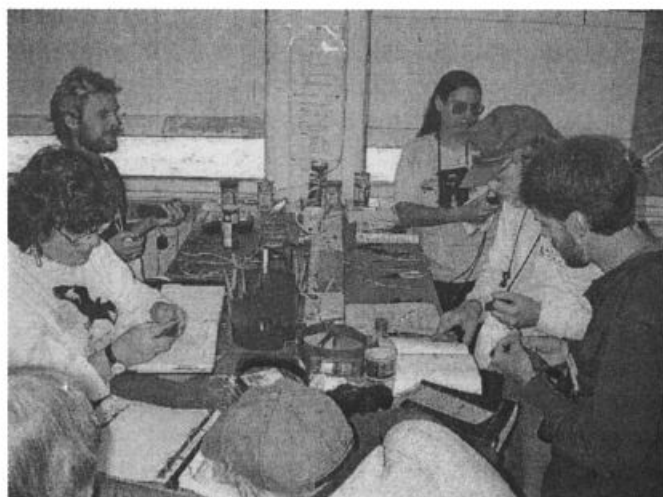


Photo Credits Paul Wedeking

Above (going counterclockwise from top left): Charley Eiseman - BBBO intern, Jean Bickal - candidate, Hannah Suthers - trainer, Mark Deutschlander - BBBO staff, David Cimprich - candidate, John Waud - BBBO staff, Mary Gustafson - trainer.

Facing are: Mary Gustafson - trainer, John Waud - BBBO staff, David Cimprich - candidate, Mark Deutschlander - BBBO staff, backs to camera Jean Bickal - candidate, Janet Huie - candidate, Bob Yunick- trainer.