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The North American Banding Council

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The North American Banding Council

<http://www.nabanding.net/netbanding>

Promoting Sound and Ethical Banding Principles and Techniques

An Improved Method of Band Removal

Candidates for NABC Landbird Bander certification are required to demonstrate proficiency in removing from a bird a lapped, spiraled or improperly sized band based on the techniques described in various NABC manuals. Having conducted that evaluation as an NABC Trainer at several EBBA-sponsored certifications, I have watched candidates nervously struggle with the recommended wire method, or variations thereof, all of which are time consuming and in some instances require two people. I have also observed candidates discover that their Circlip band removal pliers lack fine enough tips to fit between the band and tarsus on close fitting bands (see p. 27 of "The North American Banders' Study Guide," NABC Publications Committee, April 2001). When I have then showed them a tool which opened such a band in about 5-10 sec, their faces would light up in a bright smile.

This tool was introduced to me in 1962 by Ruth and George Ballentine in West Virginia who published an article (Ballentine, G. 1963. Tool for Removing Lapped Bands. *EBBA NEWS* 26:174) which showed photographically how the tool as purchased could be modified for band removal. The tool was a pair of "Field Pliers #12 External," reverse pliers that opened when squeezed, then manufactured by the Truark Retaining Rings Division of Waldes Kohinoor, Inc. After many years of attempting to locate these pliers in hardware stores, I am pleased to find that Avinet, Inc. recently began offering a similar tool, pictured in their *NABB* advertisement herein as well as on their website.

The Avinet tool, as received for evaluation, required some slight dressing of the tips with a fine metal file to make the tips suitable for opening or removing hummer bands. The advantage of both of these tools is their very fine tips which allow insertion into close spaces of as small as 0.5 X 1 mm which, when the handles are lightly squeezed, easily spread open the band for removal. Given the triangular shape of the head and a design which limits the extent to which the

tool may be opened, both tools open to 5 mm at the tip and 10 mm at the base (see photo on Avinet website or advertisement herein).

I use these pliers to remove band sizes 0A through 3A. The smaller sizes are removed by inserting only the tip of the tool into the closed or lapped band, while larger sizes are removed by first using the tip to partially open the band followed by inserting the tool further beyond the tip to the tapered sides of the tool. Given the hardness of the steel of the tool and the pressure of the tool on the band, some bands are marred by the removal process and should be destroyed rather than reused. For this reason the tool is not recommended for routine band opening except for hummer bands strung on a wire. So little pressure is required to open these soft bands that they are not marred in the process.

Coupled with the use of wire cutters, this tool aids in removal of lock-on raptor bands. If a lock-on band fits improperly or the band is otherwise misshapen during application, it may be removed by using wire cutters to cut off the post and locking tab. This maneuver creates in essence a butt-end band with a slight gap between the two butts into which the tool may be inserted perpendicularly to spread the band open about 3 mm, sufficient to then use other pliers to further open and remove the band.

Banders wishing to facilitate band removal in the simplest, safest and most expeditious manner should consider this Avinet tool.

Note: NABC endorses the value of this type of band removal tool; however, there may be other brands as effective as the one described here.

Robert P. Yunick