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## North American Banding Council Photographic Guidelines

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## The North American Banding Council

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

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### Promoting Sound and Ethical Banding Principles and Techniques

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The ubiquitous presence of both cameras and social media has prompted banders to recognize the need to manage photography at their banding stations. Responding to this need, the North American Banding Council (NABC) developed a set of guidelines aimed at assisting banders in writing their own management policies. We hope that all banders will carefully consider the proper role of photography in their banding operations, and adopt policies responsive to the needs of their stations. French and Spanish versions of these guidelines are available on the NABC website at <http://www.nabanding.net/photographic-guidelines>.

#### North American Banding Council Photographic Guidelines

Andrea Patterson, Lesley Howes & Anthony Hill

Through the use of blogs, photo galleries, social networking sites, and scientific presentations, banders daily promote bird monitoring and research to a wide audience. In so doing, banders should meet, display and promote high ethical and scientific standards. The Banders' Code of Ethics <http://www.nabanding.net/banders-code-of-ethics> reminds banders that they are "primarily responsible for the safety and welfare of the birds they study so that stress and risks of injury or death are minimized", and that they are to "handle each bird carefully, gently, quietly, with respect, and in minimum time." Inappropriate photography during banding may compromise this ethical duty.

The North American Banding Council (NABC) recommends that banders be aware of best practices and how to minimize stress to birds within the context of photography and videography. Banders or stations may wish to develop specific policies around the taking and use of images of birds and the banding process. We offer the following guidelines for consideration.

#### A. Recording Images: Photographic Best Practices

- The primary uses of photography of birds in the hand are for documentation and education. Standardized documentary poses of the birds clearly demonstrate key features that identify species, age and sex, and they should be used to document: rarities; individual markers; specific rare conditions such as indicators of disease, malformations, or injury; and molt.
- Photographers should be systematic in the collection of ancillary data such as date, location, band number, species, age and sex. Archiving photographs in a useful format provides an excellent reference library. Banders are encouraged to manage their own photographic collections in a way that adds to the scientific and educational value of the images. Banders are also encouraged to contribute to *Piranga* <http://www.natureinstruct.org/piranga/>, an educational website that provides photographic guidelines and a forum for banders to upload, share, discuss and peruse photographs of birds in the hand.
- Photographs for personal purposes including images of people holding birds and images for "adoptions" or other fund-raising should be considered low priority and taken only when the bird shows no signs of stress and when time and safety allows.
- To minimize time in the hand, photographers should arrange their shots before the bird is posed. As a maximum, we suggest that birds should be held no more than one minute for photographic purposes.

- Birds should be held by an experienced bander in a grip that is appropriate to the species and that considers bird and handler safety. For example, passerines with powerful pectoral muscles held in a photographer's grip without additionally securing the wings could risk some injury. We also strongly recommend that species with weak legs such as shorebirds, hummingbirds, and goatsuckers not be held by the legs. For guidance, consult the NABC's taxon-specific banding manuals or the NABC recommendations for bird grips.
- Birds should only be photographed when they show no signs of stress such as closed eyes, gaping, fluffed or ruffled plumage, or continual flapping wings.
- In general, it is best to avoid flash photography. If flash must be used, it would be best to ensure that the bird's eyes have time to adjust before it is released.
- Banding stations may wish to develop and post in plain view a policy concerning visitor photography. Consider the following points and decide what is appropriate for your situation:
  - a) Permission to take photographs must be obtained from the bander-in-charge.
  - b) Visitor photography must not interfere with the normal banding process and should only be allowed when banding volume permits.
  - c) Photography of birds in mist nets should generally be discouraged.
  - d) Photographs of visitors holding birds should be discouraged, but consider allowing photographs of visitors helping to release birds.
  - e) Some stations have policies explicitly stating that images taken at their stations are the property of the banding organization. As such, those images cannot be posted in public without the prior expressed consent of the host organization.
  - f) Examples of station photographic policies can be found on the NABC website <<http://www.nabanding.net/>>.

## ***B. Publishing Images***

- All photographs published in print or online, or used in presentations, should demonstrate best practices including:
  - a) Bird and handler safety and standardized photographic poses that demonstrate the scientific purpose of banding.
  - b) Birds in grips that are safe and appropriate to the species.
- Consider carefully what images are appropriate to take, and to share. If you are uncertain about the appropriateness of a particular photograph, it is best not to use it.
- While any photograph can potentially be misinterpreted, misinterpretation can be minimized by thoughtful commentary. Information associated with posted images and videos should be factual and professional, and provide context that enables viewers to appreciate the value of banding.
- Cameras often log date and location of photographs. While this can be important for scientific documentation, consider removing these data from photographs before posted online, especially for species at risk.
- Video cameras record both images and sound. Ensure that all commentary is appropriate.