

AVISE

North American Banding Council



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WELCOME

to the inaugural issue of *Avise*, the quarterly newsletter of the North American Banding Council!

NABC was founded just over 20 years ago by an intrepid group of banders from the United States and Canada. David DeSante remembers the meeting where the idea for NABC was developed:

“There was . . . a meeting . . . at a very rustic lodge on the Panoramic Highway which goes along the shoulder of Mount Tamalpais here in Marin County, California, just a few miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge. It was a beautiful location nestled among 150’ redwoods with a spectacular view all the way down the Pacific Ocean. The most exciting part of the meeting (which was in February) was the huge storm that came in from the Pacific and knocked out the electric power for over 24 hours and included 85 mile per hour winds that literally screamed through the redwoods that swayed and groaned overhead and seemed sure to topple in the storm. We remained cheerful and focused despite the fact that the road was blocked in both directions so that we couldn’t leave even if we wanted to -- and even through most of us felt like we really were likely to die from being crushed by a falling redwood tree!! It was during this meeting (and storm) that the idea of a “North American Banding Council” was conceived . . . “

Two months later, on April 15, 1996, the first official meeting of the North American Banding Council was held at the Patuxent Environmental Science Center.

In the 21 years since that initial meeting, NABC has developed training manuals and courses, certified hundreds of banders, and served as a leader in the development of safe and ethical bird-handling techniques. We are developing programs in all taxa, and we are reaching into Central and South America to train exceptional banders across the entire hemisphere.

We’ve come a long way since the storm in the redwoods, and we’re excited to welcome you all as we look to what’s next.



ANNOUNCING . . . THE WATERFOWL MANUAL

The North American Banding Council is thrilled to introduce the newest addition to our suite of banding manuals. Written by retired Canadian Wildlife Service officials Norm North and Randy Hicks, the *North American Banders' Manual for Waterfowl* is a comprehensive guide to banding ducks and geese.

Banders will find information on a variety of topics including capture methods, aging and sexing, and bird and bander safety. The text has been supplemented with color photos, and the manual as a whole is intended to be a living document that is updated regularly. The manual should be used in connection with the *Banders' Study Guide*, and all banders - especially those who are interested in pursuing certification - will find it a useful resource.

While this manual is being newly presented to the public, the NABC subcommittee on waterfowl has been deeply involved in training waterfowl banders for many years. Certification sessions have been held in several states and provinces including Ontario, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. In the fall of 2016, forty people attended the first NABC waterfowl training and certification session in New York State. Held at the Montezuma Audubon Center in Savannah, NY and supported by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the training workshop contained sessions on health and safety, ethics, aging and sexing, and rocket netting. Thirty-five people wrote the examination; nineteen passed at the bander level and and an additional fourteen at the trainer level.

NABC hopes that with the publication of the *Waterfowl Manual* and with the certification of a larger pool of trainers, we will be able to expand our waterfowl banding program to more states and provinces. If you are in contact with state or provincial officials who regularly band waterfowl, encourage them to take a look at the NABC materials and think about becoming certified!

The manual is freely available on the NABC website at <http://www.nabanding.net/other-publications/>

6. TRAP-SITE SELECTION

Site selection is an important part of a banding operation. The site is usually selected in an area frequented by many birds. Often these sites can be found by scouting from vehicles or airplanes. It is better to locate a banding site where birds naturally congregate rather than trying to bait them to other sites.



An accumulation of duck feathers on the water during the peak of basic moult may reveal the presence of ducks and suggest a potential banding site.

For dabbling ducks, select secluded shoreline areas with gentle slopes and relatively firm bottoms. For more open-water diving-duck sites, select firm bottoms if possible to prevent undermining of the trap by feeding ducks; locate the site to provide some protection from prevailing winds. If necessary, clear heavy emergent vegetation from around trap sites. Make lanes to open-water areas to ensure the trap area is accessible to swimming ducks. Ideally, the banding site should have little human disturbance, shallow water, and a relatively hard bottom. Shoreline bait-traps for dabbling ducks may be placed partially on dry land or in water up to one foot (30 cm) in depth depending on the species targeted. Floating traps with attached bait platforms may be placed in much deeper water.

The site should be posted with a sign to inform the public of the purpose of the trap. The sign should include the bander's name and contact information.

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7. BAITING THE SITE



Baiting a wetland concentrates duck use near the trap-site area and is probably the most important feature of successful bait trapping. The bait can be a variety of feed but it is typically corn, barley, or wheat. Grains of all types have been employed to catch waterfowl and those used are dictated somewhat by local availability, the species targeted, and those foods that the waterfowl are accustomed to feeding on in the trapping area. Such baits as corn, wheat, barley, rye, rice, millet, buckwheat, and milo have all been used to attract both dabblers and divers. Shelled yellow corn is probably the most universal bait, however ear corn and other floating baits such as oats, which are easily seen, are often helpful to attract the birds. Once baiting is started, ensure that bait is available until all trapping ceases. Missing a day of baiting may cause some of the ducks to vacate the site.

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HY **AHY**

Many of the adult males and some of the adult females have brighter and more colourful feet and legs compared to immatures of their species.

Male dabbling ducks often have vermiculations, complex white markings, on their body feathers. These may occur on both immature and adult males.

Male-type vermiculation

Flocking

Some immature diving ducks retain their notched tail feathers even after the month of December. Therefore, tail feathers on diving ducks can sometimes be used to age both sexes into the new year.



11.3 Diving Ducks (Aythiinae)
Most methods used to determine age and sex of diving ducks are similar to puddle ducks.

Male diving ducks often have white vermiculations on their body feathers and wings with some having just flocking, whereas females have flecks of white. If you observe vermiculations it is likely a male bird.

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11.4 Geese (Anserinae)
Young geese have notched tail feathers until the notched feathers are replaced by adult-like tail feathers with no notches. Most young geese have notched feathers into early autumn. For some geese especially temperate breeding "giant" Canada Geese this may occur in early September.

11.4.1 Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)
Sexes are similar in plumage, but birds can be sexed cloacally. Young males have a small unfeathered penis. The adult male penis is large and sheathed. Young geese may be identified by remnant down protruding from feathers particularly in the head and neck area. Young geese also tend to have a "squeaky" voice and the adults honk and hiss when captured.

The tertial coverts of adult geese tend to be broader and more rounded and young geese have narrower and frayed coverts.

Since all coverts are replaced over a period of time, young geese may have a combination of young and adult coverts. Immature geese may have adult-type feathers but adult geese never have young feathers.

The tip of the last two primaries (9th and 10th) of young geese is pointed whereas that of adults is more rounded.



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NABC 2017 ANNUAL MEETING

The North American Banding Council met on March 8-9, 2017 at Florida Gulf Coast University, preceding the meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Society. The two-day meeting focused on developing NABC's mission across all taxa, as we discussed the new certification criteria for raptors and shorebirds, how and to what extent taxon-specific materials and processes should be aligned, and how to best grow an exceptional pool of trainers.

While the certification processes for raptors, waterfowl and shorebirds are to some extent built on the success of the passerine model, we recognize that there are significant differences in capturing and banding those birds that necessitate different certification processes. While passerine candidates are extensively evaluated in the field, that process may not translate well to other taxa. Consequently, other taxa require some combination of workshop training, a minimum number of hours spent in the field, and/or a minimum number of birds banded, perhaps in connection with an experiential assessment. Much of the meeting was spent discussing and working through these differences, all the while aiming to keep the underlying philosophy consistent across all taxa.

One early morning was spent birding at Harns Marsh. With 57 species seen before breakfast, we called it a great success!

All certified trainers are welcome to participate in our annual meeting, as well as our monthly phone conferences. We hope to see you there.



FIELD NOTES

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWEST TRAINERS!

There were an incredible 32 people who passed trainer-level certification in 2016, including Eric Demers, Willow English, Brett Fried, Marcel Gahbauer, Matt Iles, Erik Johnson, Jason Jones, Timothy Kita, Pedro Vitor Ribiero Martins, Ingrid Anahi Tello Lopez, and Jaclyn Tolchin (passerines); Steve Alsup, Jay Carlisle, Eric Hallingstad, Robert Miller, Jessica Pollock, Teague Scott, and Heidi Ware (raptors); Eveling Fernandez Tavera (shorebirds); Connie Adams, Tom Bell, Kameron Brown, Jim Eckler, Kelly Hamilton, Steven Heerkens, Nathan Jerstad, Kent Kowalski, Andrew MacDuff, Frank Morlock, John O'Connor, Scott Smith, Josh Stiller, and Michael Wasilco (waterfowl).

JIM BEDNARZ and his team on the subcommittee for raptor evaluations have done a phenomenal job over the last year developing the criteria and process for raptor certification. This fall, the Intermountain Bird Observatory hosted the first **NABC RAPTOR WORKSHOP AND CERTIFICATION SESSION** at Lucky Peak, near Boise Idaho. Seven candidates were certified at the trainer level, and one additional candidate at the bander level. The workshop was incredibly successful on all fronts - the weather and the birds both cooperated, and the candidates were capable, confident, and (thankfully) willing to be guinea pigs as they field tested the new certification process. Plans are being made for future sessions, and we hope to see a cadre of certified raptor banders across all of North America.

The shorebird committee is preparing for the second **NABC SHOREBIRD WORKSHOP AND CERTIFICATION SESSION**, which will be held this November in connection with the 7th Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group Meeting in Paracas Peru. Cheri Gratto-Trevor and Lesley Howes spearheaded the development of the shorebird certification process, and we're thrilled to see it take off, spurred by the enthusiasm of the shorebird community.

WE NEED YOU!

NABC is looking for a new webmaster. If you have mad skills (or even just an easy familiarity with WordPress) and have some time to spare, we'd love to have you collaborate on a re-design of our website. Long term, we are looking for someone who can do occasional updates and help us with routine maintenance and management.

NABC is also looking for translators. While most of our manuals are already available in English, Spanish and French, we are starting to translate our certification materials and other products. In addition, our new and revised manuals will need attention.

Interested? Contact NABC at northamericanbandingcouncil@gmail.com.



THE NORTH AMERICAN BANDING COUNCIL (NABC) IS A NONPROFIT GROUP ENCOMPASSING BIRD RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS WHOSE MEMBERS USE BIRD BANDING AS A TOOL IN ORNITHOLOGICAL RESEARCH, CONSERVATION, AND MANAGEMENT. THE MISSION OF THE NABC IS TO PROMOTE SOUND AND ETHICAL BIRD-BANDING PRACTICES AND TECHNIQUES.