

## Guide for Banding Programs in North America: Opportunities for Biologists from Latin America and the Caribbean

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January 3, 2019

I wrote this document for Latin American and Caribbean biologists that would like to improve their bird banding skills at programs in North America. North American ornithologists recognize the importance of training and make available many opportunities for visiting students and biologists from other countries. The majority of these opportunities are based in bird observatories, NGOs that specialize in bird monitoring. In many cases they offer internships of 3-6 months that include lodging and food and/or a small stipend. Such internships also offer the opportunity for immersion in English and a foreign culture as well as exposure to the scientific method.

Before applying to such a program you should already have a basic foundation in banding, the use of mist nets, and English. Some additional advice is below:

1. Foreigners from Latin America and the Caribbean almost always have to work as an intern or volunteer. In the USA and Canada it is difficult and, many times, almost impossible to work as an employee for non-residents or citizens. Hence, payment for interns is considered a "stipend" or expense reimbursement.
2. It's recommended that you write a contact in the organization where you'd like to work and establish a relationship before the announced call for assistants. Organizations sometimes have limited funds for foreigners, and there can be competition. Almost all the programs in the document are permanent and look for field interns every year.
3. Usually these programs advertise positions in their websites and the following listservs:
  - a. OrnJobs: <https://www.osnabirds.org/Jobs.aspx>
  - b. Texas A&M: <http://wfscjobs.tamu.edu/job-board/>
  - c. Conservation Biology: <http://careers.conbio.org/jobs/2/>
4. The process of arriving to the USA or Canada is expensive. Flights can cost between \$500-1000 and the US governments can charge up to \$500 for visa expenses. Sometimes these programs have funding to cover travel expenses, but there is usually a lot of competition for these funds. Hence, it's always importance to ask if funding for travel exists.
5. In 2019 the North American Banding Council and Association of Field Ornithologists are offering small grants to help cover travel expenses. Applications are here: <http://www.nabanding.net/pequenas-subvenciones-de-certification-certification-small-grants/>.
6. In my experience Latin Americans can travel to the USA with a B-2 or J-1 visa. It's easier with a B-2, although these are harder to obtain. The J-1 is more accessible because it is designed for foreign researchers and visiting scholars who are visiting an academic institution like a university or museum, etc. Usually, a banding program will form an agreement to host a foreign intern in conjunction with such an institution. Unfortunately, a J-1 visa can be obtained only once every two years. I do not know anything about visas in Canada, and it's always important to check the current visa regulations in both countries.

7. Basic ability in English is important. You don't need to speak very well, but having a basic ability to understand and communicate and learn quickly is important given that most people in the USA and Canada do not speak Spanish. Hence, an internship there is an immersion. Likewise, applicants that speak better English will be more competitive.
8. Many programs usually offer the opportunity to be certified by the North American Banding Council (NABC). More info NABC and downloadable banding manuals are here: [www.nabanding.net](http://www.nabanding.net).

## PASSERINES

1. Palomarin Field Station (Point Blue, formerly PRBO)  
Location: Bolinas, California, USA  
Websites: <https://www.pointblue.org/internships/conservation-science-internships-at-the-palomarin-field-station/>  
Program type: Internship  
Season: All year  
Lodging: Yes  
Stipend: Yes  
Contacts: René Cormier & Mark Dettling  
Application Dates: All year  
Notes: Point Blue is a large NGO with many different avian research projects. Every year they seek field assistants for various projects.
2. Institute for Bird Populations (MAPS/MoSI)  
Location: USA, Canada, Latin America  
Website: <http://birdpop.org/pages/maps.php>  
Program type: Internship  
Season: All year  
Lodging: Yes  
Stipend: Sometimes  
Contact: Jim Sarraco  
Application Dates: All year  
Notes: IBP has a network of 500+ banding stations in the USA, Canada, and Latin America. Ask about available opportunities.
3. Klamath Bird Observatory  
Location: Ashland, Oregon, USA  
Website: [www.klamathbird.org](http://www.klamathbird.org)  
Program type: Internship  
Season: May – October  
Lodging: Yes  
Stipend: Yes  
Contacts: Bob Frey and John Alexander  
Application Dates: December – January  
Notes: Sometimes KBO has internships for other bird projects. Just ask.

4. Intermountain Bird Observatory  
 Location: Boise, Idaho, USA  
 Website: <https://ibo.boisestate.edu/home/>  
 Program type: Internship  
 Season: July – November  
 Lodging: Yes  
 Stipend: ??  
 Contact: Jay Carisle  
 Application Dates: January – April  
 Notes: Also have hummingbird and raptor training opportunities.
  
5. Braddock Bay Bird Observatory  
 Location: Rochester, New York, USA  
 Website: <https://braddockbaybirdobservatory.wordpress.com/>  
 Program type: Internship  
 Season: April – October  
 Lodging: Yes  
 Stipend: Yes  
 Contact: Andrea Patterson  
 Application Dates: All year
  
6. Bird Conservancy of the Rockies  
 Location: Colorado and Nebraska, USA and Mexico  
 Websites: <http://www.birdconservancy.org/what-we-do/education/bird-banding/>  
<http://www.birdconservancy.org/what-we-do/international/>  
 Program type: Internship or volunteer  
 Season: April – October  
 Lodging: Probably  
 Stipend: ??  
 Contact: Arvind Panjabi  
 Application Dates: January – April  
 Notes: This is a large NGO with many projects and I don't know much about their opportunities for foreigners. Best to ask the Director of International Programs, Arvind Panjabi.
  
7. University of Montana (Lab of Dr. Tom Martin)  
 Location: Arizona, USA  
 Website: <https://www.umt.edu/mcwru/MartinLab/FieldAssistantPositions/default.php>  
 Program type: Internship  
 Season: May – July  
 Lodging: Yes  
 Stipend: Yes  
 Contact: Maggie Riordan  
 Application Dates: December – January  
 Notes: The project is part of Dr. Tom Martin's lab and includes banding and nest searching.

8. Long Point Bird Observatory (Bird Studies Canada)
 

Location: Ontario, Canada

Websites: <http://www.birdscanada.org/longpoint/>  
<http://www.birdscanada.org/longpoint/index.jsp?targetpg=lpbointertrain>  
<http://www.birdscanada.org/longpoint/index.jsp?targetpg=lpbovolunteer>

Program type: Volunteer

Season: March – June, August – November

Lodging: Yes

Stipend: No

Contact: Stu MacKenzie

Application Dates: All year

Notes: The is managed by the Canadian government and has a special program for foreign volunteers.
  
9. Powdermill Nature Reserve, Carnegie Museum of Natural History
 

Location: Rector, Pennsylvania, USA

Program type: Internship

Website: <http://www.powdermillarc.org/>

Seasons: April – June, August – November

Lodging: Yes

Stipend: Probably

Contact: Luke DeGroot

Application Dates: January – March

Notes: They have a new system for foreign interns.
  
10. Manomet Bird Observatory
 

Location: Plymouth, Massachusetts, EEUU

Program type: Internship

Website: <https://www.manomet.org/program/connecting-nature/landbird-migration-banding>

Seasons: April – June, August – November

Lodging: Yes

Stipend: ??

Contact: Trevor Lloyd-Evans

Application Dates: January – March
  
11. Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
 

Location: Lake Jackson, Texas

Website: <http://www.gcbo.org/connect/jobs-internships-research/>

Seasons: Summer

Lodging: Yes

Stipend: ??

Contact: Tricia Patton

Application Dates: January – March

12. Canadian Migration Monitoring Network, Canada  
 Location: Canada  
 Program type: Voluntary  
 Websites: <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/cmmn/>  
<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/cmmn/index.jsp?targetpg=directory>  
 Seasons: April – June, August – November  
 Lodging: Yes  
 Stipend: No, but provide food  
 Contacts: Check the website for each station  
 Application Dates: All year  
 Notes: There are 20+ banding stations throughout Canada. Read the website for each station in the “directory” to learn more.
13. Costa Rica Bird Observatories  
 Location: Costa Rica  
 Program type: Volunteer  
 Website: <http://costaricabird.org/internships/bird-bander/>  
 Season: All year  
 Lodging: Yes  
 Stipend: No, but provide food  
 Contact: Pablo “Chespi” Elizondo  
 Application Dates: All year  
 Notes: This program has many contacts with banding organizations in North America and is based on North American Banding Council principles.
14. Tierra de Aves  
 Location: Mexico  
 Program type: Internship  
 Website: [www.tierradeaves.com](http://www.tierradeaves.com)  
 Season: All year  
 Lodging: Yes  
 Stipend: Sometimes  
 Contact: Manuel Grosselet  
 Application Dates: All year  
 Notes: Mainly migration banding in Veracruz and Oaxaca.

## RAPTORS

1. **Golden Gate Bird Observatory**  
 Location: San Francisco, California, USA  
 Website: <http://www.parksconservancy.org/programs/ggro/>  
 Season: June – December
2. **Intermountain Bird Observatory (see above)**
3. **Hawk Watch International**  
 Location: USA and Canada  
 Website: <http://www.hawkwatch.org/about/employment>

## HUMMINGBIRDS

**1. Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory**

Location: Arizona, USA

Website: <http://sabo.org/hummingbirds/hummingbird-banding/>

**2. Hilton Pond**

Location: South Carolina, EEUU

Websites: <http://www.rubythroat.org/>

Contactos: Bill Hilton

**3. Hummingbird Monitoring Network**

Location: USA and Canada

Website: <http://www.hummonnet.org/>

Contact: Susan Wethington

**4. Intermountain Bird Observatory (see above)**

## OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

1. This website has a list of all the Bird Observatories in the USA and Canada. Many do not have formal programs – they are managed by volunteers. But, you never know if they have opportunities.

<https://birdnet.org/info-for-ornithologists/observatories/>

2. There are always opportunities to participate in ecological research of birds apart from banding. Usually, they are based at universities and look for employees (not interns or volunteers usually) and can only hire citizens. However, there are sometimes internships. Usually, these programs advertise on these listservs:
  - a. OrnJobs: <https://www.osnabirds.org/Jobs.aspx>
  - b. Texas A&M: <http://wfscjobs.tamu.edu/job-board/>
  - c. Conservation Biology: <http://careers.conbio.org/jobs/2/>