



Banding During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Banders are responsible for the safety and welfare of the birds, people, and environment affected by banding operations.

NABC offers the following recommendations regarding banding birds during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Banders must ensure that they are not in violation of any directives from permitting agencies or local, regional, or national health authorities. The following recommendations are intended to reduce risk of spread if operations continue. The only way to eliminate the risk of spread is to work at home or in complete isolation from others.

- It is impossible to conduct any team banding operation while maintaining physical distancing and maintaining a sterile operation without cross contamination between banders, birds, or equipment. Any bird, mist net, bird bag, or other equipment touched by more than one person has the potential to transmit the virus. We recognize that each bird group and each banding project has unique aspects that will dictate the ability to follow health directives and the recommendations below. Decisions will need to be made on a case-by-case basis and operational aspects not covered here may need to be considered as the pandemic continues to evolve.
- Banders or organizations should assess if the loss of one season's data is critical to the project. For many projects, missing one banding season will not diminish the utility of long-term data.

If banding operations are to be conducted:

- Consult with any host landowners/entities to verify access and any liability or other legal issues.
- Banders should only operate as a team if in a family unit or cohort of individuals who are already living and working together in the same household or research station, or with one individual banding solo covering all aspects of the operation.
- If operating with reduced staff or a single individual, assess the impact on human and bird safety and data quality.
- If an organization insists on continuing 'team' operations with cooperators from different households participating, then consider scaling back or breaking-up the operation into manageable pieces so that a single bander can manage independently (e.g., extraction, transport, banding, and data recording). This may have one bander operating half of the nets/traps, and another operating the other half. Any part of the operation that is not completely isolated from another has the potential for contamination. Do not share nets, bags, equipment, pens, computers, or laboratory space.

The North American Banding Council is consortium of nine major ornithological organizations, certified NABC Trainers, and the US and Canadian Bird Banding Offices, working to Promote Sound and Ethical Banding Principles and Techniques.

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- Standard hygiene practices that apply to banding operations, such as regular hand-washing, sanitizing, and disinfection protocols are of particular importance during the pandemic.
- Show caution to not operate during times or locations that may increase human or equipment contact with mammals (bats, cats, squirrels), as to not potentially harm wildlife or create wildlife reservoirs for the disease. Disinfect all equipment that could come in contact with wild mammals.

Useful links:

- [World Organization for Animal Health FAQs on COVID-19](#)
- [US Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center bulletin](#)
- [Curated literature hub for tracking scientific information on COVID-19](#)

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