



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. The spread can also be largely reduced by working outdoors, distancing, and wearing masks.

- 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 should consult with any host landowners/entities to verify access and any liability or other legal issues.

If banding operations are to be conducted:

- Standard hygiene practices that apply to banding operations, such as regular hand-washing, sanitizing, and disinfection protocols of tools are of particular importance during the pandemic.
- Maintain social distance (>2m) and wear a mask when working with others. For situations where staff must operate <2m from one another or the public, consider adding physical barriers such as plexiglass.
- Minimize the number of people, or mingling and observation at a banding site using the least number of people to band, process, and record as possible.
- Consider maintaining roles within the banding process as much as possible to minimize exposure to others and exchanging equipment. For example, maintain the same recorder, bander, processor, extractors. .
- Do not blow on birds to check fat, breeding condition, etc. while working with others. Consider not collecting the associated data, blow on birds in isolation, or use an alternative method to blow on birds (e.g. air compressor and hose or a rubber bulb blower like those used to clean camera lenses, do not use compressed air purchased in a can or canister).
- Conduct banding operations outdoors whenever possible.

The North American Banding Council is a 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.



- Consider postponing large in-person training sessions until 2022. If training is conducted, minimize the number of people being trained at one time for training sessions, incoming employees, or new volunteers.
- If banding indoors, increase ventilation if possible by opening windows and installing fans to blow air away from banders.
- Show caution to not operate during times or locations that may increase human or equipment contact with mammals; especially mustelids, cats, and bats.

For those considering banding during stay at home orders:

- Banders or organizations should assess if the loss of one season's data is critical to the project. For many projects, missing one or two banding seasons will not diminish the utility of long-term data.
- Banders should strive to 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. Try not to share nets, bags, equipment, pens, computers, or laboratory space.

Useful links:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- [World Organization for Animal Health FAQs on COVID-19](#)
- [Curated literature hub for tracking scientific information on COVID-19](#)
- Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative COVID-19 page: <http://www.cwhc-rscsf.ca/covid-19.php>

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