

EXPECTATIONS – NABC CERTIFIED PASSERINE TRAINER EVALUATIONS

The purpose of the trainer evaluation is to determine if a candidate has the ability to both teach new banders and assess a bander's ability to safely, efficiently, and accurately complete all tasks required for bander certification.¹

The trainer level of certification indicates that the candidate has achieved: 1) a 90% or better on the bander-level written exam within the past 5 years and a 90% or better on the trainer-level written exam, 2) the bander level of certification at a high level of competence, 3) excellence in the ability to train and guide new banders of varying levels of skill, and 4) the ability to assess and evaluate the competence and skills of bander-level candidates.

Standards for passing are high, because the welfare of the birds and the quality of the data depends on the candidate's knowledge and ability. Evidence of a lack of awareness or skill that, in the opinion of the evaluators, endangers the safety or welfare of the birds, can override scores and result in failure. Once the examination is complete the candidate will have an opportunity to discuss the evaluation with the evaluators and will receive a report that summarizes his or her efforts. Feedback is appreciated. We continue to strive to make the evaluation process valid and fair.

Passerine trainer candidates will be expected to demonstrate both personal knowledge and practical competence in the following areas commonly tested at the bander level, and an ability to teach and evaluate the knowledge and competence of others in these same areas.

1. Ethics – including the Banders' Code of Ethics and the NABC Photography Guidelines
2. Purpose, goals and scientific value of banding
3. Design of research projects
4. Banding protocols – development and importance
5. Knowledge of permit authorizations, restrictions and responsibilities (both federal and local)
6. Communications with BBL/BBO or other relevant banding authorities
7. Data submission using Bandit or other relevant submission program
8. Data management, quality and collection
9. Metadata and daily logs – types and importance
10. Bird handling – proper grips, transferring hands, releasing, spreading wings and tail, opening a bird's bill
11. Species identification
12. External anatomy of birds including feather tracts and facial markings
13. Bird bands – kinds, sizes, use
14. Applying, adjusting, and removing bands
15. Standard measurements – wing chord, wing formula, tail, bill, tarsus, plumage features

¹ "Safely" refers to the safety and health of both the birds captured and handled and the people involved. "Efficiently" refers to the need to minimize stress of captured birds by processing and releasing them quickly. "Accurately" refers to the necessity to correctly identify, and where possible sex and age each bird, take the correct measurements in a repeatable manner, record the data correctly, and complete and submit schedules in a timely fashion.

- (caps, etc.)
16. Plumage and molt – terminology, use in aging, Humphrey-Parkes-Howell, Wolfe-Ryder-Pyle²
 17. Aging techniques (including skulling)
 18. Sexing techniques
 19. Using Pyle (1997)
 20. Auxiliary markers – types and uses
 21. Capture techniques – knowledge of and proper use of mistnets, traps, etc. (including setup)
 22. Extracting birds from mistnets
 23. Appropriate holding containers or carrying devices
 24. Behavior of birds (as related to banding)
 25. Avian first aid – common injuries, their prevention and treatment
 26. Avian parasites and disease
 27. Handling stressed, injured, sick or dead birds
 28. Banding during the breeding season – special considerations
 29. Banding during unusual conditions – weather, fallout
 30. When and how to document rarities or unusual birds
 31. Human first aid – common injuries, their prevention and treatment
 32. Public relations – banding demonstrations, communicating effectively to the public about banding and its scientific value, proper use of social media and other outreach platforms
 33. Bander equipment – types and sources
 34. Bander resources – essential library, websites, organizations
 35. History and future of banding
 36. Supervising assistants

The candidate should be very familiar with the *North American Banders' Study Guide*, the *North American Bander's Manual for Banding Passerines and Near-Passerines*, the *Instructor's Guide to Training Passerine Bird Banders in North America*, the CWS/USGS Bird Banding Manual <<https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBI/manual/>>, and the first 40 pages of Pyle's *Identification Guide to North American Birds Part I* (1997); should practice the Banders' Code of Ethics; and should have intensive "hands-on" training and experience in performing the above tasks. The candidate should be familiar with all methods accepted by the NABC, not just the methods the candidate normally uses.

Trainer level candidates **must** have experience in teaching new banders, but while it is true that many banders teach others, it isn't the mere fact of teaching that makes a trainer but rather the level of excellence.

A testing fee of \$35 USD must be submitted prior to the exam. The candidate will be asked to provide both a banding CV and the names of individuals for whom he or she has been the principal trainer. Two or more NABC certified Trainers will conduct the evaluation, which

² While knowledge of the Wolfe-Ryder-Pyle age classification system is not currently required for certification at the bander level, it is encouraged. Its use is widespread and growing across the entire hemisphere, and many bander-level candidates do use it extensively. Therefore, trainer-level candidates should now be familiar with WRP in order to demonstrate they can successfully evaluate bander-level candidates who use WRP exclusively.

consists of the following assessments:

Written Exam: The candidate must have scored 90% on the bander-level exam within the past five years. Often, this requirement was completed when the candidate tested at the bander level. Candidates must also score 90% on the trainer-level written exam, which focuses on training and management topics, and which includes use of and comparisons of the Humphrey-Parkes-Howell and Wolfe-Ryder-Pyle age classification systems.

Banding Skills: Evaluators will review the candidate's bander evaluation report card, and will be empowered to re-examine the candidate on any field skills including extraction, aging, sexing, identification, or individual line-item failures.

Teaching and Evaluating Skills: Evaluators will assess the candidate's familiarity with diverse training techniques, as well as his or her ability to instruct and evaluate trainees of various skill levels.

Oral Interview: Evaluators will assess the candidate's knowledge of a variety of topics.

Presentations: Teaching happens in many ways, and the trainer evaluation attempts to assess the candidate's ability to accurately, clearly, and coherently convey information in two scenarios.

- **Workshop Teaching.** Candidates will be assigned a topic in advance from the list below, and will be asked to prepare a 15-minute classroom-style presentation demonstrating considerable knowledge. The presentation will be delivered to the participating evaluators and candidates, and will be followed by approximately 10 minutes of questions. The presentation should not simply be a repetition of information found in the manuals or Pyle, but rather should endeavor to make that information accessible to banders-in-training. While it is anticipated that many of the workshop presentations will make use of PowerPoint or another similar platform, that is not a requirement.
- **Field Teaching.** Candidates should be prepared to informally discuss any or all of the remaining presentation topics while in the field. At some point during the evaluation session (i.e. while at the nets or the banding table), the candidate will be asked to instruct a novice bander "on the spot", as one would if one were explaining something to an actual trainee in that situation.

The topics and descriptions below reflect those things upon which a trainer should be prepared to extemporize with authority. The presentations need not cover everything listed in a topic description, nor are the presentations limited to items in the descriptions. The descriptions are merely intended to illuminate the intent of the topic and to give the candidate some direction. Candidates are encouraged to contact the session organizers with questions on these topics.

1. The legal landscape: legal and ethical underpinnings of banding, permitting process, permits and authorizations, the ins-and-outs of incidental captures
2. Setting up a station: developing a protocol, research goals, selecting a location, selecting net or trap locations, equipment, basic library, other resources for banders

3. Aging techniques: plumage; feather shape, quality and wear; skulling; soft parts; molt limits; other criteria
4. Molt: explain patterns of flight plumage in typical passerines, differences in feather generations, Humphrey-Parkes-Howell, Wolfe-Ryder-Pyle
5. Sexing techniques: plumage, measurements, breeding characteristics, other criteria
6. How to use Pyle
7. First aid: avian ecto- and endoparasites, diseases of birds, zoonotics, common avian injuries, first aid for birds, first aid for banders, safety considerations for birds and banders
8. Banding with the public: conducting demonstrations, communicating science to the public, addressing detractors, public relations, outreach, social media
9. How banding informs science and conservation: purposes and justification for banding, value of banding data, strengths and limitations of banding
10. Bander's ethics: banders code of ethics, photo guidelines, social media

Trainer Expectations and Responsibilities

A bander who has been certified as a trainer has made a commitment to subscribe to NABC's mission to promote sound and ethical bird banding principles and techniques. It is expected that certified trainers will teach others to band using NABC guidelines, whether through individual mentorships or through courses leading to certification.

Certified trainers should be willing to participate in evaluation sessions, but they must realize this may involve some personal expense and a time commitment on a voluntary basis. It may involve attending evaluation sessions at meetings of ornithological and banding organizations, or visiting candidates for evaluation at their banding sites. Certified trainers must participate in at least one evaluation session with other experienced trainers, before they will be authorized to conduct a session independently.

Certified trainers are welcome to attend meetings of the NABC and may serve on committees. The NABC typically has several phone conferences a year in addition to its annual meeting. There is typically no financial support available for travel to or attendance at the annual meeting.