

**A VISITOR'S GUIDE
TO THE
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES ON THE PIEDMONT
BIRD BANDING STATION
(www.envstudies.org)**

Welcome to the Environmental Studies on the Piedmont (ES) Bird Banding Station!

Please review this Guide prior to visiting the banding station to help you have an enjoyable visit. To plan your visit, look at the banding schedule online. Call us prior to your visit to confirm we will be banding and we will be receiving visitors on that day.

ES participates in bird banding throughout much of the year. In the summer (late May to mid August) we participate in the nationwide Monitoring Avian Productivity Survivorship (MAPS) program. MAPS is run by the Institute for Bird Populations (IBP) to assess and monitor vital health information and population dynamics of over 200 species of North American land birds. This provides critical conservation information and helps to manage population information.

In the fall we operate our own Fall Migratory Banding Program. This has two objectives: (1) To determine neo-tropical migrant use of the Piedmont's resources during fall migration and (2) to provide training and banding experience opportunities for new banders. Check our website to register for a 5-day banding training session in early October (www.envstudies.org).

Our banding station is operated by highly trained and experienced employees and volunteers operating under Federal and State banding permits who are responsible for operation of the station. Safety of the birds and people is high priority. Our banders follow specific research protocols and are responsible for ensuring that ethical banding practices and safety procedures are followed. In this Guide we will share some of these procedures with you to help provide you with a safe and productive experience.

Clothing

Prior to your visit, please prepare yourself in advance. Wear season-appropriate clothing and always be ready for wet weather. During the summer and fall, biting insects, including flies and ticks, are present and we encourage you to wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts. Wearing a hat and using insect repellent can also help ward off these pests. Clothing without buttons is recommended to avoid damaging delicate nets if you join our banders while they are making their net runs. You should also wear sturdy footwear, preferably waterproof or water-resistant. If you are wearing flip-flops or sandals, for your safety you may be asked to remain in the vicinity of the banding station while banding operations are under way.

Arrival Time

If you plan to visit the field station, please contact one of the lead banders a few days prior to your visit (contact information is below). Our banders arrive at the station at 5:30 a.m. or the night before, and are in the field opening nets by 6:00. Visitors should plan to arrive at the same time as the banders (5:30-5:45). Please do not be late as we

will review visitor protocol prior to opening the banding station to maximize your opportunity for the day.

At the Station

While you are at the banding station itself, and especially when the banders are processing birds, you must keep your voices low and restrict your conversations to only what is happening at the station. This will help to minimize the stress on the birds and help our banders concentrate on quickly collecting the required data. During the early summer when birds are breeding, we often catch birds that are sitting on eggs or actively feeding young and we want to get these birds back to their nests as soon as possible.

As time permits, we will be glad to explain the procedures our banders follow to collect data on the birds we catch. If you ask a question while a bander is processing a bird, please do not be offended if the bander is not able to answer right away. We follow complicated protocols and the bander's main job is to accurately collect the data and release the bird quickly and safely.

Food cannot be placed on, or eaten at, the banding station table itself; however, beverage containers are allowed as long as they can be closed. We keep food and drinks in the house, and you are welcome to use the kitchen and refrigerator.

You may have the opportunity to briefly hold and release a banded bird. After handling the bird, please clean your hands with the sanitizing wipes or liquid available at the station.

At the Mist Nets

You may be invited to join the banders while they are making their net "runs" to extract birds from the nets. Again, while near the nets, your voices should be low to minimize stress on any birds present. You should never touch a bird or the nets unless requested to do so by a bander.

At the nets you may hear some birds making distress calls. This is normal avian defensive behavior and does not mean the birds are injured or being hurt. Our banders are trained to extract birds from nets quickly and safely.

We hope this information is useful to you and that you enjoy your experience at the ES Bird Banding Station!

For additional information, you may visit the Institute for Bird Population web site (www.birdpop.org) where the MAPS program is described.

2010 Banders:

Lead Banders: Dr. Tom Wood (703) 963-0866; Bev Smith (703) 772-6529

Banders: Nanette Mickle, Kevin Shea, Caroline Emerick

In training: Dr. Julia Nord