



# Bird Banding Reveals

## Overview

Students will learn about bird banding and why scientists band birds.

## California Science Standards

Grade 6: 7.b.-I&E  
Grade 7: 7.a.b.-I&E

## Oregon Science Standards

Grade 3: 02 –S.I

## National Standards

Content Standard A:  
Science as Inquiry

## Materials Included

\* Student Journal

## Materials Needed

\* Computer Lab

## Activity Time

Preparation: 15 min.  
Activity Time: 45 min.

## Best Season

Fall/Spring

## Vocabulary

\* Bird Banding  
\* Mist Net

**Grade Level:** 3rd-12th (O.S.S.: 3rd) (C.S.S: 6th-7th)

## Learner Objectives

Student will:

- Learn what bird banding is and why scientists band birds
- Explore bird banding information on the Bird Banding Laboratory website

## Background Information

Bird banding is a method of bird monitoring to track bird population and demographic trends (characteristics of the population) over time. First, a bird is gently caught in a soft, fine net called a mist net. After being carefully removed by a biologist, a small aluminum band is placed around the bird's leg like a bracelet. Engraved in the band is a unique number which will allow biologists to track the bird if it is recaptured. Next, data (e.g., age, sex, fat, feather molt) about the bird are collected. Finally, the bird is released near where it was caught and continues its daily activities.

Bird banding allows scientists to answer questions about bird populations. These questions can then inform land management practices to aid in effective bird and habitat conservation. For example, bird banding data tell us if birds successfully breed in an area—an indication of a healthy habitat. Banding data also tell us if birds are surviving migration, information that informs international conservation efforts. We also develop our records of species longevity (or maximum number of years alive) from bird banding.

Scientists from bird observatories, government agencies, research organizations, and graduate schools band birds as part of their research programs. In order to band birds you must have a permit and be trained to safely handle and band birds. Each year approximately 1.1 million birds are banded. All the data collected on birds banded in North America is kept by the Bird Banding Laboratory of the US Department of the Interior and is available for any scientist to access.

At the Klamath Bird Observatory we operate more than 15 ecological monitoring stations to capture and band birds in the Klamath-Siskiyou Bioregion. We band approximately 10,000 birds a year with the Song Sparrow being one of the most frequently caught. If you find a banded bird report it to 1-800-327-BAND or on the web at:

<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/homepage/call800.htm>.

# Lesson Plan

## Getting Ready!

1. Read background information section.
2. Make copies of *Student Journal: Bird Banding Reveals*.
3. Contact Klamath Bird Observatory to schedule a banding station field visit. (see right panel)

## Discuss!

1. Have the students brainstorm how scientists might study birds and the tools they would use.
2. Ask them if they have ever heard of bird banding before.
3. Explain to the students what bird banding is and why scientists band birds. Discuss what bird banding data can tell scientists about birds and their habitats.
4. Tell them about the Bird Banding Laboratory.

## Investigate!

1. Let students know they will be exploring the Bird Banding Laboratory website to gather more information on bird banding in North America.
2. Give each student a Student Journal.
3. Take students to the computer lab to research.
4. Direct students to the Bird Banding Laboratory website: <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/>
5. Have students click on “Brief History of Bird Banding” & later “How Many Birds Are Banded?”.
6. Have students fill out their Student Journal sheets using the information provided on the above pages. You may also ask students to share information as a poster, presentation, or a written description.

## Go Outside!

1. Take students on a field visit to one of Klamath Bird Observatory’s banding stations to see bird banding in action and learn more about it (See right panel).

## Observe Bird Banding!

Contact Klamath Bird Observatory to schedule a field visit to either the 7 Mile Guard Station or the Rocky Point Station to experience bird banding with our scientists and one of our educators.

Email [KBO@KlamathBird.org](mailto:KBO@KlamathBird.org) or call 541-201-0866, ext 3.



A bird banding scientist's tools and guide book.



American Robin with a band on its leg.