

MEMO TO ALL BANDERS

MTAB 112

USGS Eastern Ecological Science Center Bird Banding Lab

June 2025

The Chief's Chirp

Dear Bird Banders,

As we enter June, I want to take a moment to reflect—not just on the work we do, but on the moment we're navigating together.

We are in a season of uncertainty, marked by shifting priorities, and rapid change. These periods test any program, no matter how brief or long its history. But it's in times like these that our shared values and steady purpose matter most. The commitment you show—in the field, banding birds, in your banding reports, and in your continued engagement—is what keeps the Bird Banding Lab (BBL) grounded and impactful.

We've been especially moved by the support you've shared in recent weeks. The value of BBL's science and capabilities continues to be recognized, and we are deeply grateful for the letters of support we've received from across the banding community. These letters speak to a legacy of over a century, strongly rooted in science, conservation, and collaboration. They reflect the shared value this community places on the bird banding program and the enduring partnerships that sustain it.

As we look forward, we want to wish all of you a safe, successful, and smooth banding season. This is prime time for many of you, and we know how much effort, skill, and heart it takes to be out there, morning after morning, net after net. For all that you give to the birds, let's not forget what bird banding gives us....

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Banding is so much more than just connecting dots between where a bird was banded and where it's later found. It's about holding that bird in hand—aging it, sexing it, assessing its feathers, checking for molt, fat stores, and breeding condition. On the recovery side, we can re-age it and learn even more—how it's behaving, its local movement or migration, how and where it may have died, and what that tells us about the health of both individuals and entire populations. Altogether, this gives us unique insights into both the “what” and the “why” - what are birds doing and why? What are the trends through time and why are we seeing changes?

There's an image that sticks with me—one of a coal miner carrying a canary down into a mine. If the bird stopped singing, if it fell off its perch, the message was clear: the air wasn't safe. In many ways, birds are still warning us today—just on a much larger scale.

Every morning when a bander checks the mist nets, the rocket nets, or the walk-in traps—whether it's ducks or warblers, sparrows or something rare—you're not just seeing birds. You're reading signals.

If those birds show up late...
If juvenile numbers crash...
If the species mix changes...

Those are signs that something upstream, downstream, or thousands of miles away has shifted. That's the power of banding—it's not just putting on bands for science's sake. It's listening to what the birds are telling us.

Thank you for listening. Thank you for doing this work. Thank you for your support.

More updates will be coming your way soon—including progress on system improvements, permitting, and our long-term vision.

Saludos,
Antonio Celis-Murillo, PhD
Bird Banding Laboratory Manager



USGS scientist holds a Surf Scoter fitted with a satellite tag. Bird captured and banded under a USGS bird banding and marking permit. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Fiely, Public Domain.

Message from Director of EESC

Dear Bird Banding Community,

I would like to take a moment to sincerely thank each of you who submitted letters of support for the U.S. Geological Survey's BBL. Your support is immensely valuable, as it validates the critical role the BBL plays in North American bird conservation and management. Such letters help reinforce the importance of our collective work as the President and Congress make difficult funding decisions to address our nation's federal budget deficit.

In these times of changing priorities and uncertain futures, your support is also vital for the morale of our workforce at the USGS Eastern Ecological Science Center (EESC). I make it a point to share each letter of support with all EESC employees, as it serves as a powerful reminder of the value and importance of their work. Your words inspire our team to stay focused on delivering the essential science and services that you and many others rely upon. Just like the "[Ice Bison](#)" story of Michael Hodges, our EESC team continues to move forward through this season of change just as the bison moved forward through the winter ice storm. And, just as the bison stayed focus on finding the next patch of grass to feed upon, our EESC team is focused on finding new opportunities to support this Administration and deliver the important science that partners like you place a high value on. With our "Be the Bison" philosophy, our team will hopefully persist like the Ice Bison which was seen grazing in a lush meadow the following spring.

Thank you once again for your continued support and dedication to bird conservation. The BBL is a cornerstone of avian research and management and your championship of the BBL team and the services they provide will help ensure this 105-year legacy continues.

Warm regards,
Tom O'Connell
Director, USGS EESC



Left: Eastern Ecological Science Center Director Tom O'Connell in the sunshine.
Right: Bison in winter. Photo courtesy of J.R. Douglas, Public Domain.

Staff Updates

Celebrating Craig “Tut” Tuthill’s Remarkable Career

We want to celebrate a major milestone in our BBL family. On April 18, 2025, longtime Lab team member Craig “Tut” Tuthill retired after an astounding 37 years of federal service. Many of you knew Tut as the steady, responsive presence behind your band orders—making sure, year after year, that bands arrived correctly and on time no matter where you were stationed. We estimate Tut helped deliver more than 30 million bands during his career. Tut’s precision, consistency, and deep connection with banders across the country made him an irreplaceable part of our operation. He didn’t just ship bands—he built relationships, solved problems, and kept this national program moving. We already miss him dearly, and we know many of you do too.



Photo of Craig “Tut” Tuthill, holding a strand of bird bands.



Alerts

New REPORTBAND.GOV link

If you host a website that encourages folks to report banded birds to the North American Bird Banding Database, please note we have updated the LONG URL link to make it more secure.

New updated link: https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/Bander_Portal/login/reportband.php

Links that still work:

- www.reportband.gov
- <https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/bblretrv/>

Links that no longer work:

- Any with “.cfm” at the end.
- *Note this may also apply to older bookmarked links you may have including [longevity records](#) and [BBL codes](#) (note new links provided).



The screenshot shows the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory website. At the top is the USGS logo with the tagline 'science for a changing world' and a search bar. Below this is a blue header for 'The North American Bird Banding Program' at the 'Eastern Ecological Science Center at the Patuxent Research Refuge Bird Banding Laboratory'. A navigation bar includes tabs for 'Start', 'Who', 'What', 'About Band, Bird, and Date', and 'Color Marker Info'. Under 'What', there are sub-tabs for 'Encounter Location', 'Contact Info', and 'Verification'. The main content area is titled 'Report a bird with a federal band or color marker' and features a 'Continue >>' button, language options for 'En Français >>' and 'En Español >>', and an OMB Control # 1028-0082 with an expiration date of 02/28/2027. Below this, there are links for 'Examples of federal bands and color markers', a link to a 'Certificate of Appreciation', and contact information for 'bandreports@usgs.gov'. A footer note says 'To learn more about the USGS Bird Banding Lab, click here.'

Screenshot of reportband.gov.



Avian Influenza Surveillance Program at Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. Bird captured and banded under a USGS bird banding and marking permit. Photo courtesy of Tyrone Donnelly, USFWS Public Domain.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

HPAI is a persistent issue. When in the field, please ensure that you plan for biosecurity measures to protect yourself, your field crew, and the birds you are handling. Please review guidelines produced by the [USDA here](#) and the [Ornithological Council here](#), and keep up-to-date on the current situation through the [CDC here](#). Stay safe out there!

Recent Literature/Resources:

- [Avian Influenza Research at EESC](#)
- [Avian Influenza Research by the USGS & Partners](#)
- [HPAI in Double-crested Cormorants](#)
- [Protecting Critically Endangered Avian Species against HPAI](#)
- [USGS Winter 2025 Update on HPAI](#)

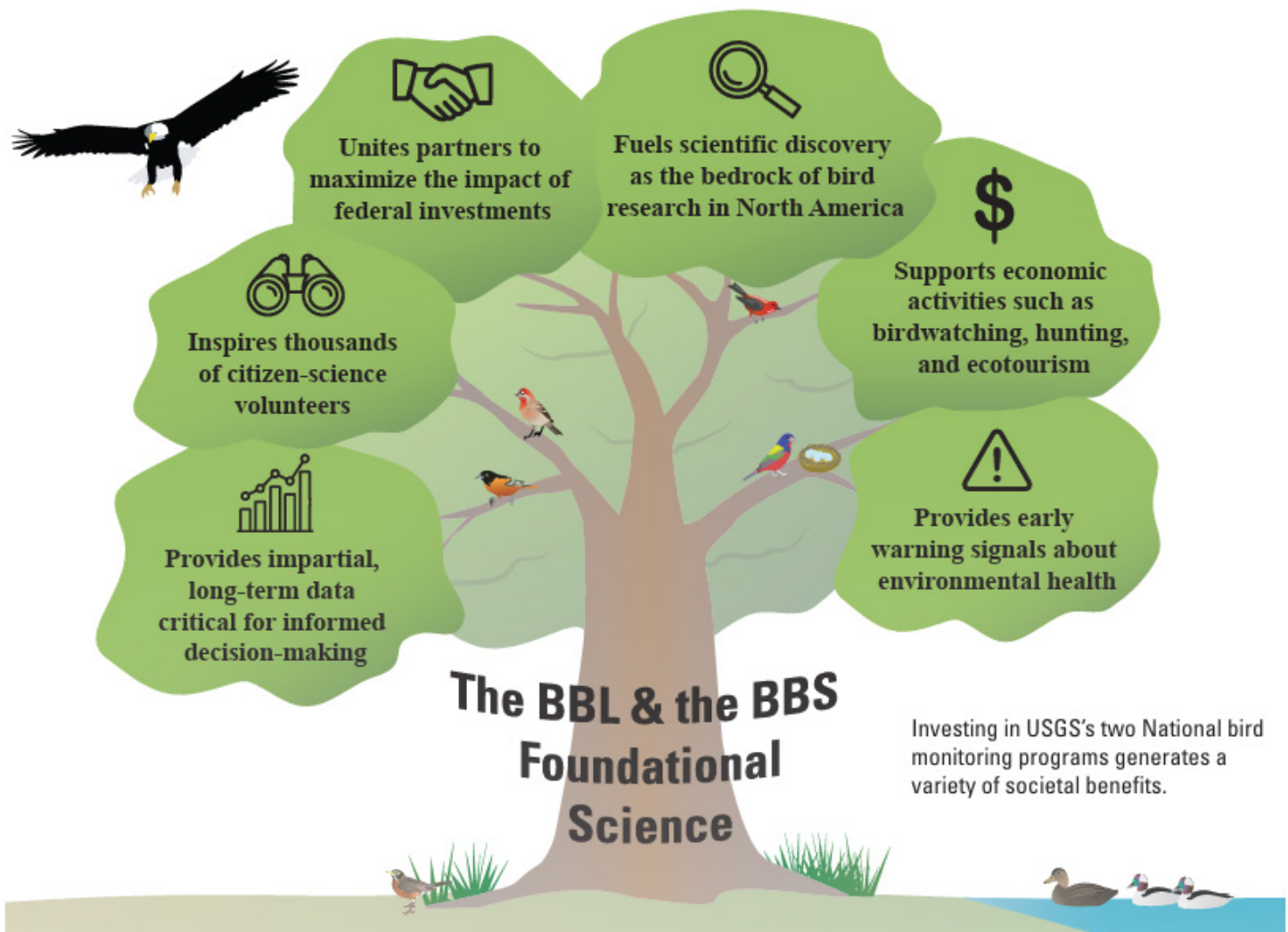
News

Find the Bird Banding Lab's news page [here](#).

Follow the Eastern Ecological Science Center on Facebook [here](#).

Foundational Science in Flight

Check out the [BBL's new factsheet](#)! Examining how the USGS bird programs, the BBL and Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), support conservation, culture, and a thriving U.S. economy.



A screenshot from the BBL's new flier.

News Continued...

Notes from the Field: What's on a sparrow's dinner menu?

“Notes From the Field” news articles highlight the continued importance of bird banding. This article was contributed by Tabitha Olsen who is currently working on her PhD dissertation examining the diet of sparrows wintering in the post-oak ecoregion of Texas. Scientists are utilizing new tools to ask the age-old question: What's for dinner?

Read more about the project [here](#).



White-throated Sparrow. Bird captured and banded under a USGS bird banding and marking permit. Photo courtesy of Pourya Sardari.



Screenshot of the Bird Collision Prevention Alliance logo.

Bird Collision Prevention

USGS joined forces as a leading agency with USFWS, NPS, American Bird Conservancy, National Audubon, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and others in a multi-sector partnership addressing the issue of bird collisions with glass and light pollution. The BBL has been participating in several leadership and working group efforts since February 2024 to advance the goals of the partnership and introduces the coalition's new name and website, [Bird Collision Prevention Alliance](#).

The BBL collaborated with the American Bird Conservancy on an article that highlights banded birds, winter feeding, backyard birds, and bird collisions. The article included encounter data reported by a resident who had 2 banded cardinals collide with the same window on the same day at her home. Read [“When Window Collisions Hit Home”](#).

News Continued...



Tufted Duck. Photo courtesy of Lee Karney, USFWS Public Domain.

Ducks Unlimited Podcast

Ducks Unlimited podcast hosts Mike Brasher and Kayci Messerly recently interviewed BBL Chief Tony Celis-Murillo and Biologist/Flyway Liaison Lauren Walker. Tony and Lauren discussed the important role that bird banding and the BBL play in waterfowl conservation and management. The podcast highlights how bird banding and recovery data tells the story of a birds across the landscape, but also connect diverse communities of bird enthusiasts: biologists, bird watchers, land managers, and hunters.

When asked about how cool it is to oversee this program, Tony commented “It’s humbling...because we’re just the stewards. The hunters, the field techs, the researchers are the heroes—they’re the ones on the ground, getting dirty, doing the work. We just make sure that work gets honored, archived, and used to guide decisions that matter.” Listen to more [here](#).

A Note From the Permitting Shelves

As we head into the banding season just a general reminder to review the [Ethics and Responsibilities of Bird Banders](#).

Be sure to review the [photography guidelines](#), ensuring best practices are taken into account when photographing and/or sharing photos. If you discuss or share your banding projects on any public platform or social media, please indicate “All banding, marking, and sampling is being conducted under a federally authorized Bird Banding Permit issued by the U.S. Geological Survey’s BBL (or the BBO in Canada).”



A biologist gently extends the wing of a Blue-headed Vireo to look for clues on how old the bird is. Bird captured and banded under a USGS bird banding and marking permit. Photo courtesy of Megan Evans.

A Note From the Supply Room

Band Orders

Despite recent BBL staff retirements, filling band orders continues to be a top priority. We appreciate your patience as we adjust staff duties to fulfill this vital service BBL provides. In order to continue to maintain a supply of bands for all, we kindly ask that banders work down their existing outstanding band inventories and refrain from panic-ordering bands for future seasons or years. We understand that uncertainty can trigger concern but placing large or premature orders can negatively impact our carefully managed band inventory. Here are some additional tips for ordering bands:

- Prior to submitting your band order, ensure your previous banding data has been submitted.
- Check your outstanding inventory. If you have more than a thousand outstanding bands of a particular size and you place an order for that size, you will be asked to account for those outstanding bands.
- Bands with older inscriptions can still be used on non-game birds. These are typically smaller sizes bands (0A through 3).
- Once you submit your request, you will receive an email notification that your order was sent. If you do not receive this email please let us know at bbl_bandings@usgs.gov.

Band Returns

Please go through your band inventory and return any unused or unwanted bands. This includes game bird banders that still have bands with our no longer active toll free number (1-800-327-BAND) and/or our mailing address (Washington, DC or Laurel, MD). To return bands: log in to the Bander Portal and navigate to the Band Inventory tab, Return Bands link and follow the instructions listed.



Banded Lapland Longspur.
Bird captured and banded under a USGS bird banding and marking permit.
Photo courtesy of Lisa Hupp, USFWS Public Domain.

Frequently Asked Questions

I haven't gotten my band order yet, where is it?

If you have been waiting several months for your band shipment and have not been contacted by our Band Order team, please contact bbl_bandings@usgs.gov so we can determine the reason for the delay and get your bands to you as quickly as possible.



Northern Cardinal with two retained secondary feathers, original brown juvenile feathers. Bird captured and banded under a USGS bird banding and marking permit.
Photo courtesy of Kyra Harvey.

Why does my Northern Cardinal kickout for Bad Age/Sex warning on the Bander Portal?

Northern Cardinals can be tricky to age considering their unique molt patterns where the preformative molts can be incomplete or complete. HY/SY can be determined by a dusky brown bill and/or the presence of retained juvenile flight feathers. However, because the preformative molt may be complete in many individuals, a uniform wing does not indicate AHY in late fall nor ASY once the calendar year changes. If you are confident in your determination, please provide your reasoning in the remarks, before bypassing the warning.

Where can I get my banding supplies?

In April 2025, the BBL added “[Bander Resources](#)” — a resource guide for permitted banders containing information to aid in the identification, capture, banding, sampling, and tagging of birds. This document was originally developed as a part of our Banders Without Borders Initiative to share with our sister banding schemes all over the world. You can find this document in the Bander Portal, under the Resources tab. If you know of any resources that can be added to this table or any part of this table that should be updated, please contact jmckay@usgs.gov.

IMPORTANT: Note any use of trade, firm, or product names in this table are for descriptive purposes only and does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Auxiliary Marker Corner



Prepared bird color markers. Photo courtesy of Megan Nagel, USFWS Public Domain.

Along with double-checking that your equipment is ready to go for the banding season, **make sure you double-check that your permit authorizations are up-to-date!** Review your banding authorizations on the [Bander Portal](#). Navigate to the Permits tab, and click the Authorizations link.

Things to double-check:

- **Species** are up-to-date
- **Locations** are up-to-date
- **Color markers** are up-to-date, including color and codes listed under the permit
- **Transmitters** are up-to-date, including all transmitter types and attachment methods

Banding and Encounter Highlights

Longevity Records

- New longevity record for Gray-backed Tern. Originally banded as a chick in 1997 this bird was found dead in August 2024, at an age of 27 years and 3 months.

Location Records

- 1st banded Brown-capped Rosy-Finch in Utah.
- 1st banded Lewis's Woodpecker in Wyoming.
- Foreman's Branch Bird Observatory at Washington College in Maryland captured their [1st Swainson's Warbler ever in their 28-year history](#). This is the first banded SWWA in Maryland since 1988.

Exciting Encounter

- On our encounters side, check out the [journey of a 22-year old Surf Scoter](#) from our partners at Sea Duck Joint Venture.



Brown-capped Rosy-Finch with Black and Gray-capped Rosy-Finches, those commonly banded in Utah. Photo courtesy of Brian Maxfield.

Swainson's Warbler. Photo courtesy of Meghan McHenry.

Birds captured and banded under a USGS bird banding and marking permit.

Message to the Flyways



Shoreline of pond in Barnstable, MA.
Photo courtesy of David Armstrong.

GameBirds

We are entering the final stretch in processing reports of gamebirds from the 2024-2025 hunting season. To help ensure that the 2025 GameBirds release is as complete as possible and ready to release on schedule in early July, please double-check your Bander Portal for any delinquent banding records and submit your data as needed. Also, please make sure to let us know if there are reports in your Reports to Bander that appear fishy or problematic. Thank you!

Band Orders

Looking towards the 2025-2026 hunting season, we know many of you are already preparing to begin pre-season banding efforts. Although some band sizes have been on back order, most gamebird band orders are being mailed promptly. If you have yet to receive your band shipment after several months of waiting and have not been contacted by our Band Order team, please reach out (bbl_bandings@usgs.gov) so we can determine the reason for the delay and get your bands to you as quickly as possible.

Please contact Lauren Walker (lewalker@usgs.gov) with any comments or questions regarding gamebird encounters or issues related to the flyways.

Moments In History



Photo of Revista de Anillamiento issue that contained the BBL history article.

Bird Banding and Management in the United States: a History of the BBL

In 2023, BBL staff put together an article on the history of the BBL, originally published in Spanish in Revista de Anillamiento in 2023. Now the [English version is available on our website](#)! This article discusses the history of the BBL, including an informative graphic showing the timeline of our transition from USDA to USFWS to the National Biological Survey, to where it is today, housed under USGS. The article also discusses the goals and direction of the BBL as we set our sites to the future. Check it out!

A lot has changed since 2023, we have had folks retire and a reorganization of priorities and duties. However, our passion has not ebbed, and we are still working hard to ensure we meet the North American Bird Banding Program's primary duties including permitting.

Recent Literature

[An evaluation of migration fidelity of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds inferred from stable isotope methods - Koehler, et al. - Biodiversity and Conservation](#)

[Band recovery data illustrate spatiotemporal and taxonomic patterns of seabird collisions with anthropogenic structures - Lawson, et al. - The Wilson Journal of Ornithology](#)

[Drone-based radiotelemetry and imagery systems provide an advantage over traditional techniques for estimating survival of dependent juveniles - Rhodes, et al. - Wildlife Society Bulletin](#)

[Migration and roosting behavior of Northern Saw-whet Owls \(*Aegolius acadicus*\) during fall migration in Western Montana - Stone & Ramsey - Journal of Raptor Research](#)

[Mismatch between strong nest-site selection and low survival of nests and broods for *Scolopax minor* \(American Woodcock\) and its implications for conservation - Slezak, et al. - Ornithological Applications](#)

[Nine years of tracking data reveal high post-breeding survival of radiomarked male woodcock in Rhode Island - Slezak, et al. - Wildlife Society Bulletin](#)

[North Carolina's Cape Fear River is a 'forever chemical' hotspot - what does that mean for its birds and people? - Burakoff - Audubon](#)

[Spatial response of Black Vultures to resource pulses during white-tailed deer hunting season - Dudley, et al. - Wildlife Society Bulletin](#)

[Supplemental feeding as a driver of population expansion and morphological change in Anna's Hummingbirds - Alexandre, et al. - Global Change Biology](#)

[State of the Birds 2025 - North American Bird Conservation Initiative](#)

[Use of Apple Airtag to track urban wildlife: proof of concept with Harris's Hawks - Poplin, et al. - Wildlife Society Bulletin](#)

[Willow and Alder Flycatchers by primary-tip spacing: the p6:7 ratio - Lee & Birch - Western Field Ornithologists](#)

Upcoming Events



Summer

**Wilson Ornithological Society
Annual Meeting**

June 23-25, 2025

Los Angeles, California

**The Association of Field Ornithologists
& Western Bird Banding Association
Annual Meeting**

July 29-August 1, 2025

Ogden, Utah

**American Ornithological Society
Annual Meeting**

August 11-15, 2025

St. Louis, Missouri

**Hummingbird Conservation Network
Hummingbird Banding Workshop**

August 24-September 3, 2025

Portal, Arizona

**Flyway Council
Summer Meetings**

August/September, 2025

TBD



Autumn

**Maryland Ornithological Society
Annual Meeting**

September 26-28, 2025

Fredrick, Maryland

**The Waterbird Society
Annual Meeting**

September 29-October 2, 2025

Traverse City, Michigan

**American Oystercatcher Working Group
Annual Meeting**

October 14-16, 2025

Cape May, New Jersey

**Raptor Research Foundation
Annual Meeting**

October 14-18, 2025

San Jose, Costa Rica

**Inland Bird Banding Association
Annual Meeting**

October 24-26, 2025

Hastings, Minnesota

Request for Information

We are looking to make these MTABs quarterly. Please see below for the things we need from you!

- Did you use BBL's data in a recent publication? Please let us know!
- Any upcoming events and dates to share with our banders. We will be glad to add any relevant dates to our Calendar section.
- Do you have any questions that you feel might be relevant to other banders? We would love to include them (and the answer) in our Frequently Asked Questions section.

Please send your suggestions to Kyra Harvey at kharvey@usgs.gov

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