Trapping and Banding Protocol

**Important:** Birds in a trap are at an increased risk of depredation and personal injury, therefore all precautions must be taken to minimize chances of injury.

**SETTING TRAPS**

LOCATION

Traps are to beput in or near places that birds may congregate (e.g., feeders, feed lines, low shrubs, edges, irregular features). The trap site needs to be scraped down to bare soil so that the trap sits evenly and completely on the ground. This also makes it easier to see any potential escape holes.

After placing the trap on the ground, secure the sides of the trap by piling brush or duff against the sides of the trap. This will help decrease the chance of predators digging under the trap.

BAITING

To increase trapping success, trap sites should be prebaited a week in advance with either crack-corn or milo. Prebait trap sites by sprinkling handfuls of bait on the bare surface and lightly scattering bait around the trap site.

SETTING

When setting a trap, spread bait in the middle of the trap and up to the sides leaving a two to three inch space around the inside of the trap wall. This will deter birds from eating bait from outside of the trap and encourage the birds to enter the trap. Next, make sure the there is no vegetation impeding the entrance to the funnel. Secure trap lid with tie-tab wire. Lastly apply cover to top and sides of trap. Pine limbs stay green the longest which make them best choice to use as cover. Cover the trap completely and make sure there is adequate weight on top of the trap. Also make sure that the cover does not block the entrance to the funnel.

**CHECKING TRAPS**

START TIME

Traps should not be checked before sunset (still approximately 30 minutes of light). Any bird that is captured after the traps have been checked has a high probability of being depredated during the night.

REMOVING BIRDS

Potential risk to the birds must be minimized! When you have birds in the trap, removing them quickly is essential. The majority of injuries occur while the birds are in a state of panic cause by the trapper’s presence. If birds can be heard in the trap calling or jumping, approach the trap quickly (with pillowcase in hand) and remove the cover. Be sure to block the entrance to the funnel with one foot to prevent birds from escaping. Also be sure to hold down trap lid while placing birds in pillowcase. Once inside the pillowcase the birds should calm down and remain relatively safe. Note: If it is warm outside, be aware of the birds surrounding temp. Trapping boxes and pillow case exposed to direct sunlight will get hot enough to kill a bird. Many birds in the same holding container will have the same effects. If >5 birds are caught in a trap consider that covey caught.

# BANDING BOXES

After removing birds from the trap, they should be transferred to a banding box. Be sure to make a note of which banding boxes contain birds from which traps. After birds are banded, radioed, and released, banding boxes should be cleaned of feathers and feces to prevent disease.

## BANDING AND HANGING RADIOS

# START TIMES

Banding captured birds should be done a half hour before sunrise. This insures that birds will be worked up and released shortly after first light. **Also, when handling birds, it is important to put as little stress on them as possible**. The health of the bird comes first!

# BANDING

Always check for wing bands on the patagial tendon along the top edge of the wings. If birds are recaptured, record band numbers on data sheet as either old recapture (last season’s birds) or new recapture (current season’s birds).

* Record band number on data sheet.
* Using No. 7 pliers (finger pinching on the bands will sometimes leave a gap), put band around either leg and with any orientation.
* Double check band number with data sheet.

Note: Record the band number on your data sheet before you band the bird.

***Tip***: Use bands in sequential order. This will aid in accurate data collection.

* Record sex and age of bird on data sheet.

Note: Males have a black head with a white stripes and females have brown heads with tan stripes. Juveniles have buffy tips and axis on the secondary coverts, adult’s feathers are all the same color. Juveniles can have all primary feathers present so be sure no to always check the secondary coverts.

* Gently place bird in panty hose and clip hose to scale. After bird has settled, hold scale by the top ring and record weight.

***Tips***: -Press ring against the roof of the vehicle; this gives you a solid base.

-If scale will not be still, then tilt to the side 2-5.

# HANGING RADIOS

It is very important that the radio does not fit too loosely or too tightly around a bird’s neck. There is no room for error. Hang radios only on birds weighing more than 140 grams to insure an acceptable ratio of transmitter to bird weight. Also, when handling birds, it is important to put as little stress on them as possible. The health of the bird comes first. The following procedure is a sufficient guide to hanging radios in a timely and safe manner:

* Record transmitter number and frequency on data sheet.
* Remove bird from banding box and hold gently but securely.
* Secure overhand knot so that it will not slip when you put it over the bird.
* Place radio over birds head and guide backward with fingers until it is past the bird’s eyes.
* Adjust the knot so that it is very snug at the back of the bird’s eyes.
* Remove transmitter and tie 2 half hitches, being very careful not to change the diameter of the loop. Keep bird tightly covered with towel or pillowcase during the glue drying process.

***Tip:*** Use this time to record the transmitter number and frequency of your next radio.

* Glue the knot and trim off all excess string.
* After glue is completely dry, remove bird from covering and place transmitter all the way over birds head.

Note: If transmitter goes on without much resistance or it is too tight then **start over**. It is no big deal. The used transmitter will sometimes fit on a different bird or can be refurbed with a new string.

* Preen neck feathers around the neck loop and try to work the antenna in the back feathers.
* Place bird in a separate banding box. Do this with all birds from the same trap so that no birds are mixed.

### RELEASING BANDED BIRDS

It is extremely important to record all banding and radio data before releasing the birds! This can prevent major problems when data is entered. Birds should be released near the trap in which they were captured shortly after sunrise so that they can have time to find their covey and eat before late morning. Release birds from the same trap together at one time, not separately. Only in new recapture circumstances should birds be released at night.