

DESERT INSTITUTE

at Joshua Tree National Park Association

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Spring Session

2023

Advanced Bird Banding

Information

Dates/Time: Wednesday, April 26, 6-8p

Sunday, April 30, 7a-1p

Sunday, May 14, 7a-1p

Location: Whitewater Preserve, 9160 Whitewater Canyon Rd, Whitewater, CA 92282

Instructor: Stephen J. Myers

(951) 616-7578

E-mail: stephenmyers@earthlink.net

Assistant: Vesta Myers

Overview

A focus on molt limits and other characteristics in North American birds as they relate to accurately determining their ages. We will cover plumage topography, molt terminology, and molt strategies among songbirds and their close relatives. We will discuss additional aging techniques such as skulling and morphometrics, and how to determine skull, fat, and molt scores. Time will also be spent on banding ethics, safe handling of birds, prevention and treatment of stress and injuries, color banding, blood and feather sampling, and MAPS banding.

This course builds on the information presented in the introduction to bird banding class. The evening class session will be followed by two days of hands-on experience capturing, handling, and banding birds in the field. The banding location will be at the Whitewater Preserve (directions below). All banding equipment will be provided.

Prerequisites: Beginning Bird Banding, or prior approval from the instructor. Basic bird identification skills are helpful.

Text: None required. Hand-outs will be distributed. *Identification of North American Birds, Parts 1 and 2*, by Peter Pyle, will be used for identification, aging, and sexing of birds.

Method of Teaching: Lecture, slides, classroom demonstrations, hands-on banding in the field.

Objectives: Upon completion of this course students should feel comfortable in the handling and banding of birds, be able to accurately age and sex most passerines and near passerines, and ultimately conduct or assist in bird banding studies.

Itinerary

Wednesday, April 26, 6-8p: classroom session at Whitewater Preserve

- Feather basics
- Molt terminology
- Molt strategies
- Molt limits
- Skull pneumatization and sculling
- Measurements and morphometrics
- Color banding
- Blood and feather sampling
- MAPS banding
- Banding ethics and safeguards
- Treatment of injured or stressed birds

Sunday, April 30 and Sunday, May 14: banding sessions at Whitewater Preserve

- Meet at 6:30a
- Banding sessions begin at 7am
- Banding sessions will be over (including breaking down the banding station and taking down nets) by approximately 1:00 PM each day.
- We usually have lunch at an eatery in Cabazon, Banning, or Beaumont for those that are interested.

What to Bring to the Course

- Daypack
- Snacks, drinks
- Water (2-3 litres)
- Hat and Sunscreen
- Binoculars
- Conditions can vary from cool early in AM to warm afternoons, so dress in layers
- If possible, do not wear clothing with buttons or exposed zippers (they snag the mist nets)
- Hand sanitizer (for cleaning bird droppings off of hands before lunch!)

Activity Level

Easy-Moderate: we will hike into the canyon at Whitewater and will be outdoors for the banding sessions.

Credit through UCR Extension

Advanced Bird Banding, biology x404.4, 1.5 units (additional fee applies)

Directions to the Whitewater Preserve

From Beaumont: Take Interstate 10 east toward Indio. Proceed 20 miles east on I-10 to the Whitewater exit. Turn left at the end of the off ramp, and cross over the freeway. Turn left onto Whitewater Canyon Road, and drive north 4.5 miles to the end of the road at the Whitewater Preserve headquarters parking lot. We will meet at 6:30 AM. Steve's cell phone: 951-616-7578. Cell phones generally do not have any service at the Preserve.

Instructor Biography

Stephen J. Myers is retired after spending 38 years as a wildlife biologist and ornithologist for private biological consulting companies. He has concentrated his studies on birds, but also has extensive experience with small mammals, reptiles and amphibians, butterflies, and plants. Much of his experience with birds has focused on threatened and endangered species such as the California Gnatcatcher, Least Bell's Vireo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Yuma Ridgway's Rail, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Mr. Myers has been banding birds since 1985, and has been a federally permitted bird bander since 1990. Bird banding projects have included research of the California Gnatcatcher, Bahama Oriole, Lark Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, and Red-winged Blackbird, along with coordinating or assisting with MAPS banding stations (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship). He has taught ornithology classes at Victor Valley College, and bird banding classes at University of California, Riverside Extension. He also leads regular birding field trips and bird walks for the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society and the Wildlands Conservancy. He and his wife enjoy international travel, usually involving birding, to places such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Belize, Mexico, Australia, and Sri Lanka.

* The Desert Institute staff/instructors will attempt to accommodate participant's needs; however we reserve the right to deny a student participation in the course due to concerns regarding health and safety issues.