



## COMPENDIUM OF CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

### *Management of the North American Bird Banding Program*

**SUBJECT CATEGORY:**  
Biodiversity / Ecosystems

**TYPE OF AGREEMENT / INSTRUMENT:**  
Canada – United States

**FORM:**  
Memorandum of Understanding

**STATUS:**

- Signed by Canada: January 13, 2012
- In force in Canada: January 13, 2012
- In force internationally: January 13, 2012
- Ongoing: The USA and Canada have had a shared agreement on bird banding since 1923

**LEAD & PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:**  
**Lead:** Environment and Climate Change Canada  
**Partners:** U.S. Geological Survey

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

**Web Links:**  
[Bird Banding](#) website

**Contacts:**  
[ECCC Inquiry Centre](#)

**COMPENDIUM EDITION:**  
July 2022

#### PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

Bird banding is an important research tool used by ornithologists in the scientific study and monitoring of wild birds. Uniquely numbered metal bands placed on the leg of the bird, as well as other types of markers, allow tracking of individual birds throughout their lifetime as well as tracking of bird movements globally. Bird banding provides data vital for ornithological research, monitoring and conservation by contributing to basic scientific knowledge about birds and the environments in which they live. Bird banding studies help to monitor bird populations and ecosystem health, set waterfowl hunting regulations and protect endangered species.

Migratory birds are protected in Canada by the *Migratory Birds Convention Act and Regulations*. A permit issued by the Bird Banding Office is required to undertake bird-banding activities.

#### OBJECTIVE

Maintain a shared bird-banding program within North America to support ornithological research and monitoring in North America, leading to improved management and conservation of migratory birds.

#### KEY ELEMENTS

The Canadian Wildlife Service of ECCC and the US Geological Survey will work together to deliver a coordinated bird-banding program. Both countries support banders in their respective countries; manage data through a shared data management system; agree on standards for bird capture and marking; coordinate issuing of bird bands as well as reporting and outreach; and support enhanced analysis and use of data.

#### EXPECTED RESULTS

Clear roles and responsibilities for management of the joint program and strong support to scientists using bird-banding in their research

Coordinated efforts to support research involving bird-banding and enhanced use of data for research and management purposes.

Promotion of best practices in bird capture, handling and marking.

Enhanced reporting of marked birds.

## CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT

This agreement is important to Canada because it supports ornithological research, conservation and management within Canada and internationally.

This agreement is implemented in Canada in the context of the *Migratory Birds Convention Act* and its regulations as well as the *Species at Risk Act*.

The Bird Banding Office of the Canadian Wildlife Service issues permits, distributes bird-bands and manages data for banders operating in Canada.

Note that a separate entry in the compendium describes a Letter of Intent signed in 2015 highlighting ways that Canada, the USA and Mexico can work together to expand the program to Mexico.

## RESULTS / PROGRESS

### Activities

This is a continuing program in place since 1923. CWS provides leadership in bird marking in Canada, and internationally.

CWS manages over 1000 scientific banding permits annually. Permits are issued to qualified individuals with demonstrated ability to safely and accurately capture, handle and mark migratory birds. Banders include government biologists, researchers at universities, non-government organizations and the private sector, as well as skilled avocational banders ("Citizen Scientists").

The Bird Banding office leads the development of the Pan American Shorebird Program Shorebird Marking Protocol to coordinate marking shorebirds throughout the Western Hemisphere, and is now leading efforts to improve management of data from automated tracking and logging devices such as radio-tags, satellite tags and GPS loggers.

### Reports

Banding data are incorporated into many different reports by Environment and Climate Change Canada and scientific researchers. Analyses of data are reported in annual evaluations of the status of migratory game birds in Canada to support setting of hunting regulations.

### Results

In Canada, about 1000 banding permits are managed each year, with over 300,000 birds banded and 30,000 encounters of banded birds reported each year by banders and the general public.

All banding data gathered under this agreement by both the USA and Canada are managed in a shared database housed by the USGS. That database has over 70 million records of birds banded in North America, along with millions of encounter records for banded birds subsequently recaptured or resighted alive or recovered dead.

Banding office data are widely distributed to researchers throughout North America, and have been used in thousands of scientific publications, as well as contributing to conservation and management of migratory birds.