

## Advanced Bird Banding Biology X404.5

### Information

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Date/ Time: Wednesday, April 27, 6:00 – 8:00 pm  
Saturday, April 30, 7:00 am – 1:30 pm  
Saturday, May 14, 7:00 am - 1:30 pm

Meet at: [Whitewater Preserve](#) (click on link for a map of the meeting site)  
9160 Whitewater Canyon Rd, Whitewater, CA

Instructor: Stephen J. Myers

Assistants: John Green, Vesta Myers, Jennifer and Michelle Tobin, others

### Overview

This class will 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 ageing 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:** Biology X404.4 (Introduction to Bird Banding), or prior approval from the instructor. Basic bird identification skills 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, ageing, and sexing of birds.

### Itinerary

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#### Classroom Session - April 27

- Feather basics
- Molt terminology

- Molt strategies
- Molt limits
- Skull pneumaticization and skulling
- Measurements and morphometrics
- Color banding
- Blood and feather sampling
- MAPS banding
- Banding ethics and safeguards
- Treatment of injured or stressed birds

### Field Banding Sessions # 1 & 2 (April 30 and May 14)

**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.

### What to Bring to the Course

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- Snacks, drinks
- Water
- Hat
- Sunscreen
- Binoculars
- Conditions can vary from cold 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!)
- On May 14 (at the latest) bring your take home exam to turn in

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 a nearby eatery, for those that are interested.

### Fitness Requirements

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Participants must be in good physical condition for courses/activities in a desert that may be hot, dry, windy, and sometimes surprisingly cold.

### **Hike Level**

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Easy to Moderate

### **College Credit**

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If taking this course for 1.5 unit of Biology (X404.5) credit through the University of California Riverside Extension, written examination at end of class (50%) and participation in banding (50%) will determine your grade.

### **Guidelines**

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- You are responsible for your safety.
- Park your car in designated areas only. Parking along the side of the road is dangerous to you and the environment.
- Rattlesnakes are present in the desert. Avoid contact with wildlife. Put your hands and feet only where you can see them.
- Stay with the group. If you get lost, stay put.
- Before leaving the class, check out with the Desert Institute Representative.
- Drink plenty of water. If you run out, notify the instructor or the Desert Institute Representative.

### **Instructor Biography**

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Stephen J. Myers is semi-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.

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\* 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.