1.0 PREAMBLE:

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) describes the acceptable method for euthanasia of birds under field conditions during bird banding activities. Birds captured using mist nets are handled, banded and released unharmed. Under rare circumstances, a bird may become unusually injured to the extent that euthanasia represents the most appropriate and humane course of action.

2.0 PURPOSE:

This procedure ensures that a consistent method is used for the euthanasia of injured birds under field conditions during bird banding activities. This procedure is applicable whenever a bird is injured or found injured to the extent that euthanasia represents the most appropriate and humane course of action as determined by VIU SOP ACC-010 titled "Monitoring Stress and Injury in Birds during Bird Banding Activities."

3.0 SCOPE:

This procedure applies when a bird is injured or found injured to the extent that euthanasia represents the most appropriate and humane course of action. It applies to all personnel who may be involved in bird banding activities at Vancouver Island University (faculty, technicians, students, scientists, animal care and veterinary staff, members of the public approved to participate in banding activities).

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES:

Principal Investigators and/or Responsible Managers have overall responsibility for: ensuring that personnel are aware of and understand this policy/procedure.

All Personnel that work under Animal Use Protocols (AUPs) that cite this SOP are responsible for:

a. Familiarizing themselves with this policy/procedure;
b. Obtaining training for this procedure prior to conducting the procedure (if unsupervised).
5.0 APPROVED PROCEDURE:

5.1 Title of procedure:
Euthanasia of Birds during Bird Banding Activities

5.2 Definition of terms used in the Standard Operating Procedure
Bird banding: Technique used in the study of wild birds, by attaching a small, individually numbered, metal band to the leg, so that various aspects of the bird's life can be studied by the ability to re-sight or recapture the same individual later.

Injured bird: A bird displaying any observable injury including, but not limited to, predator-induced puncture wounds, broken limbs, broken neck or open wounds.

Mist net: Net used by ornithologists to capture wild birds for banding activities.

Near Passerines: Bird related to the passerines, which include species such as pigeons, owls, hummingbirds, kingfishers and woodpeckers.

Passerines: Birds of the order Passeriformes, which include species such as flycatchers, vireos, jays, crows, swallows, chickadees, nuthatches, wrens, kinglets, thrushes, warblers, sparrows, blackbirds and finches.

Raptors: Eagles, falcons, hawks, ospreys and owls.

Stressed bird: A bird displaying any observable sign of stress (see VIU SOP ACC-010 "Monitoring Stress and Injury in Birds during Bird Banding Activities"), in excess of what can be reasonably expected as part of regular bird banding activities.

5.3 Supplies and Equipment:
- Plastic bags, markers

5.4 Pre-Procedural Preparations and Examination of Animal:
During bird banding, wild birds (passerines and near passerines) are captured using mist nets, extracted, identified to species, banded and measured, and released unharmed and with minimal stress. On rare occasions, banding activities (especially capture) may result in significant injury to a bird to the extent that euthanasia represents the most appropriate and humane course of action.
Birds captured and handled as part of bird banding activities will be monitored continuously for signs of stress and injury in accordance with VIU SOP ACC-010 "Monitoring Stress and Injury in Birds during Bird Banding Activities."

If a bird is injured, is suffering and in pain, and does not appear likely to respond to professional rehabilitation treatment, then it should be euthanized. Cervical dislocation is the method approved by the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC, 2003, 2008) for birds up to 2 kg (i.e., birds typically captured with mist nets). This technique involves quickly stretching the neck to cause separation of the cervical vertebrae. Manual cervical dislocation is a humane technique for euthanasia of small birds when performed by individuals with a high degree of technical proficiency.

Cervical dislocation may upset the casual observer because animals, especially birds, may convulse for several seconds after death. These movements are due to spinal reflexes and the animals do not feel pain.

5.5 Procedure

If a bird is injured during bird banding activities, is suffering and in pain, and does not appear likely to respond to professional rehabilitation treatment, then it will be euthanized by cervical dislocation (AVMA, 2007).

1. Euthanasia will only be performed by the Bander-in-Charge (BIC), and well away from the public eye.

2. The bird must be handled gently and carefully to minimize distress to the animal as well as to the operator. Euthanasia must be conducted away from other birds and/or animals.

3. The base of the skull is held in one hand and the body is held at the base of the neck in the other hand. The head is then pulled forcefully and quickly (without twisting) away from the body to dislocate the neck vertebrae from the cranium to damage the lower brain region leading to rapid unconsciousness. This is achieved most humanely by using a rapid stretching motion to cause severance of the brain from the spinal cord and carotid arteries.

4. Upon completion of cervical dislocation, death must be verified and confirmed by: (a) observing for the absence of movement; (b) observing for the absence of
respiratory and heartbeat activity for at least 3 minutes; and, (c) checking eye and toe pinch reflexes.

5. A dead bird should be preserved in a freezer for future study skin preparation and/or necropsy, unless its condition warrants disposal. Birds preserved must be stored in plastic bags labelled with the date, location, species, any available measurements, name of personnel, and any relevant additional information. Preserved birds are stored in a freezer in the Biology Department and the appropriate VIU biology technician must be notified. Birds for disposal must be placed in a plastic bag and disposed in garbage with daily collection (e.g., Biology Department laboratory).

5.6 Post-procedural Follow-Up:
A record of all euthanasia will be kept and maintained as part of all bird banding activities using the form entitled "Report of Bird Banding Casualties" (see Section 7). The date, species, band number (if applicable), net or location found, name of personnel involved, bird status (observed signs of stress, injury or death), probable cause (if known), action taken, outcome, and any other pertinent information must be recorded.

The BIC will notify the VIU veterinarian to discuss any perceived issue of potential animal welfare with the bird banding activities.

5.7 Safety Equipment and Procedures:
N/A

5.8 Non-Conformance:
Any personnel determined to be improperly euthanasia of birds during bird banding will be considered in violation of the associated AUP and will be subject to VIU disciplinary procedure outlined in VIU Procedure 31.01.001 – Animal Care Committee - Section 5.

The VIU Animal Care Committee is authorized by the President of Vancouver Island University to halt any procedure where the committee considers that unnecessary or unforeseen pain or distress is being experienced by an animal, or where use deviates significantly from an approved protocol. Authority extends to humane destruction of the animal if it is considered that pain or distress of the animal cannot be alleviated. The institutional veterinarian is empowered to take the foregoing actions without
reference to the researcher or the committee if his/her professional judgement so warrants. (Section 2 of VIU Procedure 31.01.001).

6.0 RECORDS

Records to be completed include:

See section 5.6 for records required for each euthanasia event.

The number of euthanized birds will be reported annually on the VIU Animal Use Data Form (AUDF), along with the associated Report of Bird Banding Casualties forms.

7.0 FORMS

Forms to be completed include:

Report of Bird Banding Casualties (see VIU SOP ACC-010)

8.0 REFERENCES:


Associated SOP and documents:


9.0 AUTHOR CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Bander-in-Charge
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TITLE: Euthanasia of Birds during Bird Banding Activities

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REVISION LOG

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<tr>
<td>August 5, 2015</td>
<td>Dr. Eric Demers</td>
<td>Dr. Eric Demers</td>
<td>Minor revisions were applied, including to remove reference to “draft”, update references to other documents.</td>
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