

Greetings families and friends of Cascades Banding Camp program!

The Puget Sound Bird Observatory (PSBO) and Seattle Audubon Society are celebrating another successful week of Teen Bird Banding Camp! From August 3rd through 7th, twelve high school students (one came all the way from New Jersey!) participated in a week long program aimed at developing and improving young birders' banding and data collection skills. Data collected from this camp will be used to determine how birds use high-elevation moist meadows in a long-term study conducted by the Puget Sound Bird Observatory.

Day One: After a four hour drive over the Cascade mountains (including a quick stop for lunch outside Ellensburg), the teens are anxious to explore our new camp location. Previous banding camps were located near the Tieton River at both Minnie and Conrad Meadows. This year we had to change locations due to a wildfire in the vicinity of Conrad Meadows. Luckily, through scouting and advice from the Forest Service, the advance banding



Eric and Marissa place rebar and poles at a net site near Lake McDaniel

Camp team found the lovely (and wildfire-free) McDaniel Lake to serve as both our base camp and our banding site. McDaniel Lake is located at approximately 3500' elevation and is surrounded by a ponderosa pine forest. We soon discovered that this new location was a bird jackpot.

After the teens settled into camp and engaged in a few ice-breaker activities, banding instructor Dan Froehlich, led a group of newbies out to a nearby meadow to demonstrate mist-net lane selection and net set-up. Our nets were immediately productive, catching several Yellow-rumped warblers, a couple of Cedar Waxwings and a Hairy Woodpecker. With plenty of birds to observe, teens began to watch the instructors and TA's go through the banding, ageing and sexing process step by step. As a full moon began to rise, captured birds had to be released in order to find places to roost before night fell. Happy, but tired, teens retreated to camp listening to the howling coyotes in the distance.



Dan takes a group of newbies out to the meadow for a lesson on mist net set-up

Day Two: Our group of teens eventually emerged from their tents around 6am, the next morning. Sam, one of our teen TA's, was getting the grill ready for pancakes! After we had our fill, we headed over to the meadow to start opening nets. With only a few nets open that morning, we still managed to catch nearly 50 birds!! McDaniel Lake was proving to be the most productive site in the history of Banding Camp! Instructors, Don, Dan and Ben, and teen TA's, Sam and Lindsey, were kept very busy assisting the teens with the banding process.

Highlights included banding 11 Cassin's finches, several Red cross-bills, and a Williamson's sapsucker.

That night we put up some nets by the edge of the lake to try to catch one of the Common Nighthawks that we've been watching circle the lake each evening. We managed to catch one in our net, and all gathered around in the darkness to observe the bird's especially soft plumage, very wide caprimulgid mouth, and long wings, by flashlight.



Tristan gets a rare, close-up view of a Common Nighthawk



White-headed Woodpecker (one of the 5 woodpeckers we saw at camp)

Day Three: We awoke to cooler temperatures this morning, which provided a nice relief from the heat of the previous days. This day was one of the busiest banding camp has ever experienced! We banded a grand total of 84 birds!! We added two more woodpeckers to our banding list; Red-naped Sapsucker and the White-headed Woodpecker!

Today a forest ranger also came to talk with us about the nearby fires. The nearby Discovery fire is growing but

can't see any obvious signs of the fire. There is no smell of smoke and no smoke is visible, but the moon is now orange rather than yellow.

Another highlight was during dinner when we noticed a flock of Violet-green Swallows foraging over the lake. We rushed to open the nets by the water and managed to catch 11 of the swallows! All but one were juveniles. Dinner could wait...

Day Four:

After a late start (this morning was by the far the chilliest!), we discovered that the birds were also sleeping in! After a couple of net runs, things began to pick up and we were finally catching birds. The cold temps were also affecting birds as the teens were taking note of their low fat contents. We caught a few species with active brood

patches, indicating that some species were nesting late and feeding young.



Jake and Jacob waiting to catch swallows

Highlights included a

Brown Creeper, Hammond's Flycatchers, Pine Siskins, and Western Tanagers.



Keeping busy at the banding station



Comparison of both male and female Pine Siskin wings. Can you tell which is which?

Day Five: On our last day of camp, we headed to a higher elevation meadow, Cash Prairie (elev: 5980'). With the higher elevation came lower temperatures. We had to process birds fast to prevent cold stress. The prairie was full of birds and we had to release about 50 juvenile Dark-eyed Junco from the nets because we were already inundated with birds to process. New species banded included Hermit Thrush, Lincoln's Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Vesper Sparrow.



Break time at camp

After spending five days in the mountains among the birds, bugs, and a few coyotes, our group of teen campers developed valuable skills as budding scientists, birders and team players. Campers were also introduced to various bird anatomy concepts including skull ossification and feather molt. Campers also learned how to effectively communicate with one another during the extracting/banding process which required each camper's full attention to ensure both the safety of the bird and the accuracy of the data collected. This camp allowed teens to participate in a real, on-going scientific study of montane bird populations. This experience not only enhanced campers' avian field techniques, it also provided campers with a sense of importance knowing they contributed towards a large avian conservation effort.

Thank you for supporting this program and we will see you next year!

Contact the Puget Sound Bird Observatory or Seattle Audubon Society for more information

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Teen Banding Camp 2009

On log from left: Allie O-C., Tristan H., Collin V., Peter B., Jake W., Marissa W., Annie M., Lindsey P., Carly G., Eva A., Jacob K., Ben V-J., Eric S.

Back: Don N., Sam R.

