**What to Expect for New Volunteers at Iona Island Bird Observatory**

If you are new to bird banding, you’re in for an exciting experience! There are several different tasks which volunteers can help with, including scribing (recording data), extracting birds from mist nets, banding, and census. We don’t require a specific time commitment of volunteers but learning how to band and all the skills associated with it (handling birds, extracting birds, learning to determine age and sex, etc.) requires some time and dedication. We just ask that you remain patient and recognize that you cannot learn these skills in a day or two. Our banders are happy to train anyone who is committed and enthusiastic to learn. Early on, beginner volunteers will scribe (enter data), observe, and learn by watching the banders, and practicing handling. Once you get the hang of that (usually after a couple of sessions), you'll progress to extractions and applying bands to birds under supervision.

The spring banding season runs from mid April to late May while the fall season runs from late August to early October. Each shift begins approximately 80 mins before sunrise and lasts about 7.25 hours, so the time period changes as spring progresses.

Some things to know for your first outing include:

* Be prepared for a dynamic environment. Busy days at IIBO can include several volunteers, visitors and over 100 birds processed which can make for a fast-paced working environment with many moving parts. Make sure to let the banders know if you need to take a break.
* IIBO is located on the coast and as such, weather conditions can be quite temperamental at IIBO. Be prepared for cold, wet mornings, and changing conditions as the day progresses. Dress in layers and include wind and water resistant clothing.
* The ground can be muddy or wet so wear appropriate footwear (hiking boots or rubber boots).
* Please show up on time at the start of the shift because the park gates are otherwise locked until 7 am. The exact shift times will be indicated when you sign up.
* The Bander-in-Charge has the authority on site and you must attain their approval before taking part in any bird handling. Please do not touch any birds in the nets unless you are given authorization to do so.
* Be mindful of other volunteers. There’s a good chance you will not be the only volunteer present and everyone deserves an equal opportunity to learn and receive training.
* During banding, keep unnecessary conversation to a minimum and speak in quiet voices. Try not to make any loud noises in the banding hut as this can add stress to the birds.
* Please do not bring your pets to the station as they can be dangerous around captured birds.
* Access to the station requires a vehicle or bike. The closest skytrain station is Templeton, which is still about 7 km from the park entrance. Depending on where you live, there may be opportunities to carpool with other volunteers or staff. On our [website](http://wildresearch.ca/programs/iona-island-bird-observatory/) you can also find more information about the banding station, including directions, banding resources and reports.

Before your first visit to the station, please review our [IIBO Code of Conduct](https://wildresearch.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Iona-Island-Bird-Observatory-Code-of-Conduct.pdf) which lays out some ground rules for all personnel at IIBO. Bird safety is a top priority at IIBO and the [Bander’s Code of Ethics](http://nabanding.net/banders-code-of-ethics/), developed by the North American Banding Council, describes primary rules that should be considered during any banding operation. Please also review this code if you are new to banding.

Also, new prospective banders may want to take a look over the North American Bird Bander’s Study Guide: [http://www.nabanding.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/STUDYGUIDE1.pdf](http://www.nabanding.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/STUDYGUIDE1.pdf%20)