

Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Ringing Group

RINGING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Reviewed and Amended July 2017

Objectives

To assist in the monitoring of migrant birds in the recording area.

To assist in the monitoring of populations, productivity and survival of resident species in the recording area.

To contribute to national and international bird monitoring projects e.g. RAS, hirundine project etc.

To stimulate an interest in bird ringing as a scientific tool for studying birds.

To provide appropriate training to those wishing to train as a bird ringer and for visiting ringers.

Where activities are not detrimental to core activities in the recording area undertake ringing in adjacent areas.

Membership

A ringer who carries out the majority of their ringing at the observatory should be part of the group.

Group members must be members of Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust (SBBOT) so that insurances cover them whilst carrying out ringing activities.

Ringing Committee

The Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Ringing Group (SBBORG) Ringing Committee is a sub-committee of SBBOT established to oversee the ringing activities in accordance with British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and SBBOT guidelines.

The Ringing Committee will consist of the active A permit holders.

The Ringing Committee will meet at least twice a year.

The Ringing Committee will elect a Senior Ringer who will have overall responsibility for the group and represent the group on the SBBOT Council.

There will be a voluntary position of Ringing Secretary who will ideally hold an A permit.

There will be an annual meeting of all ringers.

The Ringing Committee may call an emergency meeting of ringers providing at least 48 hours' notice is given.

The Ringing Committee must approve any sites where SBBORG rings are to be used. They may remove permission if they feel the group objectives are not being met.

Conduct of Members

All members shall comply with the instructions in the Ringers Manual and its updates from the BTO both in spirit and to the letter.

Members shall abide by any codes of practice issued by the BTO and the national Ringing Committee.

They shall comply with the rules and procedures of SBBOT and SBBORG.

All members will keep records in the manner prescribed by the BTO and SBBORG.

No member shall make any statement purporting to represent the official SBBORG policy without authority from the Senior Ringer or the Ringing Committee.

In the course of their ringing activities members shall maintain cordial relations with other ringers and with the general public.

A copy of the ringing permit for each member must be kept in the ringing room.

Standard Ringing Procedures

The Estate is the core ringing area with the Whitehouse, Haven and Oasis taking priority.

An A ringer must be the Ringer in Charge (RiC) on the day. An experienced C permit holder from the group may run a session with agreement of the RiC. If no A permit holder is on the premises an experienced C permit holder from the group may run a session with the specific agreement of their trainer or the Senior Ringer. The name of the RiC plus other ringers present should be displayed on a whiteboard in the ringing room.

Birds known to be breeding nearby should be released immediately. If they are already ringed the ring number should be noted.

Ringing data will be recorded on the standard SBBORG ringing sheets and entered onto IPMR (or its successor) the same day. In the event of a large number of birds being ringed or overnight ringing the data should be entered within 2 days.

The nets used and traps set should be recorded on the daily ringing sheet straight after setting.

Mist nets must be taken down and stored in labelled bags and with all other equipment returned to the Observatory at the end of each session. In certain circumstances, agreed in advance with the Senior Ringer or Ringing Secretary, nets may remain but must be storm furlled and the fact recorded on the whiteboard in the ringing room.

Details of activities will be recorded on the daily tick sheet.

Totals of birds caught will be recorded on the totals sheet in the front of the current ringing file and on the daily ringing sheet in the Observatory.

Unless necessary for description purposes no flash photography or videoing of any bird will be allowed.

Other photography will only be allowed if the RiC is sure that holding the bird for photographs will not cause undue stress to the bird or delay the processing of other birds.

Sound Lures

No luring is allowed during the breeding season without specific endorsement from the BTO.

Use of sound lures at the south end of the Estate should only occur after consultation with the Warden.

When in use at the south end sound lures will not be used at the north end until the Warden has completed the daily bird count.

Bird Bags

Birds must be carried one to a cotton bag except with the express permission of the RiC. Bags should be carried in front of the ringer above waist height. Ringers should use karabiners on a neck loop. Care must be taken to avoid overloading a clip as this could lead to birds overheating or to be smothered. Birds with sharp claws or strong bills should be hung separately.

Bags should be washed at regular intervals, debris having been emptied out.

BTO guidance states that sick or injured birds must not be ringed. If a bird with a condition such as “bumble foot” is inadvertently brought back to the ringing room the bag must be put aside to be washed and the ringer must clean their hands.

Health and Safety

Risk assessments should be prepared and regularly updated for all activities and a copy kept in the ringing room.

Ringers should follow the hygiene guidelines in chapter 12 of the Ringers Manual.

In particular it is recognised that refreshment is needed during ringing sessions and care must be taken to ensure that ringers take adequate refreshment and breaks.

There should be no food on the ringing desk. There will be a small picnic table away from the ringing desk for this purpose.

Outstations

Prior consent from landowners and the SBBORG Ringing Committee must be obtained for ringing outside the Estate. Any relevant letters of permission and copies of ringing permits must be carried.

Copies of all such permissions must be kept in the ringing room.

When ringing at night a ringer must be accompanied.

When ringing over water a minimum of three people (including two experienced ringers) must be present. This should increase to four for beach ringing over water.

All equipment should be cleaned if necessary and returned to the appropriate place in the Observatory within 12 hours.

Biometrics

Once the suitability of the condition of the bird has been assessed the following should be recorded:

- Species
- Age
- Sex (if applicable)
- Wing length (maximum chord to the nearest millimetre)
- Fat score (0-8)
- Pectoral muscle score (0-3)
- Weight
- Date
- Time of processing (using 5 minute intervals)
- Trapping site and sub-site
- Ringers initials
- Checkers initials
- Molt (BTO code)

For some species and individuals other relevant biometrics may be required. This may include brood patch, cloacal protuberance, feather notches and emargination, OGC (old greater coverts).

The RiC may decide to reduce the taking of this data if they consider it would be detrimental to the bird.

Retraps

If a retrap/control is found with growths, ticks, breaks (old or new), deformities etc, the ring number and deformity/injury should be noted in the casualty file.

Any non-breeding birds wearing a ring must be taken back to the ringing site and processed. The exceptions to this rule, when the bird should be released immediately, are if the ringer is certain that the bird has been ringed or retrapped within the previous 24 hours or if the welfare of the bird demands this. If possible the ring number should be recorded. It is good practice to carry a note of the current AA, A and B rings.

For controls (birds ringed elsewhere and recaptured by us) the ring must be read by two ringers and the ringing scheme and ring number carefully recorded. If only one ringer is present they may get a non-ringer to read the ring.

Rarities

If a rarity flies into a net or trap it may be ringed once identified.

The bird's welfare is paramount and handling must be kept to the minimum required for scientific purposes.

The Warden and Senior Ringer should be notified immediately if contactable.

On return to the Observatory the Warden or a Trustee present should be asked to notify others to enable the RiC to concentrate on processing the bird.

The RiC may close the ringing room to other observers whilst the bird is processed.

The description should be recorded on the standard BTO ringers form with the appropriate measurements. Blank copies of the form will be kept in the ringing room. Once completed a copy should be kept in the file in the ringing room and one given to the Warden.

The RiC should also ensure a suitable photographic record is taken of all BBRC and KOS rarities (the latter includes Common Redpoll and unusual races of commoner species) to support the description. A copy should be given to the Warden. If a flash photograph is required for a description care must be taken to allow time for the bird's eyes to readjust before release.

The RiC will decide which ringer rings the bird.

The RiC must use his/her judgement as to whether the bird can be photographed by others.

The release site must take into consideration the provision of suitable shelter and the likelihood of avoiding retrapping.

If a rarity is found in the local area three days must be allowed for viewing before catching is attempted. If it is felt capture of the bird might provide essential information before this time permission from the Warden, or a Trustee in the Warden's absence, plus that of the Senior Ringer, or Ringing Secretary in their absence, must be obtained.

Casualties

Although the incidence of casualties is very rare we do need to record any instance of injury to birds so that we can check our procedures to avoid reoccurrence.

Any such incidents should be logged on the sheet available in the ringing room.

Training

Potential trainees must be offered a trial period of up to 3 months before officially applying for a trainee permit. The BTO trainee tick list should be worked through at this time.

Despite being officially attached to one trainer, training will be shared by all A permit holders.

If a trainer wishes to put forward a ringer for advancement they must first obtain the agreement of the Ringing Committee.

As part of the training process there should be an annual review prior to the end of November. Each trainee and C ringer should download the forms from the BTO website and arrange a mutually convenient

time to go through this with their trainer. If such a time is not available the Senior Ringer should be contacted so that they can implement the review.

Individual ringers must take responsibility for keeping up to date records of their ringing activities.

Equipment

SBBOT provides funding for basic equipment, nets, traps and rings.

The Senior Ringer must organise an annual stock take.

Qualified ringers should be encouraged to purchase their own equipment where practical.

Maintenance

All members of the group are responsible for the upkeep and repair of equipment.

Where practical broken side or shelf strings should be repaired in situ the same day. If this is not possible details must be recorded on the ringing tick sheet.

There will be regular Estate work days away from the migration period. All ringers should attend these when feasible.

Care must be taken to inform the Trustee responsible for the Conservation Work Team of planned activities.

The Ringing Room

The room must be kept locked when ringers are not in situ. SBBORG A ringers will hold the key. A master key will be held in the main Observatory office. A spare key should also be held by the Senior Ringer for lending to visiting experienced A ringers who are familiar with the group's procedures. The Ringing Committee may consider allowing experienced group C permit holders to hold a key.

General visitors to the Observatory should be made welcome to observe ringing where it does not impinge on the safety of the birds or the efficient running of the operation.

All ringers should ensure the cleanliness and tidiness of the room.

Visiting Ringers

All permit holders are welcome but must bring a copy of their permit. Qualified A ringers must still be accompanied by an experienced group member to gain familiarity with procedures. If, in the opinion of at least two Ringing Committee members, a visiting A ringer is familiar with the procedures they may be allowed to run a ringing session.

Visiting C and T permit holders will ideally be accompanied by an experienced A ringer. Failing this an SBBORG A ringer must take responsibility but not at the expense of his/her own trainees.

Standards

If there is a complaint about the conduct of a ringer the Ringing Committee will consider what action should be taken and if necessary a verbal warning will be issued. Any action will be notified to the SBBOT Council Chairperson and the person making the complaint. If the complaint is still not resolved then a formal written warning will be issued and a copy sent to the BTO ringing office and to the SBBOT Council Chairperson.

In an extreme case the Ringing Committee, in consultation with the SBBOT Council Chairperson, may temporarily suspend a ringer until the matter is resolved.

If a group ringer has any other concern or complaint they should first raise it with their trainer or, if not appropriate, another member of the Ringing Committee. If they are not satisfied with the outcome then their concern should be put in writing to the Senior Ringer or Ringing Secretary. If they are still not satisfied they can raise it with the SBBOT Council Chairperson.

Ideally concerns will be dealt with in-house but as a final resort ringers are free to raise them with the officers of the BTO.

Complaints from external sources must be referred to the Senior Ringer or Ringing Secretary and the SBBOT Council Chairperson.

Warden

The Warden must be informed of the pattern of captures, what activities are planned and any unusual sightings.

July 2017 amendment

In view of the potential for misinterpretation of activities there follows clarification of the position with regard to access to ringing areas such as the Whitehouse.

The basic rule has been that when ringing is taking place no-one, apart from ringers and the warden, should enter the Whitehouse paddock.

If a person or group wishes to enter the paddock whilst ringing is underway it may be possible under certain circumstances.

1. The ringer in charge must give consent.
2. Where appropriate a senior ringer will accompany them.
3. The nets are checked first by another ringer to ensure that there are no potential misinterpretations.
4. There is no photography of any form.

The birds' safety is paramount and there is no obligation to give consent.

Agreed by ringing committee Feb 2015