

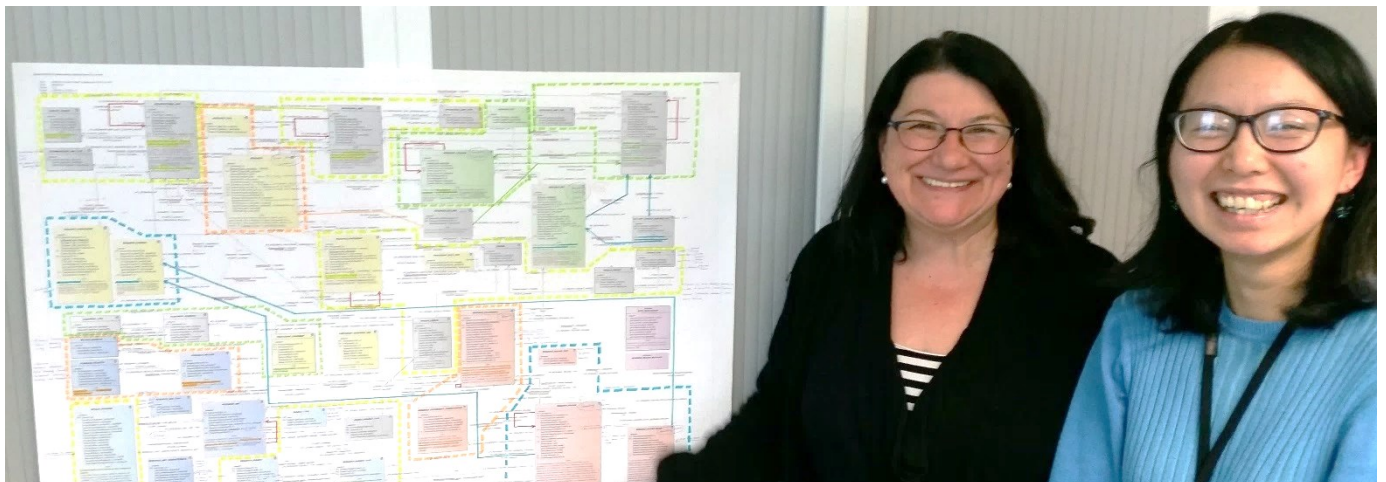
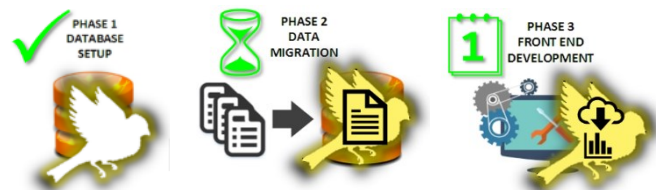
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## Banding Banter

Thanks to the continuing interest and feedback from the Banding Community, *BirDBand* has reached its 7<sup>th</sup> edition! Previous newsletters can be downloaded from the bird banding webpages of [Department of Conservation](#) and [BirdsNZ](#).

## We have a new (empty) Bird Banding Database!!

The Department of Conservation has reached the first milestone in the rebuild of the Bird Banding Database. Following the data architecture principle “data is an asset”, the DOC Data Architect has designed a fit-for-purpose **data schema** incorporating all requirements and specifications. This model was used to build a new master banding database, “BANDM”, concluding **Phase I** of the roadmap, with BANDM being hosted in the Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud. **Phase II** will undertake identification, inspection and correction of all historic banding data from various data sources, followed by **data migration** into BANDM. It is very encouraging to see an increase in data submissions – proof of the banding community’s engagement with this ambitious project. While still on the horizon, we are all looking forward to **Phase III** and subsequent phases, when an **online interface** will be developed to enable direct data upload and reporting, facilitating data analysis, sharing and publishing, as well as smarter data collection in the field.



DOC’s Dušanka Mladenović (Data Architect) and Jing “Yoyo” Zhou (Data Analyst) working on BANDM

## *Bird colonisers – Sandy Bartle*

In December 1964, while sunning myself on the rocky shore of Aorangi, Poor Knights Is, some 24 miles out to sea, I was surprised to see about 4 ducks very high above me, heading due east, nearest land Chile! They were from the mainland and looked like mallards, but they were so high that they were at the very limit of visibility, even with binoculars! Maybe 1000 m or more.

If you look at the evolutionary history of remote island ducks, like the Laysan teal (remote NW Hawaiian Is), the now endemic duck derived from the Northern pintail that is now sedentary on Kerguelen, the extinct Auckland (and Chatham) Is Mergansers, not to speak of the myriad of extinct ducks on islands all over the world, you will see it is in the nature of these powerful fliers to seek out new habitats and colonise them. Also the Nene on Hawaii (derived from Canada Geese).

Only rails are better at doing that – someone once wrote an essay once on their unbelievably fast evolution into flightless forms entitled “fear of flying”. Once wetland birds do reach a safe island home it’s better that they don’t fly/get blown off it!

But Storrs Olson once calculated that something like 30% of a bird’s energy intake is involved with maintaining their pectoral muscles, so if they can shrink these down fast they can survive better on less food, through droughts, and eat lower-grade plant material - as our flightless Kakapo and Takahe do. Derek Onley once reckoned that some Australian birds like Welcome Swallows go through genetic changes at the population level that lead to increased rates of colonisation (wandering). He’s got huge numbers of records of Welcome Swallows flying at sea without much hope of finding a new home. And Zosterops took a long time to colonise Australia and NZ from SE Asia compared to their endemic forbears now isolated on separate African mountain systems (Moreau: Ibis).

Mind you, most strays that reach NZ from Australia are waterbirds and even among these the ones most likely to occur here are the weaker fliers i.e. they DO get blown out to sea, seemingly, and only the strong ones can fly back. Hence few Pelicans and Wedge-tailed eagles but a plethora of the weakest hovering raptor, the Nankeen Kestrel. But all the Cattle Egrets must fly back since they don’t breed here. Most NZ specimens ( $\pm$  90%!) are juvenile one-year old birds (Te Papa specimens).

## *Relatively grey ducks – Murray Williams*

Dr. Murray Williams has recently published a paper in [Notornis](#): The changing relative abundance of grey duck (*Anas superciliosa*) and mallard (*A. platyrhynchos*) in New Zealand.

“The records summarised in this paper derive from the most extensive historic and contemporary accounts of grey ducks and mallards in New Zealand. They indicate that, historically (up to c. 1980), grey ducks were sufficiently abundant to be encountered readily in the field and successfully hunted over much of New Zealand. Post-1980, however, they have dwindled to the point where many hunters and field observers rarely encounter them, and when they do, there is uncertainty about what is being viewed. Ducks perceived to be grey ducks, and many designated as mallards too, may not necessarily be so.”

This is an excellent example of how banding data can be used to examine historic trends. Murray spent many hours sifting through old paper records at National Archives and in the Banding Office to collate data that are not available electronically. An interesting comparison between the species as reported by the bander and the hunter (see Appendix 1 in the paper) was possible only by trawling through thousands of letters submitted by the hunters. His sage advice to “never throw anything away” holds very true for banding records – the value of these may only be realised decades after the data was collected.

Murray journeyed, in his search, right back to the very beginning of *organised* bird banding in New Zealand...the banding of ducks in the Manawatu in 1947 by Ron Balham from the Wildlife branch of Internal Affairs Dept. He encountered a problem in the field though because he began to realise that many of the mallard ducks he was capturing were those newly released by Acclimatisation Societies in their attempt to establish the mallard everywhere in New Zealand. It was as a result that Balham agitated for all released birds to be banded, and banding records be maintained by the Wildlife Branch – a requirement that persists to this day and extends to all species. Such is history.

## Have you read...? NZNBBS Bird Bander's Manual pg 37

### Specifications of bands

The most important factor in determining band size is how well a band fits on the tarsus of a bird. A band must not be so large that it can slip over the 'ankle' and onto the foot (or over the 'knee' if being used on the tibia), and at the other extreme must not constrict the leg. The legs of many species are not cylindrical but laterally flattened, and bands may, depending on band size, also end up elliptical in shape. Ideally, a band should fit closely to a bird's leg, such that it can move freely up and down (not necessarily over the whole length of the tarsus), and be rotated slightly from side to side. Very loose fitting bands may be subject to increased wear on the inside of the band, and there may be a greater risk of a thorn or twig getting trapped between the band and the leg. While the ideal band for any bird will fit closely with limited movement on the leg, in practice it is difficult to achieve this on all species, as the range of band sizes would be too large to be practical and the cost of manufacturing such a range would be excessive.



The range of band sizes used is inevitably a compromise, designed to provide a range of sizes giving a satisfactory fit for as many species as possible. A satisfactory fit, in this context, can be defined as a band that will either fit closely around the tarsus, with limited movement up and down and from side to side, or that has an internal diameter not more than one-third greater than the maximum diameter of the leg. If the correct band size is fitted to a bird in the correct manner, no injuries should result. However, all banders should be aware that problems may occur and ensure that band fit is checked when any birds are recaptured (Berggren & Low 2004). Problems have been encountered in New Zealand when bands were incorrectly fitted by untrained personnel and/or bands sprung open after banding, thereby resulting in the band catching on the leg (Moore 2003). Any problems regarding band fit, opening of bands due to the springiness of the metal and so on should be reported to the Banding Office.

We are in the process of updating the Bird Bander's Manual. If there are any aspects of the manual that you would like to see improved, please contact the Banding Office: [bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz](mailto:bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz)

### Adventures in bird-banding - Edin Whitehead

Kia ora! My name is E-148711, although most people call me Edin. I was banded at Tawharanui Open Sanctuary in November 2017. Rule number one: only let someone you trust anywhere near you with banding pliers. In this case, it was me.

Last year for my Master's research, I worked with glorious Grey-faced petrels. They're beautiful birds with big sharp hooked beaks, and after following their breeding cycle from courtship to chick-rearing, I had banded a *lot* of birds, mainly under the watchful eye of Graeme Taylor. After a stand-out session where I banded 69 chicks (GT did the 70<sup>th</sup>!) in the space of a day and a half (it does wonders for your grip strength), I decided something. Bands are a life-long commitment for these birds, and it's our duty to make sure they're perfectly fitted so that they won't cause the birds any trouble. So I decided to band myself.



To answer the question I always get asked – No, it is not punched through my ear cartilage. I'm not that much of a hard case! It comes off so I can clean it, because being a seabird biologist means I'm often covered in dirt from inserting myself down burrows. And the other question I always get asked "Does Michelle know?!?". Yes. She was there when I banded myself.

If you use bands for ANY purpose (banding birds or otherwise), you **MUST** inform the Banding Office. The new database even has a code for "other use".

In doing this, I've picked up on a few things. One – not all bands are perfect. Some come off the string warped, the edges are sharp, or there are little metal burrs on them from where they've been cast. It's really important to check these things before you put that band on a bird – I've spent evenings filing down strings of bands to make sure there's no sharp edges that might cause injury. I've had to file down the edges of my own band. That's why I wear it – to remind me that these bands are the work of minutes (or seconds) for us, but they're on the birds for life, and we need to make sure they're absolutely perfect before we send them on their way.

## Sid the Drake - Sophie Osborne

Sid was shot and wounded on the battle fields in Te Aroha on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010. He was captured and cuddled by myself Sophie Osborne aged 14. Sid the drake was shot in the burn, he was fat and fluffy and looked healthy. He was friendly at the time and was very handsome. He was plucked and eaten on the 9-5-10 and was yummy.

Sid the Drake was very skinny.

I kept Sid's thing that was around his leg.

## My Memories - Jack Taylor

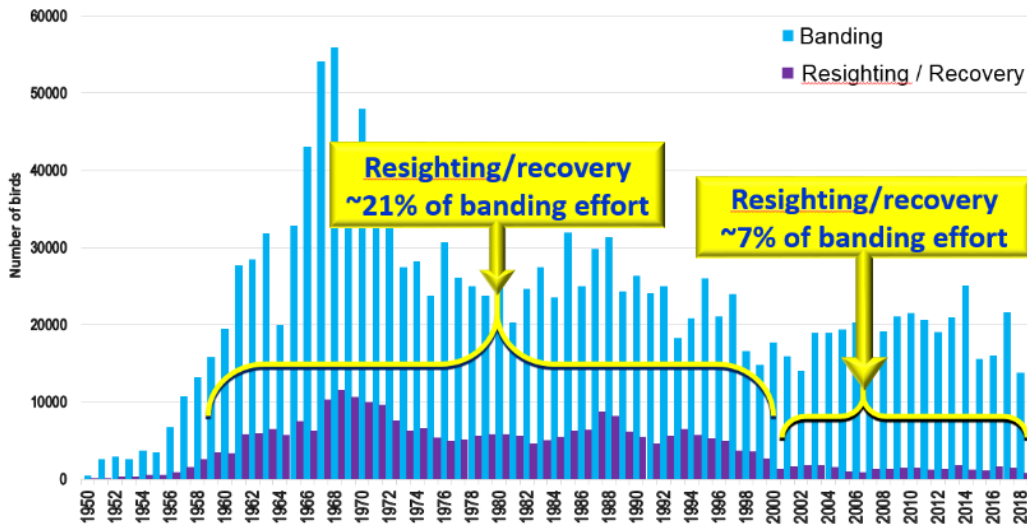


I have belonged to the OSNZ for about 60 years. My earliest memory of being fascinated by birds and flying was when I was about 4 or 5 years old. A friend of the family was a high country musterer who at that time was paid five shillings for kea beaks. This friend brought home the wings of one bird and had them stretched out on a shed wall to dry. After several weeks on the wall my temptation to fly with them got the best of me. So, with a huge effort I got them off the wall and climbed a pine tree behind the shed. I don't know how high I got but by the bump when I hit the ground it was pretty high. From memory I got two flaps in with the wings but it made no help on softening the landing. For sure I didn't try a second time.

I could be almost certain I would be the only one who has eaten sparrows. My mother was of Scottish descent. Her father came here in the mid 1800's. Her mother was born here but they both lived here in very difficult times. If they became short of food they were accustomed to making meals out of the strangest things. So my mother did likewise, and sparrows became a meal several times. The technique required a cold day with a good patch of chaff in front of the stables. Then get somebody with a shot gun. Preparing them was a bit messy but they were always stewed over an open fire in a black billy. Sparrows were only one of the strange things she taught us to make a meal of if necessary.

OSNZ member and bird watchers in general are always interesting people and are no different to look at. But some people think we are somehow different. One day a few years ago we had a young Swiss friend staying with us. Brian Bell had a group of about ten members and said he would call in about 3pm on a certain day. For several days the Swiss lad talked about their coming visit. When the day did come we had a cup of tea and a walk around before they continued on their way. After a while the Swiss lad, who hadn't been with us all the time, came up and said, "when do the bird watchers come?" I said, "that group was the bird watchers". After a couple of minutes with a surprised look on his face he said, "**But they looked normal!**".

## Band recoveries – Chris Challies



I have just seen your note in the latest *Birds New Zealand* about the banding scheme. Here is a possible explanation for the changes you mentioned in the ratio of numbers of birds banded and recovered.

Early in the scheme's existence most of the banding was done by non-researchers who did so in the hope it would produce some useful information, mainly from dead recoveries. There was a recreational element to this, and even competition between individuals to band the most birds or species in a year. Over the years bird banding has matured and it is now a project based research tool. Many, if not most, present studies have a sizable live capture component with these recoveries being retained and analysed within the project's data base. What you have observed, I think, is a shift from the banders not having a direct interest in their recoveries and passing them on to the scheme to the banders having a professional interest in their recoveries and retaining them. In my case I have long recovered more previously banded birds in a year than I have banded in that year, sometimes twice as many.

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The new database has been designed to cater for all banding and recovery records, including data such as microchips, morphometrics, moult, nest records, etc. A data sharing moratorium ensures that data will be suitably classified. We encourage the submission of all data associated with bird marking and are working towards an on-line interface that will enable direct data upload as well as data extraction and reporting.

## BirdsNZ banding workshop – Michelle Bradshaw

The banding and mist-netting workshop held at Russell Orongo Bay Holiday Park following the BirdsNZ Conference provided a great opportunity for hands-on experience. The training materials were again put to good use, especially during rainy weather. I would like to extend a huge acknowledgement and thanks to Les Feasey, as well as to the Level 3 trainers that generously offered their time and expertise: David Melville, John Stewart, Mike Bell, Kevin Parker, Paul Cuming and Troy Makan. Wendy Ambury's excellent catering ensured that mealtimes were a highlight.

Who would be interested in a banding workshop at the next BirdsNZ Conference?

Please contact [bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz](mailto:bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz)



## *It started with a sparrow – Lance Kevey*

My “adventure” with the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme (NZNBBS) began back in March 2016. I'd gone to Wellington Zoo to get some photos of the lions, but as luck would have it: only one Female was just visible, so that (as they say) was that! But: just as I was about to leave, a Sparrow landed on the fence right in front of me... so I photographed it! (What else should you do when a bird lands right in front of you and you have a camera in your hand?).

That evening, I decided to add the Sparrow photo to my Flickr web page, and whilst doing so, noticed for the first time that the bird had a Band on its ankle. “So what?” I carelessly thought, and never gave the matter another thought... However, someone else gave it some thought, because the next morning I was surprised to discover that a Flickr Friend in North Carolina(!) had noticed the Band and was asking, “Who would want to track a common Sparrow?” Another Flickr Friend suggested I try contacting the Department of Conservation in central Wellington - which I did and to my pleasant surprise, was connected to Sandy and Michelle at the NZNBBS Desk!

As it turned out, the Band on “my” Sparrow’s leg couldn’t be read, but at least that bird raised my awareness of the Bird Banding scheme... Except that...: I have to admit that it didn’t really lead to very much at the time. Oh yes: for a while, I looked out for birds wearing a Band on their legs, and I did stumble across a couple of Gulls at Seaview and Day’s Bay respectively, but for a variety of reasons, I never quite got around to forwarding those photos to the Banding Office, and before long the Banding Scheme had been erased from my Memory Banks!

Fast forward to April 2018; that’s when a Newsletter from NZNBBS arrived in my E-Mail In-Box, and with it came a little article about three Mallards that had flown from the Waikato to New Caledonia! (Who would have thought that Mallards would or could fly such a distance?). So I sent a brief note off to Michelle, stating that this was an interesting article – and on the spur of the moment added a postscript which simply said, “I’m about to retire shortly. Do you have any work for a Volunteer?” To my surprise, Michelle replied almost immediately; her e-mail in effect said, “Yes we do. When can you start?”

And so it came about that in mid-June 2018, I began my “work” with NZNBBS – and it is fascinating! Initially, Michelle offered five options; I chose to work my way through something like 2,000,000 Bird Banding sighting reports, scanning native and introduced bird reports, and separating the Game Bird reports into a separate pile! Numerous reports of game birds with a band on their leg are sent in by duck shooters during the season (which is wonderful!) but wading through all those reports can be just a little tedious. However, you never can tell. The story of [Sid The Drake’s demise](#) shows that some intriguing stories can come out of Game Bird Band sightings! But it’s the reports of band sightings that have come in from Canada, America, Russia, Japan, China, Vietnam and Australia that are at times really quite astonishing...!

49003 - Sid The  
Drake shot on  
batterfields of  
Te Aroha - 8/5/2010

038826 - Red Knot flew  
from Miranda to  
Yangtze River Estuary... a  
9384km flight. Reported  
by East China Waterbird  
Group. Killed for food,  
feathers and ceremonial  
reasons.

So I’m enjoying scanning the banding reports because I get to read about some of the [amazing feats](#) that these little feathered creatures achieve - and after two months I’ve now “only” got another 1,999,300 or so files to scan (which is fine ‘cause I’m in no hurry!). But it’s quite amazing to think that my “adventure” with NZNBBS started with a little Sparrow at Wellington Zoo...!

49148 - Albatross  
off Chile

83 - Sooty  
Shearwater found  
dead at Manzanita  
Oregon USA

49066 - Bar-tailed  
Godwit at Himehama  
Beach, Kagawa,  
Japan

## Quote me

**The goal is to turn data into information, and information into insight**

Carly Fiorina, former executive, president, and chair of Hewlett-Packard Co.

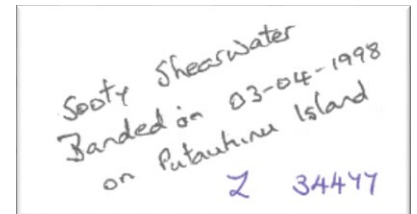
*Data! Data! Data!  
I can't make bricks  
without clay!*

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

## From the Archives - Lance Kevey

### A LESSON FROM A SOOTY SHEARWATER

Back in 1998, a Sooty Shearwater chick (better known as a Muttonbird) had a Leg Band attached while on Putauhinu Island. Just a few months later, the bird got itself tangled in a fishing net off the coast of Tasmania. Fortunately, the fisherman was able to free the entrapped bird, noted it was wearing a leg band (and later reported it), and the bird flew off - never to be heard of again... right? Wrong!



The banding database indicates that the same bird got caught in another fishing net - this time, in the Northeast Pacific! The strange thing is... this apparently happened on the *same day*! Now, before we marvel at the feat of this young bird flying over 9,000 km in less than a day, we should perhaps consider alternative explanations.

So, we have two records of the same bird being caught in a fishing net on the same day, one near Tasmania (at 41° South), and one near Japan (at 41° North) at the same Longitude. It seems trawling through the Archives is a valuable exercise in highlighting potential errors, such as recording the Latitude as "South" (the default) as opposed to "North" (the correct one in this case).

This bird hasn't been sighted again to this day, but hopefully, it has simply learnt its lesson and is staying away from fishing vessels...!

(Now if only those recording data could learn a lesson or two from this bird...)

## Website updates

Please keep an eye out for changes and updates on our Bird Banding website. The updated [Price List](#) and [Order Form](#) are available for download. Additional updates in the near future will include an updated [Certification Application form](#) and [New Data Template](#).

The [Reporting a Bird Band](#) webpage will be entirely updated, as well as the forms for [reporting band recoveries](#).

**Birds are delicate so be careful – Eli, Aiesha & Mieke**

Inspiring and teaching the next generation of bird banders can be as challenging as it can be rewarding.

Using the bird puppet training materials, an old mist-net, and lots of coloured strips of cardboard, it was possible to keep 25 6-9 year-old kids at Nova Montessori School entertained for at least an hour.

They even remembered learning about unique numbers on metal bands, how to record colour band combinations, bird handling and licences (Banding Certification).

Dear Michelle Thank you for Teaching us about bird banding. it Was a fun Time. It was cool Learning about The licenses. It was fun Learning about That each Band has To Be Unique. It Was Amazing Learning The rules. It was wonderful Learning The game. Because It Was a challenge for me Lots of Love Aiesha



Dear Michelle I saw a bird with a colour band. I love from Eli



Dear Michelle thank you for coming to Nova montessori, and teaching birdbanding. I enjoyed learning the rules of birdbanding. Below I have listed them

Numbers	They are unique so you know which bird is which
Gentley	birds are delicate so be careful
Licence	you need a licence to do birdbanding
Banders grip	you hold a bird this way

Love From Mieke



## The puzzle of two letters

A few weeks ago, the Banding Office received an odd email. It was very strange; almost like some sort of poem. Maybe it was hoax as we get several of those, so we thought nothing more of it until last week we received another one. Can you help us figure out what these letters mean?

Here is the first letter:

Kiwi in night's gloom. Sightings highlight active gannets. Not unknown: metal bands enhance research studies. Always report errors. DOC ensures children learn interesting new information: Nature's Guardians!

And here is the second letter:

Strange owls were always over head. Obscure pied grebe adeptly escaped. Ibis can undoubtedly identify certain edibles. Silvereyes undeterred; endangered penguins swagger as stilts jump oddly by.

We hope you can help us!

## Answers to BirDBanD 6 Quiz

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/bird-banding/>

<p><b>1. What is the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme's email address?</b> C. bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz</p>	<p><b>2. What is the price of a Hip Pocket Spiral All-Weather Notebook no. 146 (excluding GST)?</b> A. \$10.00</p>
<p><b>3. How many BirDBanD newsletters have been produced (excluding this one)?</b> B. 5</p>	<p><b>4. How many different types of colour band/marks are listed in the Colour Band Survey (excluding 'other')?</b> B. 10</p>
<p><b>5. What banding certification level do you need to have to be able to purchase bird bands from the NZNBBS?</b> C. Level 3</p>	<p><b>6. The Banding Advisory Committee is made up of:</b> C. Representatives of the banding community (DOC, Universities, Museums, Fish &amp; Game, CRIs and Birds NZ)</p>
<p><b>7. If you find a live banded bird, you should</b> D. Report it using the online reporting form or email the Banding Office</p>	<p><b>8. How often do banders need to submit their Banding Schedules?</b> A. At least annually</p>
<p><b>9. What is the code used for the first marking (the primary mark) of a banded bird on the new data template (the template that replaces the previous Banding Schedule and Banding Recovery spreadsheets)?</b> B. 1</p>	<p><b>10. In the new data template Latitude and Longitude should be recorded using</b> B. Decimal Degrees</p>
<p><b>11. There is a photo of a non-game bird band – what is the band number?</b> D. R-44502</p>	<p><b>12. In what year did all New Zealand banding schemes merge into a single New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme?</b> B. 1967</p>