



## Work Procedures for Haparanda Sandskär Bird Observatory

All staff members are required to read and comply with the Observatory's work procedures and program, as well as the rules and regulations governing Haparanda Skärgård national park, and Message T 159 from the Ringing Centre, dealing with bird diseases. The site manager (*platschef*), ringer in charge (*ansvarig märkare*), assistants (*assistenter*) and trainees (*praktikanter*) must, prior to commencing work, sign a statement confirming that they have read and understood the documents listed above and agree to conduct the work in accordance with those documents. All required information should be available in the Station Map. The ringer in charge must also be acquainted with the handbook for ringers (*Handbok för ringmärkare*). The information can be found either in the station binder (*Stationspärm*) or station binder 2 (*Stationspärm 2*). The site manager is responsible for ensuring that all staff members meet this obligation. A list of site managers, ringers in charge and assistants can be found in the station binder.

**Bird safety must be the key focus of any work.**

### **Daily Activities**

1. Standard ringing. See instructions below.
2. Ringing demonstrations for visitors. See instructions below.
3. Staff meeting to summarize the day's observations and discuss other matters.
4. Entry of ringing, re-trap and net hour data into the Fagel-3 program, and proofreading of that data.
5. The ringing record for the day are exported via Excel sheets to Artportalen. Note that the names of co-markers should also be registered. (See special instruction!).
6. Other observations of birds are to be summarized and exported via Excel sheets to Artportalen. Note that the names of co-markers should also be registered. (See special instruction).
7. Writing of a diary entry and uploading this every day to the bird observatory's Facebook page. The daily report should be a section of the daily diary entries to be written by staff, or coincide fully with this diary. See special instruction.
8. Filling out of forms in the field binder and on the station computer/station binder list. See instructions below.
9. Completion of rarity reports for any rare-bird sightings (the reports must be completed the day of the sighting).
10. Observation and recording of weather data once a day.

## ***Ringling Instructions***

### **Ringling (also known as Banding)**

In order to be able to draw conclusions from our ringling, it is important that as many factors as possible be kept the same from year to year. For that reason, certain routines have been standardized.

Since 2003 all ringling is now done at Sydön and has mainly taken the form of autumn activity (July – October). The net locations have been standardized and are marked 1 to 10 on a map in the field binder. There are 24 standard nets and 8 alternative nets. The alternative net sites are marked A1 to A4 on the field binder map. Up to a further four alternative sites may also be used. They will initially be mobile sites (R1-R4). Look in the field binder for more information about these nets.

Wader cages may be placed at suitable locations along the shores of the peninsula where the standard nets are located and on Pauhu. Watch for water-level changes and move the cages to higher ground if needed. The water level can rise more than a meter in just a few hours.

From the spring until September 15, the nets are to be opened at 5 am and closed at 11 am. From September 16 the times are 6 am to 12 pm (noon). There must, however, be enough light to allow the birds to be removed from the nets safely, so on some days, the opening time will need to be delayed. It is the ringer in charge who determines whether or not there is enough light.

In the case of wader cages, standard ringling is conducted between 5 am and 11 am in July and August.

The site code for standard ringling with nets is SYDÖ; with cages, the code is BUR. The site codes for ringling done outside standard hours are SYDS and BURS, respectively. The code SYDS is used for birds caught at all times with alternative nets. It is recommended to mark bags with birds from the alternative nets with clothes pins.

All nets are to be closed when it rains. When the wind is strong, nets that may pose a danger to birds are to be closed.

When the wind is strong or the station is left unmanned for a few days, the nets must be tied down using strings. Even when the weather does not allow for ringling, the nets must be checked at least once a day, and more often in severe conditions.

Ringling pliers must be used. It is not allowed to fasten a ring without the use of pliers. Use the recommended ring size if the size of the bird's leg is normal.

The nets are to be checked at least every 30 minutes. Wader cages must be checked once an hour.

Every day, when the standardized ringling is finished, the number of bird bags has to be checked with the number of bags written on the labels in the ringling station.

Every day, when the standardized ringling is finished, it has to be checked that all the nets are closed, turned and if necessary secured. Make sure at the same time that no wader cages have been left in a position where a rise in the water level could reach them!

**It is prohibited to pull feather samples for DNA analysis. The Ringing Centre does not permit the taking of feather samples for species determination, even in the case of rare birds.**

Collecting feathers that have been dropped is, however, permitted.

When handling rare species or birds that are difficult to determine:

- Take photos. (See instruction in the Field Binder. A grey sheet of paper should be used as a background. These are to be found in the hut (ringmärkarbodan).
- Write down important biometrics! (View relevant literature!)
- At the occasion of finding a rare bird take additional notes to add details that don't emerge from the biometrics and the photo. Also describe the content of the find. Take additional notes about the bird and the find context.
- Completion of rarity reports for any rare-bird sightings. The reports must be completed as soon as possible and uploaded to *Artportalen*.

Nets are to be erected so that they remain stable. The lowest shelf must be high enough so that the birds are not lying on the ground. This is particularly important in places with ants. The end net poles must always have two V-mounted "guys" (thin cords or clotheslines) well anchored to the ground with pegs. Where this doesn't work, sturdy bushes or heavy stones should be used. In order to facilitate free passage under the supporting lines, these should be fastened at the top of holes of the support poles. The mounting of the nets is to be checked daily. When closing the nets, a furling stick must be used to pull the top down since it is gentler on the nets. Do not pull the side strings. Damage to the nets should be mended when possible.

The net rides must be maintained on an ongoing basis. The ground is to be raked, and twigs and shoots that are in the way are to be removed.

The number of open nets must be adjusted to the number and experience level of staff members. The minimum number of staff members needed to man a full contingent of nets is normally 1 ringer and 2 assistants.

The biometrical measurements that need to be taken are: wing length, weight and fat score. If someone has the necessary expertise, we also measure postjuvenile moult. When dealing with a large number of birds, the first measurements to be dropped are those of common species; in such cases, biometrical data is only collected on one out of every 10 common birds. If this is not sufficient, the nets are closed. This order of priorities has been determined with the Ringing Centre.

During the ringing season, all rings are stored in the ringing hut (Ringmärkarbodan). Additional nets will also be found there. Extra forms will be kept at the hut of the ringing personnel.

The rings are to be used in the correct order. If partial rings, they should be used first. A list of available rings can be found in the station binder.

Please be careful with the equipment.

**It is important that all staff members be familiar with all aspects of ringing. As much as possible and without jeopardizing the birds' safety, less experienced staff should be given the opportunity to practice all aspects of ringing.**

### **Retraps**

All retraps are to be noted on the *Kontroller* form if the time between banding and catching exceeds 12 hours. Also note wing length, weight and fat level (and, if possible, post juvenile moult) at the time of retrapping. Birds that have already be ringed should be processed on site, so that those ringed the same day are not brought in to the Ringing Hut. When there are many birds, retraps should be processed before new ringing is performed.

### **Dead Birds**

Birds that have died as a result of ringing are to be reported on a special form. Certain species are of special interest (the list of those are included in the Program for ringing activities on Haparanda Sandskär and is also displayed in the Ringing Hut) and if in good condition should be taken care of for shipment to the Museum of Natural History at a later time. A piece of paper with the date of death should also be included in the plastic bag. Collected birds must also be noted on the *Tillvaratagna fåglar* form.

Birds that are found dead outside of the ringing activities should be left where they are, unless they belong to the category of State Game (see below). This also applies to parts of birds. It is of course not allowed to preserve dead birds. Collection of dead birds requires a special dispensation from the County Administrative Board.

### **Statens vilt (State Game)**

A number of animal species are considered wards of the State. If a complete or partial carcass of such an animal is found, it must be collected. The police are to be notified the same day (phone number 114 14). They are responsible for sending the animal to the Museum of Natural History. The animal must be taken to the police by the NOF (Norrbotten Ornithological Society) or the warden. The list of applicable animals at *Haparanda Sandskär* is as follows: bear, wolf, wolverine, lynx, muskoxen, polar fox, otter, whales, ospreys, Honey Buzzard, Barn Owl, Hawk Owl, Eagle Owl, Snowy Owl, Ural Owl, Great Grey Owl, Bittern, Puffin, Smew, Blacked-Necked Grebe, Crane, Grey-Headed Woodpecker, White-Backed Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Kingfisher, Roller, Hoopoe, Golden Oriole, Lesser White-fronted Goose, Caspian tern, Black tern, storks, eagles, kites, falcons and harriers.

### **Moulted Feathers**

Bird observatory staff are asked to leave moulted feathers where they are found.

### **Visitors**

Providing visitors with information on birds and ringing is an important activity at the observatory. If there are many birds in the nets, that information can be kept very brief, but presentations should last at least five minutes.

### **Forms and computer forms are to be filled out daily**

1. Weather observations (computer)
2. Ringing protocols (field binder)
3. Retraps (field binder)
4. Net hours (field binder)

5. Cage hours (field binder)
6. Dead birds, if any (field binder)
7. Collected birds, if any (station binder)
8. Ringing (computer or station binder)
9. Species observed (*Artportalen* and Excel file on computer)
10. Observations (via Excel file to *Artportalen*, or in rare cases directly to *Artportalen*).
11. Rarity reports if applicable
12. Visitors to the ringing site (station binder)
13. Notes in the diary (computer or station binder)
14. Diary entry on Facebook page

### **Comments on forms and data reports**

Clearly filled out forms is a necessary condition for the work of the station being of use for bird monitoring and research. Note that several of these instructions have been amended and/or clarified.

#### **1. Weather Observations**

Weather observations are to be recorded daily before ringing, in accordance with the corresponding special instruction (available in Swedish only for the time being).

#### **2. Ringing Protocols (Field Binder)**

To be filled in according to the Ringing Centre's instructions using the species listed in the field binder. The observatory has its own forms adapted for use with Fagel-3. For the first entry of the day on a given form, all boxes are to be filled in, including month and species. Completed forms may be moved to the document box labelled *Blanketter* on the bookshelf, but they can also be kept in the field binder if they do not get too worn.

#### **3. Retraps (Field Binder)**

Ring number, species and biometrical data is recorded. Read the serial number, number and ringing centre carefully. The rings on all retrapped birds are to be read twice to avoid errors. Hint: By reading the numbers backwards the second time, the risk for errors decreases further.

#### **4. Net Hours (Field Binder)**

This data forms the basis for net hours in Fagel-3. If nets are closed and opened during a ringing session, enter a new line each time there is a change.

#### **5. Cage Hours (Field Binder)**

Entered the same way as net hours.

#### **6. Dead Birds (Field Binder)**

Birds killed as a result of ringing or netting. Must be reported. See above.

#### **7. Collected Birds (Station Binder)**

All birds placed in the freezer compartment are to be recorded here.

#### **8. Data registration, nets and traps**

The activities during the day, regarding both nets and wader traps, are entered into Fagel-3 on proof-read straight away- A clear marking "I + K" is registered in the left margin of the form, so that it becomes evident which item on the respective forms that are the latest that have been entered and checked.

## 9. Data registration, ringing

The ringing - and retrap – activities for the day are entered daily in Fagel-3 and proof-read straight away (if you work two and two, this work can be carried out very efficiently). When a ringing protocol is full, all items have been entered and proof-read, the protocol is to be signed at the bottom in the designated space. New ringing is then entered onto Excel sheets and exported to the Artportalen (see separate instruction!) HSFS is responsible for the report, but enter other staff as well as co-observers. The result is also entered onto the Home Page of NOF as a part of the daily report (see 13 below).

If the internet is not available, but the computer works, the export to Artportalen and the report to Facebook will have to wait until the internet is available. The report of the day's ringing activities to Facebook, while awaiting internet availability, can be done by the telephone, getting in touch with the Contact person ashore (view the current list of names and numbers in the Station Binder!)

Please note that if all data entries and the proofreading is performed daily during the ringing season, a lot of the reporting to the Ringing Central (Ringmärkningscentralen) and a lot of other administration work will be considerably easier.

The Station Manager is responsible for ensuring that all data entries and the proof-reading is carried out.

## 10. Observations, data-entry

Estimate the number of birds of different species that have been seen or heard during the current 24-hour period. Include observations from other visitors to the island if the facts seem correct. Note observations of nesting behaviour and the general flight direction of birds. Birds that have been ringed, should not be included here, since they are reported on separately. On the other hand, birds that has been caught in the nets but ringed earlier, should be included.

The observations shall be noted in the designated Excel-file and saved, labelled with the date and exported to Artportalen (see separate instruction! (HSFS is responsible for the report, but other staff should be added as co-observers. Try to avoid posting entries directly into Artportalen! During July and August, the highest nesting criteria determined should also be entered (20-degree scale – view Artportalen).

The main part of Haparanda Sandskär lies within the square 24N9d of the Atlas. The northernmost part (Lilla Sandskäret and Norra Sandudden) lies within the square 25N0d and the westernmost part (Kelkkaniemi and Matalakarvo) lies within the square 24N9c. Nesting observations within these areas should be entered in relation to sites within these squares, so that they may be useful for the work with Norrbottens Fågelatlas. You could for example use the sites of Haparanda Sandskär 24N9d and Haparanda Sandskär 24N0d.

If the internet is not available, but the computer works, the observations should be saved in Excel and exported to Artportalen once the internet becomes available again.

## 11. Rarity Reports

Rarity reports should be entered into Artportalen as soon as possible and preferably the same day. (If the current personnel has been entered as co-observers, they can easily write the rarity report.

## **12. Visitors at the ringing site**

Note number of persons, name and type of group and a few words about what kind of demonstration they have been given. This information is important for our annual report.

## **13. Diary notes**

These should primarily be entered in the computer. The text may be the same as later is entered as the daily report on Facebook (see below). Avoid entering information about sensitive species on Facebook!

## **14. Report on Facebook**

Go to Facebook – Haparanda Sandskär Fågelstation - there you write a daily summary of ringing, other bird observations and other activities and events at the bird observatory. This may very well be the text from the diary notes (see 13 above). The length of the report is up to the writer and the format is free (not so formal). English is OK. The purpose is to market the observatory by telling what happens on Sandskär. These reports are read and appreciated by other bird watchers.

The bird observatory's Facebook page to which the diary notes have to be uploaded. The entries should be done by somebody who has a private Facebook account. Through this account, pictures can of course be uploaded.

In addition, we should note the group – Norrbottens fåglar. (Quote from their text describing the purpose of their activities: “This is an open discussion group for ornithologists, where all are invited to participate. Within the group, issues in relation to field-ornithology and bird observations in the county are to be discussed. All members are invited to make their own entries and start discussions pertaining to these matters. This could involve anything from the determination of species, age and race, interesting finds, interesting sites, exciting invasions to statistics on bird observations within the county”).

## **Weekly Tasks**

1. Wash the ringing hut and cabin floors with soap and water (every Friday).
2. Wash the bird bags. (May be necessary more often.)
3. Check the number of bird bags each time someone is about to leave.
4. Take a group photo of every week's staff.

## **Tasks that have to be conducted ca. every other week**

Back-up files from the computer (Fagel-3, the diary and weather) to the stations USB stick the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of every month. This is done through Fagel-3.