

APPENDIX A: TO SAVE A BIRD CARCASS FOR SCIENCE

Introduction: If your permit authorizes you to salvage birds (in the United States and in Canada, banding permits authorize the permit holder to "...salvage, for the purpose of donating to a public scientific or education institution, birds killed or found dead as a result of the permittee's normal banding operations, and casualties from other causes..."), these instructions will help you to assure that the carcass is preserved in a manner that will allow researchers to make use of it. In some cases, salvaged bird carcasses can help reduce the number of birds that scientists need to collect. In nearly all cases, the carcass can yield valuable information for research and teaching purposes.

Museums and researchers greatly appreciate these donations, which are an incredibly valuable source of scientific information. Information derived from museum collections includes identification of species and subspecies, geographic distribution, understanding environmental changes - such as the effect of pesticides - and even about behaviors that may be difficult to observe in the wild, such as hybridization or mating patterns. Sometimes, museum collections are the basis for something so basic as identification. Law enforcement agents may need to identify seized wildlife, and may turn to museums for assistance. Donated birds may be useful in the study of wildlife diseases.

However, if the bird is not properly preserved and the data needed by scientists is not recorded, the time and energy it takes to bring the specimen to a museum or other research institution may be wasted. These instructions will help to ensure that your donation will be useful.

On the label, write (in waterproof ink or pencil):

- Date bird taken from the wild
- Date bird brought to you
- Date bird died

Please write dates as date-month-year ("12 December 2004"). Please write the month in letters.

- Where the bird was found. Be as specific as possible.

- Your name and contact information. The museums are required to obtain and maintain this information, and your name and contact information enables the museum to contact you if more data about the specimen are required (for example, sometimes the ink runs or the writing is illegible). For permanently preserved specimens you can receive credit on the permanent museum label for obtaining the specimen.

- Optional: Cause of injury, if known; medical reports, including lab results (especially toxicology), medications, necropsy.

The museum may be able to provide forms or labels for you.

Place each bird and its associated tag or label in a separate clear plastic bag. Using clear plastic bags is helpful when possible because then the receiving party can immediately see the specimen and determine its identity, quality, and preparation or sampling future. The bag should be closed and most of the air squeezed out to minimize freeze drying. Ziploc bags or bags that are heat sealed are best. It is helpful to place this bag in a second closed bag, particularly if the specimen is going to be stored in a freezer for some time before it is donated to the museum.

For large birds, kitchen trash bags or larger trash bags are acceptable, but please be sure to close the bag tightly.

Optional: If you really want to do a professional job, put a wad of absorbent cotton or tissue down the bird's throat to prevent fluids from seeping out onto the plumage, then arrange the bird in the bag so the feathers (especially the tail) aren't bent and the head, neck, wings, or legs aren't projecting at awkward angles (they are easily broken when frozen).

Finally, make those arrangements for donation. If you need assistance finding an institution to accept your salvage specimens, contact the [Ornithological Council](#) or the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Migratory Bird permitting officials](#).

It is helpful to contact museum staff in advance, to determine if they have specific requirements, and to work out arrangements for shipping and shipping costs. Please understand that not every museum will accept every bird. There is a cost associated with this process, and the specimen may not be of sufficient interest to warrant the cost. This does not mean that you shouldn't contact the museum again. You should!