An Introduction to Bird Ringing

Surrounded by the Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve, Slapton Ley Field Centre offers a variety of manmade and natural sites to study, such as a beautiful coastline and resort towns.

Course Overview

Migrant and resident birds have been studied at Slapton by members of the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society for 50 years by observation and ringing.

This course is designed for people with a good knowledge of birds, but with no previous ringing experience. The aim is to give a flavour of what bird ringing is about, identifying the skills and level of commitment required to become a licensed ringer. The course will be run by experienced licensed British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Trainers who will guide you through the process from handling a bird safely to fitting a ring and taking basic measurements. Ringing will take place at locations around the National Nature Reserve but mostly at local coastal reed beds, weather permitting.

The BTO is keen to encourage people to join the ringing scheme and fully supports this course.

Course Description

Course Provisional Programme

Timings Please note these timings may alter depending on weather conditions

Friday

13:00 Arrival and registration

14:00 Introductory talk with the Head of Centre

14:30 Introduction to the weekend course
14:40 ‘Why ring birds?’
16:00 Break
16:30 Introducing the Slapton Ringing Site Handling, keeping and releasing birds: basic principles ringing birds: practice with models.
18:30 Dinner

Saturday
07:00 Ringing at Slapton: introducing processing and data collection.
This and subsequent ringing sessions will introduce the handling and processing of live birds in a step-by-step way, allowing participants to gain familiarity and confidence under careful supervision.
08:15 Breakfast
09:15 Ringing at Slapton Ley continued.
13:00 Lunch
14:00 Catching methods: practical activities, erecting, furling, unfurling and other methods.
16:00 Tea
16:30 Ringing at Slapton Ley continued.
18:30 Dinner

Sunday
07:00 Ringing at Slapton Ley continued.
08:30 Breakfast
09:30 Ringing at Slapton Ley continued.
13:00 Lunch
14:00 Handling all the data
14:30 Course review feedback forms, how to take it further, any questions.
15:00 End of course.
Trainers will be available for a short time after the formal end of the course for optional individual assessments, if required.

About the Tutor

Nik Ward: During 27 years as a ringer, Nik has worked at Scottish Bird Observatories, attended overseas ringing expeditions in Europe and Africa and spent a year in Australia as the Warden of Broome Bird Observatory. Currently the Group Leader of the Slapton Bird Observatory Ringing Group and a member of the BTO Trainers Panel carrying out several local projects.
Keith Grant: has been a ringer for nearly 45 years, formally at Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, and now in South Devon. During this time he has trained many others, and his special interests have included wader studies here in the UK and abroad, a Pied Flycatcher nest box scheme and monitoring Barn Owls with the Barn Owl Trust.

Judith Read: has been a ringer for over 13 years and has been a member for the Bardsey Bird Observatory Council and has ringed in Australia and Canada plus other UK sites.

What to Bring

Although August can be a warm month, please also bring wet weather gear including Wellington boots and outdoor clothes you don’t mind getting mucky (waterproofs and Wellington boots can be borrowed from the centre, if necessary). Sun cream and hat may be required. Bring your own mug plus lunchbox, salad box and a flask/water bottle. Bring binoculars, scope, note book/pencil and bird ID books if you have them. All relevant ringing materials used on the course will be supplied.

Start and Finish Times

Participants are requested to arrive on Friday 8th August at Office Reception for registration between 1:00pm and 2:00pm (see Course Provisional Programme above). There will be an introductory talk with the Head of Centre. Supper will be between 6:00pm and 7:00pm. Breakfast will be from 8:00am. The course will end at 3:00pm on Sunday 10th August with departure soon after. On the final day please vacate your room by 9:00am, storage is provided for your luggage.

How to Book

You can check availability and make a provisional booking by telephoning the Centre on 01548 580466.

To confirm your booking please complete the form found in the FSC brochure or online at www.field-studies-council.org.