

Training to ring birds With The Wicken Fen Group



We are delighted that you are considering training to be a licensed bird ringer with the Wicken Fen Group

This document will provide you with an introduction to the way that we provide training through the Wicken Fen Group, outline levels of commitment required, time scales involved and our commitment to Trainees within the group.

Individual taster sessions

Initially you will be invited to come out on ringing taster sessions. During these sessions, the Trainer will explain what ringing is about in terms of data collection and evaluation; the commitment that training requires and what the Group expects from a Trainee. You will be able to see the practical side of ringing and its context.

At these sessions you will be able to observe birds being extracted, be shown basic ageing techniques and release birds that have been processed. The Trainer will take the opportunity to discuss how suitable ringing is for you and to see if there are any obvious issues that would prevent you from becoming a ringer.

Other areas, which will be discussed include:

- the hours ringing requires, both the early starts as well as length of sessions, including setting up and taking down nets
- the extras around ringing expected – ringing site management etc
- the value of data collected
- the regularity of attendance needed to successfully learn – with once a month the minimum, once a fortnight better.
- physical dexterity required and physical fitness to reach net sites safely
- You should expect a minimum of 2 years to a 'C' permit
- 6 months' probation, after which decide if continue
- The expectation to go on an external training course at some point in the process unless circumstances make this impossible
- Role of Trainer, with annual reviews
- Cost of ringing, Group membership, BTO membership etc.

Once you have attended several taster sessions and the Trainers who have taken you out are happy, you will be provided with a specific named Trainer and given the opportunity to join the Group as a Probationary Member for 6 months.

BTO Licensed Permit scheme

Trainee: Can only operate in the company of an experienced licensed ringer, whilst developing their skills

“C” Licensed ringer: Skills developed to a level where they can operate independently on Wicken Fen, but still under the supervision of their Trainer

“A” Licensed ringer: Training skills and experience gained to the level where they can operate independently from the Wicken Fen Group and their Trainer, if desired

How we enable you to maintain commitment and achieve a ringing permit.

Once you have paid membership, you will be sent a manning plan and be able to request to attend sessions, once your Trainer is happy for you to do this. You will begin by ringing with your Trainer, if at all possible, to maintain consistency at the initial stages of learning.

Our commitment to you, is that "A" ringers will always make 2 places available for Trainees on each session that they run and that experienced "C" ringers will be expected to make 1 place for a Trainee available for each session that they run.

You will keep a record of ringing sessions, birds ringed, processed and extracted and make a note when you have done something new. This will help you keep track of what you have done and your Trainer to see where you have got to.

You will benefit from occasional one to one sessions with your Trainer or a person with whom you ring regularly. This will be arranged after you have ringed around 75 birds and at suitable periods from then on.

You will be encouraged to ring elsewhere eg with other ringing groups, eg Rye Meads, Wash Wader; at Observatories; with other individual ringers eg group members ringing off the Fen.

You will be expected to go on at least one ringing course or equivalent, if at all possible.

Your progress will be discussed several times a year by the Steering Group to ensure that needs are being met and to address any concerns.

Probationer Trainees will be reviewed at 6 months by their designated Trainer, who will ask for comments from Senior members of the Group with whom they have ringed regularly. This is an important stage at which it is possible to discuss with Trainees whether ringing is for them, and if we are happy for them to continue. The Trainer and Trainee need to consider whether they will be able to meet the requirements of a 'C' permit holder after a suitable period of training including whether:

- They put the safety of birds first
- They are going to have reasonable handling skills and are able to cope with rough terrain
- They have the ability to learn key procedures and techniques, ageing etc
- They have the time to give to training
- They are supportive of other members of the Group

They may decide that ringing is not for them but they would still like to be involved as a Helper. In this role they would be able to assist with putting up and taking down nets, ringing site management, etc.

Proceeding to C permit

Trainees need to meet the BTO requirements laid out in the Ringers Manual. As part of demonstrating they have done this they need to have:

- Attended a training course or equivalent, if at all possible. This gives them experience of different species, different sites, and the opportunity to work with other expert ringers. The Group benefits when trainees bring this experience, with different ideas and ways of doing things back to the Fen.
- Ringed elsewhere, preferably several other places (again of benefit to themselves and the Group)
- Run several sessions on their own, with a Senior member of the Group present as back up
- Put up own nets from scratch
- Been introduced to data inputting
- Processed a minimum of 750 birds of at least 40 species, 250 or more personally ringed by themselves

In addition they will be encouraged to use ringing data to learn something about birds at the Fen, preferably written up for the Group's Bulletin. This will encourage understanding of the value of ringing.

Their Trainer will also get the opinion of Seniors, with whom their Trainee has ringed as to their readiness for a 'C' permit.

Appendix: Outline of progress:

This is not intended to be fixed in stone when working with Trainees, but to give a framework of progress.

Knowledge

Age codes	Trainee – three months
Ring sizes	Trainee –six months
Use id guides	Trainee – first year
Moult strategies	Trainee – six months

Manipulate

Release	Beginner – one month
Pass hand to hand	Beginner – one month
Pass between ringers	Beginner – one month
Remove from pot	Beginner – one month
Remove from bag	Beginner – one month
Put into weighing pot	Beginner – one month
Fit small rings	Beginner – one month
Fit large rings	Trainee – second year
Remove small rings	Trainee – second year
Remove large rings	Trainee – second year

Measure

Wing length	Trainee – three months
Bill to feather	Trainee – first year
Bill to skull	Trainee – first year
Tail	Trainee – first year
Tarsus	Trainee – first year
Tarsus and toe	Trainee – first year

Examine

Identify species Beginner – one month

Know topography Trainee – six months

Take full plumage description Trainee – second year

Moult

Full Trainee – first year

Post juvenile Trainee – first year

Age & sex

General Trainee – six months

Specific Trainee – first year

Seasonal Trainee – first year

Basic wing formula Trainee – six months

Full wing formula Trainee – second year

Catching

Trapping methods Trainee – second year

Safe conditions Trainee – six months

Mist net extraction

Basic Trainee – three months

Advanced Trainee – second year

Health and safety Trainee – three months

Purpose Trainee – three months

IPMR input Trainee – second year