DATA RECORD CARDS: THEIR HISTORY AND METHOD OF USE

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INTRODUCTION

About 1965, I decided to use record cards for my area banding studies. A card was designed and printed for the purpose. A number of banders in the Sydney district have used these cards for area studies for many years. The Data Record Cards, as proposed in Newsletter No. 9 (July 1986, pages 6 and 7), are similar to those used initially. The present format was decided by the Committee of the Australian Bird Study Association.

CARD DESCRIPTION

The cards are 127 mm wide by 76 mm high, equivalent to the British Standard filing card 5 inches by 3 inches. The size was selected, in the first instance, as it was a standard size in common use, and suitable filing drawers or cabinets were available commercially. It was also a reasonably economical size and was adequate for the purpose.

The card design (Figure 1) allows for the following information to be recorded as indicated by the subheadings. Explanations of each are given.

Location

Initials representing the banding site are entered here; this avoids the need for recording lengthy place names, for example, CH is the abbreviation for a Coffs Harbour banding site.

Location			Species No.			Band No.						Bander
Date	A	S	WT	HB	WL	WS	TA	TL				
												ABSA 11/86

Figure 1. *Data Record Card.*

Species No.

The species number as given in the current Approved Band Size List issued by the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes is entered here, for example, 541 is the species number for the Red-backed Fairywren.

Band No.

This is the individual band number used on the bird. It is suggested that the number entered in the lower half of the space provided (see example, Figure 2). Occasionally a band will require replacement after some years; in such a case, the original number can be ruled through and the replacement number entered above it, thus providing continuity of the bird's history without the need to record the existing data on a new card. If considered necessary, a cross-reference card may be completed and entered in the file. The top line of this card is completed with the original data, and across the body of it is entered the replacement band number, for example see 017-10104. This permits quick location of the card for the replacement band number, for instance, if the bander has made some specific note elsewhere referring to the original number. When a cross-reference card is included, it is advisable to colour mark the centre top or either top corner of the card with a felt colour marking pen to identify it as a cross-reference card. If this is done, the cross-reference card can be omitted easily if counting cards for statistical analysis.

Date

This, of course, refers to the date the bird was banded and to subsequent recapture dates at the banding site. Opposite each date space are two sections. The upper section has vertical column headings which are explained below. The other space allows for notes on plumage, breeding condition, soft-part colours or other parameters as required by the bander in their study.

Vertical Column Headings

These headings are the abbreviations included in the "Instructions for completing Field Data Sheets" which are issued to each bander in the Australian Bird Banding Scheme. A = age; S = sex; WT = weight; HB = head-bill measurement; WL = wing length; WS = wing span; TA = tail length; TL = tarsus length.

Bander

This heading at the right hand side of the card, in the first instance, is for the initals of the bander whose band is applied to the bird. Subsequent

Location CH			Species No. 541			Band No.	017 - 10104				Bander
Date	A	S	WT	HB	WL	WS	TA	TL			Bander
15.09.86	2+	M	8.5	27.1	43	144	67				SL
Large tubules; full plumage											
21.12.86	2+	M	8.0	27.2	42	142	66				BT
Wing & body moult commencing											
18.10.92	8+	M	9.0	27.4	43	143	67				BT
Large tubules; full plumage (original band replaced)											
											ABSA 11/86

Note on Band No. cell: 017 - 10104 (above) / 014 - 62001 (struck through)

Figure 2. *Example of a card containing records of original banding data and data taken on two subsequent recaptures at banding site.*

initials are entered by the bander who records the recapture on their Field Data Sheets.

METHOD OF USE

An individual card is made out for each bird banded except for those species where it is known or anticipated that large numbers will be caught but very few are likely to be recaptured, even once. Yellow-faced Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus chrysops* and Silvereyes *Zosterops lateralis* are examples. With such species a card is made out for the individual bird ONLY at the time of the first recapture. This avoids the use of a large number of cards with initial data only, saving on card costs and filing space. However, it is necessary for the bander to have a system of record for quick reference to banding data when one of these birds is recaptured in the first instance. For example, a card is made out when the bird is recaptured for the first time, with the recapture data being entered on the second date line, leaving the first data line to be completed later when the original banding data is obtained. As a quick reference I favour the use of a separate card with each bander's initials or name and the species number. The band series number used by the particular bander for each day's banding is recorded on the card, for example, 015-12345/12450. This should permit quick reference to the Field Data Sheets for that bander, and hence the original banding data. These cards are marked at the top as for cross-reference cards. However, the bander responsible for the area study should consider the most suitable system for use in the particular study.

In co-operative banding sites the curator will need to keep a record of each bander who uses bands at the site, with a record of their initials for use on the cards and with recapture data (see Figure 2 — recapture data). Usually two initials are adequate but in some cases a third initial will be necessary to avoid duplication, thus enabling positive identification of a bander. At my North Ryde site, 32 banders participated over a period of 22 years; more than 10 000 birds were banded at the site and the Data Record Cards were entirely satisfactory.

To provide a quick reference to recoveries (birds recovered away from the banding site) a colour code can be used. I adopted blue to identify cross-reference cards, marked along the top centre of the card. Similarly the "bulk recording" cards were marked blue also. For recoveries, red was used on the top right hand side of the card, from the top to about 2 mm in depth. For birds banded elsewhere (i.e. controls), the top left hand side of the card was marked in red. These colour marking codes were each one third of the width of the card.

FILING

A separate card file is maintained for each banding study area being conducted by the bander thus providing simple access to information on the birds banded at each site. Cards are filed in species number order, and band number order within each species. Index cards should be used for each species. The species number is recorded at the top of the index card with the species name printed below it.

Standard single or double filing systems are commercially available as wooden boxes or steel drawers and cabinets. Alternately, wooden boxes or drawers may be constructed.

For use in the field and also for home use initially, suitable boxes may be constructed from cardboard boxes of suitable size such as those used for storing shoes. These boxes invariably need to be modified to provide a functional and seviceable container. This is done by cutting the box to suit the card size in width and the index card in height. The internal dimensions are 130 mm wide by 86 mm deep.

Single thickness cardboard is flimsy and the reconstructed boxes should be reinforced with a second thickness of carboard on the outside, retaining the inside dimensions. The length can be made to suit the individual bander. As a guide, a box 300 mm long will accommodate 1000 cards, allowing reasonable space for index cards and for easy usage.

To provide a serviceable box, the cardboard should be covered with a binding cloth or vinyl material. A PVC glue is suitable for sticking the cardboard together and for fixing the covering material to it on the outside. At the top of the sides and the ends the material should be turned over inside to a depth of about 20 mm, then glued. Painting the inside of the box with PVC glue provides a very serviceable container. Some boxes made in this fashion have been in use for over 20 years — with careful handling.