

The Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program coordinated by:

THE INSTITUTE FOR BIRD POPULATIONS (IBP)

“The Earth’s biosphere and biodiversity continue to face severe environmental threats. The Institute for Bird Populations is dedicated to the research and dissemination of information on changes in the abundance, distribution, and ecology of bird populations.”



The MAPS program is a cooperative network of mist-netting and bird-banding stations dedicated to collecting demographic data towards the conservation of North American landbirds. These data contribute to a) land management recommendations designed to maintain or create quality habitat that will support healthy, productive bird populations, and b) our knowledge of birds’ responses to climate and weather. MAPS provides tremendous opportunities to gain first-class training and field experience in handling, identifying, sexing, aging, and banding wild birds.

THE INSTITUTE FOR BIRD POPULATIONS
PO Box 518
PETALUMA, CA 94953
(707) 789-3224
www.birdpop.org

MAPS is IBP's largest avian monitoring program and provides tremendous opportunities to gain first-class training and experience in handling, identifying, sexing, aging, and banding wild birds. Volunteer technicians will gain invaluable experience in field data collection and recording to satisfy class requirements and build impressive resumes. The MAPS program also provides opportunities for volunteers to return for a second field season, become crew leaders in another year, and a few eventually join IBP as staff biologists out of our office in California.



Began in 1989, the MAPS program coordinates monitoring and research within a continent-wide network of long-term bird-banding stations and represents a cooperative bird conservation effort among public agencies, private organizations, and independent bird banders. MAPS technicians operate long-term monitoring stations in national parks, national forests, military installations and adjoining lands at various locations across the nation. A typical volunteer position entails the operation of six stations at a given location (i.e., park, forest, or installation) in partnership with a biologist and/or fellow volunteers. Field crews are responsible for operation of nets, processing captured birds, and describing the habitat at each of their stations. Ideally, there are six banding days during each ten-day period (seven at Yosemite). However, inclement weather conditions and occasional logistical constraints mean that we cannot promise four consecutive days off each period. Thus, days off can not necessarily be scheduled in advance.



WHAT PAST FIELD TECHNICIANS HAVE SAID ABOUT THE PROJECT:

"[Our trainer] is a great biologist; she knows her stuff and patiently teaches it well. She's a wicked friend too, we love you."

"I learned a lot in this single summer and through it all, I realized that this is what I want to do with my life ... I really enjoyed being a part of this experience ... Thank you for giving me this experience which will take me far in my academic endeavors."

"Very enjoyable teacher that loves working with birds and I would be more than happy to work with again."

REQUIREMENTS: We seek motivated, enthusiastic volunteers in good physical condition with a strong desire to learn more about birds and natural history. Prior banding experience or a background in wildlife biology or a closely related field is a plus, but not necessary. All successful applicants are expected to face the rigors and unpredictability of field conditions with good humor and flexibility. These rigors may include rustic and/or isolated living conditions, long physically taxing days that may begin well before dawn, mosquitoes, ticks, extreme weather, rough/difficult terrain, noxious plants, and more.



PROJECT DATES: May 1 - August 8, but training and banding dates vary by location.

TRAINING: Positions begin with an intensive two-week regional training session conducted by MAPS field biologists and visiting IBP staff biologists, covering mist-netting and bird extraction techniques, vegetation description, MAPS data-collection methods, and MAPS protocol. Be aware that the training sessions and setup periods involve long, hard days. There will be few, if any, full days off in the first month, but you certainly won't be bored!

RESPONSIBILITIES: A typical MAPS station consists of 10 mist-nets distributed through a 20-hectare study area. The nets are opened for six hours, beginning around sunrise, once every ten days from May (in some locations, June) to August. The nets are checked frequently and all birds captured are identified, banded, aged, sexed, and released after recording additional demographic and morphometric data. Feather samples are collected from selected species for the [Bird Genoscape Project](#), pioneered by the University of California at Los Angeles' Center for Tropical Research. Sampling poses little or no threat to the health of the person conducting the sampling. After a brief processing period all birds are released unharmed.



A typical banding day requires waking up before dawn early enough to drive to the station, carry in equipment, and set up the nets and banding station to begin operation around sunrise. Volunteers check the nets every 30-40 minutes, extract any birds captured, and take them back to the central banding station for processing and release. Volunteers also record data on breeding activity of all birds seen and heard. The nets are taken down after six hours (usually around noon), the last birds are processed, and all paperwork is completed before leaving the station. Typically, travel and data collection will be completed by around 1-2 pm, but data proofing, net repairs, and some administrative duties will also need to be completed regularly. A vegetation survey is completed at each station during the second month (the fourth 10-day period) of operation, requiring a few afternoons of data collection. The MAPS season will be physically demanding, but most volunteers will be in great shape by the end of the season!

TRAVEL: Vehicles are not typically provided. For most locations, we require at least one crew member with a reliable vehicle. IBP will provide a mileage reimbursement of \$0.37 per mile for project-related travel to offset the costs of gasoline and vehicle maintenance (amounts to \$11.10/gal for a vehicle that gets 30 mpg). This reimbursement applies to all crew members driving personal vehicles, but unless activities requiring more than one vehicle are authorized, this is limited to one vehicle driven per day. Volunteer technicians are not reimbursed for travel from home to the field site at the start of the season, travel home after the end of the field season, or for non-project-related travel. Daily distances between housing and study areas are typically 10-20 miles but, in our more remote locations, may be as much as 80 miles.



HOUSING: Housing is provided at no charge in the form of a shared house or apartment with all utilities covered by IBP. Yosemite technicians are required to camp in a developed campground.

EQUIPMENT: Volunteer technicians are expected to provide their own binoculars, hiking boots, rubber boots, raingear, **pocket knife with scissors and toothpick**, and field guide (we recommend the *Sibley Guide to Birds* or the third or fourth edition of *The National Geographic's Field Guide to the Birds of North America*). We do also suggest birding apps such as Sibley, iBird, and Merlin; however, these are secondary to having a physical book in the field, where electricity and wireless internet may be unavailable. Volunteers at Yosemite will also need to provide their own camping gear including tent, sleeping bag and mess kit. A comprehensive suggested equipment list will be provided for Yosemite volunteers before the start of the season.

VOLUNTEER STATUS: MAPS technician positions are volunteer positions that do not involve an employment relationship with IBP. Thus, MAPS volunteers receive no salary, hourly wages, or benefits for their volunteering. All MAPS crew members are reimbursed for their meals and incidental expenses by means of a *per diem* reimbursement within the limits set by the US Government Services Agency for that state or city. Per diem rates for the different locations are summarized in the table below. Per diem reimbursements will be prorated for volunteers who start the position late.

MAPS LOCATIONS, 2023:

REGION	LOCATIONS (<i>Nearest town</i>)	TOTAL POSITIONS	COMPENSATION	DURATION
California	Yosemite National Park (<i>Groveland</i>)	3 Volunteers	\$40 / 78 days (\$3,200 total)	May 4 – Aug 8
California	Yosemite National Park (<i>Groveland</i>)	1 Biologist	\$3200 / month	May 4 – Aug 8
Virginia	Fort A.P. Hill (<i>Bowling Green</i>)	2 Biologists	\$2500 / month	May 10 – Aug 8

THE EXPERIENCE: MAPS volunteer technician positions are demanding and challenging but also rewarding and exciting, as evidenced by crew testimonials and the number of past technicians that return to IBP for subsequent field seasons. You will learn a tremendous amount about avian ecology, behavior, and identification. Many of our locations are recognized by the Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy as Important Bird Areas, and some of the banding stations at Yosemite National Park are some of the longest-running stations in the country, with Hodgdon Meadow having over 30 years of banding records. Furthermore, the experience gained as a MAPS volunteer is valued by prospective employers, including IBP where our many of staff biologists start out as crew members. In fact, some of our past technicians have returned to work at IBP with doctorate degrees! We guarantee you will find your summer as a MAPS volunteer one of the most memorable of your life. Best of all, you will have the opportunity to spend the summer in some of the most beautiful areas of the country and meet fantastic people; people who may become life-long friends.



TO APPLY: Please visit our website at <http://birdpop.org/pages/jobs.php> for instructions and application materials.

For further information please contact:

Lauren Helton, Staff Biologist and Scientific Illustrator
Email: [lhelton \[at\] birdpop.org](mailto:lhelton@birdpop.org)