

MAPS Photo Contest Guidelines

IBP follows a set of guidelines when sharing photos of birds with the public. These guidelines are **not** a judgement on anyone else's photo taking or sharing practices. You do you! But because we want to share your photos with the public to spread the word about all the fantastic work MAPS banders do, we need contest entries to meet our guidelines. There are plenty of photos that are great for personal or scientific documentation, but they might not be suitable for this contest.

Please be aware that some images of bird banding activities can be misunderstood by the public or misconstrued in a way that can lead to loss of wildlife handling permits and goodwill among the public. Even perfectly safe handling techniques can be misconstrued when shown out of context. Because of this, IBP avoids using photos of birds in mist nets or birds in possible distress (winky eyes, panting, etc.) Note: these guidelines only apply to photos of birds or other wildlife. If you want to submit photos of humans tangled in your mist nets, go for it! Those are funny (unless the tangle is really bad.)

WILDLIFE SELFIES

IBP avoids using photos of people holding or handling an animal while posing or smiling for the camera. These types of photos, sometimes called "wildlife selfies" are increasingly frowned upon in the wildlife biology community for two reasons:

A. The public is told to give wildlife space and not harass it, but these photos can send the message that it is ok to do so. While you may be permitted and have a legitimate reason to be holding the animal, people seeing the photo may not read the caption or understand the circumstances in which the photo was taken.

B. At IBP and in the wildlife biology community, it is understood that the privilege of handling wildlife for scientific purposes comes with the responsibility to minimize stress and time that the animal is detained. Even if taking the photo only took a second in the normal processing of the bird, it can give the impression that the bird was detained longer than necessary in order for people to take photos with it.

The line between "wildlife selfie" and a picture of a person holding a bird for legitimate scientific purposes can be hard to define. Please see the examples on the next page to give you a better idea of what types of photos we are looking for in the photo contest.



Example A

This photo is a "wildlife selfie" and would not be considered for a prize in the contest. This is IBP's communications specialist Meredith Walker holding endangered Nene goslings in Hawaii. Meredith was volunteering with USFWS and was asked by USFWS personnel to hold these goslings while they waited to be banded. While doing so, her friend snapped a photo. While this was all properly permitted and the goslings were not held longer for the purposes of a photo, a random viewer doesn't know that and may not take the time to read a photo caption that provides this context. There's nothing wrong with taking this kind of photo or using it however you or your organization see fit, but IBP would not use this photo in public facing communications and so it is ineligible for the photo contest.



Example B

Photos of birds in the photographer's grip are just fine, as long as the bird is the focus of the photo and does not appear distressed. No humans are posing with it. Taking photos of birds in this grip is a standard documentation practice.



Example C

This photo also depicts the photographer's grip but IBP would hesitate to use it in public facing communications because the bird is not the only focus of the photo. Even though the person holding the bird is not smiling for the camera, they are still a subject of the photo. This photo could be cropped to remove the person's face and it would be OK to post.



Example D

This photo is OK. Even though the people in the photo are subjects in the photo, they are clearly processing the birds. The banding equipment and data sheet in the frame also provide visual cues that they are engaged in a scientific, not recreational, activity.



Example E

This photo is OK, BUT some viewers who may be unfamiliar with safe handling practices for songbirds may find the manner in which the bird is held disturbing. Also it does not contain obvious visual cues that indicate that this is a scientific activity (i.e. data sheets, banding equipment.) If IBP were to share it publicly, we'd amke sure the caption or text of a post accompanying this photo give an explanation of what the people are doing and that the bird is not harmed.