



Vancouver Avian Research Centre

Research - Conservation - Education

The Vancouver Avian Research Centre Visitor Program

What VARC does

The Vancouver Avian Research Centre (VARC) is a Registered Canadian Charity dedicated to wild bird research, conservation and education. It conducts year round bird monitoring and banding and provides public outreach to raise awareness of environmental issues particularly as they relate to breeding and migratory birds.

In support of VARC's mandate to raise awareness of environmental issues, VARC has developed a visitor program which provides an engaging educational experience, fostering awareness and appreciation of birds and the environment.

Program description

The program includes a field trip to VARC's Colony Farm Banding Station where participants are introduced to the research techniques required for monitoring migratory birds and the population ecology and ecosystem dynamics of wild bird populations, in an age specific way. Visitors will learn about bird migration; the various habitats and communities they depend on during both spring and fall migration and the breeding season; and the conservation actions required to protect these habitats to ensure the long term survival of bird species.



Site Visits

All site visits **MUST** be booked in advance. The structure of site visits starts with a short talk when visitors arrive to tell them who we are, what we're doing and why we're doing it. If the group is large we then typically split it in to 2 – one group accompanies our net extractors on net rounds while the other group stays at the banding station to watch the banding, take photos and ask questions. We then supervise while each visitor gets the opportunity to hold and release a bird. The groups are then switched.

At the end of the visit we give another short talk about habitat conservation and the importance of safeguarding areas like Colony Farm for breeding and migratory birds. We also provide visitors with information on how they can help to make a difference.

In addition we talk about creating bird friendly gardens and campuses by preventing window strikes, and putting up feeders and nest boxes.

What time would it be?

Bird banding is a very early morning activity – we start at dawn and continue until mid-morning depending on capture rates. Bird activity is highest in the period immediately following dawn and then dies down as the morning progresses so it is best to get to the station no later than 8.00am but the earlier the better.

What age group is appropriate?

Because of the environment and to ensure the welfare and safety of birds this is more suitable for adults and children over the age of 6. We recommend that the younger the participants the smaller the group and the lower the adult to children ratio – we cannot provide any supervision, that must be the responsibility of the accompanying adult. The

optimum size for younger groups is 10 – 12 children. We don't recommend any group over 20 participants no matter what the age. Parents with children are encouraged to attend one of VARC's scheduled [Family Days](#).

Should we schedule a back-up date in case it is raining that day?

This is always a good idea. We band Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from April 1st to October 31st (weather permitting) although we would prefer groups to visit on the weekend as we have more volunteer help available. We suggest scheduling the visit for a Saturday with the idea that it can be moved to the Sunday if the weather doesn't cooperate.

We suggest visitors check the [weather network for Coquitlam](#) the evening before to make sure POP is NOT above 60% when we are unable to band as birds can quickly become hypothermic.

How do we get there?

A map is inserted below with directions to the banding station.

What are the facilities at the banding station?

We have a very visitor friendly set up with banding pagoda, picnic tables, coat and backpack racks and a wilderness eco-friendly washroom at the station.

Are there any costs involved?

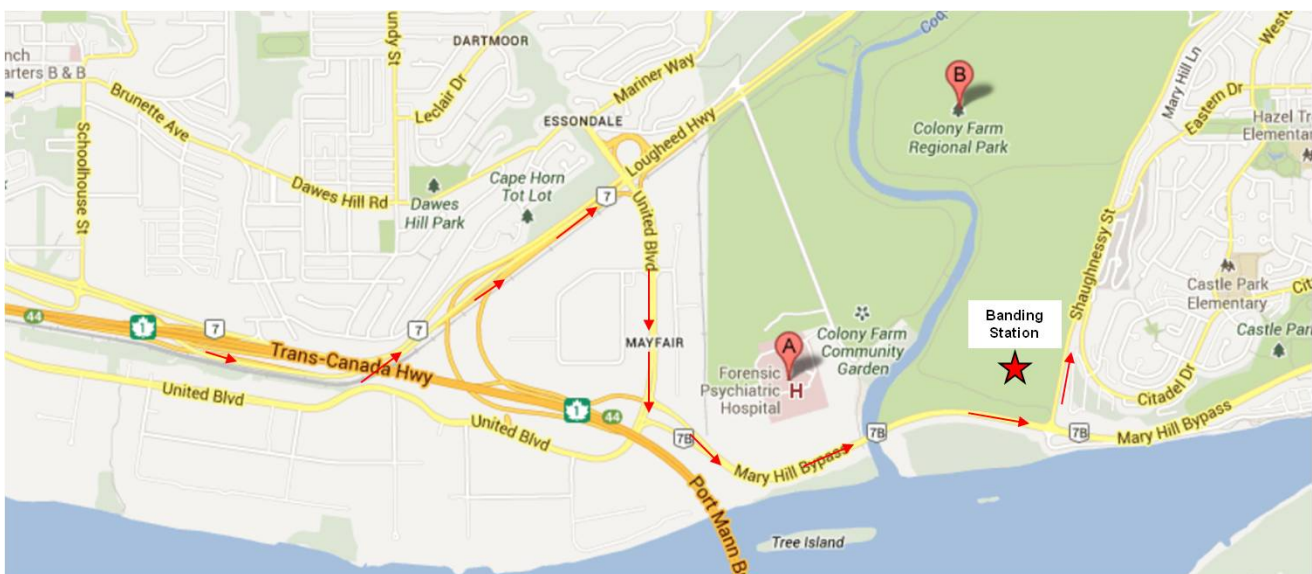
Typically we ask for a donation to VARC of \$10 per visitor but this is not mandatory for anyone who cannot afford it. Tax receipts will be issued for amounts over \$20. (VARC is a Registered Canadian Charity)

What should we bring?

- Warm clothing – Colony Farm is a low lying area and can be cold even in the summer months and especially early in the morning
- Rubber boots or waterproof shoes – The banding station is in the old field habitat and the grass can be quite wet especially in the early morning
- Binoculars and cameras
- Water and snacks

How do we get to Colony Farm and the banding station?

Please note that we are closest to the Shaughnessy Street entrance to the park **NOT** the community gardens on Colony Farm Road which is a 15/20 minute walk across the park. Please do **NOT** use GPS it will take you to the wrong entrance.



FROM THE WEST:

Take Highway 1 east. Take exit 44 for United Blvd/ British Columbia 7B E / British Columbia 7 E. Keep left at the fork to continue toward Mary Hill Bypass. Merge onto Mary Hill bypass. Turn left at the first traffic light which is Shaughnessy St.

FROM THE NORTH / EAST:

From Lougheed Hwy, take the British Columbia 7 Business/British Columbia 7B exit toward Trans-Canada Highway/Vancouver/British Columbia 1. Merge onto Mary Hill Bypass and after about 5 km turn right at the traffic lights. This is Shaughnessy St.

FROM THE SOUTH / EAST:

Take Highway 1 west –After crossing Port Mann Bridge take Exit 44 for BC 7 toward United Boulevard. Keep right at the fork and continue toward United Boulevard. Keep right at the next fork and follow signs for United Bld S/ British Columbia 7B E and merge onto United

Blvd. Turn left onto the BC 7B E ramp and merge onto Mary Hill Bypass. Turn left at the first traffic light – this is Shaughnessy St.

ALL ROUTES

Once on Shaughnessy Street, about half a mile along on the left hand side (through one set of lights) is a pull-out overlooking Colony Farm Regional Park – Park here (There is also a small additional parking lot on the opposite side of the road).

Walk through the metal gate and down along trail and in to the park – You will pass a pond on the right – 200 yards after the pond is a metal gate on the right hand side with green and yellow garbage can and a ‘Wildlife Habitat Area – Research Personnel Only’ sign - walk through the gate (PLEASE CLOSE AND LATCH IT BEHIND YOU) and follow the trail around to the banding station

For further information please contact us by visiting our [contact page](#). Our website is www.birdvancouver.com

We look forward to seeing you at the banding station!

