

Standard Operating Procedures

#AU 0022 Dominance Observations

Materials:

Bird Seed
Dominance platform
Binoculars
Voice recorder
Notebook

Procedure (setup):

The dominance platform is constructed such that there is a rounded platform for perching with a single feeding hopper at one end. The hopper is of a width that only one bird will feed at one time. The platform is placed over a pole firmly planted in the ground, usually in the location where a trap platform has been used to capture birds with Potter's traps (see SOP #0002) or where a feeder had been.

Procedure (dominance observations):

Using binoculars, the platform is observed and the dominance interactions between birds on the platform are scored. These may be within or among species. An individual is dominant when: 1) they supplant or chase an opponent, 2) when they feed while an opponent waits to approach the feeder, 3) when they elicit a submissive posture in an opponent (facing away from the dominant, tucking head away, backing away or hopping back and hanging off edge of board), or 4) when they resist a supplanting attack by an opponent (rare). Examples of the most common type of dominance observation are shown below (#1 and 3). Observers read the colour band combinations of the birds into the voice recorder. See image below for how to read bands. Once the day is complete, the recording is transcribed into a notebook. Because interactions can occur in quick succession, it is best to continually record interactions rather than pausing to write.

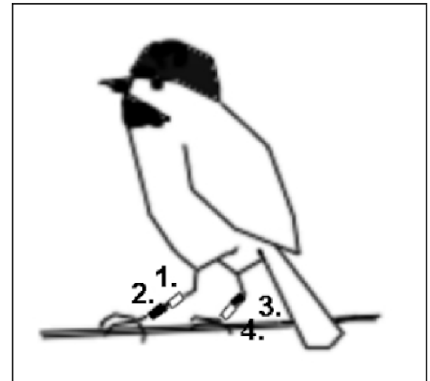
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How to read colour bands:

Band positions: Give birds four leg bands. Read birds' leg bands from left to right and from top to bottom in the following order:

1. Bird's top left
2. Bird's bottom left
3. Bird's top right
4. Bird's bottom right

(The bird pictured at right would be "White Black Black White")



Examples of dominance observations:



