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Snow Geese are migratory birds that breed in the Arctic and winter in the south. They are hunted in Nunavut, southern Canada and the United States. Hunting regulations and management policies are based on scientific studies using banded birds. Observations of banded birds in migration and the reporting of bands by hunters provide essential information on movements, reproduction and sources of mortality. Band information helps us determine where geese breeding near Pond Inlet are being harvested and the number of geese that are harvested in Canada and the United States.



How are geese caught?

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Geese are captured when they are moulting and can not fly. At this time of year they are in flocks which we locate by helicopter. Once everything is ready, people on the ground slowly surround them and walk them into a corral-like enclosure made of netting. For their safety, young are separated from adults and individually marked by a team of experienced persons. Geese are released after about 3 hours, all at the same time to ensure that young are not separated from their parents.





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Goose banding on Bylot Island: How and why?



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What types of bands are used?

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Do neck bands hurt geese?

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Do banded birds come back?

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Most geese are banded with an aluminium leg band. Written on each band is a unique number to identify the bird and a telephone number to report the band. Information from leg bands is usually only available after the animal is recaptured or has been harvested. Another type of band we use is a neck band, which is larger, and more conspicuous. The code written on them can be read with a telescope from a long distance. We can obtain a lot of information on movements of individual birds by just sighting them instead of recapturing them or relying on hunters to report information from leg bands of harvested birds. Birdwatchers report thousands of observations of neck-banded geese sighted in Quebec during migration every year.

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Some birds we have recaptured have been banded for over ten years and are very healthy. Feathers around the neck band

may be ruffled but the feathers are not worn out because the bands are made from very light plastic. Birds that wear bands migrate normally and retain their mate.



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Birds marked with leg and neck bands return to Bylot Island and every summer we observe several hundred of them nesting in the goose colony. More than half of the banded birds that return nest less than 200 metres from where they did the previous year.





