



Vancouver Avian Research Centre

Research - Conservation - Education

The Vancouver Avian Research Centre

Colony Farm Banding Station 'Family Day'



What VARC does

The **Vancouver Avian Research Centre** (VARC) is a Registered Canadian Charity (#82118 2656 RR0001) 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 now includes **'Family Days' during the main banding season (April 1st – October 31st)**. Our focus during Family Day is to provide parents and children with an engaging and interactive educational experience, fostering awareness and appreciation of birds and the environment.

Program description

The program is a structured morning field trip to VARC's Colony Farm Banding Station for families with children under the age of 14, 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 Visit

The structure of site visit 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. There are also bird related craft activities for the children.



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?

Visitors are required to arrive at the banding station at **7.30 am prompt**. Please arrive on time as this is a structured program and visitors arriving after 7.40 am will be asked to book for the next scheduled family day. The session will continue until 10.00 am. Families that arrive before 7.30 will be offered some craft activities for the children but are requested not to crowd the volunteers working with the birds.

What age group is appropriate?

Because of the environment and to ensure the welfare and safety of birds this is more suitable for parents with 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 parents. The optimum size for younger groups is 10 – 12 children. We don't recommend any group over 20 participants no matter what the age.

What about the weather?

Scheduled Family days are on Saturdays **but are always subject to the weather**. 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. We always try to schedule a rain back up day for the Sunday but again this is subject to POP being less than 60%.

How do we get there?

A map is inserted below with directions to the banding station. Do not use GPS it will take you to the wrong entrance.

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?

A donation of \$10 per person for Family Day is suggested which may be paid in advance by clicking on the donate button below (then click 'other amount') or at the station when you attend the event.

Please pay using the 'Buy Now' link on the [Family Day page](#)

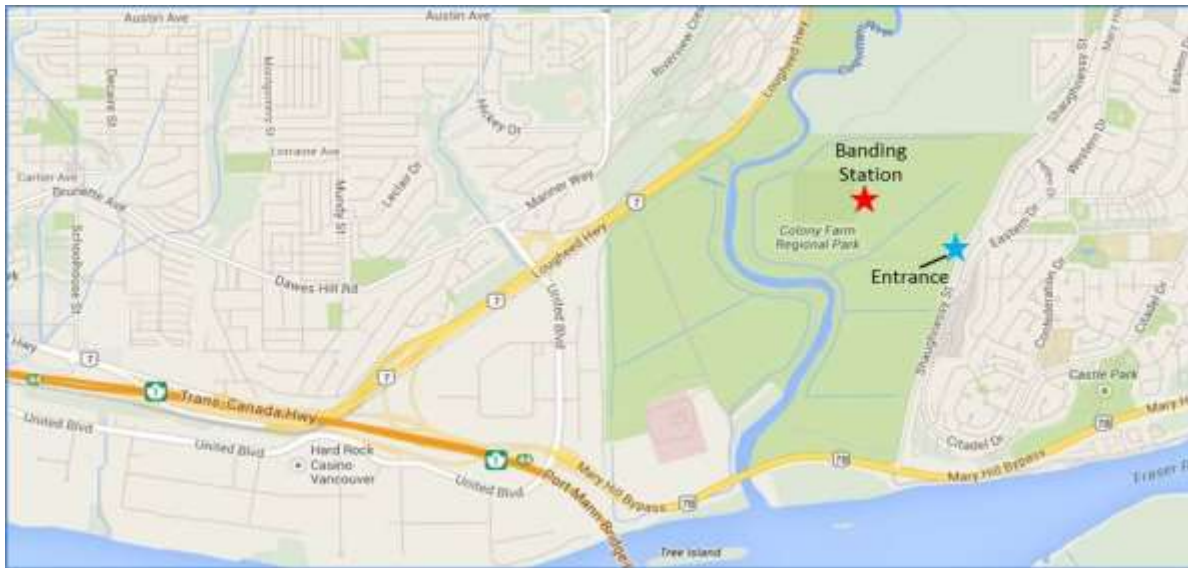
if this is not affordable please email us to discuss. Tax receipts can be issued for amounts over \$10 per person. (VARC is a Registered Canadian Charity).

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 Blvd 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 (blue star on map). 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 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.