

American Ornithological Society

Code of Professional Conduct

Approved by Council Aug 2016

The American Ornithological Society (AOS) Code of Conduct is intended to advance the mission of the society through the open and honest communication of research and exchange of ideas; to assure appropriate accessibility of accurate and reliable information to colleagues, employers, policy makers, and the public; and to encourage the effective professional development of researchers in the continuum of disciplines of ornithological sciences.

Participants in the activities of the AOS, whether or not they are members of the AOS, should engage in an environment free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

In interactions with colleagues, students and employees, participants in AOS activities have responsibilities to:

- Provide intellectual leadership, and accept responsibility for all research carried out under their supervision;
- Ensure a safe and healthy research environment, where everyone is informed of inherent risks and safety protocols;
- Promote equality of opportunity and treatment for all members, regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities, or any other protected status;
- Prevent any forms of discrimination or harassment, sexual or otherwise;
- Promote high standards in the education and training of students and post-doctoral fellows;
- Discuss and follow guidelines for the ownership of data, responsible authorship, and acknowledgment of contributions by others;
- Guarantee the accessibility to colleagues of data, research results and research products generated through the conduct of their own research; and
- Respect the privileged nature of unpublished data, ideas and products.

As members of the scientific community, participants in AOS activities have obligations to:

- Provide objective, accurate, and timely reviews of professional work of colleagues when requested;
- Communicate honestly and completely data and results;
- Fulfill professional commitments;
- Make available scientific findings through appropriate and timely publication; and

- Provide service and guidance to the scientific profession and keep informed of advances in knowledge and techniques.

As citizens in local, national and international communities, participants in AOS activities have responsibilities to:

- Accurately represent expertise and identify as such factual knowledge and interpretation(s) based on that knowledge;
- Promote education of the public on scientific issues and present scientific results at public functions; and
- Promote environmental integrity and conduct research in a responsible and humane manner.

Reporting an Incident: Any Individual covered by this policy who is aware of breaches of this Code should contact an officer of the AOS or the Executive Director (who comprise the Executive Committee). He or she is not required or expected to discuss the concern with the alleged offender. All complaints will be treated seriously and investigated promptly. Confidentiality will be honored to the extent permitted as long as the rights of others are not compromised.

Disciplinary Action: Individuals engaging in behavior prohibited by this policy as well as those making allegations of a breach of Code in bad faith will be subject to disciplinary action. The Executive Committee may take any action they deem appropriate, ranging from a verbal warning to ejection/prohibition from the specific activity in question (e.g. annual meeting, workshop, publication, etc.), and the reporting of their behavior to their employer. Repeat offenders may be subject to further disciplinary action, such as being banned from participating in future AOS activities, meetings, publications, or other programs. AOS Bylaws permit Council to terminate the membership of any member.

Retaliation Is Prohibited: AOS will not tolerate any form of retaliation against individuals who file a complaint or assist in the investigation. Retaliation is a serious violation of this policy and, like any breach of the Code itself, will be subject to disciplinary action.

Investigation Procedure:

1. The Executive Committee will name an impartial investigator (or two co-investigators), usually an officer of the society.
2. Any named investigator who believes they have a conflict of interest should not serve as an investigator.
3. The investigator(s) will request an official written letter of complaint from the complainant (documenting the nature of the breach of Code, with detailed information including times, places, nature of incident(s), and comments made). Supporting documentation (emails, notes, publications, posts, etc.) and statements from witnesses should be submitted with the letter.

4. In most cases, the complainant will be interviewed first and the written complaint reviewed. If the complainant has not already filed a formal complaint, he or she should be asked to do so.
5. The details of the complaint should be explained to the alleged offender by the investigator.
6. The alleged offender should be given a reasonable chance to respond to the evidence of the complainant and to bring his or her own evidence.
7. If the facts are in dispute, further investigatory steps may include interviewing those named as witnesses.
8. If, for any reason, the investigator(s) is in doubt about whether or how to continue, he or she will seek advice from the Executive Committee, and in some cases may seek appropriate outside counsel (e.g. consultant, legal, etc.) with prior approval by the Executive Committee.
9. When the investigation is complete, the investigator(s) will report the findings to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will determine if a report should be submitted to others, as appropriate, and/or the offender's employer.

Questions & Appeal: Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Executive Director. In the event that an individual involved in any reported incident is dissatisfied with the disciplinary action, he or she may appeal to the Executive Committee.