



Great Backyard Bird Count Instructions

HOW TO COUNT THE BIRDS: Easy as 1-2-3!

- **Count birds anywhere** you like. We recommend at LEAST 15 minutes—or even longer if you wish. Keep track of the numbers and species of birds you see and how long you watched.
- **Make your best estimate** of how many birds you saw of each species. For example, 5 Northern Cardinals, 3 American Crows. Huge flocks may be a challenge, but your best guess is still valuable.
- **Enter your list(s) online** at BirdCount.org. Put in a new checklist:
 - for each new day
 - for each different location
 - for the same location, same day, if you counted at a different time of day

Note: Look for the “Submit Observations” tab on the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) or eBird website. You can start entering bird lists at midnight local time on the first day of the count from anywhere in the world.

Easy!

Read ahead for specific details about how to set up a free GBBC/eBird account and enter your lists. If you already have an account for the eBird, Project Feederwatch, NestWatch, or YardMap projects, you can simply use that login information. If you already use eBird, just submit your sightings via eBird—all birds you submit from GBBC weekend will count for the GBBC!

CREATING A GBBC/EBIRD ACCOUNT

If you have never participated in the GBBC before, or have not taken part since 2013, you'll need to set up an account at BirdCount.org or ebird.org, providing your name and email and choosing a personal username and password (keep it safe— you'll need it again for future counts and for using eBird anytime!). Additional profile information is optional. You need to create an account because the GBBC and the eBird online checklist program became integrated in 2013, which allows you to continue submitting bird observations to eBird year round and track your bird sightings during and outside of the GBBC.

From either site, click on "Submit Observations" to get started creating your account. **Note:** If you already participate in Cornell Lab of Ornithology citizen-science projects such as Project FeederWatch, NestWatch, or YardMap, you do NOT have to create a new account. You can use the same username and password you use for those projects to submit reports to the GBBC or eBird.

If you are a new user, we recommend using BirdCount.org. If you use eBird, just submit your sightings there!

NOTE: If you don't want your name to appear in GBBC output, go to "Preferences" (at the top of most pages) and select "Anonymous Birder" for the "Public Name Display" section. Note that you can also customize how your data appear in certain outputs via this page. We recommend making your data public, but you may customize this to suit your preferences.

ENTERING DATA

Map Your Location

Log in to your account. You'll be asked where you counted birds. Enter your state/province, county (in the USA and Canada), or country (outside USA and Canada) in the window under "Find it on a Map" and hit enter. You'll then get a Google map focused on your region. Type a city or place in the "Zoom to" box at the top and hit enter or use the map tools on the left side to find your exact birding location. Make sure you zoom in close enough to indicate your exact location. Left-click with your mouse to place a "pin" at the site where you counted birds. Give that location a name (i.e. home, Center Street) in the box in the right-hand column of the page so you can use it again in the future. The larger red pins on the map are "hotspots" marked by others as being good places to find birds and include most parks, refuges, ponds, and public lands. Your personal location pin will be blue and slightly smaller. If you were birding at a hotspot, please use that for your location by clicking on the red hotspot pin.

TIP: You can zoom in further on the map by typing in the "Zoom To" box at the top; double-clicking on the map with your mouse; using the tools on the left side of the map; using the magnifying glass icon; or by using shift + click to draw a box at the desired location.

Date & Effort

Fill in the date for the checklist you are submitting and indicate the type of count you did:

- **Traveling:** You traveled some distance—walking a trail, driving a refuge loop, field birding. If you travelled more than 5 miles please submit your observations as separate checklists.
- **Stationary:** You stayed in one place, perhaps watching your feeders from a window.
- **Historical:** You will not be using this for the GBBC, but can use it when entering past data in eBird.
- **Incidental:** You saw a bird while you were doing something else—birding was not your main activity.

Enter your start time, how much total time you spent counting birds, and how many people contributed to this checklist.

TIP: Select today's date by clicking the calendar next to the date entry field—it will populate today's date automatically.

TIP: If you get an error message telling you "This field must be a number only (no decimals, colons, etc.), check to be sure you haven't put in a colon or other punctuation mark in one of the boxes. If you prefer 24-hour time (e.g., 14:00 for 2:00 PM, you can select this here.

NOTE: If your report gets flagged as being "nocturnal" (occurring at night) and you did NOT bird at night, please go back to your checklist and check that you used the correct AM or PM time designation.

Enter Your Birds

Next you will see a list of birds that could be in your area during February. In the boxes, enter your estimate for the number of individuals of each species you saw while you were counting. Use an "x" if you can't estimate the number.

Are You Reporting Everything?

It's important to let us know if you are reporting all the species you were able to identify.

You should always choose "Yes" in the right-hand column, unless you are leaving out some species on purpose. If you just noticed an interesting species casually, use the "Incidental" protocol, where we assume that you did not do a 15-minute count and include all species.

Rare Birds

If you have a bird on your list that you don't find on the Great Backyard Bird Count/eBird checklist, click "show rare species" in the right column. If the species is not there either, please double-check your identification, since all possible species should be on the list (these lists are compiled by bird experts in the area). Try googling the name to see if the name has changed (for example, Louisiana Heron is now known as Tricolored Heron). If you get stuck, email us at gbbc@cornell.edu and we can help you find the right bird name if it has changed.

If you are certain you saw something that is not on the list, you will need to report it via ebird.org. Your GBBC login and password will work here as well. The submission process is the same and the checklist is the same, but here you can use "Add a species" at the top right of the checklist entry page to type the name and add it to your checklist. All data submitted through eBird during the GBBC is included in the results.

Flagged Reports

If you enter a species or a number of birds that is unusual, you will get a message asking you to confirm your report. If you're certain about what you saw, add comments (see "Giving More Details" below) and click the "complete" check box. Your report will go to a volunteer who reviews reports from your area. **This is a normal part of the process.** You may even be contacted by the reviewer to get more details about your report. Until the report is reviewed and approved it will not appear online except in your own account.

Giving More Details

If you do see something unusual, please tell us more about how you identified the bird. Describing the field marks that you actually saw is very important. Look for the small "add details" button next to the bird name. It's VERY helpful if you have a digital photo or even a recorded sound.

It is now possible to drag-and-drop still images and sound files directly into your checklist if you are entering data through the eBird website. Your files will also be entered into the Macaulay Library archive at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Adding photos is especially helpful if you are reporting a rare or unusual species. You add images or sounds to your checklist by clicking the "add/show details" button next to the species name in the online bird list. This capability will be expanded to include data entry through the GBBC website itself in the near future. [Learn more about this new function.](#)

Submit Your List

Hit "Submit" on the lower-right when you're done. You'll see a confirmation page that shows the list you submitted. Your list will always be accessible through the "My eBird" page in your account. Click "Email Yourself" at the top-right if you want a copy of your checklist. If you were birding with one or more friends and want them to be able to add the list to their GBBC (or eBird) account click "Share w/ Others in Your Party." **DO NOT use this to send them a list to look at if they were not there as it will be included in their personal observations.** Instead, use the Email Yourself tool to send yourself an email of the checklist and forward it through email. If you have another list to submit, select links on the right that allow you to submit from the same location and date, submit from the same area, etc.

Correcting/Changing a Report

You can always go back to make changes to your checklists, location, or profile!

Login to your account and click on the "My eBird" tab on either the GBBC or eBird websites. You'll see a summary of the data you've submitted. On the right side of the page, click "Manage My Checklists" to choose individual records to edit. Choose "Manage My Locations" to move or rename your mapped birding location(s). You can also change your email address in "Edit my profile" or make other changes there as needed. It's important to keep your email address current to receive questions from reviewers about your observations.