



## GBBC 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 kinds 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 [www.BirdCount.org](http://www.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 (or eBird) website. You can start entering bird lists at midnight local time on the first day of the count, 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!

## **CREATE A GBBC/EBIRD ACCOUNT**

If you have never participated in the GBBC before, or have not taken part in since 2012 or earlier, you'll need to set up an account at [www.BirdCount.org](http://www.BirdCount.org) or [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org), providing your name and email and choosing a personal username and password. (Keep in 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.

From either site, click on "Submit Observations" to get started creating your account. **Note:** If you already participate in Cornell Lab 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 chose for those projects to submit reports to the GBBC or eBird.

If you are a new user, we recommend using [www.BirdCount.org](http://www.BirdCount.org). If you use eBird, just submit your sightings there!

## **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." You'll then get a Google map focused on your region. Type a city or place in the "Zoom to" box at the top or use the map tools on the left side to find your exact birding 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.

**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.

**TIP:** You can zoom in further on the map by typing in the "Zoom To" box at the top; double-clicking 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
- **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.

**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. Also, if you started watching at 7:00 AM, for example, enter 7 in the hour box, specify AM or PM, and **leave the minute box blank**. 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 into your account 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.

## Other Tools to Try

Find these tools in the column on the right side of the page.

- Put the species list in alphabetical order
- Show or hide rare species for your area and show or hide subspecies. (**If you are a beginning birder, we recommend leaving these boxes unchecked.**)
- Sort by frequency: this places the birds in three groups—the ones seen frequently in your area, those seen rarely, and those that have not ever been reported yet. This works best for established birding sites or other places with many checklists for GBBC weekend (i.e., your backyard if you have participated in the past two years).

### **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 main 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](mailto: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 [www.ebird.org](http://www.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 is still part of the GBBC.

### **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" button. Your report will go to a person 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.

### **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. You can link to that image with your checklist using its URL from a third-party photo-sharing site such as Flickr.

### **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 account (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.** Just forward them the list you get for yourself by email.

### **Submit Another List**

If you have another list, 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.

