



My Yard Counts Instructions

To participate, you will need to watch, count, and record all birds in a simple standardized way. Each time you count, you should spend **20 minutes** in an area of approximately **0.5 acres or less**. It's important to follow these guidelines so that all participants collect data in the same way.

A. Pick an area. Watch, count, and record

Select your count site.

A count site is a yard, or portion of a yard, where you plan to count birds. You will do all your counts at this site. A count site should be roughly a **half-acre, or less if necessary**, surrounding or directly adjacent to a residence or building. A half-acre is slightly less than half a football field, or about 100' x 200'.

Create a schedule of evenly spaced counts.

Schedule the date and time of at least 10 counts, spaced roughly 1-2 weeks apart, spread throughout spring and summer (until the end of August). You can plan for counts at different times of day. Don't change your count schedule just because you see certain kinds of birds in the yard. Doing so would bias your data. You can still record these sightings online, but if you do, please do not record them as part of My Yard Counts (see the section on "Register your yard"). If it rains during a scheduled count session, simply reschedule. Skipping counts is OK if you go on vacation. The key is to have a minimum of 10 counts roughly spaced throughout spring and summer. We encourage participants to submit observations from more than 10 counts. We established a flexible protocol to accommodate a variety of participants.

Select 2 weeks for clustered, repeated counts.

Choose 2 weeks, preferably one week in spring and one week in summer, in which to conduct counts on 3 consecutive days. Unlike the counts spread evenly throughout spring and summer, these clustered counts should occur at similar times on consecutive days and under similar weather conditions (e.g., similar temperature, wind, precipitation). If the weather changes during the planned 3-day series of counts, wait and resume the count series when conditions are again similar to the initial count.

Watch, count and record

Each count should last 20 minutes and take place under good weather conditions (e.g., when it is not raining). Record all the birds in your count site, but do not record birds flying over unless they land in your site. Take notes on bird species that you cannot identify.

RECORD THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS THAT YOU SEE AT ANY ONE TIME. This will ensure that you don't count the same bird more than once. Do not record birds seen by other people.

B. Register your yard (count site) and enter your bird counts online.

Go to [eBird](http://www.ebird.org) at <www.ebird.org> and click the button for "Register as a New User" or, once already an eBirder or if you are already registered in Project FeederWatch, just click the "Submit Observations" tab (Figure 1).



Select the "Find it on a Map" link to locate your yard (count site) or, if you already have identified the location of your yard (such as in Project FeederWatch), use the drop-down menu to "Select from "My Locations" (Figure 2).



Under "Observation type," check "Exhaustive Area Count." Enter the "Observation date" and "Start time" of your bird counts, select 20 minutes for the "Duration," fill in 1 for "Number of people in your birding party," and fill in 0.5 acres (or less) for "Area covered" (Figure 3).

Step 2: Date and Effort [What is Date and Effort?](#)

Location name: My Yard Counts * Indicates a required field

Observation type: *

- [Casual Observation](#) (Required: date)
- [Stationary Count](#) (Required: date, start time, duration)
- [Traveling Count](#) (Required: date, start time, duration, distance covered)
- [Exhaustive Area Count](#) (Required: date, start time, duration, area covered)

Observation date: * → MAY 31 2006

Start time: * → 9 00 AM PM

Duration: * → (HH) 20 (MM)

Distance covered: Miles Kilometers

Number of people in your birding party: →

Area covered: * → 0.5 Acres Hectares

Figure. 3

Report every species in your yard (exclude birds flying over unless they land in your yard) and answer "Yes" to the question "Are you reporting all the species you identified?" (Figure 4).

Step 3: What did you see/hear?

Location Name: My Yard Counts * indicates a required field

Are you reporting all the species you identified?*

→ Yes No

Most Probable | Taxonomic

Jump to: Swans, Geese and Ducks

Enter numbers (or 'X' to indicate presence) for each species you identified:

Swans, Geese and Ducks			Top ↑
Snow Goose:	<input type="text"/>	Canada Goose:	<input type="text"/>
Wood Duck:	<input type="text"/>	Gadwall:	<input type="text"/>
American Black Duck:	<input type="text"/>	Mallard:	<input type="text"/>
Northern Shoveler:	<input type="text"/>	Northern Pintail:	<input type="text"/>
		Tundra Swan:	<input type="text"/>
		American Wigeon:	<input type="text"/>
		Blue-winged Teal:	<input type="text"/>
		Green-winged Teal:	<input type="text"/>

Figure. 4

In the comment field following the question "Would you like to add a note to this observation?" enter the code phrase "MyYardCounts." **THIS STEP IS CRITICAL FOR YOUR DATA TO BE PROCESSED AS PART OF MY YARD COUNTS PROJECT.** It is this phrase identifies the count site as your yard (Figure 5).

Step 4: Confirmation and Notes

Confirm your checklist submission information below. If you would like to edit your submission, click the "Back" button. Otherwise, click "Submit."

Location name: My Yard Counts	Observation type: Exhaustive Area Count
Observation date: 5/31/05	Start time: 9:00 AM
Duration: 0 hour(s) 20 minute(s)	Distance covered: N/A
# of people in birding party: N/A	Area covered: 0.5 acre(s)
Are you reporting all the species you identified? Yes	
Total # of species: 10	

Email me a copy of this report

Species submitted:

Would you like to add a note to this observation?

→ MyYardCounts

Figure. 5

C. Online questionnaire

In May, you will receive a link to an online data questionnaire regarding the environment of your count site. The questionnaire will ask for information about the trees, shrubs, and other plants in your yard as well as activities that you do in your yard that might affect birds.

D. Additional option--Tracking wildlife injuries

Information about neighborhood pets on your property is important. If you would like to participate in an optional part of the study about pet-wildlife interactions, please download and print the data sheet. On the data sheet, record interactions between domestic and wild animals your yard. You do not need to own pets to participate.

In August, you will receive a link to an online questionnaire so you can send in the observations you collected on your data sheet about pet-wildlife interactions This questionnaire will allow you to report these important events in your yard in more detail than is covered by the general questionnaire in May.