

Christmas Bird Count – Field Counter Cheat Sheet

The following tips are for participants venturing into the field and covering designated locations by foot, vehicle, or other means of transportation. Be sure to confirm with your circle Compiler or section/route leader which locations to cover and any other questions you may have before your count date.

Record every bird species (including exotic or introduced species) and how many were seen or heard in your coverage area, only between midnight and 11:59 pm on the count date selected by your Compiler.

Try to cover your assigned route/area as thoroughly as possible during daylight hours.

Effort data are equally important to recording bird species and numbers. Record each mode of transportation used while watching and listening for birds (by foot, by car, bicycle, boat, etc.).

For each mode of transportation:

Record the number of hours your party (or group) collectively spent watching or listening for birds (e.g., 1 hour and 45 minutes= 1.75 hours).

Record the number of one-way miles traveled while watching or listening for birds. For example, if your party spends 30 minutes walking a 1-mile trail, and then backtracks that same 1 mile in 20 minutes, your effort on foot will be recorded as:

Time=50 minutes; Distance=1 mile. This method is the same for other modes of transportation and is also how data are collected for eBird.

Record only time and distance spent birding, and do not include any travel outside the area that is required to reach a counting location, nor travel within the area when you are not birding (such as getting lunch, repositioning a vehicle).

Try your best to avoid double-counting birds if you backtrack, or revisit a location at a later time.

Nocturnal birding or “owling” is optional. Time and distance spent owling is tracked separately from any birding in the field during count day.

If a rare, unusual, or unexpected bird is encountered, please ask your Compiler for a Rare Bird Documentation Form, fill it out, and return it to your Compiler by January 15. If possible, try to obtain photos or audio recording of the rare bird and include that with your submission.

Please give your tally sheet numbers to your section/route leader or Compiler at the end of count day. Thank you for participating in the annual Christmas Bird Count!

Adapted from Birds Canada “Christmas Bird Count - Field Counter Cheat Sheet”