

# Neighborhood Bird Project

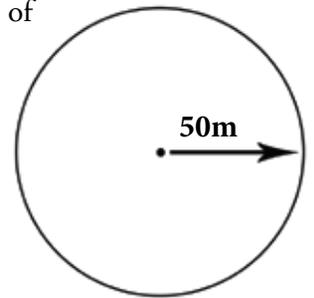


## Point Count Protocol

**TIMING** Each site is required to be visited on the same weekend of each month; e.g. the second Saturday. The count start time remains constant either throughout the entire year, or with minor changes to accommodate shortened days in the winter.

**LOCATION** The site, a city park or greenspace, is divided into permanent loops, sufficient in number to cover the different habitats in a park, or the park in its entirety. Point count stations are located along the loops; stations are located at least 200 m apart and visited in approximately the same order each month. Each station receives a GPS location and habitat description, if possible.

**PROTOCOL** Once at the station, the team members stand quietly for one minute. At the end of the minute, the team counts every bird species seen, heard or flying over within a radius of 50 m in the next 5 minute period. Heard birds are defined as birds believed to be vocalizing within the 50 m circle. “Flying over” is distinguished from “seen” by whether or not the bird interacted with the habitat. For example, a robin flying from one tree to another or from the ground to a tree within the count circle is counted as “seen” whereas a merlin flying over the 50 m circle is counted as “flying over.” The recording area is construed as a cylinder above the observers, so that height is not a problem. The observers remain at the station, which is the center of the circle, for the 5 minutes. Ideally, stop watches are used to accurately time 5 minutes; start and stop times are announced to the participants. It is permitted after 4.5 minutes to “pish” in order to call up birds within the circle which may not yet have shown themselves. After the 5 minutes are up, it is permitted to investigate a previously heard bird if necessary to verify its identity. Note: For stops surveying waterfowl occupying a body of water, where it is impossible to stand in the middle of a circle, the same surface area over the body of the water is surveyed, i.e., a rectangle ~80 m wide by ~90 m out into the water, while standing on the shoreline at the midpoint of the 80 meter width.



**RECORDING DATA** The team leader records on a standardized form: park name, loop name, date, weather conditions, station or stop number, name of team leader and participants present; and for each station: time, and name and number of species seen, heard, or flying over that stop within the 5 minute period. Common bird names are written out in full or abbreviated using the AOU four-letter code.

**REPORTING DATA** Data sheets are placed in the NBP file at the SAS office as soon after each count as is reasonable. Birds seen between stations or before/after time at stations are not entered as data, but a list of total species can be preserved for each park for the interest of all participants.

## CONSIDERATIONS

- If bad weather, e.g. snow, heavy rain or wind, makes the count inadmissible; attempts should be made to redo the count the following day.
- Please attempt to cover the loop in approximately the same amount of time each month.
- Avoid double-counting some of the larger birds, e.g., raptors, by having the team leaders within the park discuss amongst themselves afterwards which large birds were seen and when. It is therefore preferable for all the loops within one park to be accessed simultaneously.
- It is also preferable for park and loop leaders to be as constant as possible, to ensure consistency in data collection.



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## Range Finder how-to guide:

**\*All devices have been pre-set to the proper modes**

1. **Turn on** range finder by pressing the POWER button, (arrow button) on top of the device.

When you look through the eyepiece you will see the battery bar on the left, a circle in the middle and the letter M (for meters) on the bottom right.

- a. If any of these settings are incorrect – please review the set up instructions – you will need to reset using the MODE (B) button on the side
  - b. It is very important you are **measuring distance in meters** not yards.
2. Once you are sure your device is properly set up:
  3. **Aim the circle at the object** you are trying to get the distance to and **press the POWER** button on the top of the device for 1 sec.
    - a. Cross hairs will appear
    - b. The distance (in meters) will appear in the bottom right of your viewing pane.

## Considerations

- The device works best when pointed at a flat surface with a solid color.
- The range of measurement for the device is between 5m and 915m.
- Hold the device steady to get an accurate reading.
- Remove battery when being stored to prolong battery life.



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## **Birding by Ear**

### **Songs to know (comparison pairs and common birds):**

Song Sparrow vs. Bewick's Wren

Orange-crowned Warbler vs. Wilson's Warbler

Dark-eyed Junco vs. Spotted Towhee

Hairy Woodpecker vs. Downy Woodpecker

Black-capped Chickadee vs. Chestnut-backed Chickadee

American Robin

Pacific Wren

### **Practice Resources:**

#### CD and DVD Sets

Cornell Guide to Bird Sounds: Macaulay Library - Master Set - \$49.99 or Essential Set - \$12.99

NOTE – available FREE through Seattle Public Libraries

Bird Songs of the Pacific Northwest CD set - \$38.95 - available in Seattle Audubon Nature Shop

Thayer's Birds of My State: Version 4 DVD for MAC and Windows - \$29.95- available in Seattle Audubon Nature Shop

#### Apps

Larkwire Birdsong Master Birder: Land Birds of North America - \$14.99 <http://www.larkwire.com/>

Larkwire Birdsong Master Birder: Water Birds of North America - \$12.99 <http://www.larkwire.com/>

NOTE – to receive 10% off at Larkwire.com, use discount code: SEAAUD

iBird Pro Guide to Birds - \$14.99 <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ibird-pro-guide-to-birds>

Peterson Birds of North America Birding- \$14.99 <http://petersonguides.com/Birds.php>

National Geographic Birds: Field Guide to North America - \$9.99 - <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mobile/apps/handheld-birds/>

Audubon Bird Guide – free - <https://www.audubon.org/apps>

#### Web sites

BirdWeb web page- free - <http://www.birdweb.org/birdweb/>

Cornell Lab of Ornithology - <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/>

\* See reverse side for tips on birding by ear.



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## Birding by Ear Tips

### What to Listen For

When you've isolated a bird call, you have to listen to it carefully for a positive identification. Just as [observing birds carefully](#) and looking for all the details of their plumage is necessary for proper identification, so too is careful listening essential. While birding, you should listen for...

- **Pitch:** How high or low is the song? How does it change in a single call? Where in the song does the pitch change?
- **Quality:** Would you describe the song as a warble, buzz, rattle, screech, whistle, bugle or some other tone?
- **Length:** How long is the song? Can you count the seconds it lasts?
- **Tempo:** How many beats does the song have? How quick are those beats? What pauses are part of the song?
- **Volume:** Does the song change volume? If so, where and how?
- **Repetition:** Are the same syllables repeated several times? How many times?

Once you've clearly distinguished the song, compare it to your [field guide](#) or audio resources to try to identify the bird. At first this may be difficult unless you are able to see the bird as well, but with practice you will learn to identify many birds by sound alone.

### More Birding by Ear Tips

To make the most of auditory identification:

- Start with the birds you are most familiar with, including your backyard birds. Because you see and hear these birds most often, you will be able to practice and perfect your birding by ear technique while being certain of the birds' identities.
- Learn the regional accents of your local birds. Many birds develop geographic variations in their songs that can make identification more challenging, particularly if you travel while birding.
- Take notes on the bird sounds you hear in a [field journal](#) or notebook. By writing detailed descriptions of the sounds, you'll force yourself to listen more closely and you will have a reference to use when comparing to audio clips or field guides.
- Have fun listening to birds and learning their language, even if you can't always identify them by sound alone. Just as it is impossible to visually identify every bird in the field, it will also be impossible to identify every one you hear, though perfecting your bird sound identification techniques can make this hobby even more rewarding.

Source: (<http://birding.about.com/od/identifyingbirds/a/birdingbyear.htm>)



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## Rules for forming the AOU banding codes

The USF&W Bird Banding Lab codes were introduced in: Klimkiewicz, Kathleen, and Chandler S. Robbins. Standard abbreviations for common names of birds. North American Bird Bander 1978, 3:16-25. (<http://infohost.nmt.edu/~shipman/z/nom/bblrules.html>)

In 2003, new codes were formed to reflect current American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) taxonomy and nomenclature. (<http://www.birdpop.org/pages/birdSpeciesCodes.php>)

Codes are formed using these rules:

If the name consists of only one word, the code is taken from the initial letters, up to four:

DUNL Dunlin  
DOVE Dovekie  
GADW Gadwall

If there are two words in the name, the code is made from the first two letters of each word:

AMWI American Wigeon  
EAME Eastern Meadowlark

For three-word names where only the last two words are hyphenated, the code uses two letters from the first word and one each from the last two:

EASO Eastern Screech-Owl  
WEWP Western Wood-Pewee

For other names with three words, the code takes one letter each from the first two words and two from the last word:

RTHA Red-tailed Hawk  
WWCR White-winged Crossbill  
WPWI Whip-poor-will

For four-word names, the code takes one letter from each word:

BCNH Black-crowned Night-Heron  
ASTK American Swallow-tailed Kite  
NSWO Northern Saw-whet Owl

A *collision* is a situation where two or more names would abbreviate to the same code using these rules. If one name is far more common than the other name or names involved, typically the common species gets to use the name. In most cases (e.g., Lark Bunting and Lazuli Bunting) when both birds are common, the collision code is not used, and unambiguous substitutes are provided for both forms.

\*See reverse side for examples of common collisions.



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## 56<sup>th</sup> AOU Supplement (2015): Two-way collisions

Not:	But:
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BAOW	BADO Barred Owl vs BANO Barn Owl
BASW	BARS Barn Swallow vs BANS Bank Swallow
BLWA	BLBW Blackburnian Warbler vs BLPW Blackpoll Warbler
BRCO	BRAC Brandt's Cormorant vs BROC Bronzed Cowbird
BTGW	BTNW Black-throated Green Warbler vs BTYW Black-throated Gray Warbler
CEWA	CEDW Cedar Waxwing vs CERW Cerulean Warbler
HEGU	HEEG Heermann's Gull vs HERG Herring Gull
NOSH	NSHO Northern Shoveler vs NSHR Northern Shrike
SASP	SAGS Sage Sparrow vs SAVS Savannah Sparrow
TRSW	TRES Tree Swallow vs TRUS Trumpeter Swan
CAGO	CANG Canada Goose vs CACG Cackling Goose

## 56<sup>th</sup> AOU Supplement (2015): Collisions with rare forms

In these cases, two names abbreviate to the same code under the rules, but since one of the colliding names is so much more common than the others, the commoner name is allowed to use the collision form and the rarer name is assigned an alternate. Be careful and double check your work when using these codes. ([http://www.birdpop.org/docs/misc/Alpha\\_codes\\_eng.pdf](http://www.birdpop.org/docs/misc/Alpha_codes_eng.pdf))

1. BAGO Barrow's Goldeneye      BARG Barnacle Goose
2. SOSP Song Sparrow              SOOP Sooty Storm-petrel





