

CANADA KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS BIRD MONITORING PROJECT ON EBIRD

Note – this new eBird project (formerly known as the IBA Canada Protocol) can be used to survey Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (to possibly provide data for KBA proposals) and accepted Key Biodiversity Areas

Key Biodiversity Areas Background

[Key Biodiversity Areas](#) (KBAs) are sites that contribute to the persistence of biodiversity nationally and globally. Found across land, freshwater, and marine environments, KBAs support rare and threatened species and ecosystems, as well as key life stages (like migration). They range in size from small patches of habitat to large tracts of land or water. KBAs are designated based on specific, measurable criteria. The designation does not give the site a particular management prescription or legal status. KBAs may encompass private or public land, sometimes overlapping, partially or entirely, with legally protected sites.

The KBA Program strives to ensure that sites are properly identified, their values are well documented and effectively managed, and that these places are safeguarded and receive appropriate resources. In Canada, the identification of KBAs is led by Birds Canada, NatureServe Canada, and Wildlife Conservation Society Canada.

Data for bird KBAs in Canada comes mainly from [NatureCounts](#), which includes data from Citizen Science programs such as eBird. Data from eBird can be collected by Caretakers doing targeted surveys, or incidentally when birders report to eBird not realizing that they are within a KBA. In either case, these data form a valuable resource for the KBA Program as they are used directly in nominating a site, and will be used to reassess sites every 10-12 years. Data are also incorporated into various tools and visualizations available via the eBird portal (e.g., bar charts, high counts, species lists), and ultimately help to ensure our knowledge and conservation planning for individual KBAs.

What is the Canada Key Biodiversity Areas bird monitoring project on eBird?

Whether you are monitoring birds on your own, or as part of a coordinated group, the idea with this project is to obtain an overall estimate of the number of birds within a KBA on a given day, while avoiding double-counting of individual birds. Large KBAs can be divided into manageable sections and surveyed by multiple people on the same day, at around the same time to accomplish this. There are no specific rules about how often and at what time of year this KBA project should be used, as these will be largely driven by the species of interest at individual sites (e.g., peak shorebird migration season, peak waterfowl migration, breeding season), and practical considerations (when people are available to perform the counts).

The way you report your data on eBird for a KBA is the same as a regular eBird list, with a few minor differences (see *Reporting your data to eBird* below).

KBA-wide Survey Guidelines

Please follow these guidelines as closely as possible when using this eBird project:

1. For checklists to be combined for a KBA, checklists should be submitted for the same date, and near the **same time**. Later on, automated database tools in NatureCounts extract all observations from all observers who were using this project on the same date, and calculate the total number of individuals for each species.
2. Please submit **distinct eBird checklists for different locations** within the KBA, and **avoid reporting the same individual birds**. Some double-counting will be unavoidable, but the idea is to come up with the best estimate possible. This is particularly important for congregatory species that are likely to move around in large flocks, such as seabirds, waterfowl, and shorebirds. It will require that:
 - a. You exclude birds that you have reported on earlier checklists (e.g. distant birds that were seen and counted earlier, or that may have moved locations). If you believe that a large group you are seeing is the same as one you counted earlier, you should only report it once. For instance, you visit site #1 and see a group of ~1,000 Semipalmated Sandpipers, which you see fly to the east towards your next site #2. As you arrive at site #2, you then see around ~3,000 individuals. If you believe that some of the birds from site #2 are those that you saw earlier at site #1, you would report 1,000 birds at site #1, but only 2,000 at site #2 (only the additional birds). Note, if there are species that you have detected at a specific location, but for which all individuals have already been reported on another checklist, you can report them using an 'X' rather than leaving them out of your checklist entirely. The X is used in place of a count to indicate that you have detected a species, but no individuals will be counted in the overall total for the KBA.
 - b. You coordinate your count efforts with other parties that are surveying the KBA, and monitor distinct areas. This may require that if parties are monitoring sites where birds are likely to be shared, they could agree to visit those sites at a specific time of day in order to minimize the risks that bird flocks will move from one party's area to the next. We recommend that parties also compare notes at the end of the day to determine whether they are likely double-counting individuals. If so, the party that saw the birds first should report them on their checklist, while the other party should report only the additional birds (make a note in the species comments explaining that you excluded a certain number of individuals, and the rationale for doing so). Comparing notes will be particularly useful for large birds that can be identified at a distance. For instance, if you saw a large group of Sandhill Cranes flying in the distance in the other party's territory, you will only be able to determine whether they have already been counted after discussing with the other party.
 - c. Coordinated surveys of KBAs that involve many participants should be handled by the local KBA Caretaker and/or the regional KBA Coordinator. If you require additional guidance, the national KBA Coordinator may be able to help (abichel@birdscanada.org).

3. **Ensure that you are covering as much of the KBA as possible** or at least most of the area where the target species are found. Again, the idea is to obtain a best estimate of the total number of birds present, and this won't be possible if you only visit a small portion of the KBA. If you are not conducting a thorough inventory of the KBA please enter your data using a regular eBird checklist. Important to note, however, is that individuals are also welcome to use the KBA project (one need not be part of a complex blitz effort) provided the guidelines are followed.
4. **Only birds located within the boundaries of a KBA should be recorded** on checklists ([see KBA boundaries here](#)). If you can and if appropriate, report checklists using pre-defined eBird hotspots rather than create your own personal sites. [Check this page](#) to see if a hotspot seems appropriate.

Reporting your data to eBird

Joining the project (must do this before submitting checklists for the Canada KBA bird monitoring project)

If you do not already have an eBird account, you will need to sign up for one (don't worry, it's free) at www.ebird.org. To join the project for the first time, sign into your eBird account on the desktop site. Click this link (<https://ebird.org/projects/1043/about?joincode=77CB31BC8B>), and click the "Join Project" button on the Canada KBA Bird Monitoring project page. Once you do this, the project should show up on your mobile app, and at the top of the submit page on the eBird desktop website.

Submitting checklists on your smartphone in the field (for more help on eBird [see here](#)):

- Open the eBird app and turn on location/GPS. A box above "Start checklist" should be visible that says "Choose projects". **If it is not visible, update your eBird app so that projects become active.** Click "Choose projects" and select the checkbox beside "Canada KBA Bird Monitoring", and click "Continue".
- Now choose your observation type: Traveling, Area or Stationary.
 - o Travelling: You moved more than 100 ft (30 m) away from the starting point of your checklist.
 - o Stationary: Your entire birding activity occurred at a single, fixed location. You did not go more than approximately 100 ft (30 m) in any direction from the starting point of your checklist.
 - o Area: The Area protocol is intended for targeted surveys that exhaustively search a specific area for birds - often when covering the same ground repeatedly (for example walking an entire section of a KBA). Area needs to be estimated manually, and units can be acres or hectares which can be changed in eBird mobile app settings.
- Keep track of species as you normally would on an eBird checklist, paying attention to the recommendations above for KBA counts. Here you can also enter breeding codes and comments.
- When finished at the location, click "Stop" and then "Stop Track" and enter in any other information requested by eBird; Observers, Minutes, Kilometers, Area (only requested if using Area). All of these fields (with the exception of Area) are required. If you do not know the exact value, please use your best estimate, however, if you are using "Record track", Minutes and Kilometers will automatically be filled in.

Answer the question 'Are you submitting a complete checklist of all the birds you were able to identify?'. You should always answer 'Yes' to this question unless you are purposefully excluding a species (e.g., an owl) from your checklist. Click "Continue", then choose a location from existing locations or from a map (try to use a hotspot if available).

- If you are offline, you must wait until you have internet access to submit the checklist, but can start a new checklist by pressing the X in the top left corner.

Submitting checklists on a computer using notes from the field (for more help on eBird [see here](#))

- Go to the desktop website (www.ebird.org) and make sure you are signed into your account. Click on "Submit" at the top of the page. On the next page, there should be a "Choose a project" option at the top. Click that, and click the checkbox beside "Canada KBA Bird Monitoring".
- Choose a location from your locations (dropdown list) or find a personal location or hotspot on the map and click "Continue".
- Enter the date the survey was completed, and choose an observation type (see above section for notes on observation type). Fill in all other required information (Start time, duration, distance, area, party size, and any comments) and click "Continue".
- Keep track of species as you normally would on an eBird checklist, paying attention to the recommendations above for KBA counts. Here you can also enter breeding codes and comments. When you have entered all observations seen at that location, click "Submit". Answer yes or no to the question 'Are you submitting a complete checklist of all the birds you were able to identify?' You should always answer 'Yes' to this question unless you are purposefully excluding some species (e.g., an owl) from your checklist. Click submit to finish!

Other important eBird notes and tips

Ensure each specific location surveyed is entered as a separate checklist. For instance, if your party visited 5 different locations during the day, you would report 5 checklists. The 'summing up' of the total number of individuals for the KBA is handled later by NatureCounts.

If multiple observers are counting together at a specific location, only one observer should report the observations using the KBA project. If other observers of the party would also like to have their observations entered in eBird, the person reporting data under the KBA project can [share](#) the checklist(s) with other observers (the reporter will need the other observers' eBird usernames or email addresses for sharing).

For high counts, it is a good idea to document how the count was made (e.g., counted estimated groups of 100 or exact count).

If you have questions after reviewing this document in full, please don't hesitate to reach out to Amanda Bichel (KBA Coordinator for Birds Canada) at abichel@birdscanada.org.