

Neighborhood Bird Project

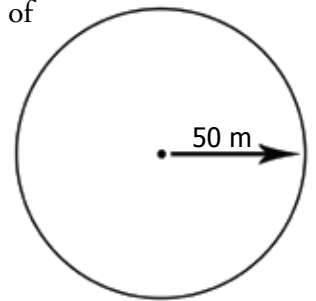


Point Count Protocol

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 ~40 m wide by ~90 m out into the water, while standing on the shoreline at the midpoint of the 40 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.