

DRAFT (Nov 30, 2019): How to eBird your Columbia CBC data

Note: This document generally assumes use of eBird mobile for data entry, but manual data entry is still an option.

Documenting distance:

eBird mobile can automatically track your route and distance travelled; activate the “Record Track” when you start your list (eBird will need location permissions).

- Regarding **backtracking**: eBird mobile will measure the full distance, even if you backtrack. CBC and eBird protocols request that you report only the distance that was not repeated/backtracked. If you use “Record Track”, eBird mobile will measure and auto-fill the full distance you travel, even if you backtrack. Before submitting the eBird list, please modify the auto-calculated distance to represent only the portion of the route that was not backtracked ([Audubon distance reporting](#); [eBird distance reporting](#)).

Travel by foot vs. vehicle:

- eBird does not differentiate modes of transportation, but CBC wants to know separate distances for each mode of transportation. One optional way to keep track of this is to use separate lists for vehicle and foot travel (see “How many lists?”, below).

Documenting time/duration:

eBird mobile will automatically track the duration of your list(s). All you have to do is remember to stop your list(s) when you stop birding.

How many lists?

If you want, you (along with companions in your immediate party) can create one single list for the whole day and document all of your birding in that single list. However, submitting two or more lists may be preferable if you are using eBird mobile. Remember, eBird will do the math to combine the totals at the end of the day, so there are few if any downsides to sub-dividing the day into a series of lists. Here are some situations in which you might want to stop an existing list and/or start a new one:

- You arrive at an existing eBird hotspot and you want to submit your list to the hotspot location.
- You depart an existing hotspot. Don’t keep recording data to a hotspot after you leave the area it represents.
- You change modes of transportation (vehicle to foot or vice versa). This may make it easier to keep track of the distances traveled by each mode of transportation.
- Your party changes: Someone arrives or leaves, or the group divides into sub-groups.
- You take a lunch break that doesn’t involve birding as your primary purpose.
- You have traveled 5 miles under your existing list. eBird prefers that lists represent smaller rather than larger areas.
- You leave your circle section for a period of time.
- You cross a county boundary (unlikely, since the Missouri River is the boundary) or see an especially unusual bird across the county boundary (REF eBird help when it is done being flaky).

- You switch to doing a feeder watch (not just passing by a feeder on a traveling count, but sitting and watching one for a lengthy period of time).
- You've been owling on a nocturnal list and need to change to a regular daytime list.

What location/hotspot should I use?:

If you are submitting multiple lists for the day, then any birding done at an existing hotspot can have a dedicated list for the area represented by that hotspot. However, if in doubt, submit to a personal location. Including "Columbia CBC—Section ###" as part of the name would be a sensible choice.

Should I mark my eBird list(s) as complete?

Almost always. Generally, your CBC goal is a complete count of birds in your designated area. This means counting all birds, but if you are *revisiting* an area, it also means *not* counting birds a second time if you see the same species in roughly the same numbers as you did earlier in the day. New species would, of course, be recorded. Under certain circumstances, you would need to mark an eBird list as incomplete: specifically, if you are revisiting a location under a new eBird list but are intentionally not double counting birds from earlier in the day.

Feeder watching:

CBC protocol allows for submissions from feeder watchers, and these can be reported on a stationary eBird list. The number of birds reported for a species should be the maximum one-time count, not the cumulative total.

Add list-level comments:

Please consider adding comments to provide context to your list. eBird has an option to show or hide list-level comments from public view. If your comments are turned off from view, it would be great if you would share this information with the CASbirddata account, casbirddata@gmail.com.

Consider including the following:

- CBC Section ## [fill in with your section id]
- By foot or vehicle
- Names of group leader and party members
- Weather notes
- Notes of use of playback [[Audubon instructions](#) note that playback use should be "very judicious" and that year-to-year continuity is a consideration]

Share your list(s):

- With the CAS Bird Data account,
 - username: casbirddata or email: casbirddata@gmail.com
- With others in your party

Additional guidance from a Google-cached eBird help page that recently disappeared from the Cornell site:

Can I enter my Christmas Bird Count into eBird?

The Christmas Bird Count is the largest and longest-running ornithological citizen science project. Its data are a great complement to what we are collecting in eBird, and indeed the CBC has paved the way for eBird in many respects. It is not a problem to enter data in eBird and then submit it for the CBC too, since the two projects are collecting data in similar ways, but at different scales. eBird is also a great way to store your data and compare it from year to year, and provides the opportunity to track your data year-round instead of just around the holidays. Please see also our [article on using eBird Mobile on your CBCs](#).

As you head out to do Christmas Bird Counts this season, please remember the following:

- 1) Entering data for the CBC and for eBird presents no problem at all. Indeed, one day we envision the possibility of entering your eBird list and having it automatically contribute to the CBC.
- 2) Most CBC circles are divided into multiple sectors, with teams of people (“parties”) covering each sector. Remember that eBird counts are single-party counts, so any data collected during the CBC season should be entered for single parties only, not parties that spend a lot of time split up. (See more [here](#) on the problem with multi-party counts being entered in eBird.)
- 3) The official CBC effort does not permanently store information at the “sector” level. eBird provides an opportunity to permanently record those data. For example, most coastal counts will have a substantially different mix of birds on the open beach versus areas 5 or 10 miles inland. eBird thrives on location specificity, so stores these data at a finer scale. Keeping track of sightings for each place that you bird throughout the day provides far better information on the birds of the area—both for your own records and for the CBC.
- 4) If you do use a day-long count to enter your count (not recommended), please give some thought as to the location that you use. Please do not plot your point at a 'hotspot' if you spent significant time birding outside of the hotspot area. It is far better to plot a new point to represent the CBC sector, and to name it in a way that makes it clear what it represents—such as “Lakeville CBC--Sector 5”. Since hotspot summaries depend on data collected at the actual point, bar charts and other summaries become much less meaningful when they include data from outside the location.
- 5) Traveling counts with accurate mileage and duration are preferred over area counts. Most CBC territories encompass much more area than you are able to cover, so the mileage is a better measure. [As with the CBC](#), you should subtract your miles spent backtracking. eBird just wants the one way distance of the mileage you covered. For example, if you walk two miles along a trail to check a lake, and then return on the same trail, the total mileage should be 2 (not 4) and the duration should be the entire time spent for the out-and-back trip.
- 6) Owling is often one of the great pleasures of a CBC. Be sure to keep your owling list separate from your other checklists, even if you are covering the exact same site. eBird prefers to keep Nocturnal Birding efforts distinct from diurnal efforts since there is such a great difference in the species you find. This actually matches CBC protocol too, since you are asked to track nocturnal mileage and duration separately for the CBC as well.

If you haven't already, contact your local compiler, or see the "Get Involved" page for the [Christmas Bird Count](#).

Many thanks in advance to all those who participate in both eBird and the CBC. Our collective knowledge of birds has grown exponentially thanks to the efforts of citizen scientists like yourselves. Everyone at Team eBird enthusiastically participates in our local CBCs, so please get out there, have fun, and enjoy the compilations!

While you are at the compilation, try to think about what patterns are emerging this year. Are a lot of late-lingering summer and fall species occurring? Are northern species occurring in good numbers? What finches are being found in your area this year (Red and White-winged Crossbills, Common Redpolls, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks)? Are Bald Eagle numbers continuing to increase and kestrels continuing to decline? How are the half-hardy wintering birds like catbirds, Winter Wrens, and Yellow-rumped Warblers? Then, when you get home, try '[View and Explore](#)' in eBird to see if you can learn more about these questions!