



# The Great Backyard Bird Count



## Great Backyard Bird Count Presentation Video Script

1. Welcome to this presentation about the annual Great Backyard Bird Count! The next count is taking place February 12th through the 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society with Canadian partner, Bird Studies Canada. The program website is BirdCount *\*dot\** org.
2. Because the Great Backyard Bird Count is part of the eBird online checklist program, anyone with an Internet connection, **anywhere in the world**, can take part, even through a mobile device. All ages and skill levels are very welcome – if you can identify a single species of bird, we want to hear from you.
3. If you are new to the count and to data entry through eBird, we have an online course to guide you. It takes about an hour to complete and it's FREE. The **eBird Essentials** course demystifies the process of counting birds, plotting birding locations, reporting species, and sharing findings. Even those already using eBird will learn how to make even better use of the program. Just type “eBird Essentials” into your browser you'll find it.
4. Though it's called the Great BACKYARD Bird Count—you can count birds anywhere—at a nearby park, nature center, your schoolyard, or neighborhood—anywhere you find birds!
5. In addition to accepting bird observations from anywhere in the world, you can use the eBird and Great Backyard Bird programs to keep track of your bird life list, yard list, and any other lists for countries, states, provinces, and counties, which will be automatically stored and updated. You can explore what is being reported by others in your area and around the world—and you can keep on reporting your birds year-round through eBird. You can always go back into your reports anytime to edit or make corrections directly in eBird after Great Backyard Bird Count data entry closes on March 1.

6. Your observations are important because no single scientist or team of scientists could hope to capture so much information about birds around the world in only four days. Each year tens of thousands of people submit checklists reporting many millions of birds. Your information provides a long-term record of how bird populations may be changing over time. Make sure *your* birds are represented by counting them for the Great Backyard Bird Count!
7. Every sighting reported in the Great Backyard Bird Count becomes part of a permanent record that anyone with Internet access can explore. You can use the information to track migration patterns and year-to-year changes in the abundance and distribution of birds and learn about the complex patterns of bird movements. Look for trends that indicate how well birds are faring in the face of environmental changes such as urbanization, global climate change, and disease.
8. Now let's walk through the steps for participating. It's very important that we all count birds the same way, so the information is consistent. You can count at any location for **at LEAST 15 minutes, but you're welcome to watch much longer than that**. Keep track of the total amount of time you spend watching and roughly how far you walked if you're hiking. Please make your best estimate of the number of individuals of each species you saw. For instance, if you're watching at a feeder and see three chickadees, then four chickadees, then one chickadee, you would report them as four chickadees, not eight.
9. Create a separate bird checklist for **each day** you participate. Submit a separate checklist for each **new location, even if it's on the same day**. You can submit multiple checklists on the same day from the same location if the two counts were **at different times**—early morning and late afternoon, for example.
10. When you're ready to report your results, go to the Great Backyard Bird Count website at BirdCount *\*dot\** org and click on the "Participate" tab on the home page to choose the best way for you to submit your data. The options are:
  - Identify birds with [Merlin Bird ID app](#) and add sightings to your list
  - Use the [eBird Mobile app](#)
  - Enter your bird list on the [eBird website](#) (Desktop/laptop)
11. If you are new to the count or have not participated since before 2013, you'll first be asked to create a free Great Backyard Bird Count account. If you already have an account for the Great Backyard Bird Count, eBird, or another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, please use that same username name and password to log in; you do NOT have to create a new account.
12. When you're ready to enter your checklists and have signed into your account you'll first be asked "Where did you bird?" This is where you map the exact location where you were counting. If you've done the count before, you can choose a site you've already

mapped from the drop-down menu where it says, “Select from My Locations.” If you’re watching at a new location or participating for the first time, click “Find it on a Map” on this page. On the next screen, shown here on the lower-right, you’ll fill out your county, state, or province—and choose your country from a drop-down menu. Participants in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico must enter their state or province.

13. When the map comes up, zoom to your location or type the address in the search bar that runs along the top edge of the map. When the map is zoomed in to your location, left-click your mouse on your birding spot. You’ll see a large green marker which you’ll drop at your birding location—then it turns blue. Position the marker, if needed. When the site is marked, a space will show in the right column where you’ll name your location so you can choose it again for future checklists. Make the name something that YOU will recognize, but that does NOT give an exact address or person’s name because location titles are shown on maps that others can see. The red markers you see are eBird birding “hotspots” set up by other bird watchers and you can use them as your location if you were counting birds there.
14. Next step: The Date and Effort page. This where you tell us which date the checklist is for and the type of count you did. Choose: **traveling** if you were walking or driving around (if you’re driving, please break down the route into segments with the same habitat, preferably five miles in length or less and submit a separate checklist for each segment); choose **stationary** if you stayed in one place, perhaps watching feeders from a window; choose **incidental** if you’re reporting birds you saw while you were doing something else else—driving to work, perhaps—and watching birds was not your primary activity.

After you choose the type of count you did, you’ll see additional spaces open up lower on the page. This is where you mark the time you started, how much total time you spent counting, how many people contributed to the checklist, and the distance covered if it was a traveling count. When putting in your birding start time, put hours in the first box and minutes in the second. Remember to choose “A.M.” or “P.M.” from the small dropdown menu.

15. Now you’re on the bird list page, showing the species that are likely to be seen in your area in February. There are several tools and options in the light-blue column on the right side of the bird list page. You can look for a species in the list using the “jump to species” search bar at the top. You may change the list from taxonomic to alphabetical order and show or hide rare species and subspecies. If a bird you saw does not appear on the main checklist, click the “show rarities” option. If the species still isn’t there, go to “Add Species,” type the name, and add it to your list. If you’re participating from a country outside the U.S. and Canada, click “preferences” to set your preferred language for bird names; you can also search for a species by its scientific Latin name.

16. As soon as you enter a number next to a species, you'll see a small "Add Details" button appear to the right of the bird name. Clicking that button opens additional space for you to add information about the sighting if you wish. This is especially important if you are reporting something rare or in unusually high numbers. Use this section to add notes on how you identified the bird and even upload a digital image with your checklist. A photo is *very* helpful in confirming a rare sighting. Photos uploaded with checklists become part of the Cornell Lab's Macaulay Library digital archive and also remain embedded in your checklist.

If you enter a species or a number of birds that is unusual, you will get a message in a yellow bar at the top of the page asking you to fix the item. If you're sure about the sighting and have added comments supporting it, click the green "complete" button. Your report will go to a Great Backyard Bird Count/eBird data reviewer for your area before appearing anywhere in the online data. **This is a normal part of the process.** You may even be contacted by a reviewer to confirm the sighting. This is just one of the ways that we make sure the data are accurate. If the reviewer validates the sighting, it will then be added to the database.

17. In the lower right-hand corner of the bird list page, you are required to check whether you are submitting a complete checklist of all the birds you were able to identify. The only time you'll select "no" is if you are **deliberately excluding** some species from your list (for example, if you counted everything other than crows or gulls or another species). Otherwise, click "yes" to indicate you are including everything you could identify—click "yes" even if you saw some birds you could not identify. Then click the green "submit" button.

18. You'll see a confirmation page where you can review the list you submitted. If something isn't right, use the small edit buttons to the right of each entry to edit your checklist. If you were birding with a friend and want them to be able to add the list to their Great Backyard Bird Count/eBird account, click "Share with Others in Your Party." The checklists that you share this way will be included in your friends' personal observations. Birds shared on your lists at the same location will not be counted more than once. If you just want to share your list with someone who was not birding with you, copy the web address at the top of your checklist and email that—you'll see an ID number in the address. If you have other checklists to enter, you can do so from the confirmation page using the links on the right.

19. If you have other questions about the Great Backyard Bird Count or how to create an account and enter or explore data, please read through our FAQs on BirdCount \*dot\* org under LEARN. We hope you'll join us for the next world-wide Great Backyard Bird

Count. Tell others and invite someone new to try birding with you this year. Come count birds with us!

20. All the photos you've seen in this presentation were taken by Great Backyard Bird Count participants.