

Mississippi River Twin Cities IBA Bird Monitoring Program

Bird Survey Instructions

Navigating Sites

- Identify an optimal route around the site that minimizes travel time.
- If point becomes inaccessible, please re-locate a new point as close as possible to the original. Note the new location on the site map and record the point ID number, GPS coordinates, and any other details about the new location on the map and data sheets.
- In order to avoid a “time of day” effect, alternate starting points for the route.

Equipment Checklist

- Site maps and datasheets
- Watch or timer
- GPS unit
- Clipboard
- Binoculars
- Water, sunscreen, snacks, etc
- Pencils or Sharpie marker
- Field guide

When to Survey

Dates

- 6 times (once per week) during migration (mid-April to the end of May)
- At least 2 times (separated by at least 1 ½ weeks) during the breeding season (early June-early July).

Time of Day

- Begin as early as 30min before sunrise and end no later than 4 hours after sunrise
- Finish any remaining points another morning and note this on the datasheet with a brief explanation.

Weather

- Occasional short rain showers or bouts of light drizzle are ok
- Stop if there is fog, steady rain or drizzle, wind exceeding 12-15 mph (enough breeze to raise dust and loose paper and move small tree branches).

50 meter Fixed-Radius Point Count Methodology (5 minute duration)

- Navigate to each point using a hand-held GPS unit.
- Only one primary observer to locate and ID birds per site; other team members can act as recorders. Use AOU 4 letter codes on datasheet.
- Wait 1 minute to acclimate, then begin 5 minute point count. Stop if interrupted and continue the count later until 5 minutes have elapsed
- Count only land birds (no waterfowl, shorebirds, or other water birds). Identify birds as within 50m of you or beyond 50 m (horizontal distance to observer)
- Count all birds that flush from site upon approach.
- Count birds that enter the habitat and do not merely fly through
- Do not count flyovers
- Count birds that are aerially using the habitat (like flycatchers foraging)
- It's ok to describe a bird seen/heard and try to narrow the ID later
- No “pishing” to attract or flush birds

Happy Birding!