



Background

The Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA) Program is a global initiative of BirdLife International in which 120 countries participate. It is a science-based program to identify, conserve, and monitor sites that provide essential habitat for bird populations. In Canada and the U.S., eBird is helping to update population data for IBAs, either by design (IBA Caretakers enter their bird data on eBird) or incidentally (birders enter their data, not realizing that they are within an IBA). In either case, these data form a valuable resource for the IBA Program as they are incorporated into various tools and visualizations available on www.eBird.ca (e.g., bar charts, high counts, species lists) and ultimately help to ensure our knowledge and conservation planning for individual IBAs.

Why do we need a special protocol for IBA monitoring in eBird?

There are two main advantages to the IBA Canada protocol on eBird (see guidelines below).

1. Coordination of monitoring allows volunteers to cover a large portion of an IBA, and cover multiple locations near the same time, providing better data on the number of birds present in the entire IBA at a given time.
2. Specific procedures for recording observations in eBird using the protocol create a reliable way to combine multiple checklists that cover a large proportion of the IBA, and help avoid double-counting and overlap.

When should the IBA Protocol be used?

There are no rules about how often or when the IBA protocol should be used, as these will be largely driven by the situation at each IBA (peak shorebird migration season, peak waterfowl migration, breeding season), and logistics (when volunteers are available to perform counts).

IBA-wide Survey Guidelines

Please follow these guidelines as closely as possible when using this protocol and reporting your data on eBird:

1. **All checklists for a single inventory should be submitted for the same date.** Later on, our automated database tools will combine all observations from the same date and IBA that use the IBA protocol.
2. **Submit distinct eBird checklists for each location** within the IBA and **avoid reporting the same individual birds.** Some double-counting will be unavoidable, but with these tips we can come up with our best estimate:
 - a. Exclude birds that you have reported on earlier checklists: If you have some reason to believe that the large group you are seeing is the same as the one you counted earlier, you should only report them once. For instance, you visit site #1 and see a group of ~1000 Semipalmated Sandpipers, which you see fly to the east towards your next site #2. As you do your count at site #2, you see ~3000 individuals, so would report 1000 birds at site #1, but only 2000 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, we encourage you to report them using an 'X'. This indicates that you have detected a species, but no individuals will be computed in the overall total for the IBA.

b. Coordinate count efforts with other parties surveying the IBA on the same day by dividing the IBA into manageable sections: This requires coordination of date and time to minimize double-counting. We recommend that parties compare notes after the survey to determine whether they are likely double-counting the same individuals. If so, the party that saw the birds first should report them on their checklist, while the other party should report additional birds (make note of this in the species comments). This will be useful for large birds that can be identified at a distance, possibly from one section of the survey to another.

c. Coordinated surveys of IBAs that involve many participants should be handled by the local IBA Caretaker and/or the regional IBA Coordinator. If you require additional guidance or resources, the national IBA program coordinator at may be able to help (iba@birdscanada.org).

3. **Only birds located within the boundaries of an IBA should be recorded.** If they exist, we encourage you to report sightings using one of the pre-defined eBird hotspots, rather than creating a personal location. If a hotspot does not exist and you must create a personal location, be specific in placement of the location, and give it a descriptive name.

4. **Ensure that you are covering the entire IBA** or most of the area where the target species are found. Remember, the idea is to obtain a best estimate of the total number of birds present, which isn't possible if you only visit a small portion of the IBA. If you are not conducting a thorough inventory of the IBA please enter your data using one of the regular eBird protocols.

Note: Individuals are welcome to use the protocol, provided the guidelines are followed. To ensure you are the only one doing an IBA survey that day, please communicate with the IBA Caretaker or provincial coordinator.

Reporting your data to eBird

1. When you are ready to submit data, go to the main **eBird Canada** portal at <http://eBird.ca/> (the IBA Canada Protocol will only show up later if you are in the eBird Canada portal). **One observer per section should report observations using the IBA protocol!** If others in the section would like observations under their name in eBird, the designated person can [share](#) the checklist(s) using the other observers' eBird usernames or email addresses.

2. To start, click **'Submit'** at the top left of the page.

3. **Where did you bird?** Identify your site (from a list of your existing locations, or from a map which brings up personal locations and hotspots). **Remember**, enter each location surveyed as a separate checklist.

4. **Date and Effort.** Enter the observation date, and click Other for Observation Type. Use the drop-down menu to choose **IBA Canada (protocol)**. Enter Start Time, Duration, Distance, and Party Size (reporting Area is optional). If you do not know exact values, please use your best estimate.

The screenshot shows the eBird observation form interface. At the top right, there is a red asterisk icon and the text '* = Required'. The 'Observation Date' section has a date picker set to 'Oct 7 2019'. The 'Observation Type' section has four radio button options: 'Traveling', 'Stationary', 'Historical', and 'Incidental', each with a description and a 'More Info...' link. The 'Other' option is selected, and a dropdown menu is open showing a list of protocols, with 'IBA Canada (protocol)' highlighted. At the bottom right, there is a green 'Continue' button with a right-pointing arrow. The footer of the form reads '© Cornell Lab of Ornithology | Contact | FAQ'.

TIP: If 'IBA Canada (protocol)' does not show up as an option, type in <http://eBird.ca/>, and restart your checklist in the eBird Canada Portal. If you still don't see IBA Canada Protocol contact iba@birdscanada.org for assistance.

5. **What did you see or hear?** Report the individual count of each species at each location. **Remember, your count must exclude birds that are already reported on another checklist.** 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). Before submitting the checklist you must 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., European Starlings) from your checklist. Click 'Submit' to finish!

TIP: To use the IBA Canada Protocol on an **existing checklist**, open the checklist, click 'Checklist tools' and then 'Change Portal'. Select eBird Canada; if that isn't an option, then it is already in the eBird Canada portal. Then click 'Edit Data and Effort' on the checklist and choose the IBA Canada Protocol under 'Other' Observation Type.

Submitting data directly from the field

The IBA Canada Protocol is now an option on **eBird Mobile!** If you have a smart phone running Android or iOS you can download the eBird Mobile app for free and enter data as you see it in the field. Here is an overview of steps for submitting data on the app. For further details and any assistance please contact the national IBA program coordinator at iba@birdscanada.org.

1. Similar to using www.eBird.ca, make sure that your portal is set to eBird Canada in your settings, this will save time, and an extra step to correct the checklist later.
2. Click 'Start New Checklist'
3. Choose a location (easier with location settings turned on). You have the option of choosing a location from a map or from a list of personal locations and hotspots. Whichever method you choose, remember, **each location surveyed should be entered as a separate checklist so be specific with location.**
4. Report the individual count of each species at each location. **Remember, your count must exclude birds that are already reported on another checklist.**
5. To to make sure your observations are included in the IBA survey count, click on 'Observation Type', and choose **'IBA Canada (protocol)'**. Enter all parameters requested, and press 'Submit'.
6. For further tips with the eBird mobile app visit [this helpful page](#) (Getting Started with eBird Mobile).

