

**Sagebrush Songbird Survey Introduction Draft January 31 2019**

**2019 Survey Schedule**

Choose one day per month to survey a site during the months of April, May, and June 2019.

Preferred dates are:

* Round one of field work: April 11-20
* Round two: May 2-12
* Round three: June 1-9
* The goal is to complete one survey in each month and have each survey a minimum of 2 weeks apart.

The preferred dates are three weeks apart. Thursdays/Friday for those free during the week, and Saturday/Sunday for those who have weekday commitments.

* If you cannot survey the site(s) on scheduled days because of any issue including weather, (strong winds or rain), please reschedule preferably within one week and email us the date. If you cannot reschedule the survey, email Christi Norman, cnorman@audubon.org **and your local chapter Chair**.

**Methodology: Avian Point Count Overview**

A point count is a tally of all birds detected by sight or sound by a single observer located at a fixed position during a specified period of time (i.e., 10 min.). Counts are conducted in the morning, typically during the breeding season when birds are most vocal and territorial. Counts in our sagebrush steppe are best conducted between a half hour after sunrise and preferably by 9am. Counts must be conducted under suitable weather conditions typically winds < 10 mph and no rain. It is important to **NOT** pish or play any birdsongs from iPhone, iPad, or other devices.

Our point count sites are off-road. We will also record species seen by walking into the point count site. We will conduct a stationary point count at the flagged site. Then we will record species by the walking out of the site. Sites range from 0.2-0.8 mile off the road. It is critical to record the straightline distance to site, the importance is the distance for the birds, not the actual walking distance for surveyors. Points counts and all traveling must be concluded by 10am.

We use WDFW protocols and data forms.

**Record Keeping:**

* Follow WDFW protocol. Data will be recorded at the survey site on paper data forms.
* Our data will be housed in eBird. One volunteer from each team will enter sightings into eBird preferably the date of the survey. eBird sites are designated by: WDFW/Audubon site-2017-(site name)- site number
* You will need a personal eBird account. Sign up before, or, at the trainings.
* **All data should be entered into eBird preferably within a week of the survey each month. All data must be entered by June 30 or earlier. All paper data forms must be mailed to your chapter chair or Quality Assurance/Travel Voucher Approver, or, to**

 **Christi Norman, Audubon Washington, at 5902 Lake Washington Blvd. S., Seattle WA 98118.**

**Sagebrush Songbird Survey Vision**

Audubon Washington and eastern Washington chapters are developing a new cooperative conservation program focused on the shrub steppe ecosystem and its bird life. This community science project matches Audubon Washington and chapters with the Washington Department of Wildlife (WDFW) to establish a long-term sagebrush avian census.

* Three target species - Sagebrush Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, and Brewer's Sparrow - function as "umbrella" species for other birds with similar sagebrush and shrub steppe habitat associations.
* Some of the best remaining habitat for sage obligate species is owned/managed by public agencies.
* The breeding songbird data collected through this project is housed in eBird and the data will be used to validate the Western Governors Association Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool distribution models and update the WDFW Priority Habitat Species database. Ultimately, the Sagebrush Songbird Survey project will inform large-scale conservation projects and help wildlife values become incorporated into multi-state land use, transportation, and energy and climate planning.

Sagebrush and shrub steppe are a dominant communities in eastern Washington. Audubon’s goals are

* to stabilize or increase sagebrush songbird populations;
* advance our understanding of sagebrush songbird responses to habitat management practices;
* advocate for ecosystem-based management on publically-owned land;
* identify priority conservation areas under future climate conditions;
* educate and engage new audiences around value of sagebrush & shrub steppe ecosystem.

**Songbird Survey Structure:**

* A 7-year program, to survey Columbia Plateau public lands in order to establish bird distribution and to verify bird occupancy.
* Washington Department of Wildlife survey design to supplement shrub steppe avian data from Breeding Bird Surveys in eastern Washington from tribes, agencies, and, eBird hotspots.

**Community Science** plays an important role in community health. Why a team?

* We use a team approach for our survey efforts for continuity of survey coverage in a multi-year program, survey performance, safety, and coverage during sickness and vacations.
* Share responsibilities so that time spent in the field is most efficient at collecting bird data.
* Ensure continuous survey support as different members come and go.
* Build broader birder support, increase site knowledge, and increase the capacity of birder’s skills in community science survey techniques for wildlife and habitat, data collection and reporting.

**Legal Framework:**

* We survey public (government) lands. WDFW, DNR, USFWS and BLM have given permission to survey**.**
* We will survey private land in 2018-20. Please respect for private property at all times.

**Our requirements for participation are:**

1. Access to suitable transportation to complete a survey.
2. Good (not perfect) hearing and eyesight.
3. The ability and/or training to identify breeding birds in the area by sight and sound. Knowledge of bird songs is important, because most birds counted on these surveys are singing males.
4. Ability to walk 0.5-1 mile cross country in shrub steppe.
5. Volunteer completion of a visual and oral Bird ID, eBird data entry, GPS usage and field protocol training to become familiar with techniques and forms.

**Elements for a successful and safe survey morning:**

* Audubon will scout and map survey sites. Time can be lost finding sites due to closed roads, wash-outs, and wrong turns. Therefore Audubon will save volunteers those frustrations by providing maps with driving directions. This is important as we will survey different sites each time.
* Park at each site so that roads are accessible by other drivers/farm equipment.

**Equipment check list:**

* Car with full tank of gas
* Discovery Pass for state lands: State Parks, WDFW and WA DNR sites, or Federal Lands pass for BLM.
* GPS Garmin Unit (or your own) and **2 extra AA batteries. Datum setting** WGS84 Web Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
* Site map(s) & driving directions
* Binoculars and/or scope
* Clipboard, Pencils (dark, soft lead) / pen (dark ink)
* Forms (Audubon Survey Form and Audubon Protocol Sheet)
* Smartphone/cell phone
* Camera (if no smart phone)
* Flashlight
* Water
* Tick-proof clothing

**What Audubon will provide:**

* GPS units: Etrex Touch 25 units to share among teams.
* Survey forms for each site. Map to each site.
* Bird ID CD

**Administrative:**

* **Before** survey starts: Complete, sign & return Audubon Assumption of Risk form to Christi Norman
* Volunteer mileage reimbursement available to June 30, 2019 courtesy of an ALEA WDFW grant.
* Register on CERVIS website,
* Fill out Statewide payee form/W-9 and mail to WA State.
* Fill out ALEA travel voucher and **mail forms** to each chapter Travel voucher approver each month of survey. Partial Mileage reimbursed 2019.

INCOME TAX DEDUCTION/RECEIPTS:  Citizens who itemize deductions on their Income Tax Returns may make a deduction for mileage necessary for volunteering. The cost of motels, campgrounds, etc. that you used when surveying sites are also deductible.  Please check your 1040 instructions each year.

**Resources:**

Google Docs Sagebrush Songbird Survey Folder is accessible to **participants only.**  It contains contacts and the survey schedule. Anyone in the survey can update these two documents. You can look at and download all other documents.

Public docs: [Audubon Washington](http://wa.audubon.org/songbird-survey-eastern-washington-underway). http://wa.audubon.org/songbird-survey-eastern-washington-underway

**Get Involved!**
Join skilled amateur birders and professional biologists to participate in the sagebrush songbird survey.

**Resource team**

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| **Audubon Washington** |   |  |
| Christi Norman | Program Directorcnorman@audubon.org | Survey Management  |
| Trina Bayard | Director of Bird Conservation | Science Oversight  |
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| **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife** |   |  |
| Matt Vander Haegen | Senior Research Scientist  | Sampling & protocol design, quality assurance |
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| **Audubon Chapters**  |  |  |
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| **Central Basin** | Steering Committee Chair | Jim Herrin  |
| **Kittitas**  | Steering Committee Chair  | Steve Moore |
| **Lower Columbia Basin**  | Steering Committee Chair | Robin Priddy |
| **North Central WA**  | Steering Committee Chair  | Richard Scranton |
| **Palouse**  | Steering Committee Chair | Charlotte Omoto |
| **Spokane**  | Steering Committee Chair | Lindell Haggin |
| **Puget Team** | Steering Committee Chair | Cindy Easterson & Stephen Elston |