Neighborhood Bird Project
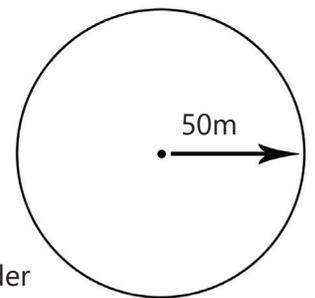
Point Count Protocol

TIMING   Each site is required to be visited on the same weekend of each month; e.g. the second Saturday. The count start time remains constant either throughout the entire year, or with minor changes to accommodate shortened days in the winter.

LOCATION   The site, a city park or greenspace, is divided into permanent loops, sufficient in number to cover the different habitats in a park, or the park in its entirety. Point count stations are located along the loops; stations are located at least 200m apart and visited in approximately the same order each month. Each station receives a GPS location and habitat description, if possible.

PROTOCOL   Once at the station, the team members stand quietly for at least one minute. At the end of the minute, the team counts every bird species seen, heard or flying over within a radius of 50m in the next 5 minute period. "Seen" birds are seen interacting with the habitat within the 50m circle. Heard birds are defined as birds believed to be vocalizing within the 50m circle. Birds that fly over or through the 50m circle without interacting with the habitat are "Fly-overs". For example, a robin flying from one tree to another or from the ground to a tree within the count circle is counted as "seen" whereas a goose flying over the 50m circle is counted as "flying over." The recording area is construed as a cylinder above the observers, so that height is not a problem. The observers remain at the station, which is the center of the circle, for the 5 minutes. Ideally, stop watches are used to accurately time 5 minutes; start and stop times are announced to the participants. It is permitted after 4.5 minutes to "pish" in order to call up birds within the circle which may not yet have shown themselves. After the 5 minutes are up, it is permitted to investigate a previously heard bird if necessary to verify its identity.

RECORDING DATA   Date are recorded on a standardized form: park name, loop name, date, weather conditions, station or stop number, name of team leader and participants present; and for each station: time, and name and number of species seen, heard, or flying over that stop within the 5 minute period. Common bird names are written out in full or abbreviated using the AOU four-letter code.

REPORTING DATA   Data should be entered into project eBird account as soon after each count as is reasonable. Data entry instructions are available from Birds Connect Seattle on request.

CONSIDERATIONS

- If bad weather, e.g. snow, heavy rain or wind, makes the count inadmissible; attempts should be made to redo the count the following day.

- Please attempt to cover the loop in approximately the same amount of time each month.

- Avoid double-counting some of the larger birds, e.g., raptors, by having the team leaders within the park discuss amongst themselves afterwards which large birds were seen and when. It is therefore preferable for all the loops within one park to be accessed simultaneously.

- It is also preferable for park and loop leaders to be as constant as possible, to ensure consistency in data collection.

BIRDS CONNECT SEATTLE