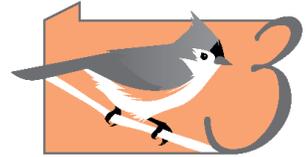# 3rd PA Bird Atlas. 6-minute Volunteer Point Counts

What are the aims of these counts?

These counts will provide a systematic and standardized data set to help estimate bird abundance across the state. Because locations are pre-selected, they should be a representative sample of habitats across the state.

Who should do them?

Observers with a known ability to identify all local bird species by sight and *especially sound* will be selected by the 3rd PBA County Coordinators to cover a sample of points in each year. There are four points per block (fewer in blocks that span the state border).

> Important: County Coordinators will be allocating count locations. Only complete counts at locations that a Coordinator has allocated to you!

How are the counts completed?

Please read the detailed methods on the next page. Here's a summary:

- 4 counts per atlas block as close as possible to predetermined locations (within 0.6 miles)
- Between May 25th and July 5th (inclusive)
- In early morning (before 10am)
- 6-minute stationary count

How do I find the count location?

The best way to find the locations is to use the files on this site: https://hero.page/pba3/pba3, which can be accessed by phone. The locations are in a separate file by county, organized in lists by atlas region. Simply click on the link for the atlas county that your block is in and zoom in to see the points in your block (birdwatcher icon).

For those who want to access the coordinates to use with their favorite GPS app/unit, there's also a complete list of coordinates for each region.

More information about using the online maps can be found on page 3.

What if I can't get to within 0.6 miles of a point?

Inform your county coordinator that it was not possible to complete all four counts due to access reasons. Three or even two completed points in blocks with access difficulties is still valuable. Please do not over-exert yourself trying to access remote points, and always let someone know where you are heading if you are hiking in remote areas.

Should I include breeding codes?

Yes, please! They will all go into the main atlas data set. We suggest focusing on counting birds during the 6-minute count, and adding the breeding codes immediately afterwards.

How do I submit data?

Use the PA Bird Atlas portal through the phone app or website (https://ebird.org/atlaspa/submit) as usual, but share your checklists with this eBird account, so that we can track coverage: **PA Bird Atlas**

Detailed Methods

1) **Timing of the counts**. The surveys should be conducted between civil twilight (approx. 30 minutes before sunrise) and 10am. Between 6am and 9am are optimal. Surveys can be conducted between 25th May and 5th July (inclusive). Note that in the southern tier of the state many birds are already quiet by late June, so earlier within this time window is better. The four points do not have to be surveyed on the same day, but it is often easier to do it that way. Conduct counts during favorable weather (little to no wind or rain).

2) **Research count locations.** The count locations have been selected on a regularly spaced grid across the state, ensuring four locations within each (full-sized) block. We recommend looking at the map of the locations for your block before fieldwork to get some idea about where they are and how you will access them. Consider taking screen shots of the maps (zooming in to the point you will cover) in case you lose cell coverage in the field.

3) **Travel to your locations.** We strongly urge you to use the provided online maps (https://hero.page/pba3/pba3) to find your count locations. If you cannot survey at the *exact* point location (which will often be the case), try to choose a nearby point that has the same broad habitat type – for example, if the grid point is in forest, try to select a nearby forested location. There will be some points that are just not possible to access. If you cannot find a suitable count location within 0.6 miles (1 km, or 3,280 feet) of the selected location, it's OK to drop that point. It is easy to see your location relative to the point in the map tool (see Page 3 for more details).

4) **Create a Point Name** in the eBird app (PA Bird Atlas portal). These points will always be at a new *personal location*. When creating these locations give them a name in the following format: **block_point number** (e.g., 78B35_2). These are the same names that are in the Google map file. We are using the 2nd PBBA block codes because they are shorter and none of the names are duplicated.

5) **Conduct a 6-minute Stationary Count.** Stationary counts are standard eBird protocols (https://support.ebird.org/en/support/solutions/articles/48000950859-guide-to-ebird-protocols#anchorStationary) but note that you should remain in one place (eBird suggests not moving more than 100 feet). Be sure that your count is for *precisely* 6 minutes. Setting a timer on a watch or phone will help. Face multiple directions through the count period so that you can see and hear birds in every direction. Record all birds that you see or hear, including flyovers.

6) **Share with the PA Bird Atlas eBird account.** If you do not know how to share a checklist see here: https://support.ebird.org/en/support/solutions/articles/48000625567-editing-and-sharing-checklists#anchorShareChecklists
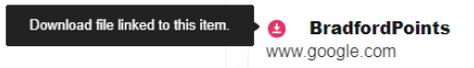
7) **Do not include any birds that you observe before or after the 6-minute count period**. We suggest adding these to a separate checklist, which will still be used in the atlas data, but will not become part of the point count dataset.

Detailed Instructions on Finding Count Locations

All information can be found at https://hero.page/pba3/pba3.

The easiest way to access the points is to use the existing Google maps, linked above. The links are organized by folders for each of the eight atlas regions, and listed alphabetically by county.
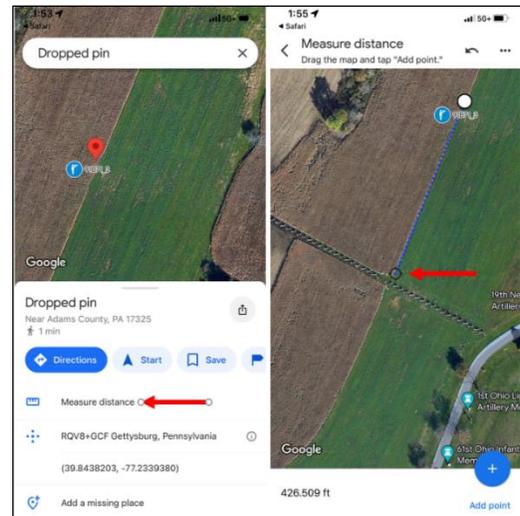
You can also download the full list of locations for each county by clicking on the pink download button. Once the file opens, you can save it to your device or to Google Drive.

If you have concerns about **cell coverage** in the area where your counts are located, we suggest printing a screen shot of the location, or saving a screenshot to your photos folder on your phone.

iOS instructions

Click on the link for the county map and zoom into the area around the point that you will survey. To measure distances to the ideal locations, zoom in to area, press on the screen near the point, a red pin should pop up (see middle screen right). There will then be an option to measure distance. You can move the black target circle around to see how far away various locations are from the red pin, in this example the fence line is 426 feet away, which is good!

Android instructions

Click on the link for the county map and zoom into the area around the point that you will survey. To measure distances, tap the Google Maps icon at the top right (left screen, right). When Google Maps opens, zoom in to area, press on screen near the point, a red pin should pop up. Swipe up at the bottom of the screen (middle screen) and select Measure distance. You can move your screen until the black target circle lines up with the point count location to see how far the location you selected is from the point. In this example, it is 0.5 miles away, which is acceptable.