



Birding Aboard — How to Participate in the “SeaBC” Sea Bird Count

Novice or advanced, casual or dedicated, there are many ways to participate and report your seabird observations.

Step 1: Get a Long-lens Camera (Recommended, Optional)

The new ultra-zoom cameras are compact, equivalent to over 1000mm zoom, geo-tagged, and low-cost (under US\$400). You'll probably want one anyway for your travels. You can download a list of recommended models at www.birdingaboard.org/resources/downloads.html. Advanced birders can add a telephoto lens to an existing DSLR body.

Step 2: Be Underway More Than 2 Miles Offshore

Sail or power, anywhere in the world, noting seabirds or land birds seen at sea.

Step 3: Choose Your Survey Time Frame

Complete hourly tallies have the most scientific value—even if you see no birds. But you also can opt to record only those birds you notice while doing other activities onboard, or what are called *incidental sightings*.

Option 1: Tally All Birds For One Hour

Observe while you're on watch or to pass the time, counting for one hour or as many hours as you'd like, but always in one-hour increments. Some people like to do a count for a set period of time, such as during a morning watch (the best time for bird sightings) for something to do. It won't be unusual to have an hour count with no species or only one bird, and that is of scientific value and should be recorded.

Option 2: Note Birds Incidentally

Instead of dedicated complete counts for an hour, you can record any birds you happen to notice while you are going about your usual sailing routine. Hours may pass with no birds, then all of a sudden an interesting bird joins your boat.

Step 4: Choose Your Recording Method

While underway, you can keep a tally on paper, or let the camera tally for you. If you opt for paper, *be sure to take photos of unusual birds*. Because most waters are under-surveyed, your odds of seeing a “rarity” are good, and a photo provides the necessary documentation.

Option 1: Traditional Paper Field Notes

Tally sheets are available at www.birdingaboard.org/resources/downloads.html. Download the appropriate tally sheet (“Hourly Tally Sheet” or “Incidental Tally Sheet”) to record your sightings. Or jot down sightings in a notebook, using the tally sheet as a guide, and transfer your notes to the tally sheet when not underway.

Option 2: Shoot First, Identify Later

Instead of keeping written notes, which can be difficult at sea, especially if it's cold or rough, take several photographs of any bird seen. Photos can be poor quality, distant, or even blurry—what matters more is several angles of each bird. If your camera doesn't include a built-in GPS, then follow with a photo of your chartplotter's latitude-longitude display.

Step 5: Submit Your Sightings

The ultimate goal is to contribute under-surveyed data to eBird, a user-friendly international bird sighting database, accessible to scientists, conservationists, individuals, and other organizations such as Audubon and BirdLife International.

Option 1: Direct Enter Into eBird

You can enter your own sightings directly into eBird simply by creating a user account. More detailed instructions on using eBird, "SeaBC eBird Primer" and "SeaBC eBird Tips," are available at www.birdingaboard.org/resources/downloads.html.

Please add the words "Birding Aboard SeaBC" in the general comment field. If you're unsure about a bird identification, ask for help at the Birding Aboard Facebook Group, www.facebook.com/groups/BirdingAboard/ or at reports@birdingaboard.org.

Option 2: Ask Us to Enter into eBird For You

Email your completed tally sheets to reports@birdingaboard.org and we can enter them into the general Birding Aboard eBird account. Include your name and boat name, because we'll credit to you, such as *fide* John Smith on s/v Serenity.

Option 3: Batch Submit Your Photos

When you get to port and have unlimited free internet, contact us at reports@birdingaboard.org and we'll coordinate an electronic transfer (such as by WeTransfer or email) of all your bird photos. We will identify and submit your sightings to eBird, credited to you.

If you have any questions, before departing or while underway, feel free to email. Thank you for being the "eyes on the water" for seabird conservation!

reports@birdingaboard.org
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