



# Entering Offshore eBird Checklists: Instructions and Tips

## A Primer for SeaBC Surveys

After completing your SeaBC surveys, you need to enter your data into eBird. These instructions will help you with the data entry process.

- First go to the eBird website (<http://www.ebird.org/>) and sign in, or create a new account if you are not yet an eBird user. (The website will guide you through the account creation process.)
- The eBird database is organized into surveys called “checklists,” and each hour-long count during a SeaBC should be entered as a separate checklist.

### BASIC SURVEY INFO

- Click on **Submit Observations**
- Select the **Use Latitude/Longitude** location option, and input the coordinates from your start position. Note that *South* latitude and *West* longitude need to be entered as *negative* (-) numbers. The decimal degree format (e.g. 42.4250) is the default, but you can press the white button for deg/min/sec format (e.g. 42°25’30”).
- After hitting **Continue** once, you should see a map with the location displayed as a green marker. The map will be in a blue field—unless you were very close to shore—but you should zoom out to ensure your location is plotted correctly. Now give this location a name. Including specific information is a good way to keep your locations organized, for example: “SeaBC\_2012/12/15\_svVictory\_hour2”. Since this is a one-time survey location, do NOT select the box to suggest it as a hotspot. Click on **Continue**.
- Now enter the basic date and effort for the count. First enter the date. The standard observation type for SeaBC surveys is **Traveling**, but if you are more than 2 miles from shore you can use the specialized **eBird Pelagic Protocol** from the **Other** dropdown menu instead (see links below for more details). In either case, you can then enter the appropriate data into the fields that appear. The duration should be 1 hour, and the distance traveled (in either statute miles or kilometers) can be estimated from your vessel’s average speed or that count’s end position.
- In the comments field, please note your vessel’s name, the location description, and that this checklist comes from a SeaBC survey. This field also can be used to enter weather observations, other sightings (e.g. marine mammals), and any bird sightings that could not be narrowed down to more specific “sp.” categories (see “add species” below). Click **Continue** to move on to the bird data entry.

### SPECIES INFO

- Enter the total number of individuals for each species you observed.
- If a species you observed is not on the list, click on the **Add Species** button. Type its name into the field provided, then select the appropriate choice from the list of options.
- General species (sp.) categories: the **Add Species** button is how you can find most of the larger “spuh” (sp.) categories, such as “shearwater sp.,” “Pterodroma sp.” or even “bird sp.” Most taxonomic groups have “sp.” categories available, but if you cannot find what you are looking for, please click on the back arrow at the bottom of the screen and add a note to the comments field about what you saw. You can use the arrows to move back and forth without losing the data you’ve entered.
- Sometimes a message will appear asking you to provide details on a “Rare” species. The eBird system uses a set of automatic filters to allow data reviewers to verify sightings more efficiently. This system should flag any rare species, or unusually high counts of a common species. Please include any notes about how you identified the bird (including field marks, flight style, etc.) in the **Comments** field provided below the species

name, then select the box marked **Complete** next to the species. Any species added with the **Add Species** option will be flagged in this way, even if that group is common in your region. Often these automatic filters are better suited to land birding, so you may need to **Add Species** often. For truly rare sightings, you may receive an email from the local eBird reviewer about the sighting – please provide him/her with as many details as you can, and ideally a photograph.

#### THE OPEN OCEAN eBIRD REGION

The eBird filters are based on regional boundaries that extend out to 200 miles from shore. If your SeaBC takes you further offshore, your checklist will be in one large region encompassing the entirety of the world's oceans, currently labeled as "unknown" (with the country code: XX). Eventually, eBird hopes to split this massive area into smaller, more manageable units. Until then, there is a single filter for the world's oceans. Since most open ocean checklists come from the Southern Ocean, eBird's default filter accommodates checklists from Drake Passage. This is why eBird's standard list of options is all Southern Ocean seabirds, even if your checklist comes from 300 miles east of Hawaii. Until eBird institutes sub-regions for the open ocean, you need to use the **Add Species** button to add the birds to your checklist.

- Next to each species that you enter is a button labeled: **Add Details**. Clicking on this button provides you with a number of options for including data on age and sex of the birds, evidence of oiling, or other comments you wish to make. None of these extra input fields are required. We do highly encourage comments, especially on birds that were difficult to identify, because they can help put the observations into context.
- You also can embed pictures and videos in your eBird checklists. The instructions for doing so are here: <http://help.ebird.org/customer/portal/articles/973966-adding-photos-videos-and-recordings-to-checklists>
- Finally, check the box that you are submitting a **complete checklist**, and click on **Submit**. You then will be taken to a page summarizing your checklist. There are options here for going back in to the data editing steps, in case you missed anything.

#### SHARING YOUR CHECKLIST

- Once you have submitted your checklist, you can "share" it with other members of your birding party (allowing multiple eBird users to have the birds on their personal lists, without duplicating the data). First bring up the checklist page, which you see immediately after submitting it, or you can find by going to: **My eBird** → **Manage My Observations** → **View or Edit** (next to the appropriate checklist). Then click on the button labeled: **Share w/ Others in Your Party**. Note that "sharing" only should be used for other eBird users *in your party* – to give the information to someone else, such as the SeaBC organizers, please use the **Email Yourself** option (see next point).
- There are also links on the checklist page to **Email Yourself** the checklist (which then can be forwarded to anyone else), and to post the checklist via Facebook and Twitter. Each of these options can be used to send your records to the SeaBC community.

#### HELPFUL RESOURCES

- The eBird contact email address: [eBird@cornell.edu](mailto:eBird@cornell.edu)
- The eBird quickstart guide: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/about/ebird-quick-start-guide>
- The eBird Pelagic Protocol: <http://help.ebird.org/customer/portal/articles/1375503>
- The SeaBC website: <http://www.birdingaboard.org/index.html>
- Michael Schrimpf (volunteer eBird reviewer for the open ocean region): [michael.schrimpf@gmail.com](mailto:michael.schrimpf@gmail.com)