2021 Washtenaw County May Count Procedure

Please bird safely and responsibly.

If going out in groups of individuals who live in different households, consider traveling in a separate vehicle for each person and maintain 6 feet in distance between birders at regular stops. Please do not bird if you are feeling ill or have been caring for someone who is ill with Covid-19, or anything else for that matter. Drive safely and observe all necessary precautions when making frequent stops.

Updates for 2021:
- **If observers have all been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, they may share vehicles and carpool as desired. Please wear masks and social distance in areas with other non-surveyors present, and when interacting with the public.**
- There are no other significant changes to the procedures or documents for 2021.
- Merlin, Semipalmated Sandpiper, and Bonaparte's Gull added to the Rare Birds list.

Goals for the 2021 May Count:
- Continue to use eBird to collect and organize data.
  - Using eBird will allow us to keep the data separate by township for historical comparisons.
  - No hand-written, paper lists for the compilers to fumble through!
  - The eBird Master Township Account names and passwords have not changed from when they were set up in 2019.
- We will use everybody's data to provide County-wide information to eBird. We'll also publish the data in the Washtenaw Audubon Newsletter and at our website: www.washtenawaudubon.org.
- Provide printable tally lists available in both alphabetical and taxonomic order.
  - Create separate lists for the expected birds and for the rare & unexpected ones.

Procedure:
- **Tl;dr (too long; didn't read) version:**
  - **Use eBird and share your list with the *Master Township Account.***
  - **Only share your Count Day lists, unless you hear otherwise.**
  - **Complete your sharing by the end of the weekend so we can start compiling.**
  - **Document anything Rare or Weird! Let Juliet know right away if you find something Rare.**
  - **Area Leaders – Check that everything makes sense, then share up with the *WASMayCount* eBird account.**

- Birders:
  - **Use eBird**! Be sure to ask us if you need help with using eBird or with List Sharing.
    - Put the eBird *Master Township Account* (*eMTA*) name in the comments of your list.
    - Your Area Leader will provide the *eMTA* names. These have not changed from 2020.
    - Share your completed eBird lists with the eBird *Master Township Account*.
    - **Please try to complete your sharing by the end of the May Count weekend.**
    - Only share lists from Count Day unless you get other specific instructions.
    - **Let your Area Leader know when you are done sharing**.
  - If you are using eBird Mobile, please do not submit your lists until you have reviewed them for accuracy and correct location *and* you have indicated you'd like to share them with your *eMTA*.
    - A reminder - if you are birding by yourself, you must still choose two (2) observers, so that eBird Mobile gives you the option to share. If you submit your list before sharing, you'll have to edit and share in the desktop version.
  - Bring cameras for documenting your birds with photos; use an audio-recording app (such as Voice Memo on an iPhone) to make audio recordings. Both can be easily uploaded to eBird in the desktop app. This is especially valuable for documenting Rare Birds.
  - Be sure to provide appropriate documentation for Rare Birds!
    - **Let us know right away if you do find something rare so we can share the information with the rest of the birding community before the bird goes away.**
  - If you later find that corrections are needed, make them in your own lists and also let the Overall Compiler know, so we can keep the data up-to-date.

- Area Leaders

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- o Check your *eBird Master Township Accounts* to verify that your team's lists have been shared properly. eMTA access information will be provided separately.
- o Accept the shared eBird lists from your area birders to the eMTA. You will not receive notification via email – this is why the birders in your team must let you know when they are done, and also why we have provided the eMTA usernames and login info to you.
- o **Once you have Accepted and reviewed the data in the individual lists, please share the lists up to the County-Wide ebird account: *WASMayCount*.**
    - ▪ If you need to correct data before sharing it up to the County level, please make sure that the Birders also correct their personal eBird lists.
    - ▪ If issues are discovered later, please let the Birders and the Overall Compiler know. This will help keep the data clean at all three levels.
    - ▪ **Please try to complete your sharing by the next weekend following Count Day.**
- o Let the Overall Compiler know when you are done reviewing and sharing everything.

- • Overall Compiler (and compiling team)
    - o eBird accounts that we set up previously will be used again this year.
    - o We're constantly reviewing the process to find ways to make it easier and clearer.
    - o We will use the report-generating functions of eBird to consolidate the data by township and county.
    - o (Updated) We will make the data available in the Washtenaw Audubon Newsletter and on the website at www.washtenawaudubon.org for all to see!

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Key Responsibilities and More Details:
- • Everybody:
    - o If you aren't sure about *anything* in this procedure, please ask us! This process is still new, and we welcome any feedback or suggestions for how to make it clearer.
    - o If you know anybody that is interested in participating in the May Count, please let the Overall Compiler know!

- • Overall Compiler
    - o **Find volunteers and direct them to Area Leaders based on where they will bird.**
    - o **Get this Count Day procedure sorted out so everybody can understand and use it.**
    - o Create eBird *Master Township Accounts* (*eMTAs*) and an overall County account.
        - ▪ Participants will be provided with the account names (the eBird usernames) well in advance of Count Day.
        - ▪ The account names and passwords are the same as were set up in 2019.
    - o Accept all of the shared lists into the County eBird Account.
    - o Compile the County-wide list using the submitted data.
    - o Report the historical comparisons on a Township and County basis.
    - o Share the Area Leaders' contact information to help with township boundary and other questions.

- • Area Leaders (Township Compilers)
    - o **Help recruit, organize, and train volunteers.**
    - o Make sure the birders on your team know their township and territory boundaries.
        - ▪ Provide maps as needed.
        - ▪ **Do you need help finding good township maps? Washtenaw County's GIS site is a great resource: https://gisappsecure.ewashtenaw.org/mapwashtenaw**
    - o Contact the Area Leaders in neighboring townships to resolve boundary questions.
    - o Make sure that the individual birders know how to use eBird and how to share their lists.
    - o Make sure that the lists from your birder team are entered into eBird and properly shared with the eBird *Master Township Account*.
        - ▪ Make sure that the individually shared eBird lists are clean, and include no overlapping counts of birds and locations, and no out-of-area sightings.
        - ▪ Please Accept the lists that your team's birders have shared into the eMTA.
        - ▪ Once you have Accepted reviewed the data in your township birder's lists, share the lists up to the County-wide account: *WASMayCount*.

- Let the Overall Compiler team know when the data is ready for compilation.

- <u>Individual Birders</u>
  - Use eBird to record your sightings.
    - **Include the assigned *eMTA* name in the comments on your list.**
    - Let us know if you need help with eBird!
  - Make sure that you know the boundaries of your assigned township and territories. If you aren't sure, please ask. Your area leaders should be able to provide maps.
  - Create a unique eBird list for each location that you bird, rather than a single list for your entire territory.
  - Use known eBird hotspots when appropriate.
  - If you are using Personal Locations, try to create them in advance.
    - This will help you to check that locations are within your assigned territory, and should generally speed things up on Count Day.
    - **Do Not** share your "scouting lists" with your *eMTA* for inclusion in the final data. (But let us know if you find anything unusual while scouting!!)
    - If you need additional lists, such as for cleanup or incidental birds, new Personal Locations with names like "abc Road List – xyz Twp" might be appropriate.
  - Verify then share your eBird lists with the appropriate eBird *Master Township Account* **by the end of the weekend** if possible**.**
    - *eMTA* usernames will be shared with everybody well in advance of Count Day.
    - **(New)** - Again - if you are using eBird Mobile please do not submit your lists until you have reviewed them for accuracy and correct location *and* you have indicated you'd like to share them with your *eMTA*.
      - If you are birding by yourself, you must still choose two (2) observers, so that eBird mobile gives you the option to share. If you submit your list before sharing, you'll have to edit and share in the desktop version.
  - Make sure that there is no overlap in birding coverage between you and other birders;
    - If overlap does somehow occur, please let your Area Leader and the Overall Compiler know so we can avoid multiple tallies of the same birds. Please send a specific email or written note (not just verbal) to document this. Notation within the eBird list is NOT enough.
  - Collect the appropriate information required to document Rare Birds.
    - This may be as simple as providing the normal eBird documentation. But for exceptionally rare birds, you may be asked to fill out a Michigan Natural Features Inventories (MNFI) or Michigan Rare Birds form. Links to these forms are on the *Rare Birds List*.
    - Photos, audio, detailed description of the bird's appearance and behavior, as well as location information such as habitat, weather conditions, etc., should be collected whenever a rare bird is sighted.
    - We will provide a *Rare Birds List*. This list will indicate in **Bold Letters** those birds that require the strongest documentation, but always collect what you can when you see an unexpected bird.
    - **Let us know if you do find something rare so we can share the information with the rest of the birding community before the bird goes away.**