PREPARE to Conduct Birds in the City

1. **Learn to identify one or more species of urban birds**

2. **Find a study site for your Transect(s)**

3. **Set up your Transect**
   a. use a map or hand-drawn picture to
      - choose “start” and “stop” points
      - draw a line along each block of your Transect
        from “start” to “stop”
   b. determine the length of your Transect and get comfortable with the width of the transect
   c. complete a Habitat Form

4. **Practice counting (optional)**

5. **Choose a bird identification method**

CONDUCT Your Count

1. **Fill in the top of your Tally Sheet**

2. **Walk along the Transect looking and listening for birds**
   Record on Tally Sheet
   - the numbers of birds you see or hear INSIDE the Transect
   - the numbers of birds you hear or see OUTSIDE the Transect
   - the numbers of birds you see fly over

3. **Record on the Tally Sheet your end time and time spent observing**

4. **Submit your data**

   **Mail your Habitat Forms and Tally Sheets to**
   Urban Bird Studies / Birds in the City
   Cornell Lab of Ornithology
   159 Sapsucker Woods Road
   Ithaca, NY 14850

   You may include any questions, comments and concerns in the same envelope.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Tally Sheet
- pen or pencil
- clipboard or other hard surface

**Optional:**
- a bird field guide
- binoculars
- measuring tape
**PREPARE TO CONDUCT BIRDS IN THE CITY**

1. **Learn to identify one or more bird species**

   Choose one or more bird species to count along your Transect. If you are learning how to identify birds, you may want to conduct your first Transects by counting only a few common species and then adding more as you feel comfortable.

2. **Find a study site to conduct birds in the city**

   You can conduct Birds in the City at any location in any city. Remember that each location will have different species or numbers of birds. Walk and watch birds along one or more blocks in a fairly straight line. This line is called a Transect. You can have as many Transects as you want. Each Transect can be about one to five city blocks long.

3. **Set up your Transect**

   a. Mark two spots on a printed or hand-drawn map
      - A point where you will begin your Transect: this is your “start” point.
      - A point where you will end your Transect: this is your “stop” point.

   The start and stop points should be at least one but not more than five city blocks apart. If you do not have street intersections then make your Transect about 55-280 yards long (50-250 meters).

   On the map, draw a line connecting your start and stop points. Try to make the line as straight as possible. The line will be the center of your Transect. You will count the birds you see to the left and right of this center line.

   b. At the Transect location:
      - Determine the distance between the start and stop points. You can do this by pacing or using a tape measure.
      - Learn the width of the Transect. You will count birds that are within 50 feet to each side of the center line. An easy way to estimate 50 feet is to imagine the lengths of 1 1/2 city buses or 3 cars. You don’t need to measure the width exactly but try to find some features that you know are about 50 feet from the line. For example, you may see trees, buildings or fences that are about 50 feet from the line. Measure some of these by pacing or using a measuring tape. Remember the features to help you when you are counting your birds. Birds that are within 50 feet of the line are “in” your Transect. Birds beyond the 50 feet are “outside” the Transect. It is important that you get a “feel” for the width of your Transect.
4. **Complete the Habitat Form**

You can measure the length of your Transect and record the habitat data on the same day that you begin counting birds or you can complete them ahead of time. You only need to record the length and habitat information once. You may count birds along the same Transect as many times as you wish.

5. **Practice Your Count (Optional)**

You may want to practice counting birds along a new Transect before you begin your official counts. When you count birds along a Transect, you will be recording which birds are “in” the Transect (within 50 feet of the center line) and which birds are “outside” the Transect. If you have never conducted a Transect count before, practicing will help you to get a feel for the dimensions of the Transect, especially the width. Practicing also will help you find out how long it takes to complete the count.

First try counting the birds without recording the species. This will help you to focus on determining which birds are in and where along the Transect it may be difficult to count (for example, if there is a lot of noise or other disturbance). Practicing also can help you to get familiar with the Tally Sheets and to help you figure out what bird species you might see along the Transect. Record the information on a Tally Sheet but please do not submit the bird count data.

6. **Choose a Bird Identification Method**

You can choose to count all of the birds you see along your Transect or only selected species. Choose one of these two methods before beginning your count.

   a. **Selected Species Method:** record only certain species, families, or groups of species

   Choose this method if you want to:
   - improve your bird identification skills by focusing on one or a few species at a time
   - focus on one or more bird species
   - locate birds for which there are other projects you can conduct

   For the Selected Species method, you will record counts only for selected birds along your Transect. If you are not sure which birds to count, you may choose from the list of recommended species for bird study available on the web site.

   b. **Full ID Method:** identify and count all birds

   This method is moderately difficult. It is recommended if:
   - you are already comfortable with bird identification and counting birds along a transect, or
   - you have a group of observers who have divided up the bird identification responsibilities.

   Count and record all of the birds you see. When a bird flies over too quickly or leaves before you have had a chance to identify it, record it as “unidentified.”

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**Boat-tailed Grackle / Zanate**
CONDUCT YOUR COUNT

After choosing your method and getting your materials ready you can head out to your start location.

1. **Fill in the top of your tally sheet**
   - Date, start time
   - A list of the birds you will count

2. **Walk along the transect looking and listening for birds**
   Beginning at your start point, walk along the Transect looking and listening for birds. Count the birds you see or hear and record the following on the Tally Sheet
   - Numbers of birds you see or hear in the Transect (within 50 feet [15 meters] of the transect’s center line)
   - Numbers of birds you hear or see outside the Transect (more than 50 feet from the center line)
   - Numbers of birds you see fly over (birds that fly over your Transect but do not land where you can see)

3. **Record your end time and the time you spent observing**

4. **Submit your data to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology**
   Mail your Habitat Forms and Tally Sheets to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Send only one Habitat Form per Transect. You can send many Tally Sheets for each Transect.
   
   **Mail to:**
   Urban Bird Studies / Birds in the City
   Cornell Lab of Ornithology
   159 Sapsucker Woods Road
   Ithaca, NY 14850
   
   You may include any questions, comments and concerns in the same envelope.