MANUAL FOR OBSERVERS

Point Count of Resident Birds Costa Rica

National Monitoring of Resident Birds
Ornithological Association of Costa Rica (AOCR)

©Daniel Hernández

"Have you ever asked yourself, how many grackles and vultures are there in Costa Rica, how many species are there and which ones live in our cities, which specie is the most abundant in Costa Rica, or which province, canton, or district has the most abundant and diverse birdlife and what is the status of their populations?"

You can help find the answers to these questions by participating in the Point Count of the Resident Birds of Costa Rica project.

ASOCIACIÓN ORNITOLÓGICA DE COSTA RICA

INTRODUCTION

The Point Count of Resident Birds of Costa Rica project, responds to the necessity for monitoring resident avifauna that the Scientific Committee of the Asociación Ornitológica de Costa Rica (AOCR) pointed out in 2006 when it published the updated, second edition of the *Official List of the Birds of Costa Rica*. The project is based on the participation of volunteer bird observers, distributed throughout the country, who, by using the Point Count method, realize an annual bird count along designated routes, gardens and parks, and who report their results to the Scientific Committee of the AOCR for analysis and publication.

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Jaboncillal Garden, Goicochea

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Our principal objective is to monitor the resident bird populations in Costa Rica through citizen science and to use the collected data for the conservation of wild birds, education, and for scientific and academic purposes.

© Mario Morazán

Tityra semifasciata (Masked Tityra)

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METHODOLOGY

The Point Count methodology is a common way to monitor avian populations. It consists of counting all the birds observed and heard in a fixed place during specific time periods, repeated over and over through the years. This method is able to detect the relative abundance and population tendencies of bird species through the investment of relatively little work in comparison to other methods.

COUNT SITES

The methodology of this project is applicable in the entire national territory, including islands and the open sea.

It consists of two modalities:
1. Routes
2. Gardens & Parks

Resident birds are counted from one to three times a year in each Route or Garden/Park during the period:

15 May to 30 June

© Giovanni Delgado

Puriscal Garden

© Giovanni Delgado

Puriscal Central Park

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

The only requirement is to have an ample knowledge of the birds in your area and a few hours each year to count them and to send in your report. The observer chooses the site, date and time.

It is also important to be committed to doing the count yearly along the same Route and Garden/Park, since only in this way can we obtain systematic data over the long term.

© Diego Quesada

Arenal Route Count

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GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Think carefully about the bird watching place you know best and where you can identify the local birds.

2. Read closely the protocols for both modalities.

3. Reconnoiter the place you have selected.

4. Take the geographic coordinates of the beginning of the Route and/or the Garden/Park. Use a GPS or Google Maps/Earth. On the website there is a video tutorial that explains how to do this.

5. Fill out the registration form to reserve your Route or Garden. Remember that you have to indicate the geographic coordinates.

6. Indicate the number of points where you will be counting, between 10 and 20 for Routes, but only one for Gardens/Parks. With the help of Google Maps/Earth, make a map, measure the distance between points, mark the route, and obtain the coordinates for each point (preferably). On the website there is a tutorial video that shows you how to do this.

7. Select the date, the time and means of transportation.

8. Do from one to three bird counts between May 15 and June 30.

9. Fill out the form for reporting your data. It is available on the website. Send it to the indicated address before July 30.

It is important to register your count place!

In order to avoid site duplications, observers should register their Route and Garden/Park as soon as possible before doing the count.

SITE SELECTION

Every site is important. The objective is to monitor all resident birds in all the panoramas present in Costa Rica such as gardens, parks, cities, towns, all types of forests and woodlands, coasts, islands, cultivated areas and pastures, open sea.

ROUTE COUNTS

Number of count points: between 10 and 20 points.

Distance between count points: 200m in open areas and 300m in forests and woods (Exceptions can be made depending on your route).

Location of count points: distributed in such a way that all parts of an ecosystem are represented.

Total of counts: one to three counts.

Time of counting: 5 minutes at each point.

Observers: one responsible for the count with a maximum of three helpers.

© Selva Verde, Sarapiquí

Route Counts

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GARDEN AND PARKS COUNTS

Number of count points: one only.

Location of point count: wherever there is an ample vision of the major part of the garden/park and different habitats such as buildings, fruit trees, bird feeders, bushes, fences, ponds.

Total of counts: one to three counts.

Time of counting: 30 minutes.

Observers: one responsible for the count with a maximum of three helpers.

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Garden Counts

A single observer can register and develop various gardens/parks and routes, or a combination of all, whenever the protocol for each one is fulfilled.

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ABOUT THE BIRDS

- All Costa Rican resident birds are important and should be counted.

- Each observer should note the maximum number of birds of each species that is simultaneously observed and heard at each counting point (better if it is timed).

- Juvenile individuals count only if they are independent of their parents.

- If you are unsure of an identification, it is best not to count the bird and move on to a bird that you can identify.

- Migratory, rare, and nesting birds and other special cases that are observed ought to be noted in the available space indicated in the report form.

REPORTING

The report form is available on the website and consists of an Excel file containing six pages, each of which should be carefully reviewed and filled-out before sending the report:

- Page 1: General Data
- Page 2: Bird Count 1
- Page 3: Bird Count 2
- Page 4: Bird Count 3
- Page 5: Provinces, Cantons, and Districts
- Page 6: Other registers

Final date for sending reports:
July 30

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USE OF DATA AND FINDINGS

The AOCR will use the data only for educational purposes, and in academic and scientific contexts, for the purpose of conserving and protecting the avifauna of Costa Rica.

The findings and list of participants will be made available in an annual report published in *Zeledonia*.

Other institutions and organizations interested in using the data obtained during the count, should sign a cooperation agreement with the AOCR for jointly using the information.

PROHIBITIONS

It is completely prohibited to use the name of the AOCR and the project to enter without permission in private properties, protected areas, or restricted access areas. In order to enter such properties, contact the Scientific Committee of the AOCR and it will provide a letter for requesting such permission that can be presented to the property owner or administrator.

Attracting birds to count area using sounds (playback) is not allowed.

INFORMATION

Details about the project are available in:
http://conteodeavescr.wordpress.com/

Here you will find tutorial videos, answers to frequently asked questions, as well as the registration form, protocols for Routes, Gardens and Parks, data reporting form, publications, news and more.

Remember to subscribe to the blog and receive updates and notices directly in your mail.

Contact:
puntosdeconteocr@gmail.com

Thank you for your participation!

© Carlos Cruz

Tambor Tropical Garden Counts

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