



Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee

Documentation Guide

Species _____ Date(s)/Time(s) Observed _____

Submitted by (observer name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and date of write up):

Location (state, county, jurisdiction, city, place, specifics, GPS coordinates, habitat, etc.):

Number of birds, sex, age, plumage, morph, etc.:

Circumstances of the sighting (who/how encountered/found/identified the bird(s); other species present, etc.):

Description (describe the entire bird, as seen, not just key field marks; how were similar species eliminated?):

Behavior (any vocalizations, flight style, feeding, interactions with other species, etc.):

Viewing conditions (approximate distance to bird(s), weather conditions, sun angle, optics used, etc.):

Observer experience (with this species and general):

Other observers who saw and/or identified the bird(s):

Additional Comments (were field guides or references used before completing this report? other analysis?):

*Note: It is best to take and record field notes before consulting field guides
Sketches & photos are encouraged * * * See other side for a detailed documentation checklist*

Checklist of Points to Include in Reports

Not all these items will be seen or noted, nor are they all necessary to report or correctly identify a species, but not including something you did see may lessen the value of your documentation. Use this checklist as a reminder of items to include in your report.

Location:

- State, county, jurisdiction, city
- Place name, town, park, address, road intersection, street address, GPS coordinates-if known, etc.
- Habitat description (field, woods, water, plants, etc.)

Number of birds, sex, age, plumage, morph, etc.:

- Number of birds
- Sex by plumage or behavior (male/female) - if known
- Age by plumage or behavior (e.g., adults, juveniles, etc.) - if known
- Unusual plumages or morphs, etc.

Description (describe the entire bird, not just key field marks) - sketches, even rudimentary, can be very helpful:

- Which bird family does this individual belong to? Why?
- How were similar species eliminated, including extralimitals?
- Plumage (e.g., breeding/winter/juvenile/etc.)
- Overall length, posture, size, shape, structure, bulk
- Head: shape, colors, pattern (e.g., stripes)
- Bill: length, shape, color
- Eye: color, eye ring, eye stripe, eyebrow
- Upper parts: nape, back, rump
- Tail: colors, shape, length
- Legs: color, length, feathering, presence of hind toes (for waterfowl)
- Underparts: throat, breast, belly, flanks, vent
- Wings: colors, wingbars, length, wing linings
- Other characteristics
- Other birds present? Comparisons?

Behavior:

- Behaviors observed/interactions with other birds
- Any voice/vocalizations/songs/calls/how delivered (in flight, perched, etc.)
- Flight patterns, walking, hopping, etc.
- Preening, sleeping, resting, feeding methods

Viewing Conditions:

- Weather conditions; sky/cloud cover
- Wind/speed and direction
- Temperature
- Precipitation (snow, rain)
- Water/ice, depth, waves
- Time of day, length/duration of sighting
- Was observer stationary/moving, distance to bird
- Lighting/sun location in relation to observer and the bird/light on the bird
- Optics used: binoculars/scope; model(s), power
- Camera, lens used

Observer Experience:

- Experience with this species and this location; number of years birding

Other Observers:

- Who saw and/or identified the bird(s)
- Were photos/videos taken?:

Additional Comments (include additional sheets, if necessary):

- What parts of the bird couldn't be seen; field marks expected but not seen or variations thereof
- Which field guide(s) or references were used and when, relative to the observation
- Description from notes made at the time of sighting, notes made later, from memory?

Send Your Report to:

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