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?):

* * * See other side for a detailed documentation checklist

Note: It is best to take and record field notes before consulting field guides.
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?

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