

## **Frequently asked questions about Bird Population Monitoring Programme**

Q. I don't know all the bird species – should I volunteer to take part?

A. Yes please. We need volunteers – BirdLife Botswana aims to provide training and guidance and some counts are better than no counts.

Q. Why can't I just do a transect point count from my house?

A. To ensure the counts you do work scientifically, it is vital we use randomly selected starting points. If you need a starting point near your home, we can provide a suitable one.

Q. How do I get my starting point for my walk/drive?

A. Your local representative will have identified a starting point and can provide this.

Q. I've got my starting point. What do I do now?

A. You need to work out a route. You may want to do this before you start your counts to check your route is not blocked.

Q. How do I find my point count positions again?

A. It is important to do your counts from the same position each year so we recommend marking or making a note of your point count positions – using tape or ribbons.

Q. What birds do I count?

A. All birds you can see or hear from your 200m point count position.

Q. If I don't know a species on a count, should I guess?

A. No. It is better to not record any species you are unsure of. You can spend some time after the five minute count with a book and record the bird if you are sure.

Q. Can I count birds I see in-between my point counts?

A. For consistency we ask all people to count the same way – only at their point counts. Do make a note of any important birds you happen to see (as these are useful additional records) but keep separate from your survey counts.

Q. Does my transect have to be straight?

A. No. Your route will probably follow existing tracks so is unlikely to be straight. The important aspect is to avoid counting birds already counted. This is why points are 200m apart. Therefore please avoid a route which doubles back.

Q. I only completed one of my counts – do you still need the other count?

A. Yes. We welcome any survey data. The more we receive, the more accurate the results will be.

Q. It is too dangerous to walk in my area; Do I need to use a car?

A. We do not ask people to take unnecessary risks. This methodology suits both those with vehicles and those without. If you can, step out of the vehicle to make your count.

Q. Can I do my count with a friend?

A. Absolutely! We would encourage people to work in groups of two or three if they can, to help. But it is important that only one person counts (one observer) for consistency. One person

could write the species down. All we ask is that you carry out the survey in the same place over time.

Q. I will be doing a walked transect. How do I measure 200m accurately?

A. The best way is to pace out a measured distance like 25 metres. Work out how many of your paces equal the 25metres and multiply by eight. Once you reach your next 200m point, mark it with cord or tape on by making a note of an obvious land mark. It does not matter if your point count is actually 190m or 210m away from the last but it important you count from the same point each year. Of course, if you have a GPS, it is even easier!

Q. I'm not sure of some of the distant species, should I record them?

A. If the bird is too far away and cannot be identified, it should not be recorded.

Q. I can hear a calling bird on more than one of my counts, should I record it again?

A. No. Please record it the first time you hear it only. Unless you can be sure another individual is calling, do not record again even if it is calling throughout your counts at other points.

Q. Can you record birds you do not see?

A. Yes. You do not need to be able to see the bird to record it – some birds will only be heard.

Q. I can't get to my suggested area in November because it is too wet. Can I take part in September?

A. No, please liaise with your local representative to identify another transect start point.

Q. Do I need binoculars to take part?

A. No, you can take without binoculars although we recommend using them.

Q. If it is not easy for vehicles to follow track what do you do

A. If the transect is not accessible by car you have an alternative of walking the transect but please try and fine a route you can repeat with ease each year.

Q. Why is the survey not done in winter time?

A. The survey is done in February and November to cater for the migratory species too

Q. Do we record water birds when you see them in your transect?

A. Avoid wetlands as much as possible