

## Tips on Record Keeping and How to Read the Bird Chart

1) **STATUS** -I've tried to give some idea of the chances of seeing our birds with letter codes just after the name of the bird. Abundance symbols are not as on many checklists, they give the *probability of seeing a species on an outing in Middlesex*, rather than totally an imperial value. However in the last few years, owing to the large number of sightings reported through eBird, by about 200 observers, our status codes have been revised. I am rating on dates seen and numbers reported.

**c** –common- Present in numbers, widespread or conspicuous, and should be seen in habitat and in season on almost every trip. Species likely to have more than 100 dates reported per year and often in large numbers.

**u** -uncommon- Present but due to low numbers, migration span, behaviour, or distribution, will be seen in habitat and season on only some trips. A species with usually 30 to 99 dates reported per year.

**r** -rare- Present in low numbers or due to other factors not expected to be seen without special effort. Probably able to be seen every year, 10 to 29 dates in most years.

**o**- occasional- Not expected to be seen each year but may be present. Less than 10 individuals involved during dates seen.

**a** -accidental- Birds that have been reported in Middlesex but not expected to be found in Middlesex again in the near future or they could be out-of-season dates for migrant birds which seldom if ever are found in the County.

**y** - A resident species in Middlesex although some species experience migration which may add or reduce our numbers of that species.

**w** –winter seasons (2 times, Jan-Feb, and Dec)

**S** –spring season (late Feb-May, and some species until June)

**s** –summer season (Jun-Jul, Aug for some species)

**f** –fall season (Jul and Aug for some, like shorebirds but usually Sep – Nov)

**m** –migrant -species that mainly migrate through this area

\* - has nested or has had nesting evidence

2) **BIRD CATEGORIES AND COLUMNS USED**-Where possible and when available, all of the listed dates will be given, depending on the species being present in the county. London Christmas Bird Count is included for all birds in the last column. Skunks Misery CBC data is within the table.

a. **Wintering birds** -birds that breed elsewhere but will spend all or part of the winter in this area. Examples include winter finches, juncos, etc. The pertinent dates include...

-first fall arrival date, high number date, latest spring date, out-of-season dates sometimes indicating numbers of individuals in brackets.

b. **Nesting birds**- birds that come to this area to breed are found in the breeding column with a Breeding Bird letter code denoting breeding evidence and a significant breeding date where available as well as a few other pertinent dates including...

- ? Indicates a possible nesting species, first spring arrival date, high number date, Breeding Code Letter(s), latest fall sighting, high fall number date, out-of-season dates

c. **Resident birds** -Birds that appear to be here all year but may migrate somewhat, or be joined by those from elsewhere. This could be like Blue Jay which appears to remain but since others migrate through the County, it is hard to decide in which category, migrant or resident, particular birds may be classed. Dates including...

-Some key dates including migration highs, highest breeding evidence, and CBC totals

d. **Migrant birds** –birds that travel through this area to nest further north. Some species might remain rarely to breed or in very small numbers but are considered migrants mainly and the following will be recorded...

- First spring date, high number spring date, latest spring date, first fall date, high number fall date, latest fall date, out-of-season dates, and if suspected of breeding a breeding date with code

e. **Rare, Occasional, Accidental birds** -usually all sightings will be listed but if sometimes just the key ones. For example, if an eruption of a species of owl occurs, which is usually very rare, only a few days would be listed.

### 3) COLUMN NAME DEFINITIONS –each column heading explained

**First spring** -First sighting of the species in spring if a migrant, or nesting bird, March being considered first “spring month” A few species arrive sometimes arrive in late February. Some not until May or early June.

**Spring high** -Highest one day total seen for a migrant, seen by a single person or number of people’s sightings on that date. Note that high number dates can be totalled for a number of sites, indicated with a dash followed by a number. For instance, May 2(10-2) means high count on May 2 is 10 individuals, at 2 sites.

**Latest spring** -Latest date to be recorded for a migrant species or for a wintering species.

**Breeding evidence** - Breeding evidence for the species indicated by letters as in the Breeding Bird Codes are as on the eBird site at

<https://help.ebird.org/customer/portal/articles/1006850-breeding-codes-behavior-codes>

If possible a date is put in for when the code was achieved. The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) from near Strathroy to near Glencoe and the Ontario Field Ornithologist (OFO) Skunk’s Misery outing are in early June so often a T in the column would be from one or both of those dates. Other dates indicate being

present in breeding season. If unsure of nesting status the date or a blank space has a question mark in the box.

**First fall** -First sighting of a migrant in the fall or a wintering species arrival.

**Fall high**-Highest one day total seen in one day for a migrant, or nesting species about to migrate as per flocking behaviour seen, or flock of wintering arrivals, seen either by a single person or multiple sightings from the same date. Note that high number dates can be totalled for a number of sites, indicated with a dash followed by a number. For instance, Sep 2(10-2) means high count on September 2 is 10 individuals, at 2 sites.

**Latest fall** -Latest record for a migrant or last date for a breeding species. Last “migrant month” is considered as November though some don’t leave or arrive until December.

**First/second winter, out-of-season** -Records for these 2 columns include dates for species encountered not in their usual times, eg. Species here but not known to nest, winter birds lingering into spring or summer, nesting or migrant birds lingering into winter, etc.

**CBC total** - London CBC from first Saturday in Count period is listed. Other Counts which have part of their list in Middlesex County are tabulated into the table. This column gives an idea of lingering birds and their abundance, resident birds and wintering birds and their abundance.

**4) RECORDS VS SIGHTINGS and NOTES ON RECORDKEEPING** -Note that the sightings given in the chart are considered authenticated/substantiated records unless otherwise stated. Since our records are being used more and more for research purposes, the Middlesex Birds Record Committee and eBird are trying to make records more accountable by insisting on documentation for unusual and rare species, or out-of-season records when necessary. Many birds are vetted through eBird contact after a sighting has been made. Some bird sightings are also adjudicated by the MBRC for authenticity. A completed rare bird report or

detailed oral report will do for most sightings. However, for new species to our checklist and accidental species, full documentation or photos, etc, are required. For information on how to document your sighting of a New, Accidental or out-of-season bird please contact me. Or if you would like to know the Middlesex Bird Record Committee criteria for acceptance of a record, let me know also.

The number and quality of sightings continues to be high. You can help in a few ways.

As mentioned above, you data-keepers could keep track of your sightings and trip lists, and then at year's end, transfer them onto Middlesex Recording sheets. A new one is available for each year. These computer files are available from me. The sheets have our Middlesex County list on them as well as columns as on the chart to fill in your sightings for the particular species in the appropriate time slot, throughout the year. By filling them in, you can save me a lot of time.

Obviously for significant sightings (see u,o,r,a on our checklist), please contact me as soon as possible so others may see your birds. Or report them on the Listserv or on eBirds as below.

Join [http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/midd\\_elgi\\_observations/](http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/midd_elgi_observations/) , the Listserv mentioned above and which is invaluable for me to glean info, and perhaps also enter data on eBirds where I also check for info. <https://ebird.org/home>

The latter method is the preferred method so please think about entering your sightings on eBird.

(Besides the Listserv, and eBirds, bird sightings can be submitted to Pete Read at 519-472-2887, or e-mail at [psread11@gmail.com](mailto:psread11@gmail.com) or by giving them to Pete at Club meetings.)