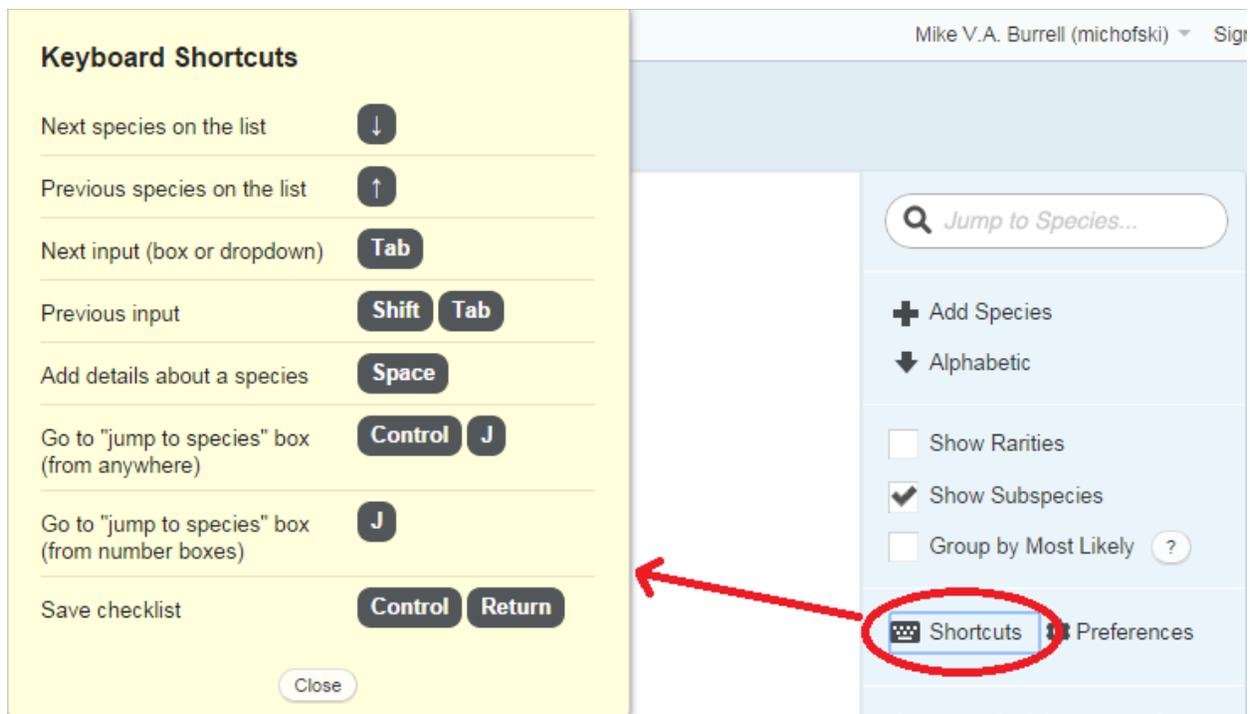# eBird 201: tips and tricks for entering data

Introduction

In eBird 101 we showed you the basics for using eBird – how to register, input a simple checklist, and some basic ways to explore eBird data. In eBird 201 we'll build on the first instalment to explore some of the tips and tricks of making it easier to submit your data to eBird.

Data entry tips

There are many ways you can make entering your checklists easier and faster. One of the most useful things you can do is learn the different **Keyboard shortcuts**. The following all apply when you are filling in your species list:

Figure 1: Keyboard shortcuts for data entry

If you try out these shortcuts you'll quickly get used to them and will be able to enter your entire bird list without having your hands leave the keyboard. To give you an idea of how it works, when you start your checklist type your first species name in the "jump to species" box. When the species pops up, hit "Enter" and you'll be taken to the count box for that species. Enter the count, then type J and you'll be taken back to the "jump to species" box and you can move to the next species. If you have comments you want to type, just hit "space" after you enter the count for that species and then start typing. It might not sound like much, but keyboard shortcuts are very handy. If you forget the shortcuts, you can click the "shortcuts" button in the right-hand margin to bring up the list as a reminder.

Checklist preferences
Everyone has slightly different preferences for how they do things and how they like things to look and eBird has many ways you can change how the checklist looks and what information shows up each time you start a new checklist. Any changes you make to any of these preferences will automatically be saved for your next checklist.

On figure 1 (above), you can see some of these options:

Alphabetic/Taxonomic order. You can toggle between listing the species in taxonomic order or alphabetic order by clicking this button. This is really a personal choice, some people prefer alphabetic, others taxonomic…

Show subspecies. Some people aren't satisfied with just reporting the species, but want to also report the subspecies they saw. No problem – just toggle the "show subspecies" checkbox on or off to display your choices (e.g. Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted)).

Group by most likely. This is a really handy feature; especially if you are submitting a checklist for a location that has a fair number of checklists already (works great for yards!). What it does is looks at past eBird data for that location at that time of year and groups the species into three groups: frequent (10% or more of the checklists have the species on it), infrequent (less than 10%), and not reported (0%). For example, on my yard this works great because there are lots of species that I'll probably never see that aren't necessarily rare elsewhere in the area, PLUS the ten or so common species for my yard always appear near the top of the list. Give it a try!

More preferences. If you click the "preferences" button on your checklist you will be given all sorts of other preferences that you can adjust – these are all quite self explanatory and include what fields to show each time you start a checklist, whether to show common or scientific names (or both) and what language the species names should appear in (handy if you want to learn your French bird names!).

Embedding photos, video, or audio recordings
NOTE: sometime in 2015 eBird will allow you to directly upload photos to your checklist – at that point the following will be obsolete. If you're lucky, you'll enter a record of a rare species, or a high count. Great, but now eBird will ask you to include details along with your record. No problem, you can write a description of what you saw. But you can go one better and embed photo, video or an audio recording. Currently, eBird doesn't offer a way to directly upload your photo/video/audio but instead you'll have to use a third party to host the media and then refer back to that third party (this will likely change in the very near future). Depending on what type of media you have, there are different services that are suggested.

Photos. If you have a photo you can use a number of free photo sharing websites. Flickr is one of the best, you can get a free account with more space then you should ever use up. Once you have uploaded your photo to Flickr (or any other site) you just need to grab the "embed code". In Flickr, just navigate to the photo, click the right facing arrow that is down and right of the photo (see figure 2) and make sure you select "HTML" from the code type. From here, specify the photo size (medium is recommended)

and then select either "Embed" or "HTML" at the bottom. "HTML" is recommended since it is a little more stable within eBird.
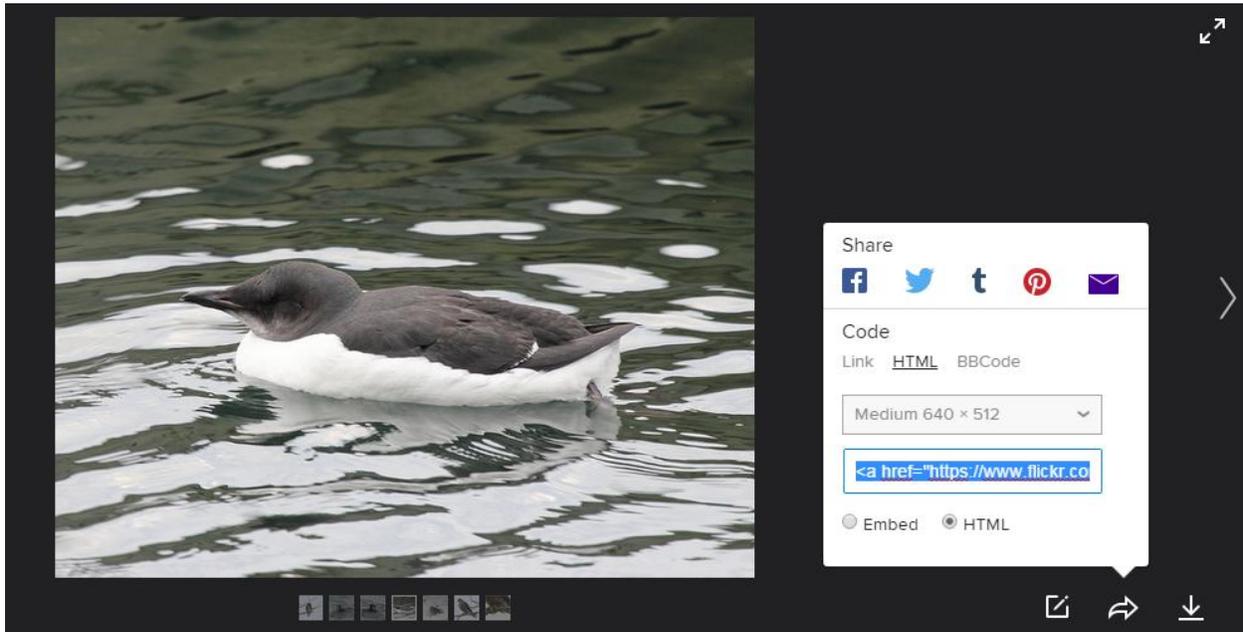
You can embed photos that appear anywhere on the internet, as long as you can get the direct URL of the image. You can usually right-click (or control-click) on an image and select "copy image url". Then, just paste the image url into this code, replacing "image url" :

```
<a href="website url"><img src="image url"></a>
```

If you want to take the extra step, include the website url as well, and it will turn your photo into a link to the website.

The final step of embedding your photo is to take the code that you copied/made (above) and paste it into the species comments. You can include written notes before and after the code. Once you save/submit your checklist it will transform your code into the image.

Videos. Embedding video works the same as it does for photos, except the most commonly used repository is YouTube.
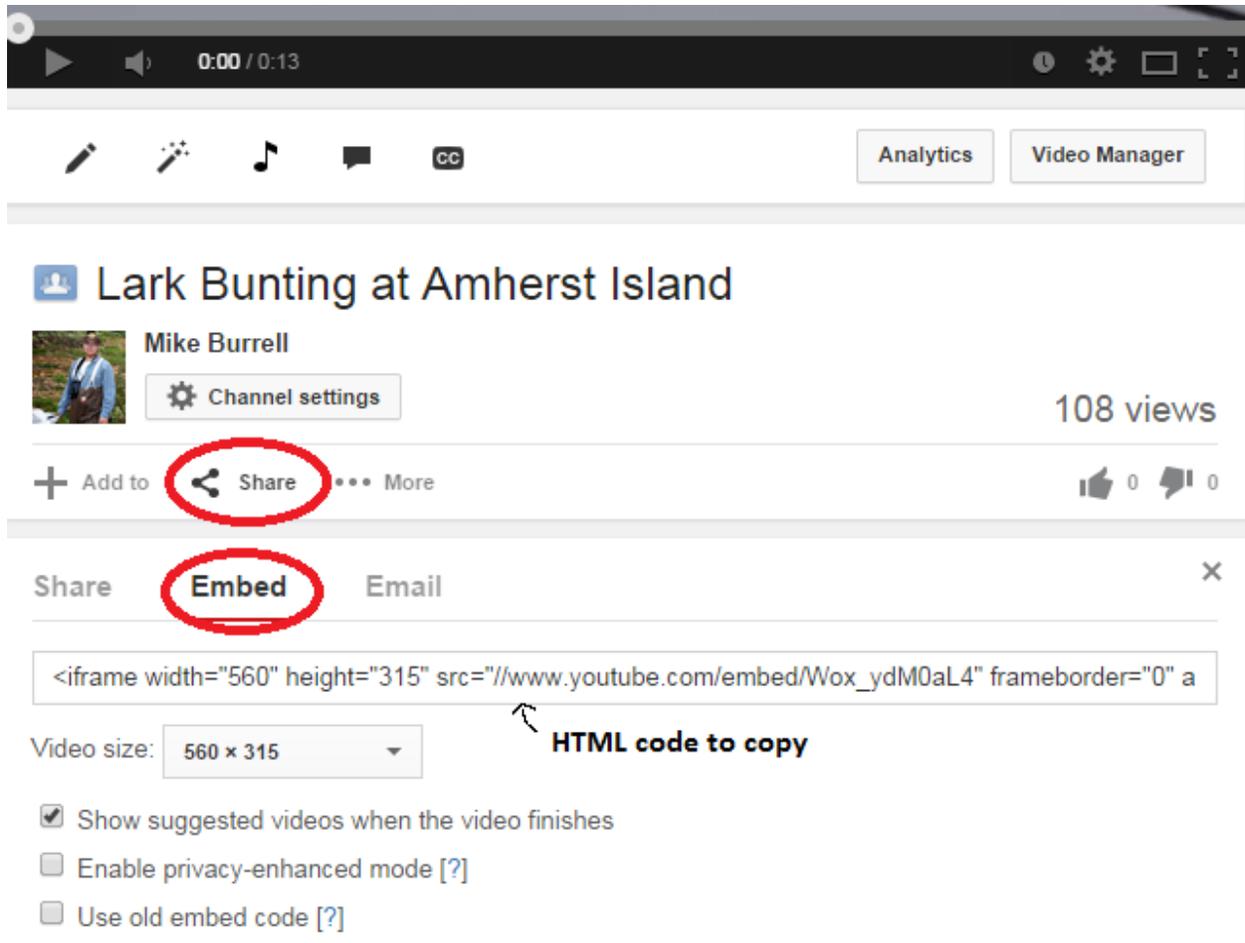
Figure 3: grabbing the link from YouTube

After you have uploaded your video to YouTube, click the "Share" button and then click the "Embed" option (Figure 3). This will display a line of HTML code that you can copy and then paste into the species comments field like you would do for a photo.

Audio. You can embed an audio recording just like a photo or video. For audio, the best place to upload your recording is to Xeno-Canto (which s an amazing resource on its own that you should check out!). You'll need to register an account (free) at http://www.xeno-canto.org/. Once you have an account and have uploaded an audio recording you can click the "embed" button (Figure 4) which will take you to another screen with a couple options and present you with the embed code that you can copy and paste into your species comments. This will embed a small player that can be clicked on to hear the recording.

XC180103 · Chuck-will's-widow · *Antrostomus carolinensis*

XC180103

Chuck-will's-widow (*Antrostomus carolinensis*) · male, song
Mike V.A. Burrell
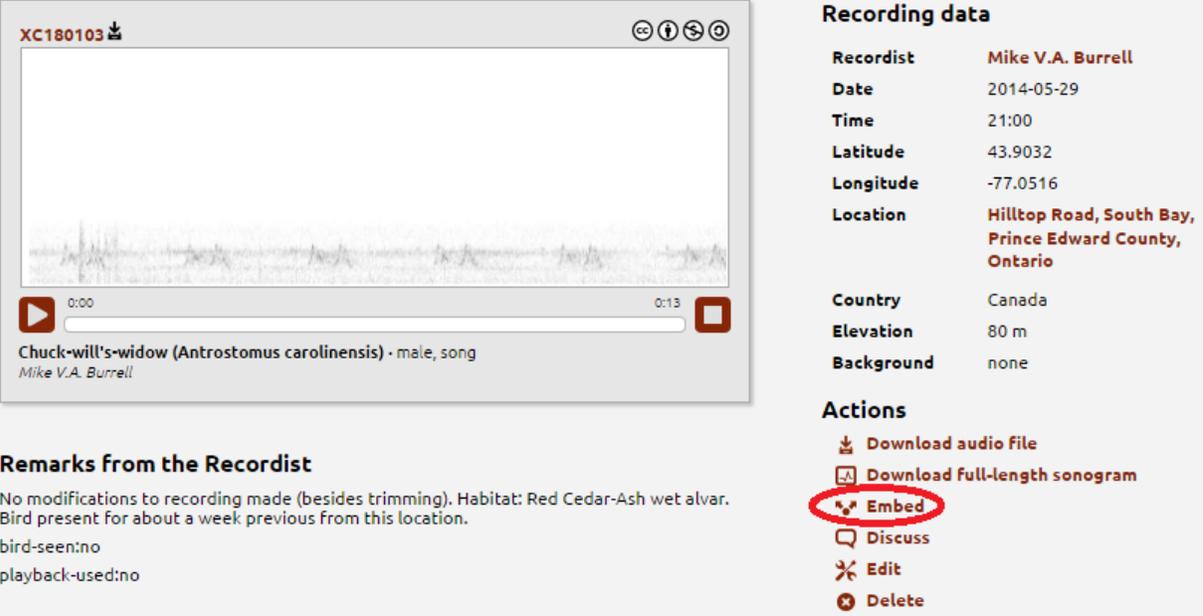
Recording data

Recordist	Mike V.A. Burrell
Date	2014-05-29
Time	21:00
Latitude	43.9032
Longitude	-77.0516
Location	Hilltop Road, South Bay, Prince Edward County, Ontario
Country	Canada
Elevation	80 m
Background	none

Actions

- Download audio file
- Download full-length sonogram
- Embed
- Discuss
- Edit
- Delete

Remarks from the Recordist

No modifications to recording made (besides trimming). Habitat: Red Cedar-Ash wet alvar. Bird present for about a week previous from this location.

bird-seen:no

playback-used:no

Figure 4: grabbing the link from Xeno-Canto

Editing a checklist

There are lots of situations where you might want to edit an existing checklist

Sharing

In eBird 101 we showed you how to enter a basic checklist. Now, often you'll be out birding with one or more other people and eBird offers "checklist sharing" as a way to make data entry easier and to make sure records from several people out together don't all get entered as duplicates. If you go out with others, you can designate one person to be the official list keeper. This works great on large trips where one of the trip leaders can get everyone's eBird username or email address at the start of the outing. Once the checklist has been submitted, it is just a matter of using the share feature to share a copy of the checklist with everyone on the trip. Each person can then make edits to their version of the checklist (adding/removing species or changing species counts to reflect what they actually saw) and eBird will create a master version of the checklist that has the highest counts for each species from all of the different versions. The system then uses the "master version" for calculating stats, and knows that all of the other versions are duplicates.

To share a checklist, navigate there (or better yet, do it as soon as you have submitted) and then click the "share with others in your party" that will be in the right hand margin to the right of the date of the checklist. This will bring up the checklist sharing menu (Figure 5)

Figure 5: The checklist sharing menu

On the checklist sharing menu you'll enter the username or email addresses of each person in the "to" box. Note, that if you have shared a checklist with someone before, they'll appear in your list of contacts (on the right) in alphabetical order – just click who you were with and eBird will automatically fill in the information in the "to" box. Once you have filled in the "to" box with all of the intended recipients you can include a message that will go along with the checklist share. This message could be anything, such as explaining which event (e.g. "KFN outing to Prince Edward Point") the checklist was from. Note that this last step is optional, and recipients will be able to view the checklist once it is shared. Once you're satisfied, just click the green "Share Checklist" button and you're done.

Managing your contacts

It's a good idea to manage your eBird contacts once in a while, especially after you have accumulated a fair number of people in your contacts list. To manage your contacts, either click the "manage my contacts" link below your list of contacts on the checklist sharing menu (Figure 5) or else click the "manage my contacts" link that is found on the "My eBird" page near the bottom right (under Account Settings). You can also go directly using the address http://ebird.org/ebird/manage/contacts.

On your contacts page you can delete contacts or add new contacts and a few other useful features. One of the most useful features is to modify your contacts so that those that you share checklists with most frequently appear at the top of the list (saves you from scrolling through your contacts list every time you are sharing a list). To do this, you can change the "alias" of a contact by clicking on it and adding text. In your contacts list the names appear in alphabetical order of the alias, so adding an asterisk or two should move someone up to the top of the list. Notice in the list in Figure 5 how this has been applied. You can change an alias temporarily (say, if you were going on a weekend birding trip with someone) and then change it back.

Another useful feature of the contacts page is to add people as "friends". What this means is that whenever a friend shares a checklist with you it will automatically be accepted into your account, so you don't have to do the extra step of accepting the checklist. You can still delete a checklist if you realize you don't want a copy. Note that the automatic acceptance of a checklist will only work if your friend used your username to share the checklist – if they used your email address it will not work.

Mobile data entry

If you have a smartphone that runs iOS or Android OS you can purchase the Birdlog app (http://www.birdseyebirding.com/). Birdlog comes in several different versions that have different lists of species available – the North American version works perfectly here, but you may want Birdlog World if you do lots of travelling outside of North America.

Birdlog is an app that uses your phone's GPS to pinpoint your location and optimizes data entry for a small touchscreen (as opposed) to your computer. Note that you can still enter data using eBird.ca on your phone; it will just take more effort to make all of your selections.

Bulk Uploads

eBird offers a convenient way to upload many records at a time using one of two templates. These templates are incredibly useful if you have existing bird data you want to get into eBird. People often find that if they have old records all formatted in a similar way it is easiest to enter them into a spreadsheet first, then use the bulk upload tool later to get those records to eBird. If you have bird records in any kind of digital format (e.g. a spreadsheet or commercial bird listing software) it is probably that the data can be formatted in a few minutes so they are suitable to upload at the click of a button to eBird.

Bird data can be formatted in two ways for builk upload to eBird, "checklist format" and "record format".

Checklist format: Data following this format has information from each checklist (location/date) in a column in the table (figure 6).

Record format: Data following this format has information from each individual species observation in a row in the table (figure 7).

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Location		Lemoine Point	Marshlands C.A.	Amherst Island	Lower Brewer's Lock
2	Latitude					
3	Longitude					
4	Date		07/04/2014	07/04/2014	07/04/2014	07/04/2014
5	Time		15:50	15:56	16:02	16:12
6	Province		ON	ON	ON	ON
7	Country		CA	CA	CA	CA
8	Observation type		Travelling	Stationary	Incidental	Travelling
9	Observers		3	3	3	3
10	Duration		6	6		5
11	All obs reported?		y	y	y	y
12	Distance (miles)		6.2137			6.2137
13	Area covered (acres)					
14	Notes					
15	American Crow		1	1	1	
16	Common Raven					2
17	American Robin				1	1|carrying food
18	American Kestrel					1
19	European Starling				2	
20	Killdeer		1			
21	Red-winged Blackbird		2			2
22	Common Grackle		2	1	1	1
23	Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)			35		
24	Broad-winged Hawk			1		
25	Mourning Dove				1	

Figure 6: an example of data formatted to eBird Checklist format, ready for bulk upload

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
1	Species			Num	Species comments	Location	Latitude	Longitude	Date	Start Time	Prov	Country	Protocol	Observers	Duration	All obs reported	Distance	Area	Checklist comments
2	Passenger Pigeon			x		Niagara			03/08/1847		ON	CA	incidental			N			
3	Passenger Pigeon			1	Diary says: '...Also s	Wyton			03/29/1888		ON	CA	incidental			N			
4	Passenger Pigeon			10	A flock of ten seen	Dufferin county			04/02/1899		ON	CA	incidental			N			
5	Passenger Pigeon			x	Numerous flocks fl	Toronto			04/13/1876		ON	CA	incidental			N			
6	Passenger Pigeon			1	April 13, saw a male	Toronto (University Park Ravine)			04/13/1891		ON	CA	incidental			N			
7	Passenger Pigeon			12	Twelve seen at McK	Ottawa (McKay's Lake)			04/15/1886		ON	CA	incidental			N			
8	Passenger Pigeon			1		Peterborough			04/15/1891		ON	CA	incidental			N			
9	Passenger Pigeon			13	A flock of thirteen,	Toronto (High Park)			04/15/1896		ON	CA	incidental			N			
10	Passenger Pigeon			500	might be same as al	Amabel Township, Lot 13 Concess			05/24/1878		ON	CA	incidental			N			
11	Passenger Pigeon			1	One seen at McKay'	Ottawa (McKay's Lake)			05/24/1886		ON	CA	incidental			N			
12	Passenger Pigeon			1	About May 24th. Or	Locust Hill			05/24/1888		ON	CA	incidental			N			
13	Passenger Pigeon			11	Eleven seen and 'o	Listowel			06/10/1885		ON	CA	incidental			N			

Figure 7: an example of data formatted to eBird Record format, ready for bulk upload.

eBird has an excellent help page for uploading data to eBird, so be sure to read that for the full instructions: http://help.ebird.org/customer/portal/articles/973915-uploading-data-to-ebird

If you have bird data that you are interested in uploading, Mike Burrell is happy to help do most of the work for you, just get in touch with him!

Wrap up

In this issue we've covered a few of the more advanced uses of eBird as far as getting information into your checklists. In eBird 202 we'll expand on the first two instalments to learn more of the great ways you can explore all of that wonderful eBird data.

In the meantime if you have any questions about using eBird don't hesitate to contact Mike Burrell (613-442-0020, mburrell@birdscanada.org).