

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

General Principle: Enter what you see on the card, even if you know the name or AOU number has changed as we will be updating all the data in the database to the current names and numbers and we want the data entry to reflect what is actually on the card not an interpretation. Also, do not correct spelling mistakes!

Double Entry Failsafe: Since mistakes are always made and it is always a concern, each migration card will actually be entered twice by different people. Those two records will be compared, if the same then they will go into the database, if different then someone will rectify the cards against the original.

The chart below should help many of the questions you will have. If you have something to add, e-mail me.

WHAT CARD SAYS:	HOW TO TRANSCRIBE IT:
SPECIES/ NAME OF BIRD	
Misspelling? Ex: Yellow Wabrler	Transcribe "Yellow Wabrler" into Common Name Always transcribe <u>exactly what you see!</u>
Two species on one card? Ex: American Robin and Song Sparrow	Mark under Problem with Card? "Other" Write something like, "multiple species on card."
LOCATION	
Cavan and Millbrook, Ontario	In City/Town fill in "Cavan and Millbrook" In State/Province fill in "Ontario"
OBSERVER	
Two observers given? Ex: May Thacher Cooke, Wells Cooke	Transcribe as "May Thacher Cooke, Wells Cooke"
COMMONNESS	
Breeds: Some years	Breeds? Fill in "Yes" Add in Observer Notes , "Some years"
Some winter	Overwinters? Fill in "Yes" Add in Observer Notes , "Some winter"
Common in Migration	Enter in Observer Notes , "Common in Migration"
Moderately Common	In Observer Notes add, "Moderately Common"
Not Common	In Observer Notes add, "Not common"
BREEDS	
Breeds: Common	Breeds? Fill in "Yes" Commonness? Fill in "common" Observer Notes (since it is a non-standard answer) add: "Breeds: Common"
Breeds: Rare	Breeds? Fill in "Yes" Commonness? Fill in "Rare" Observer Notes (since it is a non-standard answer) add: "Breeds: Rare"
Breeds: Plen	Breeds? Fill in "Yes" Observer Notes (since it is a non-standard answer) add: "Breeds: Plen" *Do not fill in anything under commonness since "Plentiful" is not an option
OVERWINTERS	
Winters: Rare	Overwinters? Fill in "Yes" Commonness? Fill in "Rare" For non-standard answers, you can always just transcribe it into Observer Notes as: "Breeds: Common," that way the exact information on the card is transcribed
EVENT OBSERVATION DATA	

Nest[Date] ____	1. If this is the only date given, then choose, Problem card: Not an arrival card 2. If there are other non-nesting dates given, transcribe as usual and then under Observer Notes , add in, "Nest[Date] ____"
Seen from May 15-23	Fill in First Seen as "May 15" Fill in Last Seen as "May 23" For non-standard answers, you can always just transcribe it into Observer Notes as: "Seen from May 15-23," that way the exact information on the card is transcribed
Seen from May 15-23, 1 observed on May 17	Fill in First Seen as "May 15" Fill in Next Seen as "May 17" Fill in Last Seen as "May 23" For non-standard answers, you can always just transcribe it into Observer Notes as: "Seen from May 15-23, 1 observed on May 17" that way the exact information on the card is transcribed
May 15-23, 1 observed on May 17	Since it does not say "seen" or "observed" on May 15-23, we must assume these were dates of an observation period, not dates of bird sightings, so: Fill in First Seen as "May 17" In Observer Notes add "May 15-23"
Taken	Transcribe as you normally would with filling in First Seen with event date observed Add "Taken" to Observer Notes
Species Examined	Transcribe as you normally would with filling in First Seen with event date observed Add "Species Examined" to Observer Notes
F 3/27= all F 3/27= prob F 3/27= sure	For any of these, transcribe date into First Seen Add "= all (or what it says on your card)"
Only a Last Seen Date? Ex: L 9/13	Transcribe into Last Seen Field as 9/13

Date Questions:

What if there are more than four dates on a card or if there are multiple years?

Please SKIP these cards. We are in the process of creating an additional chart which will allow you to transcribe these cards online. For now, we'd like to keep the cards in the system but not transcribe them yet.

What if there are two or more dates and the card does not specify which fields they should go in?

If there are two or more dates with nothing denoting where the information should be transcribed, please place the information in the order of the fields. If there are two dates, place them in First Seen and Next Seen. If there are three dates, place the information in First Seen, Next Seen and Became Common.

What if the date appears as "2=40A", "F 5/16=All 93", or "F 4/29=com"?

If the only information you have is 2=40A, then transcribe as much of the card as you can, then mark the card as a "problem card" and write in Transcriber Comments "insufficient information for migration date." If you see the date as F 5/16=All 93, transcribe the first seen date as May 16th, 1893 and in the Observer Notes you can write in "=All." If you have a card that states something like "F 4/29=com 88," transcribe April 29, 1888 as your first seen date and under Commonness, select common.

Location Questions:

What if I can't read the handwriting on the card telling me the location where the observation was made?

You can use different websites to look up locations:

(1) USGS Geographic Name Information System (GNIS) <http://geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gnispublic>

(2) Google Maps <http://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&tab=wl>

TerraServer-USA <http://terraserver-usa.com/> (This site can help find older location names)

(3) PlaceNames.com <http://www.placenames.com/>

(4) Wikipedia: List of cities, towns, and villages in the United States

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities,_towns,_and_villages_in_the_United_States

(5) Global Gazetteer <http://www.fallingrain.com/world/>

*If you come across other useful resources, please email Jessica with suggestions

What if there is only a lake or other location information other than county or city?

If you have any location information that you feel does not fit into either category, please transcribe it into the City/Town field.

What if I'm not sure if a location is a county, city or town?

If you are unsure, please type the location information into the City/Town field.

What if there are multiple locations listed or a sentence describing the location?

If you have either a long description or several locations listed, please transcribe the information exactly as you see it on the card into the City/Town field.

Problem Card Questions:

What if a card looks to be from a publication and not an original observation?

If the card looks to be from an unoriginal source, please mark it as a Problem Card under Transcription Process. You can mark it as, "Other" and write in Transcriber Comments why you did not transcribe the card.

What if there is only nest, egg, or young information on the migration card and no arrival or departure information?

If there is only nest, egg, or young information on the card and does not have any information about migration, please mark this as "Not an Arrival Card" under Transcription Process, Problem with Card?

What if I can't read part of the card?

If you are having trouble reading a card, please transcribe as much information as possible and then mark the card as a Problem Card under Transcription Process. Mark the card as "Card all/partially unreadable" and in the Transcriber Comments, tell us what you were having trouble transcribing.

What if I'm having trouble reading the scientific name? How do I transcribe it?

Do the best you can while transcribing. If the card is very difficult to read, please mark it as a Problem Card, "Card all/partially unreadable," and write what you were having trouble transcribing in the Transcriber Comments field.

Additional Information on Card Questions:

What if there is additional information on a card besides what is asked for in the fields?

If you find additional information on a card, please transcribe the information into the Observer Notes field.

Where do I put elevation information?

If you have any additional information, please transcribe it into Observer Notes.

What if a card shows both an AOU number and a common or scientific name- do I put them both?

You want to transcribe exactly what you see on the migration card so if both the AOU number and scientific name or the scientific name and common name, please transcribe all information into the necessary fields as it was originally written.

What if Information Isn't On a Card?

What if a card only has the last two digits of a year?

The BPP only accepted records from 1880-1970 which makes figuring out the year easy. If the card says '80 to '99, you know it is 1880 to 1899. If the card is '00 to '70, it is 1900 to 1970. Please transcribe the proper four digit year in the Reference Year field.

Do I have to put whether or not a species was breeding or overwintering if it is not mentioned?

If breeding or wintering is not mentioned on the card, you should skip these fields. You only need to enter these fields if the information is placed on the card. However, if you accidentally fill one of the circles under Breeds or Overwinters, you will need to fill the Unknown button if it is not noted on the card.

What if the bird name is out of date - do I need to look it up?

No, you do not need to look up any information. We want you to transcribe exactly what you see on the migration card. Please transcribe whatever information is given on a card, whether it be the scientific name, common name, or AOU number.

Do I need to find the AOU number if there isn't one listed?

No, you do not need to look up any information. If an AOU number is not given on a migration card, leave the field blank. We want you to transcribe the cards exactly as you see them originally written.

Other Questions:

How do I transcribe a “Field Report File?”

To transcribe a Field Report File, read the card and pull out the appropriate information to transcribe into the various fields. Then once, you have completed this, transcribe the card in its entirety (and just as you see it on the card) into the Observer Notes field.

What if I press SUBMIT before I was ready? Can I retrieve an old card?

Currently, you can’t retrieve a card once you press Submit or go back to view a card you have previously transcribed. We are working on creating these functions and should appear soon.

What if a migration card says “over” on the bottom of a card?

If a migration card says “over,” it means that there was additional information on the back of the card. The volunteers in the office who scan these cards check only scan double sided cards when the information is a duplicate of what is on the front. So please transcribe as you normally would.

How can I find out how many cards I have transcribed, how many cards are available for transcription and how many cards have been scanned?

On the left-side panel of the transcription page there are stat bars which you can mouse over to get updated card counts.

What is an AOU number?

AOU stands for the American Ornithologist Union. The AOU was founded in 1883 and was the first organization started devoted to the scientific study of birds. The AOU Check-list of North American birds is the official source on the taxonomy of birds found in North and Middle America. This list is produced by the North American Classification Committee (NACC), an official committee of the American Ornithologists' Union. The AOU number is a specific number assigned to denote a species. AOU numbers are still accurate but no longer commonly used. Today scientists commonly use a four-letter ALPHA code to denote a species.

Where is the AOU number found on the migration cards?

The AOU number is typically found on the upper left-hand-side of the migration cards. It is usually a three digit number but can sometimes be a four digit number with a decimal point.

IF YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTIONS FOR INFORMATION TO ADD TO THIS PAGE- PLEASE EMAIL JESSICA ZELT at jzelt@usgs.gov. THANKS!

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