

Puget Sound Seabird Survey FAQs



When are the surveys happening?

All surveys are synchronized to take place during a four-hour window (determined by Seattle Audubon) on the first Saturday of the month, October through April. Each survey is 15-30 minutes in duration. The timing of the surveys is based on the daytime high tide, and varies by month. You can find the monthly schedule [here](#), and on the [PSSS webpage](#) under the WHEN section.

Surveys happen in all weather conditions. Now is an excellent time to ensure you have functional rain gear. If you need help accessing gear, please get in touch with [Christine Scheele](#). Surveys will be postponed or cancelled if weather conditions are hazardous.

Do I need to show up every month?

Ideally, yes. We have a limited number of volunteers assigned to each site, and most sites need at least two volunteers present every month for accurate data collection. With that said, we know that volunteers have other life commitments. If you know you're going to miss some surveys, please let [Elizabeth Cameron](#) know so that we can recruit substitute surveyors.

What if something comes up and I cannot attend a survey?

Please contact [Elizabeth Cameron](#) as soon as you know you cannot attend; *ideally by the Monday before the scheduled survey*. We will do our best to find a substitute. Some sites have a deep bench of volunteers and can afford to have a volunteer skip a month, but many sites have two volunteers assigned. Conducting a survey solo is possible, but not generally desired.

When and where are the trainings happening?

This season we are offering three in-person trainings and two online trainings. For the moment, we ask that the in-person training spaces be reserved for brand new, never participated in PSSS before, volunteers. Should there be space remaining in certain training sessions, we will be in touch via email to see if returning volunteers would like to attend. In-person trainings happen rain or shine, and we ask that all participants follow Seattle Audubon COVID-19 protocol. The training sessions are:

Wednesday, September 15: Titlow Park, Tacoma (meet at the observation platform, across the railroad tracks).
5:30-7:00pm

Tuesday, September 21: Seahurst Park, Burien (park in the lot by the beach and head towards the playground).
5:30-7:00pm

Wednesday, September 22: Online (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85098396021> Meeting ID: 850 9839 6021). Be sure to watch the training videos on the [PSSS webpage](#) before the training and come with questions. 4:00-5:00pm

Tuesday, September 28: Golden Gardens Park, Seattle (park by the water – not dog park. We'll be occupying several picnic tables by the beach). 5:30-7:00pm

Thursday, September 30: Online (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86334922185> Meeting ID: 863 3492 2185). Be sure to watch the training videos on the [PSSS webpage](#) before the training and come with questions. 5:30-6:30pm.

[RSVP for a training session here](#). Returning volunteers, please note in the comments if you want to attend an in-person training if there is space, as well as which training you would attend.

Who will I be surveying with?

We try to build balanced teams comprised of experienced birders and those who are learning. You will likely be surveying with at least one other volunteer who compliments your skills.

When and how do we get materials?

OPTION 1: Many sites have returning volunteers who may already have materials from the past season. Please check with your teammates to see if your materials needs are already covered.

OPTION 2: If your team does not have materials, we can hand them to you in-person if you attend the in-person training sessions at Seahurst Park or Golden Gardens. Alternatively, we will be coordinating with other Audubon chapters in the region to set-up materials pick-up times. If you live near Seattle, you are welcome to stop by the Seattle Audubon Nature Shop during business hours to pick-up a materials kit.

Materials are NOT READY YET. We're working on this and will let you know when and where you can pick things up.

OPTION 3: You can print your own datasheets from the [PSSS webpage](#), as well as use your own compass and clipboard. There's nothing special about the materials we'll be assembling.

I have materials from past seasons that I need to return. How do I do that?

OPTION 1: If you're on a survey team for this coming season, hang onto those materials and use them.

OPTION 2: If you're not surveying this season, but know that your former teammates will be – pass those materials over to them.

OPTION 3: If you're not surveying, and none of your former partners are surveying, and no one else you know is surveying, you can either drop the materials off at one of the in-person trainings or mail them to the Seattle Audubon office (8050 35th Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98115).

I am not an expert birder. Can I still participate?

Yes! Birders of all levels are welcome. We ask all PSSS volunteers to complete the [Seabird ID quiz](#) so that we can build balanced survey teams. Those with strong ID skills will likely assume the role of identifier/spotter, while those who are building their skills can help spot and/or scribe.

How can I get better at seabird ID?

Here are a few suggestions and resources to improve your seabird ID skills:

1. Spend time birding on your own and note what you're seeing.
2. Go out with knowledgeable birders. Audubon chapters throughout Washington offer field trips (check out the websites for chapters near you) led by experienced birders.
3. Attend a seabird ID class. Seattle Audubon offers [classes](#) throughout the year.

4. Download an app. Merlin is a good, free option.
5. Check out www.BirdWeb.org

Do I need binoculars or a scope (a.k.a. optics) to participate?

There should be someone on your survey team with a spotting scope; please check with your teammates to ensure this gear item is covered. If your team needs a scope, please call the Seattle Audubon Nature Shop (206-523-4483) to arrange borrowing one of our loaners. It is helpful to have binoculars to help you spot birds, as well as to build your ID skills. Anyone participating in a Seattle Audubon program (class, field trip, volunteer opportunity) may borrow binoculars and/or scopes at no cost. Please call the Seattle Audubon Nature Shop (206-523-4483) to arrange borrowing optics.

My previous site has fallen into the sea/been developed/is now private property/is inaccessible. What do I do?

We will not be moving, modifying, or adding new sites this year. If a previously surveyed site is no longer accessible, we will record that information and not survey that site this year.

Why do I have to keep entering my information into Google Forms? Can I send it via email?

This year, we have several staff working on PSSS coordination. Google Forms helps consolidate volunteer responses into one place where multiple staff can access.

What is the COVID-19 protocol for PSSS?

We maintain updated guidelines, all of which follow Washington State, the CDC, and/or King County guidance, on the [field trips webpage](#) of the Seattle Audubon website. This page does not include mention of staying home if you're experiencing Covid symptoms – but you should absolutely not show up to survey if you're feeling ill. If/when guidelines change I will include an update in the monthly reminder email that I send roughly five days before each survey.

Please get in touch with [Christine Scheele](#) if your question was not addressed in this document. Thank you for reading!