

How to participate in the Fairywren Project

Step 1: Log in to eBird

Step 2: Choose a participation level and contribute

The Fairywren Project is interested in many aspects of fairywren behavior and ecology. We've broken down our data-collection into three levels of participation, beginning with the most important way to contribute. Whether you choose to participate at the basic, intermediate, or advanced level, any data you submit to eBird is a significant contribution!

Basic Participation: Which plumage types are you seeing?

The simplest, but by far the most important way to contribute to the project is to let us know what species and plumage types you're seeing. We've divided plumage into five categories, one for females, three for males, and one for dull birds of unknown sex:

Bright Male Plumage (b): A bright bird is one that is in full flashy breeding plumage and does not obviously show any dull feathers intermixed with bright feathers. A species bright plumage is typically the plumage the species is known and named for. Only males exhibit bright plumage.

Intermediate Male Plumage (i): Intermediate plumage is a male in any stage between dull (no bright feathers) and completely bright (all bright feathers). An intermediate male may be actively molting, but some species are known to maintain intermediate plumages for months at a time.

Dull Male Plumage (d): Dull male plumage is the species typical winter or non-breeding plumage (sometimes referred to as "eclipse" plumage). A male in dull plumage should show no bright body feathers, although some species like Superb Fairywrens often maintain blue tails year-round, even when in dull plumage.

Female Plumage (f): Applies to Superb Fairywren, Splendid fairywren, Variegated Fairywren, Red-winged Fairywren, Blue-breasted Fairywren, Lovely Fairywren, Purple-crowned Fairywren. Female plumage is typically worn by females or juveniles. For most species, female plumage consists of light brown body plumage, and reddish brown lores or ear-coverts, but some species are quite distinct.

Juvenile (j): Juvenile fairywrens exhibit the same plumage as females and can be distinguished from females soon after fledging by their short tails. **Once their tails have fully grown in, juveniles are indistinguishable from females and should be recorded as females.** Other field marks for juveniles include begging for food, uncoordinated movements, and short flights.

Unknown Dull Plumage - dull male or female (u): If you can't distinguish between males in dull plumage and females, that's ok! You can record these sightings as dull unknown. **Note:** For

Red-backed and White-winged Fairywrens, it's rarely possible to distinguish between males in dull/eclipse plumage and females. For these two species, if you cannot clearly see a black bill or bright male plumage, please enter these birds as unknown dull (u) in your species comments.

How to submit your plumage type observations:

In your eBird checklist, let us know how many birds of each plumage type you saw in the species comments. For the eBird app, click on the species name to access the species comments section of the checklist. For the eBird website, click add details to access the species comments. Use these codes you can report plumages:

b = bright male, i = intermediate male, d = dull male, f = female, j = juvenile, u = unknown dull

Precede each plumage code with the number of birds of that plumage type you saw and separate each code with a space. The order in which you list them does not matter and either uppercase or lowercase (B or b) letters are fine.

Heard only: Did you hear birds but did not see them? That's ok. Still include them in your species total as you normally would. If the number of birds in your species comments does not add up to the total number of individuals reported, we'll assume you heard or did not obtain a high quality visual observation of the remaining birds.

Example:

8 Variegated Fairywren

2b 4f

10 Superb Fairywren

3b 5f 1d 1u

29 Red-backed Fairywren

8b 21u

Note the total number you report does not need to match the number you identify plumages for if you only hear some birds or only saw an individual briefly.

Intermediate Participation: Plumage types + breeding observations

The next step up from the basic level is to report any observations of breeding you observe. eBird makes this easy by including this option already in their app and website.

Advanced Participation: Plumages + breeding + group size observations

The highest level of participation is to add on observations of group size to your sightings of plumages and breeding observations. To approximate group size, we ask that you observe each possible group for five to ten minutes counting how many birds are interacting with one another. Interactions can generally be classified into two categories which are defined by the behaviors taking place: within-group interactions and across-group interactions.

Within-Group Interactions: If birds are allopreening, foraging together, and generally seem content in one another's presence, this would typically be considered a within-group interaction.

Across-Group Interactions: These interactions are typically defined by higher than normal singing rates, chases, obvious courtship displays, and overt aggression.

For each group you observe, we ask that you identify whether it's a within-group interaction or an across-group interaction: across-group interactions take precedence over within-group interactions. So if at any point during your 5-10 minute observation you thought an across group interaction occurred, classify the interaction as across-group and report the the number of individuals you saw during your 5-10 minute observation. If a group you were observing became engaged in an across-group interaction in the middle of your observation, only list the group and its composition once as an A (across-group) type group.

For each checklist, list the number of the group observed preceded by W (within-group) or A (across-group) For example, Wgroup1, Agroup2, Wgroup3 for your first, second and third viewed groups, respectively. Follow each of these with the number of individuals for each plumage type seen in each group. Separate each new piece of data with a space and separate each group with a semicolon.

Not sure about the group size for all the birds you see? That's ok, just list the group size and plumage types for the number of groups you are confident of then list the plumages of all of the other birds you observed as above, separated from the other data by a semicolon. For example, if you saw 2 groups but saw an additional 11 birds who you were unsure of group size but could categorize their plumages, you would list segments of information, one for the first group, one for the second group, and one with no group id listing the plumage types of the 11 extra birds (see the example below).

Example:

10 Variegated Fairywren

Wgroup1 1b 1i 1f; Wgroup2 1b 1i 1f; 1b 1u 1f

9 Superb Fairywren

Wgroup1 1b 1f; Wgroup2 1b 1f 1d; Wgroup3 1f 1d
