

Guide for participating in the Climate Watch program with St. Johns  
County Audubon Society

Summer 2019 Count

Version 1: 03/08/2019

## INTRODUCTION

In 2014, Audubon released the [Audubon Birds and Climate Change Report](#) highlighting the risks that climate change poses to birds across North America. In response, thousands of people asked how they could help make the world a better place for birds. The National Audubon Society implemented a program called Climate Watch, using developed models to predict seasonal changes in bird populations as a result of the changing climate. Program participants gather data that will validate those models through a community science program. National Audubon has chosen to start the program by monitoring the presence of two species, bluebirds and nuthatches, during a winter and summer count. These species were selected based on strong predictions of range shifts; however, more species will be included in the future.

You can help by observing birds in your area, using a specific protocol, to help us learn about how birds are responding to the changing climate. By participating in Climate Watch, you can help to test and improve climate models.

The winter count takes place from January 15 to February 15 each year and the summer count from May 15 to June 15. During these windows, participants stop at 12 survey sites in “climate squares” and conduct a 5-minute stationary count of all birds they see. The sites are selected based on the appropriateness of the habitat for the species selected. National Audubon has divided the country in a continuous grid of climate squares that are 10 kmx10 km square. The protocol requires conducting a survey within 10 squares.

St. Johns County Audubon Society has designated a Climate Watch coordinator for St. Johns County to coordinate local participation in the program. Linda Burek ([ldburek@gmail.com](mailto:ldburek@gmail.com)) is the regional coordinator for St. Johns County.

Information that describes the overall program and protocol can be found at <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch>. Because there is so much information on the website, it can be overwhelming to determine just what you need to know to participate locally. This guide is meant to focus on the important information needed to participate in the Climate Watch program locally.

It is important to read the Survey Manual provided on the Climate Watch website. It is also included on the St. Johns County Audubon Society website. The Survey Manual includes important information about the protocol. Use the following guidance to supplement that information for the local count.

## SUMMARY OF LOCAL PROGRAM

Audubon predicts a decrease of the Eastern Bluebird population in the summer and a stable population in the winter in Northeast Florida. Brown-headed Nuthatch populations are projected to increase in

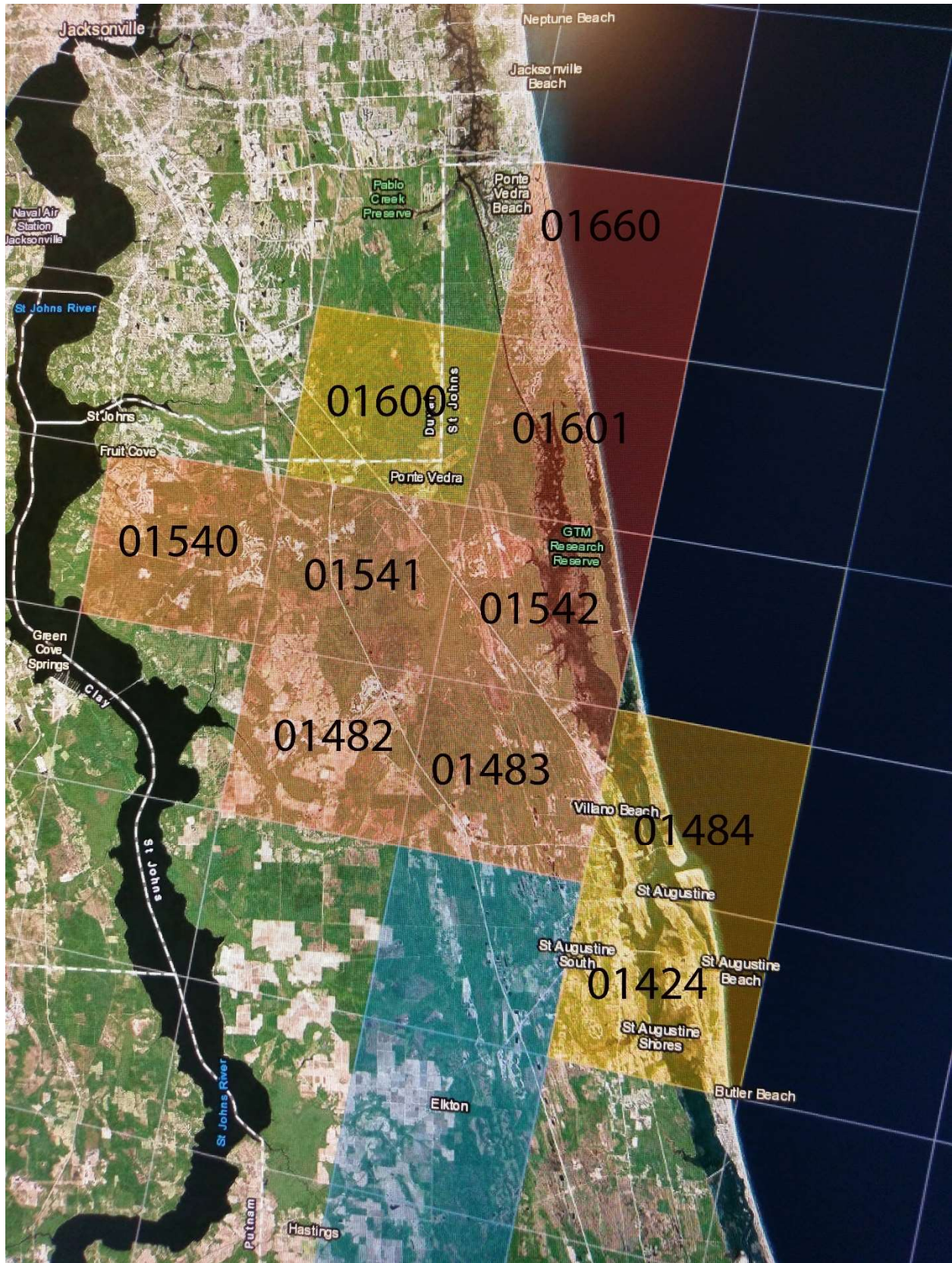
both winter and summer in most of Northeast Florida. The Climate Watch coordinator chose bluebirds as the species to begin our local efforts.

Volunteers are asked to participate in surveys in one or more of the 10 Climate Watch squares claimed in St. Johns County. The 12 locations to be surveyed in each square will be where habitat is suitable for Bluebirds. Bluebirds are insect eaters and enjoy open habitats near trees. Ideal locations are pastures, parks, golf courses, savannahs, and forest clearings. In St. Johns County, bluebirds can sometimes be seen around retention ponds surrounded by grass and a few trees. Bluebirds sit on a perch and wait for prey and then drop down to pick it up. They are secondary cavity nesters. They cannot make their own cavity, so they depend on re-using existing cavities or nest boxes.

### **CLIMATE WATCH SQUARES**

Using the Climate Watch Square numbers located on the ESRI map on the National Audubon Climate Watch website, the following squares have been claimed for conducting the Summer 2019 survey.

- USA-FL-01660
- USA-FL-01600
- USA-FL-01601
- USA-FL-01540
- USA-FL-01541
- USA-FL-01542
- USA-FL-01482
- USA-FL-01483
- USA-FL-01484
- USA-FL-01484



## **SURVEY SITES**

Survey sites have been identified for each square. The Climate Watch coordinator will provide each participant with a map of the designated square that identifies the survey sites. If you are familiar with the square and can identify better survey sites, you are free to replace an existing survey site. Because we are just getting started with this program, it may make sense to alter some of the survey sites. In future counts, we will want to keep such changes to a minimum because the data is more useful if sites are not changed from count to count.

If you choose to replace a survey site, it must be at least 200 meters from other survey sites. Please refer to the Survey Manual for further guidance.

## **PROTOCOL**

Counts can take place on any day from May 15 to June 15. One to three people may participate on a count. The protocol does not allow for more than 3 people. If more than 3 people want to participate in a square, the survey sites can be divided among multiple teams. But, they must all survey on the same day. Counts should be done in the morning and preferably completed before noon.

Surveys should be completed using eBird. If you are not familiar with eBird, please go to the following website for some free online training. In addition, the Climate Watch coordinator can help you.

<https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/product/ebird-essentials/>

When you stop at a survey site, you will want to start eBird. Press start a new checklist. Select "Choose a Location from Map". This will give your GPS coordinates. Please edit the location name to include the following number before the location description. USA-FL-XXXXX-YY where XXXXX is your Climate Watch Square Number and YY is the survey site number. Each of the 12 survey sites should be identified with a number from 1 to 12. This will be very helpful when submitting the data.

In the comments section of the checklist, enter "Eastern Bluebird". Also indicate whether there are any feeders or nest boxes present.

Start counting all the birds you see for 5 minutes and record them in eBird. Do not be concerned if you cannot identify every bird. Please identify the birds that you can. Look and listen for the presence of Bluebirds. Please refer to the Survey Manual section on Conducting Surveys for important information about the protocol for taking the count.

## **SUBMITTING DATA**

Once your checklist is entered, please either copy each

of the 12 checklist urls into one email (see video on the Climate Watch website) and send that to [climatewatch@audubon.org](mailto:climatewatch@audubon.org) and cc the Climate Watch Coordinator ([ldburek@gmail.com](mailto:ldburek@gmail.com)) or use the "Email Yourself" link from the eBird desktop website on the checklist review page and forward those emails to [climatewatch@audubon.org](mailto:climatewatch@audubon.org) with a cc to the Climate Watch Coordinator ([ldburek@gmail.com](mailto:ldburek@gmail.com)). If you don't cc the Climate Watch Coordinator, the Coordinator will bug you about getting your data submitted on time!

Avoid using the email checklist feature in the mobile app to email your checklists because it does not include all the information that is required. Please also avoid using the share checklist feature, as this feature was intended for those individuals who conduct surveys together.

### **CALL TO ACTION**

If you are interested in the Climate Watch program, more information can be found at [www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch). This site includes maps that depict the climate watch squares, survey locations, predictions of bluebird and nuthatch presence during winter and summer, and the results of completed surveys. Information specific to the St. Johns Audubon County counts can be found at [www.stjohnsaudubon.com](http://www.stjohnsaudubon.com).

If you are interested in participating in the St. Johns County Climate Watch counts, please contact Linda Burek at [ldburek@gmail.com](mailto:ldburek@gmail.com).