



The INSTITUTE for BIRD POPULATIONS



Photo: Seabamirum

Backcountry Point Counts in Sierra Nevada National Parks, 2023

We have openings during spring/summer 2023 on our backcountry point count crews at Yosemite National Park, Sequoia National Park, and Kings Canyon National Park.

PROJECT DATES: Late April – early August (Exact dates TBD)

TRAINING: The field season will begin with an intensive 3 week training session in visual and acoustic bird identification skills, point count techniques, tree and plant identification, backcountry orienteering and safety, and wilderness camping skills. These skills will be honed further throughout the field season. Field technicians will acquire substantial expertise in western bird identification, general natural history, and backcountry living, while exploring one or more of the beautiful, rugged national parks in the Sierra Nevada. Applicants should have a good knowledge of the songs and calls of western montane birds before the training period begins and will participate in biweekly online review sessions of bird songs prior to the in-person training period. A Wilderness First Aid course will be available for those without a current WFA certificate.

RESPONSIBILITIES: Working in teams of two, field technicians will hike into the backcountry for up to seven days at a time. On a typical day, they will wake up before dawn and spend the morning conducting point counts and brief vegetation surveys at each point count site. The afternoon will then be spent breaking camp, backpacking to the beginning of the next day's point count transect, and setting up camp once again. Work will be extremely physically demanding, sometimes

involving backpacking 15 miles or more per day with a heavy pack, and requiring substantial off-trail travel. A 3-day break will usually follow each backcountry session. Later in the season longer backcountry trips using cached resupplies maybe be also be possible (ranging from 10 to up to 20 days). Some computer data entry will also be required. Schedule will vary to accommodate accessibility concerns; snowpack, runoff, weather conditions, and fire and smoke conditions may affect work schedule.

REQUIRED SKILLS and EXPERIENCE: We are looking for candidates with prior birding experience and familiarity with (or ability to quickly learn) the songs and calls of western montane birds. Even more important than prior birding experience, however, is a strong desire to learn more about western montane birds and natural history, and a willingness to face the rigors of fieldwork with good humor. These rigors include (but are not limited to!) physically demanding work, long work days that may begin well before dawn, wet, cold weather, mosquitoes, occasional contact with bears, and less-than-glamorous housing with possibly no cell service. Successful candidates must be in excellent physical condition, must have backpacking experience, and must be comfortable with off-trail hiking and orienteering with map, compass, and GPS (training provided) and must be able and willing to put a substantial amount of time into studying bird songs before arriving to training.

EQUIPMENT: Field technicians are expected to provide their own binoculars and backpacking gear, including hiking boots, tent, sleeping bag, raingear, etc. A personal automobile is highly recommended.

COMPENSATION: Compensation includes the valuable skills you will develop, the satisfaction of joining important bird conservation efforts, and the joy of working with fun-loving people in a fantastically beautiful environment. Surveyors will be considered seasonal IBP staff, and will receive payment of \$2,900 per month (before payroll taxes), mileage reimbursement for all project-related travel, and free shared housing.

MORE INFORMATION: For more information about this IBP program, please see our [Birds of the Sierra Nevada National Parks Webpage](#).

TO APPLY: Please email a resume, cover letter, and the names, phone numbers and email addresses of up to three references to [Mandy Holmgren](mailto:mholmgren@birdpop.org), Biologist (mholmgren AT birdpop DOT org). Professional references are preferred, but one reference may be a character reference. Many times references are slow to reply, we encourage submitting more references so that your application can be quickly processed.

IBP values diversity and encourages people from all backgrounds to apply. All qualified applicants will receive consideration regardless of race, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation.

WHAT PAST FIELD TECHNICIANS HAVE SAID:

"I gained so much, I don't know where to begin. My backcountry skills, my people skills, survival skills, have all been fine-tuned. My experience with the birds will never be forgotten. I loved learning the songs!"

"This was probably the best summer I've ever had. I learned a lot of new birds, made some great friends, and got to work in some of the most beautiful country I've ever seen."

"This was one of the hardest summers of my life. It was physically challenging and forced me to do things I would have never otherwise attempted. I learned so much about birds, backpacking and bushwacking, and found I can actually function at 4am!"

"I am very satisfied with all of the experience I gained this summer. I learned a lot about myself, my interaction with other people, and nature. I also enjoyed learning all of the birds and plants. Working for IBP and in the North Cascades has been a very positive experience that has forever changed me."