

Renfrew County Biotabase User Guide

How to Register

The Renfrew County Biotabase contains information on species found in Renfrew County and adjacent areas. The Biotabase is a **public participation project** through which citizen scientists share field observations on an ongoing basis. The Biotabase also contains historic records of Renfrew County species, including some collected by professional taxonomists. While the Biotabase Coordinator reviews and finalizes survey forms, each participant is ultimately responsible for the quality of data entered. Have fun observing nature in Renfrew County, and thanks for participating!

To register as a Biotabase participant:

- Go to the Renfrew County Biotabase website, which is housed on the Bird Studies Canada website (www.bsc-eoc.org/birdmon/rcb/main.jsp)
- Click on **Create new login** located in the left side-bar of the page.
- Fill in the fields and click on the **Register** button at the bottom of the page. The user name you choose will be visible to the public. We invite you to enter **Contact information** so that the Biotabase Coordinator can get in touch with you if needed.
- You will be re-directed to a welcome page. From here you can start entering data.

How to Submit Data

The four essential elements of any Biotabase entry are i) the location where the species were observed, ii) the date of the observation, iii) the names of the observers, and iv) the species observed.

1. Location

- The **Site Survey Description** allows you to **Select an existing site** from the drop down menu, or to enter a name in the **Site Name** field. Naming your site is optional, but the name you choose will appear in the **Review Data** feature, helping others know where your observation was made.
- If you **Save this as a new site**, its name will appear when you **Select an existing site** from the drop down menu. If you will be adding more observations for this site in future, having it on the drop down menu will avoid the need to re-enter its geographic coordinates. The new site will appear only on your personal list and (unlike public sites) will not be visible to other observers. You can delete a site you have saved using the **Sites** feature on the left side-bar.
- Insert **Coordinates** (latitude and longitude, decimal degrees) for your new site either directly into the appropriate fields, or by clicking on **Find coordinates on Google Map** or **Convert from other format**.
- If you choose Google Map to find the coordinates, simply follow the instructions on the pop-up Google Map window to pin point your location, then click the **Transfer** button. Your coordinates will automatically be transferred and you will be returned to the data entry form.

2. Date

- Enter your **Survey date** (required) and **Time and effort** (optional).
- Note that the date and time entered here refer to when the observation was made, not when you are entering the data (unless these happen to be the same).

3. Observer(s)

- As you are logged into the site, you will automatically be listed as **Participant** on any form you are entering. As required, add observers in the **Field Observers** section.
- Insert any general **Comments** (nature of trip, trip leader, access to the survey site, weather, equipment used, etc.). There are also comment fields for each species in the checklist forms.

4. Species observed

- The **Current checklist** default is Birds: Ontario. If this is the list you wish to use, simply start entering your data in the fields provided. If you wish to enter a count for how many individuals of a particular species you identified, put a number in the checkbox; if not, enter a “1” (you can also enter a comment, such as “many individuals seen”).
- If you wish to change the checklist from birds to other flora or fauna, click on the drop down arrow and select another one. Renfrew County lists are provided for better known species groups - amphibians, birds, butterflies, fish, mammals, reptiles, plants, etc. Only Ontario lists are provided for lesser known groups - ants, beetles, freshwater mussels (Bivalvia), centipedes, lichens, mayflies, grasshoppers and crickets (Orthoptera), spiders, stoneflies, etc.
- To find a species name quickly in a long checklist, use the **Search** feature,
- You can add data from many different checklists to a single form by changing the checklist and locating the species. You can also click on the **expanded search** box to search for a name across all the checklists. This is useful if you don't know which checklist contains a particular species (e.g., whether a plant species is a tall shrub or a low shrub).

5. Save your form


Click the **Save** button at either the top or bottom of the form.

How to Review Data

- To view data you or others have entered, click **Review data** on the left side bar. This will open a list of all the data/survey forms entered to date.
- You can view any individual form by clicking on the magnifying glass icon beside it. A noteworthy feature is the **Display coordinates on Google Map** link which will map the location of the survey.
- You can edit or delete any form you have submitted until it is finalized by the Coordinator. If you need to change a finalized form, please contact the Coordinator.

How to Download Data

If you wish to work with the information in the Biotabase (e.g., locate/sort records), we recommend that you download the entire database and import the resulting file into spreadsheet software. To download the database, click **Download data** on the left side bar. Then:

1. At **Start new query**, go to the drop down menu under **By dataset** and select the Renfrew County Biotabase. Then scroll down to the very bottom of the page and click **Search**.
2. At **Select data to download**, check the box that indicates that you will be downloading the Renfrew County Biotabase. Please read the Bird Studies Canada data sharing policy, and the citation policy, and check these boxes. After checking these boxes, click the **Download** button at the bottom of the page.
 - The Renfrew County Biotabase is a Level 5 database. Data are publicly available, and the complete dataset is available for download.
 - If you publish data, the **Data provider name** is the **Pembroke Area Field Naturalists** and the **Dataset name** is the **Renfrew County Biotabase**.
3. You will be asked to complete a **Data request form**. This is optional for Level 5 datasets such as the Biotabase. Click **Continue**: your data request should be automatically approved.
4. You will see a new screen saying that a zip file is ready for download. You will also receive an email to inform you. You can click on the  icon and save the file to your computer.

The downloaded file will be a zipped file and will need to be extracted using zip software (freely available on-line). Unzip/extract the file and save the version of the Biotabase to your computer. If you have Excel or similar spreadsheet software, you should now be able to import the file and work with it.