

Relocation Standards for Existing Woodcock Singing Ground Survey (SGS) routes and stops

Qualifications for Route and/or Stop Relocation

Woodcock routes and stops will be considered for modification or relocation only when one or more of the following is true:

1. Running the route or stop constitutes a safety hazard to the observer.
2. An increase in the noise level at two or more stops on the route affects the observer's ability to hear woodcock, and this increased noise will permanently alter the accuracy of woodcock counts.
3. Road conditions permanently preclude the completion of the route during the prescribed time period.

Routes will **NOT** qualify for modification or relocation solely based on the following:

1. High noise levels preclude an accurate count in the number of woodcock heard at stops, but this disturbance level has been constant for all years that the route has been in existence. (This criterion differs from #2 above because no significant changes have occurred to alter disturbance levels.)
2. The nature of the survey route has been markedly altered due to resurfacing of roads, increases in buildings, changes in land-use practices, etc.

Procedures to Relocate Routes

The State/Province Coordinator, in cooperation with the observer and the USFWS Woodcock SGS North American Coordinator, should modify or relocate any route or stop that meets one or more of the qualifications above. The following procedures must be closely followed:

1. The new route should be located as close as possible to the original route without regard to differences in habitat or woodcock densities.
2. The starting point (stop 1) and general direction of the route should be as close as possible to the original route's starting point and general direction. This is most easily done by drawing a 3-mile diameter circle around the original starting point (stop 1) on a map and picking a new starting point.
3. New routes should meet the original criteriaⁱ and should also:
 - a. avoid main highways, except for short distances when it is not possible to select a more appropriate route
 - b. avoid routes that "double back" upon themselves on roads closer than one mile
 - c. avoid acute angle turns in order to prevent duplication or partial overlap of auditory radii around successive stops
 - d. new routes should receive a new, unique number that the USFWS coordinator will assign. The old route number should be permanently retired.
4. If adjusting **ONLY** one stop location due to a hazard that will permanently prevent the observer from stopping at the location in the future, the new stop location may be adjusted up to 0.1 miles (0.2 km) in either direction with the subsequent stops to stay the same as before. In other words, there might be a 0.3 or 0.5-mile (0.5 or 0.8 km) difference in between the new stop location and the subsequent one. Adjusting one stop location does not constitute the route needing a new unique number but does require notification to the state/province and national coordinator as described below.

Once a potential new route or stop has been identified, there are several important steps which must be completed:

New Route -

1. A map showing the new route that indicates the starting location (stop 1) and ending location (stop 10) and the layout of the route should be prepared.
2. GPS coordinates for each stop should be collected following established protocol. See the standards for collecting GPS coordinates.
3. Copies of the map along with the GPS coordinates must be sent to the USFWS Woodcock SGS North American coordinator, via email at WeblessSurveyCoordinator@fws.gov. A copy should also be retained by the State/ Province Coordinator in a permanent file.

Single Stop Adjustment –

1. Creation of a new map showing the adjusted stop location along with the rest of the original stop locations along the route path.
2. GPS coordinates for the new stop location should be collected following the established protocol. See the standards for collecting GPS coordinates.
3. Copies of the map along with the GPS coordinates must be sent to the USFWS Woodcock SGS North American coordinator, via email at WeblessSurveyCoordinator@fws.gov. A copy should also be retained by the State/ Province Coordinator in a permanent file.

What if a route change is authorized after survey materials have been distributed?

In the event that a route change is authorized during survey season *after* route specific survey forms have been distributed, amend the data submission process by obtaining a new survey form from the state/province coordinator or the USFWS Woodcock SGS North American coordinator which identifies the new route number and suggested sunset times.

If the observer is not able to obtain a new form before they conduct the survey and if the route change only included modifications to one or several stops along a route and the new route path is directly connected to or overlaps with the old route path, the suggested official sunset times will not change. Therefore, collect survey data on the route specific survey form with the old route number, however, cross out the route number and write “New Route or the newly assigned route number.” Write “ATTENTION: AUTHORIZED ROUTE CHANGE, NEW ROUTE” in the survey form margins. If the new route path is not directly connected or does not overlap with the original route path, collect data on a blank survey form, and then follow the same guidance mentioned above in this paragraph. You can obtain a sunset time from this website: <https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/grad/solcalc/>.

When you are entering survey data for the new route via the data entry website <https://naturecounts.ca/nc/amwo/main.jsp>, and a new route number has not been assigned, enter data using the old route number. In the main remarks/comments field directly under the ‘Sunset’ time write “ATTENTION: AUTHORIZED ROUTE CHANGE, NEW ROUTE”

The steps for route map and GPS data submission outlined above must still be followed.

Important Reminders

A new route number will not be assigned or become active until the new route map and GPS coordinates are received and approved by the USFWS. Until that time, the previous route will remain active in the USFWS database.

When the new route is established, the USFWS will notify the State/ Province Coordinator of the new number, mark the year of establishment on the new route map, and provide a clear copy of the new map to the State/Province Coordinator.

If possible, both the original and the relocated routes should be run during the year of transition.

For situations not covered by these standards or if other problems arise, direct inquires to the USFWS Woodcock SGS National Coordinator at WeblessSurveyCoordinator@fws.gov.

¹ The original criteria are outlined in the document “Procedures and Instructions for Selecting Random Routes In the Annual Woodcock Singing-ground Survey,” Feb. 9, 1968, updated February 20, 2009. For a copy of this document, please contact the USFWS National Woodcock SGS Coordinator.