TIPS FOR RECORDING COUNTS IN THE FIELD

Be sure that the way you record shorebird counts in the field doesn't confuse you when you tally the final counts afterwards. Here are some commonly used recording techniques that you can try to keep your notes readable when you are hurriedly trying to get it all down on paper.

For species that occur in large flocks, counts of birds are commonly recorded as numbers separated by a "+" or a "," or blank space:

225 + 48 + 677 + 32   OR   225, 48, 677, 32   OR   225 48 677 32

When you record this way, be sure that commas are distinguishable from "1"s, plus signs cannot be mistaken for numbers, and that blanks are wide enough to unambiguously separate numbers.

For species that are counted in smaller multiples, symbolic recording techniques may be helpful. Below are two that are commonly used. If, for some species, you use both numbers and symbols, physically separate them on the recording sheet.

❶ Most people are accustomed to crossed slashes for tallying in groups of 5, where:

1 = I   2 = II   3 = III   4 = IIII   5 = ┼┼┼┼

You can take shortcuts with this method. For example, if you have already tallied two (II) and you next see three, you could simply cross the vertical slashes (┼┼─), knowing that every horizontal slash indicates 5, even if it crosses fewer than 4 verticals. We use the X (Roman numeral) symbol within this system to indicate 10, and C to indicate 100. ***Do not intersperse this symbolic method with regular numbers***, where eleven is indicated as 11 (use X I in tally form) or one hundred eleven as 111 (use C I in tally form).

❷ Ten birds also can be accumulated with a symbolic combination of dots and connecting lines. You keep adding them till you have an X inside a box. The first through the fourth birds are indicated by dots at the four corners of a square: 1 = **.**   2 = **. .**   3= **: .**   4 = **::**
The next four birds are indicated by connecting the dots: 5= I **:**   6 = I I   7 = ⊓   8 = (

The ninth and tenth birds are added with the two diagonal slashes to create an X within the box (⊠).