



For immediate release

Join a local Christmas Bird Count!
Visit www.ontarionature.org/CBC to find one near you

Toronto, December 9, 2013 – Throughout the holiday season, many Ontarians enjoy one decadent feast after another. Why not use those newly-acquired calories to help our feathered friends?

The Christmas Bird Count, initiated by American ornithologist Frank Chapman in 1900, is a one-day bird census conducted by volunteers in fixed plots. Counts are organized locally by birding and nature clubs. They are free and open to everyone – no matter skill or age.

This year, counts run from December 14th to January 5th. Visit the Bird Studies Canada (www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/cbc) and Ontario Nature (www.ontarionature.org/cbc) websites to find a local count. Ontario Nature member groups are coordinating over 60 counts.

Each citizen scientist who braves snow, wind and cold to take part in a count contributes to the study and conservation of birds. Data collected are used to monitor the status of resident and migratory birds across the Western Hemisphere. The Christmas Bird Count is the longest-running wildlife census and a crucial part of Canada's biodiversity monitoring database

Says Anne Bell, Director of Conservation and Education at Ontario Nature, "The Christmas Bird Count is fun and informative. Experts are out there counting alongside novice birders, all committed to seeing as much as possible, regardless of the weather. You know you're contributing to important scientific research and are spurred on by the hope that a rare bird might show up."

Last year in Ontario, 4,200 people participated in 110 Christmas Bird Counts. A whopping 185 species and 1,516,553 individual birds were recorded. Here are some highlights:

- The Peel-Halton count recorded six warbler species – orange-crowned, Nashville, Cape May, yellow-rumped, pine and common yellowthroat, the presence of which was attributed to a warm fall.
- Red-bellied woodpecker continued to show a winter range expansion and to be reported as new species on counts, especially in eastern Ontario.



- Northern hawk owls and great grey owls were present in higher than normal numbers.
- Barred owls were more widespread, and were even recorded in southwestern Ontario, where they are rarely found.
- Northern cardinal also continues to be found farther north each year, in large part due to feeders.
- Wild turkey continues to expand its range in Ontario.
- Bald eagle numbers were high in northern Ontario, with 206 recorded in Thunder Bay alone.
- Merlins were found more frequently, with a total of 55 recorded, many in areas farther north and east than in past years.

What avian rarities and trends will we uncover this year? Join a Christmas Bird Count to find out. And if you're still not convinced that participating in a count is for you, many are followed by a pot-luck.

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For more information, please contact:

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Photos are available and we can provide local contact information for interviews.

Ontario Nature protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. It connects thousands of individuals and communities with nature through close to 150 conservation groups across the province (charitable registration #10737 8952 RR0001). For more information, visit www.ontarionature.org.