



For immediate release

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

Toronto, December 8, 2014 – 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. 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 Ontario Nature (www.ontarionature.org/cbc) and Bird Studies Canada (www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/cbc) websites to find your local count. Ontario Nature member groups are coordinating more than 70 counts.

The Christmas Bird Count is the longest-running wildlife census and a crucial part of Canada's biodiversity monitoring database. Each citizen scientist who braves the 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 a fun tradition with an important goal – bird study and conservation," says Anne Bell, director of conservation and education at Ontario Nature. "It's great to see expert and novice birders working together to spot as many species as possible, regardless of the weather."

Last year in Ontario, more than 4,000 people participated in 110 Christmas Bird Counts. A whopping 178 species and 1,094,937 individual birds were recorded. Here are some highlights:

- A record number of trumpeter swans (160) were spotted at LaSalle Marina in Burlington.
- Snow bunting was the sixth most abundant bird reported, reaching a record tally of 101,541 individuals.
- Participants of 58 counts recorded 284 snowy owls. By comparison, participants of 29 counts recorded 52 snowy owls the year before.
- Common redpoll, pine siskin, crossbill and grosbeaks were absent or present in smaller-than-usual numbers in counts across southern Ontario.
- Linwood count participants recorded a near record number of rough-legged hawks (119).
- Peel count participants spotted a Ross's goose.
- Parkenham-Arnrior count participants spotted 350 dark-eyed juncos, a new high for this species.
- Participants of the Blenheim and Hamilton counts spotted 98 species, the greatest number among all Ontario counts last year.

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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Some photos are attached and more are available, as is local contact information for interviews.

Ontario Nature protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. Ontario Nature is a charitable organization representing more than 30,000 members and supporters and 150 member groups across Ontario (charitable registration # 10737 8952 RR0001). For more information, visit ontarionature.org.



Common redpoll: Peter Ferguson c/o
Ontario Nature



Gray jay: Ontario Nature



Northern saw-whet owl: Missy
Mandel c/o Ontario Nature

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