



For immediate release

Join a local Christmas Bird Count this holiday season!

Ontario Nature member groups are [hosting counts](#) across Ontario

Toronto, December 6, 2018 – Each year, bird lovers welcome winter by joining a Christmas Bird Count. It's a great way to explore nature while helping our feathered friends and is a part of many families' holiday traditions.

The Christmas Bird Count began in 1900, and today it is North America's longest-running wildlife census. The one-day bird census is conducted by volunteers of all ages and skill levels. Many local counts are organized by birding and nature clubs, and everyone is welcome to attend free of charge.

This year's Christmas Bird Count will run from December 14, 2018 to January 5, 2019. Ontario Nature member groups are organizing at least 80 counts in the province this season. Visit the Ontario Nature website (ontarionature.org/cbc) to find a count near you. For a comprehensive list of counts happening in Canada, visit the Bird Studies Canada website (bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/cbc).

Always fun, even when it's chilly, every volunteer who braves the elements to take part in a count contributes to the study and conservation of birds. Scientists use the data collected to monitor the health and status of resident and migratory birds over time, and to develop conservation strategies for species in decline and their habitats. The Christmas Bird Count also teaches citizen scientists about the myriad bird species that live in and migrate through their communities.

"The Christmas Bird Count is a great way for bird lovers of all ages to help Ontario's birds. Novices work alongside experts to collect important data that help guide work on behalf of all birds across the province. And who knows... maybe you'll see a rare bird that no one has recorded before," says Emma Horrigan, Ontario Nature's Conservation Projects and Education Manager.

Last year, more than 14,000 Canadians participated in over 450 Christmas Bird Counts across the country. Participants recorded a whopping 2.4 million individual birds. In Ontario, 4,435 citizen scientists tallied 231 species and 1,277,568 individual birds throughout the province.

Here are some highlights from last year's Ontario counts:

- Highlights included red-shouldered hawks, black-billed magpies and red-throated loons
- Record numbers of snow buntings and dark-eyed juncos were counted in and around Kingston
- The first ever golden eagles and a record 30 bald eagles were recorded during the Hanover-Walkerton count
- A record 410 American goldfinches were recorded in Niagara Falls

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- Unusual sightings around Lake Simcoe included two golden-crowned kinglets and a mockingbird
- Count participants tallied a record 192 hooded mergansers and 103 red-bellied woodpeckers in Hamilton
- Rare sightings in Thunder Bay included a boreal owl, a brown thrasher and a white-crowned sparrow

What avian rarities and trends will be uncovered this year? Join a Christmas Bird Count to find out. If you're still not convinced that participating in a count is for you, many are followed by a social gathering and pot-luck meal.

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For more information, please contact:

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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, and 30,000 members and supporters across the province. For more information, visit ontarionature.org.



Red-throated Loon, CREDIT: Peter Massas c/o Ontario Nature



Boreal Owl, CREDIT: Nate Kohler c/o Ontario Nature



St. Catharines Christmas Bird Count, CREDIT: Noah Cole, Ontario Nature