



Great Backyard Bird Count Perfect for New Birders

15th annual count takes place Feb 17-20, 2012

As movie-goers watch the stars of *The Big Year* in their quest to count birds, some may be motivated to try the hobby for the first time. The annual Great Backyard Bird Count is the perfect opportunity. The event is hosted by Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada. The results provide a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species. Anyone can participate in this free event and no registration is needed. Watch and count birds for at least 15 minutes on any day of the count, February 17-20, 2012. Enter your results at www.birdcount.org, where you can watch as the tallies grow across the continent. The four-day count typically records more than 10 million observations.



Cassin's Finch by Gary Botello, AZ, 2011 GBBC

"When thousands of people all tell us what they're seeing, we can detect patterns in how birds are faring from year to year," said Janis Dickinson, director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

"The Great Backyard Bird Count is a perfect example of Citizen Science," says Audubon Chief Scientist, Gary Langham. "Like Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, volunteers help us with data year after year, providing scientific support that is the envy of many institutions. It's also a lot of fun."

"We're finding that more people are taking part in our bird count programs every year--and the more that take part, the better it is for the birds," says Richard Cannings, Senior Projects Officer for Bird Studies Canada.

The 2011 GBBC brought in more than 92,000 bird checklists submitted by participants from across the United States and Canada. Altogether, bird watchers identified 596 species with 11.4 million bird observations.

Results from the 2011 GBBC included:

- Increased reports of Evening Grosbeaks, a species that has been declining;
- A modest seasonal movement of winter finches farther south in their search for food;
- The Eurasian Collared-Dove was reported from Alaska for the first time, more evidence of an introduced species rapidly expanding its range.

Although it's called the Great "Backyard" Bird Count, the count extends well beyond backyards. Lots of participants choose to head for national parks, nature centers, urban parks, nature trails, or nearby sanctuaries. For more information, including bird-ID tips, instructions, and past results, visit www.birdcount.org. The count also includes a photo contest and a prize drawing for participants who enter their bird checklists online.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible in part by sponsor [Wild Birds Unlimited](#).

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Editors: Visit the [GBBC News Room](#) for high-resolution images and your state's top-10 lists from the 2010 count. Please also inquire about possible interviews with local participants.

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The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a nonprofit membership institution interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. www.birds.cornell.edu.

Audubon is dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in conservation. www.audubon.org

Bird Studies Canada administers regional, national, and international research and monitoring programs that advance the understanding, appreciation, and conservation of wild birds and their habitats. We are Canada's national body for bird conservation and science, and we are a non-governmental charitable organization. (www.birdscanada.org)