



2010 Great Backyard Bird Count Slide Show Script

- 1) Welcome to this presentation about the Great Backyard Bird Count! My name is _____. This year's count will be February 12th through the 15th, 2010. I'll tell you why we need your help, what scientists can learn from the count, and how you can participate in this fun event.

- 2) The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual event led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. This year is the 13th year for the count. The GBBC is a free, fun event--and anyone can participate. It's a great activity for kids, families, and adults of any age. Beginners and experts alike are welcome. All you have to do is count birds at your favorite location for at least 15 minutes during the count. You can much longer if you want to! You enter your tallies on the GBBC web site. Then you'll be able to see your results, as well as what others are reporting from around the United States and Canada as the count progresses. Scientists use this real-time snapshot of where the birds are to learn more about changes in their numbers and distribution from year to year.

- 3) No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to capture information about birds across the United States and Canada in four days. The GBBC is only possible thanks to the help of tens of thousands of people from coast to coast and on the Hawaiian Islands who are all counting birds at the same time. The more people who participate, the better record we will have of this year's birds. Scientists can use the information to track the ups and downs of bird populations and to learn more about their migratory movements. Your participation will ensure that the birds in your community are well represented as scientists track how birds are faring.

- 4) Last year GBB participants recorded 619 species and more than 11.5 million individual bird observations. They submitted more than 93,600 checklists, an all-time record! Your contribution this year could help break even that checklist record—or put your town in the running for the top town in your state or province.

You can also send photos of birds you've seen during the count. Some of them are posted in the GBBC online photo gallery during the count for everyone to see. All the photos are considered for the GBBC photo contest. They are also archived for possible future use by the Cornell Lab of

Ornithology and National Audubon Society in print and web publications to help promote a better understanding and appreciation of birds.

- 5) Everyone is invited to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count. You don't have to know a lot about birds. If you see any species you can't identify, consult a field guide or look at the ID tips on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site. If you're still unsure what you're seeing, you don't have to report that species. Just report the ones you do know. When you go online to enter your counts, just check off the box that says you are not reporting all the species you saw.
- 6) It's easy to participate, and it can take as little as 15 minutes. Of course, you can count for much longer if you want to! All you have to do is count birds, keep a tally, and enter the results at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site.
- 7) You can count birds anywhere you like. If you count on more than one day or at more than one location, keep a separate list for each location and day.
- 8) Keep a tally of the highest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time. For example, if you see eight Red-winged Blackbirds while counting on Saturday, then twenty, then twelve during your count, you'll record twenty Red-winged Blackbirds for that day, the highest number you saw together at once. Do NOT add the numbers together or you might be counting the same bird over and over.
- 9) When you're ready to report your results, go to the Great Backyard Bird Count web site and click on the big "Submit your checklists" button at the top. You'll be taken to an online form with a few questions and a checklist. Fill it out, make sure to hit the "submit" button and the bottom, and you're done! Before you go consider taking the GBBC survey, revised this year.
- 10) Every sighting reported in the Great Backyard Bird Count becomes part of a permanent record that bird watchers, scientists, and anyone with Internet access can explore at any time. Scientists can use the information to track year-to-year changes in the abundance and distribution of birds. They learn about the complex patterns of winter bird movements. And they can look for trends that indicate how well birds are faring through environmental changes such as urbanization, global climate change, and disease.



- 11) GBBC participants have helped track the spread of Eurasian Collared-Doves over the past decade. Native to Europe, Eurasian Collared-Doves escaped captivity and first appeared in Florida in the 1980s. They have been expanding their range ever since. In 1999, GBBC participants reported them from eight southern states. In the most recent count, participants reported Eurasian Collared-Doves in 39 states and provinces. The species is pushing ever northward, now being reported in British Columbia and Manitoba, Canada, as well as North Dakota and Oregon

- 12) During the 2009 Great Backyard Bird Count, the Snow Goose was once again the most numerous species reported. It's hard to believe there was a time when the Snow Goose was scarce. Populations are now so large that the geese are destroying nesting habitat. Hunting of this species has been permitted since 1975, but has not slowed the dramatic increase in Snow Goose populations.

- 13) The Great Backyard Bird Count coincides with the northward migration of Sandhill Cranes to their grassland breeding areas. Sandhill Cranes are either just beginning migration at the time of the count or, in some years, migration is well underway. GBBC maps show a long streak of birds reported from Florida along their migratory route to the north. Cranes wintering in Arizona and New Mexico take a different route to a staging area on the Platte River in Nebraska. GBBC results show that cranes from Georgia and Florida consistently appear to move north earlier than those wintering in the Southwest. This map is a great example of what we can learn when thousands of sets of eyes and ears are tuned to the birds during the Great Backyard Bird Count.

- 14) Some bird species undergo dramatic migrations in some years but not others. Some examples include Snowy Owl, Clark's Nutcracker, Bohemian Waxwing, and "winter finches" such as Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Evening Grosbeak, and the Common Redpoll. Irruptions seem to be driven by a lack of food on more northerly wintering grounds. 2009 was a great irruption year for Pine Siskins which moved southward in such massive numbers that they showed up on the GBBC's list of the top ten most numerous birds—at number ten—for the first time in the history of the count!



- 15) West Nile virus was first detected in the United States in 1999, in New York. Since then, the disease has spread, killing American Crows in its wake. American Crows have dropped in the GBBC rankings since 2003 and were the 9th most frequently reported bird in 2009. It's important to continue monitoring crows through the Great Backyard Bird Count, the Christmas Bird Count, and other monitoring projects.
- 16) Results of the Great Backyard Bird Count are useful not only to scientists, but to anyone who is curious about birds. Everyone can access the same results, going all the way back to the first count 13 years ago. You can select lists or maps showing results for any bird species, town, state or province. You can look up results from any year or watch animated maps showing how the distribution of birds changes from year to year.
- 17) Throughout the count, you can find out what's being reported. Be sure to check out the gallery of bird images captured during the count, and consider submitting a photo of your own.
- 18) Everything you need to know is on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site, including tips to help with the more difficult bird identifications and links to the All About Birds online field guide with images, sounds, and range maps for more than 500 species.
- 19) If you want to do more to make your yard bird-friendly, you can download a brochure with recipes for making feeders and bird treats at this website from Wild Birds Unlimited, a sponsor of the GBBC. For more ideas on how to turn your property into a bird paradise, visit the Audubon at Home website.
- 20) If you have question about how to participate or how to help get more people to join the Great Backyard Bird Count, contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at gbbc@cornell.edu, or the National Audubon Society, and citizenscience@audubon.org. You may want to check out the website's FAQ section first, though, to see if your question has already been answered!
- 21) I hope you'll participate in this year's Great Backyard Bird Count, February 12-15, 2010. Thank you!



- 22) Here are some slides and interesting facts about the top 10 birds reported on the most checklists in last year's Great Backyard Bird Count.
- 23) #1: Northern Cardinal. The brilliant red plumage of a male Northern Cardinal is the result of pigments found in the cardinal's natural foods, which include seeds, fruits, and insects. One study found that brighter males have better nesting territories and raise more young than duller males. The Northern Cardinal is a year-round resident, but the species' range has been expanding northward since the early 1800s, possibly as a result of moderate temperatures and a greater availability of feeders.
- 24) #2: Mourning Dove. Mourning Doves are adaptable birds. They will nest in open woodlands and edges between forest and prairie, as well as in yards and window ledges. Ever since European settlement of North America began, Mourning Dove numbers have increased. Of all birds that are found only in North America, the Mourning Dove is one of the most abundant and widespread—even though they are game birds—with 70 million shot every year.
- 25) #3: Dark-eyed Junco. The Dark-eyed Junco is one of the most familiar and widespread North American songbirds. Although one species, there are distinctly different forms in various parts of North America. The “slate-colored” variety is primarily found in eastern North America. The “Oregon” junco is found primarily in the west and has a very distinct dark hood. There are several other forms aside from these two, but all are categorized as Dark-eyed Juncos—and as you can see from the map, they're everywhere!
- 26) #4: American Goldfinch. Male American Goldfinches are brilliant yellow in summer, but they resemble the drab females in winter. American Goldfinches are gregarious birds. In winter, they are sometimes seen in flocks of more than 200. Although some individuals are sedentary, others migrate long distances. One goldfinch banded in March in Ontario, Canada, was found eight months later in Louisiana, more than 1,000 miles away.
- 27) #5: Downy Woodpecker. Similar in appearance to the Hairy Woodpecker, the Downy Woodpecker is smaller and has a shorter bill. Downy Woodpeckers mainly eat insects. Males usually look for food on small branches, whereas females tend to look for food on larger branches and tree trunks. They also readily visit feeders. John James Audubon wrote, “I have found it pretty generally distributed from the lower parts of Louisiana to Labrador, and as far to



the westward as I have traveled. It seems, in fact, to accommodate itself to circumstances, and to live contented anywhere.”

- 28) #6: Blue Jay. Blue Jays are intelligent birds, known for their loud, harsh calls and boldness around humans. Some people dislike them because they are known to eat the eggs and nestlings of other birds. However, when researchers examined the stomach contents of more than 500 jays, they found only six with evidence that nestlings or eggs had been eaten. In winter, jays eat mostly acorns and nuts. When scientists followed some jays using transmitters, they found that the birds were storing 3,000 to 5,000 seeds in a single autumn. At feeders, they sometimes fill up their throat pouch with seeds or suet, then fly off to store the food.
- 29) #7: House Finch. True to their name, House Finches are often found around houses. They even nest on window ledges and in Christmas wreaths on doors. The Great Backyard Bird Count map shows House Finches across the continent, but this species was absent east of the Rockies just 70 years ago. In the 1940s, House Finches were introduced to Long Island, New York. Since then, they have spread across the East. In 1994, bird watchers noticed some House Finches with eye infections in the Washington, D.C., area. Researchers discovered that it was caused by a bacterium that originated in chickens. Since then, participants in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s House Finch Disease Survey have helped scientists track the spread of the disease all the way from the East Coast to the West Coast. The disease is not transmissible to humans, but it can be deadly for the House Finches. Researchers estimated that the disease caused House Finch numbers to decline by half in a three-year period in affected areas.
- 30) #8: Tufted Titmouse. At feeders, Tufted Titmice choose the largest sunflower seeds available. In fall and winter, they may take one seed at a time and hide it within 40 meters of the feeder. They often shell the seed first, before hiding it in under loose bark, crevices, and rotted areas of trees. The geographic range of the Tufted Titmouse has expanded in the past 50 years, probably because of warming temperatures and increased availability of feeders. Young titmice sometimes stay with their parents throughout the winter, and may even stay to help care for their new siblings in spring.



31) #9: American Crow. American Crows are more susceptible to West Nile virus than most other birds. West Nile virus first appeared in North America in 1999. Before 2003, American Crows always ranked as the top 4th or 5th most frequently reported bird in the Great Backyard Bird Count. Every year since 2003, their ranking has been 9th or 10th. In 2006, the number of crows reported was 35 percent lower than the previous year. Will American Crow populations rebound? Help scientists find out by sending counts of crows from our community to the Great Backyard Bird Count.

32) #10: Black-capped Chickadee. This is one of the most familiar and beloved birds in northern North America, and a frequent visitor to bird feeders. Chickadees hide seeds and other food items. Each item is placed in a different spot and the cheerful chickadee can remember thousands of these hiding places.

