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Help Count Birds for Science during Audubon's 118th Annual Christmas Bird Count

Matanuska Valley, Alaska, December 2, 2017 -The National Audubon Society invites birdwatchers to participate in the longest-running citizen science survey, the annual [Audubon Christmas Bird Count](#) (CBC). On Sunday, December 17, 2017, birders and nature enthusiasts in the Matanuska Valley will take part in this tradition, many rising before dawn to participate.

This year, the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will mobilize over 72,000 volunteer bird counters in more than 2,500 locations across the Western Hemisphere. The Audubon Christmas Bird Count utilizes the power of volunteers to track the health of bird populations at a scale that scientists could never accomplish alone. Data compiled in the Matanuska Valley Count will record every individual bird and bird species seen in the Matanuska Valley Christmas Bird Count Circle, a 15 mile diameter circle with its center at the old Four Corners intersection of Old Trunk Road and Stringfield Road, on the Palmer-Wasilla Highway. Matanuska Valley CBC Bird data contribute to a vast citizen science network that continues a tradition stretching back more than 100 years.

To date over 300 peer-reviewed articles have resulted from analysis done with Christmas Bird Count data. Bird-related citizen science efforts are also critical to understanding how birds are responding to a changing climate. This documentation is what enabled Audubon scientists to discover that 314 species of North American birds are threatened by global warming as reported in Audubon's groundbreaking [Birds and Climate Change Study](#). The tradition of counting birds combined with modern technology and mapping is enabling researchers to make discoveries that were not possible in earlier decades.

Birders of all ages are welcome to contribute to this fun, nationwide citizen science project, which provides ornithologists with a crucial snapshot of our native bird populations during the winter months. Each individual count is performed in a count circle with a diameter of 15 miles. At least ten volunteers, including a compiler to coordinate the process, count in each circle. The volunteers break up into small parties and follow assigned routes, which change little from year to year, counting every bird they see. In most count circles, some people also watch feeders at their homes instead of following routes.

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count began in 1900 when Dr. Frank Chapman, founder of *Bird-Lore* - which evolved into *Audubon* magazine - suggested an alternative to the holiday "side hunt," in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds. 117 years of counting birds is a long time, but the program somehow brings out the best in people, and they stay involved for the long run. And so the tradition continues.

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count is a citizen science project organized by the National Audubon Society. There is no fee to participate and the quarterly report, [American Birds](#), is available online. Counts are open to birders of all skill levels and [Audubon's free Bird Guide app](#) makes it even easier to learn more. For more information and to find a count near you visit www.christmasbirdcount.org.

The Matanuska Valley Audubon Christmas Bird Count started in 1979. In 1999, the newly-formed Mat-Su Birders wild bird club took over responsibility for planning and conducting the annual Matanuska Valley CBC. If you live within the Matanuska Valley CBC Count Circle (i.e., no more than 7.5 air miles from the old Four Corners on the Palmer-Wasilla Hwy), you can participate in the CBC by counting birds at your home feeders. To sign up to participate as a CBC Feeder Count, please contact Bob Winckler, the CBC Count Compiler, at <msbirder@mtaonline.net> or at 907-376-8594.

About Audubon

The National Audubon Society saves birds and their habitats throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation. Audubon's state programs, nature centers, chapters and partners have an unparalleled wingspan that reaches millions of people each year to inform, inspire and unite diverse communities in conservation action. Since 1905, Audubon's vision has been a world in which people and wildlife thrive. Audubon is a nonprofit conservation organization. Learn more at www.audubon.org and follow [@audubonsociety](https://twitter.com/audubonsociety).

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