

Christmas Bird Count

The San Saba Bird & Nature Club will meet Tuesday October 15 at 7 p.m. at the Garden Club at Mill Pond Park. The topic for discussion will be the Christmas Bird Count.

The 114th Christmas Bird Count will take place from December 14, 2013 through January 5, 2014.

From December 14 through January 5 tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Families and students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists go out on an annual mission - often before dawn. For over one hundred years, the desire to both make a difference and to experience the beauty of nature has driven dedicated people to leave the comfort of a warm house during the Holiday season.

Each of the citizen scientists who annually brave snow, wind, or rain, to take part in the Christmas Bird Count makes an enormous contribution to conservation. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations - and to help guide conservation action.

From feeder-watchers and field observers to count compilers and regional editors, everyone who takes part in the Christmas Bird Count does it for love of birds and the excitement of friendly competition -- and with the knowledge that their efforts are making a difference for science and bird conservation.

How Christmas Bird Count Helps Protect Species and Their Habitat

The data collected by observers over the past century allow researchers, conservation biologists, and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

The long term perspective made possible by the Christmas Bird Count is vital for conservationists. It informs strategies to protect birds and their habitat - and helps identify environmental issues with implications for people as well. For example, local trends in bird populations can indicate habitat fragmentation or signal an immediate environmental threat, such as groundwater contamination or poisoning from improper use of pesticides.

Since the Christmas Bird Count began over a century ago, it has relied on the dedication and commitment of volunteer citizen scientists. In other words, it all starts with you!

The Christmas Bird Count season is December 14 through January 5 each year. Your local count will occur on one day between those inclusive dates. If you have more than one local count, they will probably be conducted on different dates within the CBC season. You can pick the most convenient date, or participate in more than one count.

There is a specific methodology to the CBC, but everyone can participate. The count takes place within "Count Circles," which focus on specific geographical areas. Each circle is led by a Count Compiler. Therefore, if you are a beginning birder, you will be able to join a group that includes at least one experienced birdwatcher. In addition, if your home is within the boundaries of a Count Circle, then you can stay home and report the birds that visit your feeder once you have arranged to do so with the Count Compiler. There is no fee to participate. If you have never been on a CBC before your first step is to locate and contact your local Count Compiler to find out how you can volunteer.

Counts are conducted in Travis, Kerr & Burnet Counties just to name a few. If you would like to get involved come join the San Saba Bird & Nature Club October 15 at 7 p.m. at the Garden Club building in Mill Pond Park to learn more.

Go outside & play!