

The 2011 GBBC will take place Friday, February 18, through Monday, February 21. Please join us!

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they fill out an online checklist at the [Great Backyard Bird Count website](#).

As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported from their own towns or anywhere in the United States and Canada. They can also see how this year's numbers compare with those from previous years. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see. A selection of images is posted in the [online photo gallery](#). (Contest rules follow)

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

We need your help. Make sure the birds from your community are well represented in the count. It doesn't matter whether you

report the 5 species coming to your backyard feeder or the 75 species you see during a day's outing to a wildlife refuge.

Your counts can help us answer many questions:

- How will this winter's snow and cold temperatures influence bird populations?
- Where are winter finches and other “irruptive” species that appear in large numbers during some years but not others?
- How will the timing of birds’ migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?
- Are any birds undergoing worrisome declines that point to the need for conservation attention?
- Scientists use the counts, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the [Christmas Bird Count](#), [Project FeederWatch](#), and [eBird](#), to give us an immense picture of our winter birds. Each year that these data are collected makes them more meaningful and allows scientists to investigate far-reaching questions.

Photo Contest Rules

All images must be in **.jpg format** and have been taken during the Great Backyard Bird Count, though photos may be submitted until March 1. Please submit images in **as high a resolution as possible**.

You must agree to the [terms of use](#). In the “Note” section, please tell us any interesting information about where/how you took the image (optional).

You will be asked for your name, address, phone, and email.

Three judges each from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society will review all the entries. Winners in each category will be notified by email and prizes awarded. All winners and finalists will be posted on the GBBC web site.

Photos are evaluated based on both technical skill and artistic ability. Winning photos are those that show the photographer's skill in composing an image and using a camera. Some of the factors the judges consider when choosing photos include use of lighting, depth of field, sharpness of focus, color balance, composition, framing, camera angle, originality, choice of subject matter, and the amount of patience (or luck!) required to get a shot.

Images will be judged in six categories:

Overall

Bird in its habitat

Behavior

Group shot (2 or more birds)

Composition

People enjoying birds

When taking photos, use your imagination! Bird watchers could be photographed inside or outside, in the city, suburbs, or country. They might be at a nature center or retirement home. Young children, seniors, or scout groups could be photographed marking tally sheets, talking to each other, looking up birds in a field guide, filling feeders, making bird treats, mugging for the camera, or just having fun!

Good luck to all who enter the 2011 photo contest and thank you for joining the Great Backyard Bird Count!

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