

## **MAKING CHRISTMAS COUNT FOR THE BIRDS!**

Naramata, B.C., 19 November 2002: This year over 55,000 volunteers from every Canadian province and territory, all 50 states, parts of Central and South America, Bermuda, the West Indies, and Pacific Islands will take part in the 103<sup>rd</sup> annual Christmas Bird Count.

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) forms one of the most important databases used to monitor the status of resident and migratory birds across the Western Hemisphere. Initiated by the National Audubon Society, results from 1900 to the present are available through their website. Two years ago, Bird Studies Canada became the Canadian partner in this huge project.

Last year, about 52 million individual birds were counted - a record high of 1,936 individual counts was completed, over 300 of them in Canada. Each individual count group completes a census of the birds found during one 24-hour period between 14 December and 5 January in a designated circle 24 kilometres in diameter – about 458 square kilometers.

“Backed with over a century of data, the CBC is the longest running volunteer-based bird census, spanning generations of Canadian bird enthusiasts,” said Dick Cannings, Canadian Coordinator of the Christmas Bird Count. “CBC has evolved into a powerful and important tool, providing raw material for studies monitoring the status of bird populations as well as the overall health of the environment.”

CBC began over a century ago when 27 conservationists in 25 localities, led by ornithologist Frank Chapman, changed the course of ornithological history. On Christmas Day 1900, the small group initiated an alternative activity to the “side hunt”, a holiday practice typical of the time period. During the “side hunt” teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds and small mammals. As an alternative, Chapman proposed to identify, count, and record the birds they saw, thus founding one of the most significant citizen-based conservation efforts that has now become a century-old institution.

While CBC is a tradition, the compilation of its data is anything but traditional – most compilers will enter their data on-line via Audubon’s website where the 103<sup>rd</sup> Count results will be viewable in near real-time. Canadians can link to the site through Bird Studies Canada’s website at [www.bsc-eoc.org](http://www.bsc-eoc.org), National Programs.

Birders of all skill levels are welcome to participate and can obtain information for their area on the BSC website. Members of BSC participate free of charge, for non-members there is a \$5.00 fee to offset administration costs.

Bird Studies Canada is the country’s preeminent, non-profit, organization committed to advancing the understanding, appreciation and conservation of wild birds and their habitats. With coordinators in British Columbia, Prairie Canada, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada, BSC’s National Research Centre is located in Port Rowan, Ontario

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