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

Bethel, Alaska (11/13/2017) –The National Audubon Society invites birdwatchers to participate in the longest-running citizen science survey, the annual [Audubon Christmas Bird Count](#) (CBC). On December 16, 2017, birders and nature enthusiasts in Bethel will take part in this tradition, many rising before dawn to participate.

Last year, we conducted the count on December 17. We had 10 adults and 2 children in the field looking for birds and four parties that counted birds at their feeders. We observed a total of 14 species. The most common species on the count was the raven (we counted 750!) followed by redpolls (259) and pine grosbeaks (133). Rare but exciting species that were observed included bald eagle, spruce grouse, downy woodpecker, and great horned owl.

This year, the Audubon Christmas Bird Count 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 Bethel will record every individual bird and bird species seen in a specified area, contributing 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 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 Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge is proud to support the Christmas Bird Count in Bethel, Alaska. Our mission is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Christmas Bird Count is one way for citizens to add to our knowledge about birds and their distributions. **To sign up for the count in Bethel, please visit/contact Kristine Sowl, kristine_sowl@fws.gov or 907-543-3151.**