



Christmas Bird Count Regional Editor Manual

1. Introduction

Audubon's Christmas Bird Count stands as one of North America's most enduring wildlife monitoring traditions, with roots stretching back to Christmas Day 1900. On that day, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman proposed a revolutionary idea—instead of the popular "side hunt" where hunters competed to shoot the most birds, Chapman suggested counting them instead. This simple yet profound shift from hunting to conservation marked the birth of what would become an environmental institution. Beginning with just 27 dedicated birders across 25 locations in the United States and Canada, the Christmas Bird Count has flourished into a massive community science initiative spanning the Western Hemisphere.

The count operates during a three-week window around the Christmas holiday, from December 14 to January 5 each year. Volunteers venture out within designated 15-mile diameter circles, meticulously counting every bird they encounter—whether seen or heard—during a 24-hour period. Each count area has a compiler who coordinates the volunteer efforts and ensures the data is properly collected and submitted. What began as a small conservation-minded alternative to hunting has transformed into one of the largest and longest-running community science projects in the world.

The significance of the Christmas Bird Count extends far beyond its impressive longevity. The data collected over more than 125 years provides an invaluable record of bird population trends, offering scientists a window into the health of our environment. This information has directly informed critical conservation decisions, including U.S. and Canada State of the Birds Reports, and has helped identify species requiring urgent protection. Beyond its scientific value, the count fosters community engagement with nature, welcoming birders of all experience levels and creating meaningful connections between people and wildlife. This accessibility has helped build generations of conservation-minded citizens while contributing to hundreds of peer-reviewed studies that continue to shape our understanding of avian ecology and guide environmental policy.

CBC Regional Editors

CBC Regional Editors serves as a vital link in the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) organizational structure, playing a crucial role in maintaining the scientific integrity and smooth operation of this long-standing community science initiative.

Regional Editors are experienced birders who oversee a specific geographic region, typically encompassing a state/province, group of states/provinces, or country. They act as the bridge between local count compilers and the national CBC team, bringing specialized knowledge of their region's avifauna and birding community to the process. Regional editor teams that share responsibilities for a region are also welcome.

The primary responsibility of Regional Editors (or Regional Editor teams) is quality control. They review all count data submitted from their assigned territories, scrutinizing unusual sightings, unexpected numbers, or rare species reports. This verification process often involves direct communication with local compilers to request additional documentation, photographs, or detailed descriptions for exceptional records. Their knowledge of regional bird distribution, abundance patterns, and seasonal movements allows them to identify potential errors or misidentifications before data enters the permanent record.

Beyond data validation, Regional Editors provide essential support to count compilers throughout their region, offering guidance on count circle establishment, helping resolve boundary questions, or answering inquiries about the CBC protocol. Many Regional Editors have decades of CBC experience, making them invaluable mentors for newer compilers.

Regional Editors also play an important ambassadorial role, representing the CBC program at regional birding events, conferences, and conservation meetings. They help communicate the scientific value of the count data, encourage participation, and build relationships with local conservation organizations and agencies that might utilize CBC findings.

Regional Editors are expected to represent Audubon's principles of [equitable conservation](#). The Christmas Bird Count brings together a caring community of people inspired by birds and committed to their protection. Regional Editors are expected to:

- Foster an inclusive environment where participants of all backgrounds, lifestyles, perspectives, and abilities feel welcome and valued.
- Ensure communications with Compilers and participants are respectful and accessible.
- Support efforts to expand CBC participation to anyone who wants to participate.
- Address any concerns related to respect or inclusion promptly and appropriately.
- Embody Audubon's belief that protecting and conserving nature transcends political, cultural, and social boundaries.
- Help create a healthy, vibrant community united by our shared passion for birds and nature.

Note of Appreciation

The National Audubon Society extends its deepest gratitude to our Christmas Bird Count Regional Editors, whose dedication forms the backbone of this historic conservation initiative. Your meticulous attention to detail, ornithological expertise, and countless hours of volunteer service transform raw field observations into scientifically valuable data that informs critical conservation decisions across the hemisphere. The Christmas Bird Count's reputation for reliability and scientific integrity rests squarely

on your shoulders—a responsibility you bear with remarkable commitment year after year. Your willingness to share knowledge, mentor others, and champion community science has strengthened not only the CBC program but the entire bird conservation movement. As we face unprecedented environmental challenges, the historical dataset you help maintain grows ever more valuable to researchers, policymakers, and conservationists. Please know that your contributions, though often behind the scenes, are recognized and celebrated by the entire Audubon family. The birds we all work to protect have no more dedicated advocates than you, our Regional Editors.

2. Regional Editor Core Responsibilities

Position Responsibilities and Expectations

Regional Editors have four primary responsibilities: ensure timely data entry by Compilers, review data submitted in their region, collect documentation of rare species and use editorial codes to provide context about species and counts, and produce a written report summarizing CBC in their region.

Core Responsibilities:

- 1. Compiler Coordination (December-February)**
 - a. Maintain regular communication with Count Compilers in your region
 - b. Ensure all Compilers understand data entry requirements and deadlines
 - c. Provide guidance and support to new Compilers
 - d. Monitor data entry progress and send reminders as needed
- 2. Data Review and Validation (February-April)**
 - a. Ensure all counts in your region are completed by the February deadline
 - b. Review submitted data for accuracy and completeness
 - c. Verify unusual species sightings and counts
 - d. Add appropriate editorial codes to provide context for rare or unusual records
 - e. Follow up with Compilers regarding any questionable data
 - f. Mark counts as "reviewed" once validation is complete
- 3. Regional Summary Report (March-August)**
 - a. Review count data to identify trends and notable observations
 - b. Prepare a comprehensive written report summarizing CBC results for your region
 - c. Submit completed report by the August deadline
 - d. Incorporate historical context and regional significance where appropriate
- 4. Program Support**
 - a. Serve as a knowledge resource for Compilers in your region
 - b. Provide feedback to CBC Administrators on the CBC program
 - c. Participate in occasional Regional Editor meetings or training sessions
 - d. Assist with recruitment and training of new Compilers as needed

Below are some tips and guidelines that will help Regional Editors fulfill each of these responsibilities.

1) Compiler deadline communication.

- The deadline for data entry is the end of February. Compilers will receive reminder emails from National Audubon as the deadline approaches but may benefit from an additional reminder from their Regional Editor. If the deadline passes and data have not yet been submitted, the Regional Editor can follow up individually with compilers to ensure that all counts are reported.
- 2) Reviewing all data from their region using the CBC data entry platform and following up with Compilers to confirm any rare species or unusual numbers reported.**
- Regional Editors will use the CBC data entry platform to review all submitted counts in their region. Section 3 details how to access and use the platform for data review. When reviewing data, Regional Editors should check all data entry pages, including count effort and weather, to ensure that the submitted data look accurate. The majority of time will be spent on the bird checklist, but all data entry pages are important and should be reviewed.
- 3) Collecting documentation of all rare or unusual species and adding editorial codes to provide context about the species and counts.**
- If it looks like an error may have been made on any of the data entry pages, the Regional Editor should reach out directly to the Compiler to ask about the error. They should use any information provided by the Compiler to make a final decision on what is included in the final record for the count.
 - When Regional Editors find a bird sighting or count that seems unusual for the region, they should reach out directly to the Compiler for more information. National Audubon provides a [rare bird form](#) (available on the Compiler Resources webpage) that should be used along with other supporting evidence (e.g., photographs) to determine the accuracy of unusual bird sightings during a CBC. The Regional Editor has the final say on whether a species or count is included in the final data and should also use editorial codes to indicate any supporting evidence for the sighting or otherwise provide their opinion on the bird or count. The editorial code reference guide can be found in the appendices of this document.
- 4) Writing a report summarizing the CBC in their region each year.**
- Detailed instructions on writing an annual report can be found in section 4. The Regional Editor position is a volunteer role, but honoraria or appreciation gifts are available to Regional Editors from some geographies once written reports are completed.

Time Commitment and Annual Timeline

This volunteer position requires approximately 40-60 hours annually, with most work concentrated between December and August. Regional Editor teams would divide these responsibilities among members.

- **December 14 through January 5:** Coordinate with Compilers to support the CBC.
- **December through February 28:** Online data entry opens to Compilers on December 14th and must be completed by the end of February each year. Monitor data entry progress and send reminders as needed.
- **February through April 15:** Ensure that all data have been submitted by Compilers in your region, review data and reach out to Compilers with any questions or further documentation.

- **March through August:** Write and submit a summary report for your region.

3. Technical Systems and Tools

Accessing the CBC Data Entry Platform

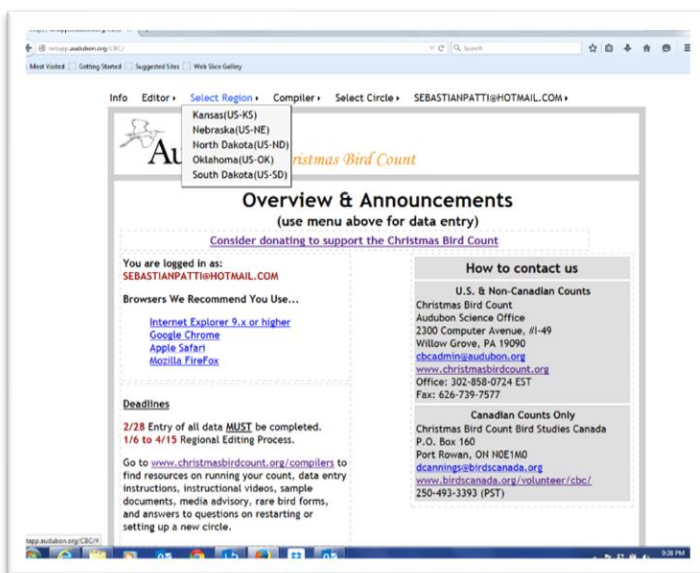
When you become a Regional Editor, an administrator from National Audubon will add you to the Christmas Bird Count Data Entry Platform with regional editing abilities. If you are new to the system, you should receive an email from Audubon with a link to click to set up your password in the data entry system. That link will expire in 24 hours, but if you don't use it in time you can always click on the "forgot username/password" link on the login box and have a password reset message sent to yourself. If you have already created a login in the past, you can just use the username and password you've set up in the past.

Start here to log into the system (do not use a saved link):

www.christmasbirdcount.org

There, when you scroll below the photo of the birders you'll see where to click to "**enter your CBC data**" and that will take you to the login box. Your "username" is your email address in full, and your "password" will be whatever you set up.

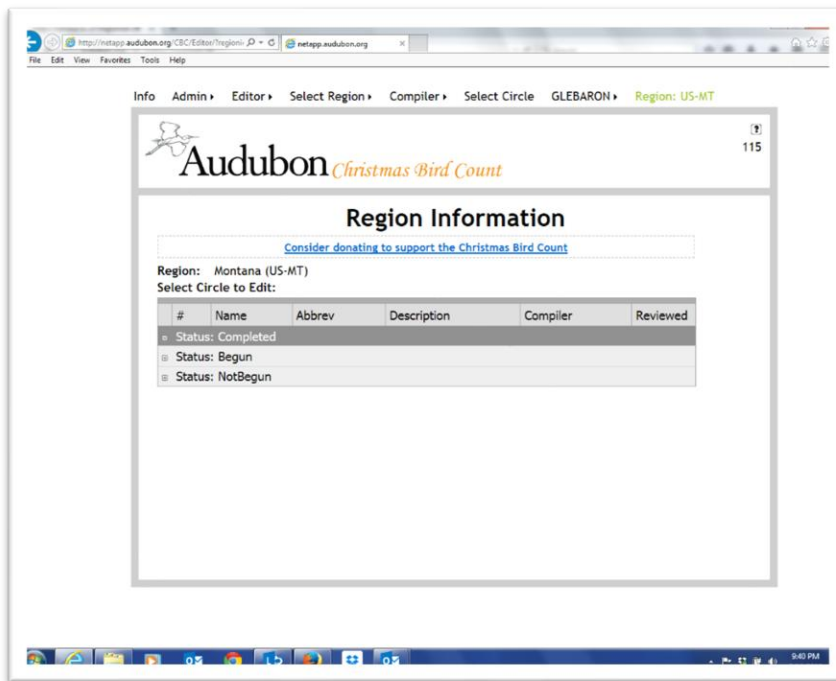
Once you're logged into the CBC system you should see a screen similar to this:



Your email address will be in the upper right, and if you mouse over the "Select Region" menu at the top you'll see your state or region listed. If you do not see the tabs at the top, try logging out and logging back in.

Navigation of the Platform Interface to Review CBC Count Data

Select your region from the “Select Region” dropdown menu, and you’ll get to this screen:



On that screen when you click the “+” in front of “Status: Completed” you’ll find the list of counts for which data entry has been completed. Your job is to review the data submitted for each count and make sure it makes sense for the region. To review, select one of them by clicking the radial (circle) button in front of the name. This will take you to the data entry (or compiler) interface for that count, where you can review everything that has been entered.

detected in this circle. The High, Low, and Unus. Columns can be selected by the compiler or yourself if you notice any out of the ordinary numbers or species.

netapp.audubon.org/CBC/Compiler/BirdChecklist.aspx

Info Admin Editor Select Region Compiler Select Circle COOPER.FARR Circle: MTBG

Audubon Christmas Bird Count

125 Count Completed ☒

Bird Checklist

[Add Species](#) Taxonomic sort order ☒

Common	Scientific	#/cw	Max/Yr	Min/Yr	# Occ.	High	Low	Unus.	Editor
Greater White-fronted Goose	Anser albifrons	<input type="text"/>	1/88	1/88	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Snow Goose	Chen caerulescens	<input type="text" value="2"/>	36/124	1/123	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Cackling Goose	Branta hutchinsii	<input type="text" value="2"/>	6/84	0/122	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Canada Goose	Branta canadensis	<input type="text" value="6667"/>	6844/119	339/86	45	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Trumpeter Swan	Cygnus buccinator	<input type="text" value="107"/>	138/123	1/108	18	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Tundra Swan	Cygnus columbianus	<input type="text" value="6"/>	272/112	6/125	43	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Whooper Swan	Cygnus cygnus	<input type="text"/>	1/104	1/104	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
swan sp.	Cygnus sp.	<input type="text"/>	26/124	1/101	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Wood Duck	Aix sponsa	<input type="text"/>	2/113	1/122	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>

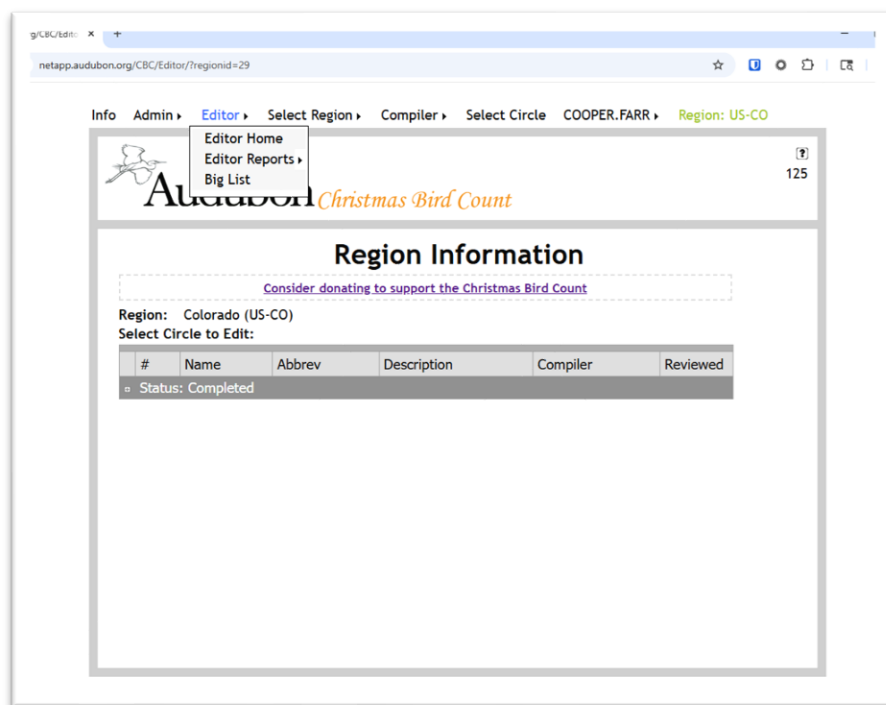
If there are any records that need notations or comments, there's a comment field to the right of that species in the bird checklist section, and you can enter comment codes there (the codes list is included at the end of this document).

If there are any records that need questioning, it's best to be in touch with the compilers rather than just deleting them. You *do* have full authority to delete records on a count if you think it's wrong, or you can edit/change it if necessary. Or you can just put questioning codes on it which will flag it for any researchers using the data.

You can look at the counts in the "Begun" and "Not Begun" sections (and nag the compilers to hurry up and finish up if you want) but please don't actually edit anything other than the counts in the Completed section. For any counts that look like they're done but haven't been checked as completed, it's fine to shoot them an email and ask if they're done. If they are either they or you can check the completed box.

Once you have finished reviewing each count, select the "reviewed" checkbox to indicate you have reviewed and approved the data.

You may also want to view a summary of the CBC data submitted for your entire region to help with your review or to quickly pull data for your summary report writing. To access all summary reports for your region, select the “Editor Tab” at the top.



You’ll see options to download different Editor Reports (i.e., Circle Status, Effort, Species Data, Effort Data, Weather Data), or the “Big List.” If you’d like to download a report, just click on that report in the menu and select the option on how you’d like to export the data (i.e., PDF, Excel, Word, CSV). A report will download, and you can open it directly on your computer. You can also select the Big List, which will bring up a table with all species reported for the count, the total number for that species across all circles, the total circles where it was detected on count day or count week, and any editor comments you have already provided.

Technical Support Resources

All technical support questions should be directed to cbcadmin@audubon.org.

4. Regional Summary Report Writing

Purpose and Audience for Regional Reports

Regional summary reports serve as the official historical record of each year's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) results within a specific geographic area. These reports:

- Document notable trends, patterns, and exceptional findings
- Highlight significant changes in bird populations over time
- Provide context for unusual sightings or count conditions

- Recognize the collective effort of volunteers and compilers
- Create an accessible summary for both scientific and general audiences

The audience for these reports includes ornithologists, conservation biologists, CBC participants, birding enthusiasts, and the broader Audubon community. Regional reports become part of the permanent scientific record and may be referenced by researchers for years to come.

Report Content and Structure

A well-structured regional report typically includes:

1. Introduction

- Total number of counts conducted in the region
- Any new or discontinued count circles
- Overall participation statistics (field observers, feeder watchers)
- Weather conditions that may have affected counts
- Compiler changes or other administrative notes

2. Overall Results

- Total species count for the region
- Comparison to previous years' totals
- Total number of individual birds counted
- Counts with highest species totals
- Counts with highest participation

3. Notable Findings

- New species for regional CBC records
- Rare or unexpected species
- Count week only species
- Species found in unusually high or low numbers
- Range expansions or contractions
- Interesting patterns in common species

4. Species Highlights

- Detailed discussion of selected species of interest
- Historical context for significant findings
- Population trends for key species
- Notable high counts by species
- Species missing that are typically found

5. Unusual Records

- Documentation of rare sightings
- Hybrids or unusual forms
- Out-of-range species
- Unseasonable occurrences

6. Acknowledgments

- Recognition of compilers and participants

- Special thanks to those who provided photos or additional documentation
- Acknowledgment of sources cited

Links to Sample Reports

The following regional reports provide excellent examples of comprehensive summaries:

1. [124th Christmas Bird Count: Virginia and Washington DC](#)
 - a. Notable for: Detailed species accounts, thorough documentation of high counts, excellent use of historical context.
2. [124th Christmas Bird Count: North Carolina](#)
 - a. Notable for: Effective summary of the conditions for the year, species totals, and notable species.
3. [124th Christmas Bird Count: Colorado](#)
 - a. Notable for: Comprehensive taxonomic coverage, good organization by species groups, thorough coverage of rare sightings.

Submission Process and Deadlines

Once you have completed your regional report, you should submit it as a word document to cbcadmin@audubon.org. Photos are welcome but not required. Reports will be posted online with the full annual summary. Completed reports should be submitted by the August deadline.

5. Resources and Support

Any questions about the regional editing process should be directed to national Audubon CBC staff at cbcadmin@audubon.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When should I begin reviewing count data?

A: You can start reviewing counts as soon as compilers mark them as "Completed" in the CBC data entry system. While you can view counts in the "Begun" and "Not Begun" sections, please only edit counts in the "Completed" section. For counts that appear finished but haven't been marked complete, you may email the compiler to ask if they're done, and either they or you can check the completed box.

Q: What is the deadline for completing my regional data review?

A: All data review should be completed by April 15th. This timeline allows compilers to submit data through February 28th, giving you approximately 6 weeks to review all counts in your region and address any discrepancies with compilers.

Q: How do I handle rare bird reports or unusual numbers?

A: When you encounter rare species or unusually high/low counts, contact the compiler to request additional documentation such as photographs, detailed descriptions, or observer information. Use the appropriate editorial codes in the comment field to flag these records for researchers. Remember that

you have the authority to edit or delete records if necessary, but direct communication with compilers is preferred.

Q: What should I do if I disagree with a compiler about a reported species?

A: First, request additional documentation and discuss your concerns directly with the compiler. If you cannot reach agreement, you may use editorial codes to indicate your level of confidence in the record. For significant disagreements, you can contact cbcadmin@audubon.org for guidance. Your regional expertise is valued, but maintaining positive relationships with compilers is also important.

Q: When is my regional summary report due?

A: Regional summary reports should be submitted to cbcadmin@audubon.org by August. This timeline allows sufficient time to analyze trends, compare with historical data, and produce a comprehensive report after completing your data review.

Q: How detailed should my regional summary report be?

A: Regional reports typically range from 3-10 pages depending on the size of your region and the number of notable findings. Focus on significant trends, unusual species, and notable count achievements as described above. The sample reports from Virginia/DC, Montana, and Colorado provide excellent examples of appropriate detail and structure.

Q: Can I edit data from previous years if I notice errors?

A: If you notice errors from previous years, please notify cbcadmin@audubon.org and we can make those changes to the historical data.

Q: How do I help compilers who are struggling with the data entry system?

A: You are welcome to provide basic guidance on navigating the platform, but also direct technical support questions to cbcadmin@audubon.org. Consider organizing regional training sessions before count season if multiple compilers in your area need assistance.

Q: What resources are available if I have questions about my role?

A: For questions about the regional editing process, contact national Audubon CBC staff at cbcadmin@audubon.org. Additionally, you can join the CBC Regional Editor listserv to connect with other editors, share questions, and exchange ideas.

Q: How do I balance being thorough in my review while maintaining good relationships with compilers?

A: Approach data review as a collaborative process rather than a critique. When questioning records, acknowledge the compiler's expertise while explaining your concerns. Frame your inquiries as seeking to strengthen the scientific value of the data rather than challenging the compiler's knowledge. Remember that building trust with your compilers will improve data quality over time.

Q: I tried to log into the data entry platform and the usual tabs at the top have disappeared. What should I do?

A: If you encounter an issue with the data entry platform, first, close out the browser window and try navigating to christmasbirdcount.org and clicking the “Enter your CBC Data” button. The data entry platform sometimes malfunctions when people try to visit it using a saved link. If the system is still not working after navigating to it from the main website, try logging out and then logging back in. If neither of those strategies work, reach out to cbcadmin@audubon.org and the Audubon CBC staff will try to help resolve the issue with you.

6. Appendices

Appendix A: CBC Regional Editor Position Expectations and Responsibilities

Position Summary:

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Regional Editor serves as a critical link between local Count Compilers and CBC Administrators with the National Audubon Society and Birds Canada. Regional Editors ensure data quality and integrity for their assigned geographic region, typically covering a state/province, group of states/provinces, or country outside the U.S. and Canada. Regional editor teams that share responsibilities for a region are also welcome.

Time Commitment:

This volunteer position requires approximately 40-60 hours annually, with most work concentrated between December and August. Regional Editor teams would divide these responsibilities among members.

Commitment to Respect and Inclusion:

As a Regional Editor, you are expected to represent Audubon's principles of [equitable conservation](#). The Christmas Bird Count brings together a caring community of people inspired by birds and committed to their protection. Regional Editors are expected to:

- Foster an inclusive environment where participants of all backgrounds, lifestyles, perspectives, and abilities feel welcome and valued.
- Ensure communications with Compilers and participants are respectful and accessible.
- Support efforts to expand CBC participation to anyone who wants to participate.
- Address any concerns related to respect or inclusion promptly and appropriately.
- Embody Audubon's belief that protecting and conserving nature transcends political, cultural, and social boundaries.
- Help create a healthy, vibrant community united by our shared passion for birds and nature.

Key Responsibilities:

1. Compiler Coordination (December-February)

- a. Maintain regular communication with Count Compilers in your region
- b. Ensure all Compilers understand data entry requirements and deadlines
- c. Provide guidance and support to new Compilers
- d. Monitor data entry progress and send reminders as needed

2. Data Review and Validation (February-April)

- a. Ensure all counts in your region are completed by the February deadline
- b. Review submitted data for accuracy and completeness
- c. Verify unusual species sightings and counts
- d. Add appropriate editorial codes to provide context for rare or unusual records
- e. Follow up with Compilers regarding any questionable data
- f. Mark counts as "reviewed" once validation is complete

3. Regional Summary Report (March-August)

- a. Review count data to identify trends and notable observations
- b. Prepare a comprehensive written report summarizing CBC results for your region
- c. Submit completed report by the August deadline
- d. Incorporate historical context and regional significance where appropriate

4. Program Support

- a. Serve as a knowledge resource for Compilers in your region
- b. Provide feedback to CBC Administrators on the CBC program
- c. Participate in occasional Regional Editor meetings or training sessions
- d. Assist with recruitment and training of new Compilers as needed

Qualifications:

- Knowledge of birds in your region, including distribution and abundance patterns
- Familiarity with the Christmas Bird Count program, procedures, and protocols
- Excellent attention to detail and data analysis skills
- Good written and verbal communication abilities
- Basic computer skills and comfort with online data systems
- Ability to meet deadlines and follow through on commitments
- Previous experience as a CBC Compiler is desirable
- Commitment to Audubon's [principles of equitable conservation](#)

Benefits:

- Contribute significantly to one of the longest-running and most important community science programs in ornithology
- Develop deeper knowledge of bird distribution and population trends
- Connect with a network of dedicated birders and conservationists
- Honoraria or appreciation gifts may be available for Regional Editors from some geographies
- Help build a more diverse and inclusive birding community

Appendix B: CBC Regional Editor Editorial Codes

As noted, annual count data goes through a comprehensive review process with regional experts. These reviewers use a set of editorial codes to flag certain entries. These codes may be included in the raw data you receive.

Code	Comment	Code	Comment
AB	albino	NC	new to count
AD	adult	ND	no details
AF	at feeder	NF	not Forster's
AM	adult male	NH	call not heard
AP	alternate plumage	NU	not unusual?
AQ	adequate details	OU	origin unknown
BD	banded	PD	poor details
BP	basic plumage	PH	photo
DD	details desired	PS	present for some time
DM	dark morph	QN	questionable number
DW	dark winged	QR	questionable
ED	excellent details	QU	?
EO	experienced observer	RA	radio collared
ES	estimated number	RC	record count
EX	exotic	RE	Refuge estimate
FC	first CBC record	RI	recent introduction
FE	feral	RL	recently released
FP	female-plumaged	RN	remarkable number
FS	first state record	RP	re-introduced population
FW	first winter	RR	remarkable record
GD	good details	RT	responded to tape
HE	high elevation	RW	regular in winter
HH	hand held	SK	sketch
HO	heard only	SP	specimen
HY	hypothetical	SW	second winter
IJ	injured	UD	unconvincing details
IM	immature	UE	un-countable exotic
IV	ID by voice	UR	under review
LO	low	VP	viable population?
MD	marginal details	VT	videotaped
ML	migrant lingering	WM	white morph
MO	many observers	WR	winter state record
YM	immature male		