



Audubon

**Compiler's Manual -- How to plan and
conduct a Christmas Bird Count™**

Blue Jay Photo/Michele Black

Note: This manual is meant to be read online rather than as a printed document. Web links are embedded within text for access. Please use your cursor to click on these links and the requested web page will display in your browser.

Main Christmas Bird Count website: www.christmasbirdcount.org

Email Contact: cbcadmin@audubon.org

Compiler Resources Web Page: <https://www.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count-compiler-resources>

Regional editor contact information: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/christmas-bird-count-regional-compilers>

Link to Compiler mapping tool:
<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/964d16c79e1c405c85e2c40ec956a640>

Compiler's Manual to the Christmas Bird Count

Contents

PROGRAM OVERVIEW.....	4
QUICK GUIDE TO AUDUBON'S CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT™.....	5
THE BASICS	6
ROLE OF THE COMPILER	7
ORGANIZING/RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS INCLUDING FEEDER-WATCHERS	7
PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO COMPILERS.....	8
TIPS FOR PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL COUNT:	8
GUIDELINES FOR SCOUTING.....	10
DATA THAT MUST BE COLLECTED FOR THE ENTIRE COUNT.....	11
DATE & TIMES.....	12
EFFORT	13
<i>Units.....</i>	13
<i>Observers.....</i>	13
<i>Party Hours and Distance.....</i>	14
<i>Types of Transportation to be recorded.....</i>	14
<i>Other Time and Distance.....</i>	15
WEATHER	15
<i>A.M. and P.M. Conditions.....</i>	16
BIRD OBSERVATIONS	16
<i>Total Number of Species.....</i>	17
<i>Recording and Documenting Unusual Species.....</i>	17
HOW TO CONTACT THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT PROGRAM.....	18
HOW TO SUPPORT THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT PROGRAM	18
APPENDIX – SAMPLE FIELD FORM.....	19

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Frank Chapman along with 26 other conservationists initiated the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) as a way of promoting conservation by counting, rather than hunting, birds on Christmas Day of 1900. The full history including a summary of the first 26 counts can be found [here](#).

Now in its second century, the CBC has evolved into more than a seasonal tradition. The CBC is, to quote former CBC Director Geoff LeBaron, "increasingly accepted by ornithologists and conservationists alike as the best, if not only, tool available for assessing the long-term trends in the early winter bird populations of North America". The online cumulative historical CBC data, with thousands of individual counts from December 25, 1900 to the present are available for perusal and scientific research. To date over 300 peer-reviewed articles have resulted from use of CBC data. Information about how the CBC data have been used in research and a bibliography of publications produced with CBC data are available on the [CBC website here](#)

The online archive of the historical summaries of the CBC can be found [here](#)

The full CBC database can be queried [here](#):

The Christmas Bird Count is free and open to all. Participation must be arranged in advance through the individual compilers, who run and manage their own counts.

QUICK GUIDE TO AUDUBON'S CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT™

All items below are detailed further in this document – this is just a place to learn some highlights!

The CBC Compiler's resource webpage with answers to your questions, printable references, instructions on how to submit your data to Audubon, guidance, and more can be found [here](#).

Email Contact: cbcadmin@audubon.org

- **Who can be involved in a Christmas Bird Count?**
 - The CBC is open to all who are interested, but everyone must coordinate in advance with a circle compiler. Although compilers are in charge of recruiting and organizing their own circle, ***Audubon strongly urges all compilers to make your count day inclusive and welcoming to all birders.***
- **Is participation in the Christmas Bird Count free?**
 - Yes, participation is free.
- **What is the role of the Compiler?**
 - Each count circle must have a lead primary compiler that is responsible for recruiting, training and guiding participants on the count and summarizing and submitting data. More details are in the next section. This primary compiler is also the email contact with Audubon.
- **Dates of the Count**
 - Audubon's Christmas Bird Count is conducted annually from December 14 to January 5 every CBC season. Those dates never change regardless of the day of the week on which they fall.
- **Count locations**
 - All counting is done within a 15-mile diameter circle that has been established by the compiler (the circle location, once established does not change). Circle locations can be found through the CBC web site.
- **Can new Circles be proposed?**
 - Yes, a new count circle can be proposed by anyone. Details on how to do that and what is required can be found [here](#).
- **Data that must be collected** during a CBC are detailed in this document. Instructions on how to submit your data to Audubon's online CBC system are contained in a separate manual on the compilers resource web site.

THE BASICS

Circle: A count must be done entirely within a 15-mile (24 kilometer) diameter circle. The location of the circles cannot overlap any other circles, and the circle cannot be moved once established as a count circle. Any exceptions must be discussed with Audubon's Community Science Team. Circles may not overlap and should avoid abutting neighboring counts.

Center Point: The same center point should be used each year as the circle cannot be moved once established.

Count Period: Your count must be conducted within the official count period, December 14th through January 5th, inclusive dates. Your specific date can be any within that range, although it is best to be consistent each year about the date selected.

Count Day: Your count must be conducted only within one 24-hour calendar day (midnight to midnight)

Field coverage within circle: It is important to confirm in advance of each count day that you have permission from appropriate authorities to access any areas you wish to bird.

Birds outside the circle seen by an observer standing in the circle may not be included in your census data. All birds tallied must be within the count circle.

Count Hours & Observers: Minimums of full daylight hours (at least 8 with exception of short daylight areas or pelagic counts) in field with 10 observers are preferred for best annual coverage.

ID by Voice: Birds may be identified by voice, but specimens or tracks are *cw* (count week) birds (unless you can document the fact that the specimen/track wasn't present in the area earlier than the count day).

Linear pelagic CBCs are allowed, if the boat follows the same transect or covers the same area each season.

Count Week: A count week is defined as from 3 days before to 3 days after your official count day. Birds seen during this count week period but NOT seen on count day can be recorded in your checklist as "present" and marked in the online checklist with a "cw". Numbers of count week birds are NOT recorded. More details about count week can be found [here](#).

Circle compiler: Audubon requests that each CBC circle maintain one point of contact to receive email of count program updates and to be listed as the primary compiler for the circle. This primary compiler, needs to provide name, email, and phone numbers in their online account on the CBC website upon creation of the circle. The primary compiler may also designate other "secondary" compilers to receive emails and to help with data entry for the circle. Once the compiler's email is submitted to Audubon, they will be set up to also receive our quarterly Community Science e-newsletter, ***American Birds***, which will contain the results of the CBC each year. They can opt-out of receiving this newsletter at any time. Please refer to [Audubon's Privacy policy](#) for more information.

Compiler Callout	<u>Important Dates:</u> • All counts must be run within the "Official Count Period," which runs from December 14th through January 5th (inclusive dates) each season. • Access to set up count dates is open for compilers in October. • Updated public map showing circle locations and count dates goes online in November. • Online data entry opens December 14th and must be complete by the end of February each year. Data entry access will be restricted as of February 28th each year. • Regional Editing process should be completed by April 15th each year.
---------------------------	---

ROLE OF THE COMPILER

The CBC Primary Compiler is responsible for:

- Recruiting and training participants to provide thorough coverage of the count circle
- Communicating with participants about the CBC
- Obtaining permission to count in any non-public locations.
- Planning and Scouting survey areas, or directing others to plan and scout.
- Collecting, verifying, summarizing and submitting required data to Audubon including bird observations, weather and effort data. The primary compiler can designate others to help with data entry.
- Providing any required documentation of rare birds directly to the regional editor.
- Responding to the regional editor on any questions that arise about the count data.
- Maintaining their own updated contact information within the Audubon system.

A very useful and thorough discussion about planning for your count can be found by reading [*The Art of the Christmas Bird Count*](#) by Alan Contreras, longtime compiler of three count circles in Oregon.

ORGANIZING/RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS INCLUDING FEEDER-WATCHERS

1. Remind previous participants and start recruiting new ones in early November if not sooner. The "Join the Christmas Bird Count" section of the CBC website contains general information to guide new potential participants to find out what CBC circles are near them, using information in the database provided by compilers about count dates and plans. This is generally available online in mid-November of each year.
2. Compilers should reiterate to past participants and communicate or email out to new participants a list of reminders such as how much time they may be spending in the field, what to wear, the need to bring their own binoculars, the need for food and water/soda, sturdy footwear, rules of

counting using the CBC protocol covered in this manual, where they should meet up, etc. Please notify your participants what to do in case of inclement weather.

3. Share a printable copy of your blank field form with your sector leaders or volunteers so they have reference for what to collect in the field.
4. Make sure to train/educate counters on how to record their effort information in addition to how to ID birds (hours/miles by foot, car etc).
5. Share a printable map with your sector leaders or volunteers after you have drawn your sectors [in this mapping tool](#).

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO COMPILERS

Compilers can find the following promotional materials on the compiler resource [webpage](#).

Media template: Available in Nov of each year

Printable posters and social media graphics: Available in Nov of each year

TIPS FOR PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL COUNT:

Scheduling count day: It's best to schedule your count during the same weekend or weekday of the count period annually. This helps observers plan their activities well in advance, and enhances the value of your data. A discussion about why the count dates are December 14-January 5 can be found [here](#).

Participant consistency: It's best to use at least some of the same people in the same areas each season. That way they can better learn their area and the birds therein. New participants that join the count can be paired with experienced birders.

Designated census route: Each group (party) should run a census-style route where they cover the route in-depth counting every bird encountered. No other group should cover that area—we need to ensure that no double-counting occurs. Routes and field activities should be run the same way each year by the same people. Consistency over time is very important to the integrity of the data collected.

Counting when retracing census route: If a group needs to retrace their path along a census route, birds should not be recounted. However, if additional species or higher numbers of previously counted species are encountered, they should be included in the census results.

Effort: Please remind all party leaders that complete effort information (see below) must be reported to the compiler for all field parties. Hours spent watching must be reported separately by feeder watchers. This is very important to making the data scientifically useful.

Feeder watchers: Feeder watchers should look for the maximum number of each species visible (or within earshot) at any one time as their maximum count. They should not just keep adding chickadees for their entire watch period. Feeder watchers also must report the number of hours spent watching their feeders. Field parties should not tally birds at feeders known to be counted by feeder watchers. See our [Feeder Watcher Guidance](#) document for more detailed instructions on feeder watching for the CBC.

Large roost counts: For counts where large roosts are within the circle, an observer experienced with estimating large numbers of birds should census that roost in the morning or evening. With very few exceptions, no other individuals of that species counted by other observers during the day should be included in the final tally.

Use Mobilize for event management (U.S. states or territories only): We are currently piloting a free tool called Mobilize - a dedicated event management platform that enables centralized registration and volunteer communication. We recognize the time and effort it takes to manage and track circle volunteers. After a successful small-scale test last year, we're expanding access to an easy-to-use Mobilize tool that several of your fellow compilers have found valuable. Mobilize offers many key benefits:

- **Simplified Communication:** Connect with all registered count volunteers through a single platform – eliminating the need to track multiple email threads or send duplicate messages across different groups.
- **Centralized Information Sharing:** Share count updates, meeting locations, and other critical information in one accessible location for all volunteer registrants.
- **Streamlined Volunteer Management:** Easily track participants and their contact information in one organized system, reducing the time it takes to transfer to the CBC NetApp.
- **Future Integration:** Audubon is considering more formally integrating Mobilize into CBC count management as part of the CBC modernization update. Early adopters will gain valuable experience with this tool.

Review the [Mobilize Pilot Training Webinar recording](#) and access the [Mobilize Pilot Setup Instructions](#) to learn about how to use Mobilize for your CBC. If you are interested in piloting mobilize for the 126th CBC (2025/2026), fill out [this pilot signup form](#) and create your group by October 31.

Building an Inclusive CBC Community: Fostering an inclusive Christmas Bird Count requires building authentic relationships with diverse communities before planning activities. Host informal conversations with community groups, attend local events to build connections, and offer reciprocal value through your expertise. For comprehensive guidance on creating a more accessible and welcoming CBC experience, refer to our [best practices document](#).

CBC POLICIES

Use of audio: Because the CBC is monitoring birds in the non-breeding season (and most species are not singing, at least in North America) the use of playback and attractant noises has always been permitted on the CBC, where allowed by law. If prudent use of audio broadcast has been used routinely on a CBC, those methods should be continued to maintain consistent counting data over time. If a field party or CBC elects not to use attractant measures, it's best for them not to suddenly start one year. The use of playback on a CBC should be very judicious, and never done in a fashion that could affect the behavior of target species in any significant way. The policy on use of attractant audio can be [found here](#).

Use of Merlin: Use of the Merlin birding app for identifying bird vocalizations in the field has been rapidly increasing in recent years. Here are the rules regarding use of this birding tool on Christmas Bird Counts:

1. If an unfamiliar vocalization is heard by CBC participants and Merlin is used to assist in the identification, inclusion of the species is permitted.
2. If Merlin picks up a vocalization of a bird species that participants did not hear right away, but that then do then hear and identify, inclusion of the species is permitted.

3. If Merlin assists in the identification of the call of a rare or hard-to-identify species, secondary identification by sight or photography should be obtained to permit inclusion of that species.
4. As with by-ear identification, species that are often imitated by others (hawks by jays, mimicry by mimids, etc.) should also be visually confirmed for inclusion.
5. If Merlin identifies a vocalization of a species that is neither heard nor independently seen by participants on a Christmas Bird Count, that species may not be included in the CBC results.

Use of trail cams, drones, remote audio recorders, or live stream feeder cameras: These remote sensing devices cannot be used as a method of collection of CBC data. Bird data on Christmas Bird Counts must be tallied by officially involved human observers, in designated field parties, who are not only submitting their bird data but their effort data as well. The key factor that makes CBC data so meaningful for long-term analyses is that we collect effort data as well as the bird numbers, and thus the final results are effort-weighted. More people in a given area will count more birds in that area...even if the number of birds is stable or possibly even declining. Species detected by trail cam photos or other remote sensing can be listed as "cw" (count week) species if they were documented during the count week. But they can never be included in the actual CBC census results for the day.

Use of eBird checklists from non-CBC participants to report species on a CBC: Checklists in eBird that are from areas within a count circle on the count day but not submitted by official CBC participants *cannot* be added to Christmas Bird Count results. Because official CBC observers and parties on Christmas Bird Counts are coordinated in advance by compilers, and because the effort of the parties on CBCs is as critically important as the bird data for the analyses of CBC results, independent eBird checklists are not compatible with official Christmas Bird Count results. Species recorded on eBird by non-CBC participants can be listed as "cw" (count week) species if they were documented during the count week. But they can never be included in the actual CBC census results for the day.

Inclusion of rehab released birds on a CBC: Birds released after rehabilitation may be counted on a CBC if the bird has regained normal activities and movements, and if the bird is a species that would normally be present in the area during the CBC count period.

Inclusion of domestic or exotic species on a CBC: Domestic and/or escapee birds (including any birds that are known or suspected to be escaped) may not be counted on a CBC. A species observed far from its normal range may be counted if it arrived in the location unassisted by humans. Individuals from established exotic populations may be counted.

GUIDELINES FOR SCOUTING

Scouting is not a required every year as part of the preparation of any Christmas Bird Count. However, if one goal of your group is to get the highest species total each season, pre-count scouting can make or break that effort. The early winter bird season is quite variable from year to year, and a bit of time over the week or so before your official count day will save valuable time (and potentially frustration) for your field parties.

The timing on routes: While your field parties probably always tend to follow the same route in their section of the circle each season, scouting beforehand can provide them tips about finding reclusive, crepuscular (dusk-loving), or nocturnal birds. In addition, if you learn before count day that a particular marsh or lake is completely frozen or dry (and thus not worth a visit), that could save your participants a valuable few minutes on their busy day.

Road conditions: As with the Breeding Bird Survey, it's best to make a dry run through all your Count's areas prior to your CBC to ensure that no construction areas or bridge outages will hamper your participants' access to their assigned areas.

Rarities: Scouting before count day may turn up rare, out of range, or out of season species. These could well be your "best birds" during count day, and obviously you'll want to alert your field parties to their presence if any rarities are turned up. Any species considered to be a "rare bird" on your count should be documented and reports sent directly to your CBC Regional Editor.

Tricky identifications: Scouting may result in the location of difficult-to-identify birds that could otherwise go unlisted if they are only seen on count day. Sorting these species out in advance (some shorebirds, gulls, flycatchers, or sparrows for example) can ensure that observers familiar with the species assist with the identification, and will help supply the details that will probably be necessary to satisfy your CBC Regional Editor.

Owling: Scouting for nocturnal species prior to your count day can be especially helpful to your observers. The CBC period is the time when many species of owls are defining their territorial boundaries, and driving your routes at dusk or dawn may uncover specific locations where owls may be quickly seen or heard by your observers on count day. Nocturnal birding is an optional activity on CBCs, and if done the hours and distance should be reported separately from daytime effort.

DATA THAT MUST BE COLLECTED FOR THE ENTIRE COUNT

Tip: A custom blank field form is available to compilers through the CBC circle access online (and shown in Appendix A). You can download and share with participants as you wish. Note that the form provided is meant as a starting point for you to customize for your groups. This may require the use of your own software to edit. Providing this in advance of count day will help participants know what data they should be submitting to the compiler.

Compiler Callout	A detailed manual on how to use the data entry system is a separate document and can be found on the compilers webpage, along with instructional videos to help you learn data entry.
-------------------------	---

Many people submit checklists tallied on the CBC to eBird, but these **are not** flagged in eBird or automatically included in the CBC database, as there is no funding to integrate it with eBird. It is critically important that all bird observations from a CBC be sent to the compiler of the count. The compiler will then review and tally all the results for their circle and submit the data to the Audubon CBC database.

Compiler Callout	Checklists in eBird or on listservs that are from areas within a count circle on the count day but not submitted by official CBC participants cannot be added to Christmas Bird Count results. Because official CBC observers and parties on Christmas Bird Counts are coordinated in advance by compilers, and because the effort of the parties on CBCs is as critically important as the bird data for the analyses of CBC results, independent eBird checklists are not compatible with official Christmas Bird Count results.
-------------------------	---

DATE & TIMES

Count Summary Report				Printout Date: 8/5/2020	
Count Name:	West Chester	Count Code:	PAWC	Count Date:	12/14/2019
Organizations & Sponsors:	West Chester Bird Club	# of Party Hours:	102.96	Species reported on count date:	74
Compiler(s)					
First Name	Last Name	Email	Is Primary Compiler		
Barry	Blust		Yes		
Anthony	Fernandes		No		
Start & End Times					
Start time		End time			
03:30 AM		05:45 PM			
09:45 PM		10:45 PM			

Count Date: Date must be one date within December 14th to January 5th inclusive.

Start and End Times: You must specify at least one start time and one end time. If your count times are discontinuous, you can specify additional times by using additional rows.

For example: If your nighttime and daytime hours are discontinuous, give both sets.

Start time 1 and End time 1: 1:15 A.M. to 3:00 A.M.
Start time 2 and End time 2: 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

EFFORT

Effort

Observers			
In Field	Total Number: 45		
	Minimum Number of Parties (daylight): 16		
	Maximum Number of Parties (daylight): 16		
At Feeders	Total Number: 26		
Party Hours and Distance (excludes viewing at feeders and nocturnal birding)			
By	Hours	Distance	Units
Foot	66.34	50.57	Miles
Car	36.62	446.00	Miles
Air			
All-Terrain Vehicle			
Bicycle			
Dog Sled			

	Hours	Distance	Units
At Feeders	77.43		
Nocturnal Birding	12.51	75.40	Miles
Total Party	102.96	496.57	Miles

Units

Measurements can be in English or metric units.

Observers

Observers in the field during daylight are counted separately from nocturnal birders and those observing at feeders. When reporting the minimum and maximum number of parties, remember these include only parties in the field during daylight hours.

In Field- Total Number of Field Observers and Minimum/Maximum Number of Parties: The number of field observers is the total number of birders in the field. Daylight parties are the number of groups covering areas of the circle. To determine the number of daylight parties, use the number of parties that you began the day with as your basic number. If parties further split up during the day, the maximum

number in the field at any given time of the day should be reported, and the basic number becomes the minimum.

Example: A count starts the day with 10 birders in 3 parties. Later, two of the groups split into two parties each. The compiler records this as 10 Total Field Observers, Minimum Number of Parties (daylight) = 3 and Maximum Number of Parties (daylight) = 5.

This count also had a group of counters out owling from 4:45 A.M. to 6 A.M., but this party is not included in the Minimum/Maximum Number of Parties. Owling effort is recorded in the "Nocturnal Birding" fields.

At Feeder-Total Number: Example would be of 4 people feeder-watching for several hours during the day as well, but again, this is not recorded in the daylight party number (it is recorded as observers At Feeders, Total Number).

Party Hours and Distance

Party hours and distance details are required in order to submit your CBC data. A video on why it is important to collect effort information on your CBC can be found [here](#).

Document a value for all hours and distance in the field by each form of transportation (foot, car, skis, etc). If appropriate, use a 0 for distance. For example, an owling party may spend 1/2 hour in one spot--resulting in 1/2 hour and 0 miles owling.

Party hours and distance (Total Party, By Foot, By Car, and by other forms of transportation) are reported excluding feeder hours and nocturnal birding hours and distance. Please round all hours to the nearest quarter-hour, and all distances to the nearest quarter-mile or quarter-kilometer.

It would be unrealistic to report any more Total Party Hours than the Maximum Number of Parties (daylight) times 12, since 12 is the approximate maximum number of daylight hours in December and January. Take into account that for a party on foot, it is stretching reality to have traveled--and birded--much more than 1 or 1.5 miles per hour.

If a route is an out-and-back trail or roadway, only the one-way distance is taken, but the entire time spent should be reported.

Please make every effort possible to be accurate with these numbers.

Types of Transportation to be recorded

Compilers should make sure to get the breakdown of hours and distance covered by car, foot, and other means of transportation (boat, bicycle, skis, etc.) from the party leaders.

For party hours and distance, you can delineate the type of transportation using the following categories:

air	horseback
all-terrain vehicle	motorized boat
bicycle	non-motorized boat
car	skis/xc-skis
dog sled	snow machine
foot	snowshoe
golf cart	wheelchair

If the exact method is not listed, please select the best approximation.

Other Time and Distance

At Feeders: The number of hours is obtained by totaling the hours spent at feeders by feeder-watchers taking part in your count. Time spent observing feeders by parties afield should not be included here-- they should be included in your field party totals. Hours should be rounded to the nearest quarter hour.

Nocturnal Birding ("owling"): For nocturnal birding, report the number of hours spent by all parties in the field during non-daylight hours, rounded to the nearest quarter-hour and for the distance, total up the distance (by foot, car, or other transportation) traveled by those parties, and round to the nearest quarter-mile or quarter-kilometer.

WEATHER

Weather				
Temperature	Minimum:	46.0 Fahrenheit	Maximum:	50.0 Fahrenheit
Wind Direction	Variable			
Wind Velocity	Minimum:	0.00 Miles/hour	Maximum:	10.00 Miles/hour
Snow Depth	Minimum:	0.00 Inches	Maximum:	0.00 Inches
Still Water	Open			
Moving Water	Open			
AM and PM Conditions				
Cloud Cover	AM:	Cloudy	PM:	Cloudy
AM Rain	Light, None			
AM Snow	None			
PM Rain	Heavy, Light, None			
PM Snow	None			

Temperature: Indicate the minimum and maximum temperatures of the day to the nearest degree.

Wind Direction: If there is little to no wind, select Calm for Wind Direction. In case of fluctuating wind patterns, select Variable.

Wind Velocity: For Wind Velocity, report representative values rather than rare extremes. You will need to use your best judgment as to what is representative. For example, if wind velocity was generally in the 5 to 15 mph range but very infrequent gusts of 30 mph occurred, report Wind Velocity, Minimum as 5 mph and Wind Velocity, Maximum as 15 mph.

Snow Depth: Minimum and Maximum should be reported to the nearest quarter-inch. Both should be reported as 0 if there was no snow. Report representative values rather than rare extremes. For example, if snow depth was typically between 4 and 8 inches with occasional 3-foot snow drifts in gullies and bare spots on ridge tops, report Snow Depth, Minimum as 4 inches and Snow Depth, Maximum as 8 inches. If

snow depth increases with elevation, report the representative minimum depth at low elevation and the representative maximum depth at high elevation. If snow depth decreases with elevation, do the reverse.

Still/Moving Water: Ice Coverage, Open and Moving Water should be set by these guidelines: Open = 100% water, Partly Frozen = more water than ice, Partly Open = more ice than water, Frozen = 100% ice.

A.M. and P.M. Conditions

Cloud Cover: For Cloud Cover, A.M. or P.M., indicate the condition that was true most of the time. Local Fog means that only portions of the count circle had fog for most of the period, while Foggy means the entire circle had fog. Clear = 0-15% clouds, Partly Cloudy = 15-33% clouds, Partly Clear = 33-66% clouds, Cloudy = 66-100% clouds.

Rain/Snow-A.M./P.M.: For A.M./P.M. Rain/Snow, record all conditions that were true. For example, if the morning started with drizzle that developed into heavy rain, the "Rain "boxes should have both "light " and "heavy " checked for the A.M.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS

Checklist

Species	Number or cw	Flags	Max Number	# Of Counts	Editor Comm.
Snow Goose	5		8957/109	39	
Cackling Goose	1		8/116	6	
Canada Goose	4837		21503/112	72	
Mute Swan	7		13/112	16	
Wood Duck	4		12/103	30	
Gadwall	21		30/117	12	
American Wigeon	19		64/53	20	
American Black Duck	15		346/50	78	
Mallard	341		793/78	81	
Northern Shoveler	4		5/116	10	
Ring-necked Duck	32		229/119	46	
Bufflehead	24		43/100	27	

For each species seen, record the number observed on count day, *or "cw" and no number* if the species was observed count week only. Do not enter zeros (0) for species that are not seen—just leave them blank.

For birds coming to feeders, it is the highest number of individuals seen and heard at one time that should contribute to the total number for that species.

Compiler Callout	The count week runs from three days before to three days after the count day. The count week can therefore extend outside the official count period; for example if your count is run on December 14th, the first day of the period, your count week is still from three days before to three days after your count (December 11th through 17th). Count week birds are those that were NOT seen on count day but seen within the count week period and are indicated on the checklist with a "cw", noting that they were present. Numbers of count week birds are not recorded.
---------------------------	--

Other Flags: In the online CBC system there are *optional* flags for

US (unusual species) species that are out of range or seasonal or are difficult to identify

HC (high count) is if the number of birds observed is an unusually high count.

The LC (low count) flag is for unusually low numbers.

NOTE: When a new species is added to the checklist in the online database, you must decide whether to flag it as "unusual". The requirement as to whether a species is "unusual" and therefore needs a rare bird report requires a human to decide. You should obtain guidance from your regional editor about what species will need rare bird reports and should be manually flagged as "unusual". The data system does not have any special knowledge about individual bird species and does not set this for you.

Total Number of Species

The total number of species that you will report to Audubon will be the number of AOS-listed ('real') species observed on count day plus any generic or *sp.* forms not represented within the list. For example, *loon sp.* counts in your total only if no other loons were identified to the species on count day. A species such as Dark-eyed Junco only counts once in your species total, even if three or four forms were identified on count day. Your total will not become official until it has been reviewed by the CBC Regional Editors.

Recording and Documenting Unusual Species

Regional editors often will give specific guidance on which species will require documentation. If you have any questions, please contact your regional editor directly.

Unusual Bird Reports are required under the following circumstances:

- *Neotropical migrant species for which there are few accepted winter records for North America.* Any reports of these species in North America **MUST** be accompanied by impeccable substantiating details, preferably including sketches and/or photographs, or they will be deleted from counts. The only exceptions for some of these species, such as Broad-winged Hawk and Ruby-throated Hummingbird, will be for the very limited geographic area (like coastal Louisiana or south Florida) where the species is regular on Christmas Bird Counts.

- *The species (or form) is out of range, season, or difficult to identify.* These species should be flagged as US (Unusual Species) when reported on the checklist. The best rule is that if it's a "good bird" or not a winter regular, it should include details. Lack of a report could result in the species being omitted or tagged with the comment ND (no details)!

Documentation of all rare bird/unusual species must be submitted directly to the regional editor, not to Audubon. If you have received written reports from observers documenting species that they observed on Count day, and especially if you have photographs or sketches accompanying the report, it is best to email a scan of those "original" documentations directly to the regional editor. It is NOT wise to transcribe those reports into other forms, as the report then becomes yours, not that of the observer. Rare Bird Forms can be [found on the compiler resource page here](#).

All reports must include the name and contact information of the person who is the contact for the report. This could be a compiler or it could be a participant who observed the species. Unusual bird reports are reported directly to your regional editor and not to Audubon. Please visit this [webpage](#) for regional editor contact information. The decision about accepting unusual species is up to your regional editor.

HOW TO CONTACT THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT PROGRAM

Visit the Christmas Bird Count [website](#).

You can find the most commonly asked questions and printable materials and references for compilers on the Christmas Bird Count Compiler Resources [page](#).

Email the Christmas Bird Count program at cbcadmin@audubon.org

Note that this mailbox is monitored daily during the CBC season and only periodically at other times of the year. We appreciate your patience as we typically receive a very high volume of emails during the CBC season.

HOW TO SUPPORT THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT PROGRAM

The Christmas Bird Count now relies 100% on donations to provide support to compilers and volunteers on count day, to manage the historic database, and to fund the technology to make historic data available to researchers. Please share this link with your volunteers and consider donating to ensure the future of this very important community science program:

Online donation form: www.audubon.org/GiveCBC

A printable donation form can be found on the compilers resource page [here](#).

APPENDIX – SAMPLE FIELD FORM

Species Section:

Region: Pennsylvania	CountDate: 12/14/2019 12:00:00 AM			
Circle: West Chester	Count Code: PAWC			
Species	# or cw	US	HC	LC
Greater White-fronted Goose				
Snow Goose				
Brant				
Cackling Goose				
Canada Goose				
Mute Swan				
Tundra Swan				
Wood Duck				
Gadwall				
American Wigeon				
American Black Duck				
Mallard				
Northern Shoveler				
Northern Pintail				
Green-winged Teal				
Green-winged Teal (American)				
Canvasback				

Weather Section

Weather						
Temperature						
Minimum	Maximum	F or C (circle one)				
Wind						
Direction	Minimum	Maximum	MPH or KPH (circle one)			
Snow Depth						
Minimum	Maximum	in. or cm. (circle one)				
Water Type	Unknown	Open	Partly Frozen	Partly Ope Frozen		
Still Water (check one)						
Moving Water (check one)						
Cloud Cover	Unknown	Clear	Partly Cloudy	Partly Clea Cloudy	Foggy	Local Fog
AM (check one)						
PM (check one)						
Precipitation	None	Light	Heavy	Unknown		
AM Rain (check one)						
PM Rain (check one)						
AM Snow (check one)						
PM Snow (check one)						

Effort Section

Effort				
	Minimum # of Parties (daylight)	Maximum	Total Observers at Feeders	
Total Observers in Field				
Party Hours and Distances (excludes viewing at feeders and nocturnal birding)				
All Distances are in (circle one)	Miles or Kilometers			
Mode of Transportation	Hours	Distance		
By Foot				
By Car				
Add Other Modes Here				
Hours at Feeder				
Hours at Nocturnal Birding				
Distance Nocturnal Birding				
Observer Names	Observer Addresses			