



Audubon

Christmas Bird Count 126 Mobilize Pilot Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is changing with the Christmas Bird Count program?

Over the next three years, we'll be improving this flagship community science program to enhance the experience for participants while welcoming new communities across the Americas. This will involve updates to the technical and digital systems that support the count, new resources for leaders, and new opportunities to engage a wider audience. This modernization effort will strengthen the CBC's scientific impact while preserving the cherished traditions that have made it such an enduring success.

2. Why is it changing this year?

As we build towards this future, you may notice gradual enhancements and new features we are testing in various aspects of the program. Over the past year we've solicited feedback from CBC leaders and participants to identify opportunities to improve the program. The changes we pilot and test over the next few years are designed to better meet the needs of the CBC community and provide CBC leaders with tools to grow and sustain this beloved tradition.

With respect to Mobilize, we anticipate that Mobilize will be the primary sign-up process for the CBC in the U.S. and U.S. territories moving forward. This pilot will allow CBC leaders to test the platform, provide feedback, and improve how it is used in the future. Throughout this journey, we'll be actively seeking your input and feedback to ensure these improvements serve our dedicated community while positioning the CBC for future growth.

3. What will Mobilize do for me as a CBC leader that I can't do via a group email system?

Using Mobilize for the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) offers several benefits that can significantly improve both participant experience and compiler efficiency. One major advantage is the automatic reminder system in Mobilize, which helps boost engagement and reduce "no-shows" by keeping participants informed and on schedule. Additionally, the ability to sort participants into specific sectors or zones allows for more tailored and relevant communications, ensuring each group receives information that's most applicable to them. The platform also simplifies the sign-up process, which is especially important for attracting new participants who may be intimidated or uncertain about emailing their local compiler. Looking ahead, planned integrations between Mobilize and the new CBC data platform will streamline data entry and tracking for compilers—getting familiar with Mobilize now will ensure a smoother transition as these systems become more interconnected.

4. How do participants know which circle to join?

Ideally, participants will be finding the Mobilize groups through communications from the compiler, other circle leaders or members, or from the Christmas Bird Count circle finder. When they go through these methods, participants should receive a link to their correct circle without having to search through available groups to find the correct one.

Additionally, participants can use the [map on Mobilize](#) to find circle groups in their area, or in any area they are interested in. When someone is viewing the list of all Christmas Bird Count groups on Mobilize, they will automatically be shown the groups closest to them first. We also recommend that each group includes the circle center location in the description to make it easier for participants to identify the correct circle.

5. Why do you use the term “event” for circle sectors/groups/zones?

Although all activities associated with your count are a part of one CBC event, we use the term “event” for circle sectors, groups, or zones because that’s the terminology used by Mobilize, and it accurately reflects what these gatherings are – a unique time, date, and location where people come together to participate in an activity. Even less structured options, like the Feeder Watch events done from home, can still benefit from being set up as events to help with coordination.

6. Do I need to invite people to the Mobilize group and/or events if they have already been participating in our Christmas Bird Count for years?

Yes, you’ll want to invite people who have previously participated in your CBC to join the Mobilize group and/or events via the signup form(s). You are also welcome to add them yourself if that is easier. This will ensure you are able to fully realize the communication tools available in the Mobilize platform and will help CBC participants become more comfortable with the sign-up process. Ultimately, the more participants that use the system to sign up for your count, the less manual entry of participant information is required of compilers.

7. What if there is poor cell service in our Christmas Bird Count area?

Similar to past years where you may have organized your count through emails, phone calls, or text messages, most of the Mobilize event management and communication (e.g., organizing people into groups, emails about where to meet, what to bring, what to expect, etc.) will take place *before* the event. So, poor cell service during the actual count shouldn’t impact your use of Mobilize any more than it impacted your previous event management strategies.

8. What languages does Mobilize support?

Mobilize currently supports English and Spanish. There are no other language options at this time.

9. There are three questions on the Christmas Bird Count group sign-up pages. Can we edit the questions that are asked?

For this pilot season, all questions will need to stay the same. However, you can easily follow up with participants if you need them to provide you more information. Also, the third standard question on the group sign-up page is an open-ended question which would allow you to include instructions in your group description if you would like for registrants to provide specific information in that text box.

10. How do participants make it from the Christmas Bird Count circle group to the sector/section/zone event(s)? Do they need to sign up twice?

Full instructions are available in the CBC Mobilize [instructions document](#), but there are two main options: (1) participants can sign up for the circle group first and then sign up for their specific sector event(s) once you've provided links for these options, or (2) the compiler/leader can manually add participants to the appropriate events.

11. Why do you recommend selecting an end date five years away?

We want to allow compilers and circle leaders to come back to these groups over time as needed, including after this Christmas Bird Count season has ended, so that you can maintain communication with count participants and reuse the same groups for multiple years. Mobilize requires an end date for a group within five years. Setting groups with an end date five years away allows us to maximize the time they are available to use.

12. Do participants need to download an app or create an account to use Mobilize?

Participants sign up using their name, email address, and zip code; providing a phone number is optional. An account is automatically created during this process, allowing them to manage their signups either through their Mobilize account or via automated emails sent to them. There is no need to download an app or create an account password.

13. Can some groups or events be for a limited or private audience?

For the CBC Mobilize pilot, we request that all CBC groups are public and all CBC sector events are private. This ensures that community members can find your circle group and sign-up to engage in some capacity, even if certain options are limited or at capacity. Keeping your sector events private ensures that you have more control about where you place participants and can better monitor the size of your groups. Private events can be shared with specific people, however. This allows organizers to limit access and ensure that only people with the link can view or join that sector/section/zone.

14. If you have 20 areas in your circle, does that mean you need 20 different sector "events"?

Yes, if you want to manage signups for each of those areas through Mobilize, you will need to create 20 separate sector events – one for each area. This allows you to organize and track participation for each sector individually. You can also combine areas or not post some as events if that makes more sense for your situation. If you have questions about your specific circumstances please contact us at cbcadmin@audubon.org or mobilize@audubon.org.

15. My participants have privacy concerns about using the Mobilize tool. What should I share with them?

When someone registers for a Christmas Bird Count event through Mobilize, their information is shared only with the event organizer and Audubon. **Audubon does not sell or share your personal information with third parties.**

Audubon's use of personal information is governed by our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Use](#), which detail how we protect and use participant data. You'll receive email updates from Audubon about conservation work and ways to help birds, and you can unsubscribe at any time.

Mobilize serves as our trusted platform provider and has its own [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#) that outline their data security practices and commitments.

As we modernize the CBC platform, our commitment to data privacy remains unchanged. Participant information will continue to be used solely for CBC coordination and Audubon communications—never for commercial purposes or sold to external parties.

16. What if we don't use sectors and instead are organized by groups?

That is totally fine - "sectors" is just another word for "groups" in the context of the Christmas Bird Count. Once you have your CBC group created, you can set up your circle events in whatever way makes the most sense for your circle and how you divide up coverage.

17. What happens if I need to edit my group or event page?

You should be able to edit most details on your group or event page. If you find that you cannot edit certain details, you can email mobilize@audubon.org or cbcadmin@audubon.org for help.

18. Can I add a team/sector leader to the sector "event" page?

Yes, just like with your CBC group page, you can add a team or sector leader as a co-host by entering their name and email address on the Event Creation Form or by editing the event after it has been created. This will give them the ability to help manage the event, edit details, and communicate with attendees. Alternatively, you can also add them manually as a participant if you don't need them to have editing or management access.

19. I have a series of standard notes I send to my CBC participants. Can I store these emails in Mobilize to use when needed?

No, Mobilize does not have a feature to store email templates or saved messages. However, it is very easy to copy and paste your standard notes into the platform when you're ready to send a message to attendees.

20. Will Mobilize record any data from the count?

Mobilize is a tool for event promotion, recruitment, and participant management and is not designed to collect count day data. In future years, we plan to integrate Mobilize with the new CBC data platform so that anyone who registers for your count in Mobilize will be automatically added to the participant list in the new data entry platform.

21. Are we able to add events other than Christmas Bird Count events to Mobilize?

Yes! Any Audubon community or campus chapter events can be added to Mobilize. You can create Audubon community chapter events using [this form](#) or campus chapter events using [this form](#).

If you have another question that isn't answered here, please email us at mobilize@audubon.org or cbcadmin@audubon.org.