

For release: September 25, 2009

Take a Mid-Winter Nature Break With the Great Backyard Bird Count February 12-15, 2010

New York, NY and Ithaca, NY—Bird watchers coast to coast are invited to take part in the 13th annual [Great Backyard Bird Count](#), Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15, 2010. Participants in the free event will join tens of thousands of volunteers of all levels of birding experience to count birds in their own backyards, local parks or wildlife refuges.

Each checklist submitted by these "citizen scientists" helps researchers at the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) and the [National Audubon Society](#) learn more about how the birds are doing—and how to protect them. Last year, participants turned in more than 93,600 checklists online, creating the continent's largest instantaneous snapshot of bird populations ever recorded.



Taking part in the Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way to get outside with family and friends, have fun, and help birds—all at the same time. Anyone who can identify even a few species can provide important information that enables scientists to learn more about how the environment is changing and how that affects our conservation priorities,” said Audubon Education Vice President, Judy Braus. “Everyone who participates in the GBBC—families, teachers, and young people—will get a chance to hone their observation skills, learn more about birds, and make a great contribution to the future!”

Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from novice bird watchers to experts. Participants count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. One 2009 participant said, “Thank you for the opportunity to participate in citizen science. I have had my eyes opened to a whole new interest and I love it!”



“The GBBC is a perfect first step toward the sort of intensive monitoring needed to discover how birds are responding to environmental change,” said Janis Dickinson, director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab. “Winter is such a vulnerable period for birds, so winter bird distributions are likely to be very sensitive to change. There is only one way—citizen science—to gather data on private lands where people live and doing this across the continent over many years. GBBC has enormous potential both as an early warning system and in capturing and engaging people in more intensive sampling of birds across the landscape.”



Bird populations are always shifting and changing. For example, 2009 GBBC data highlighted a huge southern invasion of Pine Siskins across much of the eastern United States. Participants counted 279,469 Pine Siskins on 18,528 checklists, as compared to the previous high of 38,977 birds on 4,069 checklists in 2005. Failure of seed crops farther north caused the siskins to move south to find their favorite food.

On the www.birdcount.org website, participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during the count. The site has tips to help identify birds and special materials for educators. Participants may also enter the GBBC photo contest by uploading images taken during the count. Many images will be featured in the GBBC website's [photo gallery](#). All participants are entered in a drawing for prizes that include bird feeders, binoculars, books, CDs, and many other great birding products.

For more information about the GBBC, visit the website at www.birdcount.org. Or contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473 or (outside the U.S., call (607) 254-2473) or gbbc@cornell.edu, or Audubon at citizenscience@audubon.org or (215) 355-9588, Ext 16.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by generous support from [Wild Birds Unlimited](#).

###

Editors: Please go the [GBBC News Room](#) for high-resolution images, top-10 lists, FAQs, and results of the 2009 count. To interview a participant in your area, please get in touch with one of the media contacts listed below.

Contacts:

- Pat Leonard, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, (607) 254-2137, pel27@cornell.edu
- Delta Willis, Audubon, (212) 979-3197, dwillis@audubon.org

Images by 2009 GBBC participants: Black-capped Chickadee by Rodney Smith, WA; Bird

watcher at window by Terie Rawn, NY; Pine Siskins by Steve Gillespie, WV.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a nonprofit membership institution interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Cornell Lab's website at www.birds.cornell.edu.

Audubon is dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in conservation. www.audubon.org