

MEDIA ADVISORY

Cover the Oakland count on Sunday December 20!

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Oakland Christmas Bird Count will top the nation in field participants

Oakland and adjacent communities have been hosting a Christmas Bird Count for 75 years – but this year’s count on Sunday December 20 will mark a new historic record.

The Oakland count now draws more participants into the field than any other count in the Americas!

Oakland had 257 birdwatchers in the field in 2014, one more than runner-up Santa Barbara. This year promises to be another strong year, with over 300 people registered for the count!

The Oakland event is one of two counts organized each year by Golden Gate Audubon Society: one centered in Oakland on Sunday December 20, and one in San Francisco on Tuesday December 29.

As part of this longstanding international Audubon tradition, birders fan out in teams within a 15-mile circle to count every species and every individual bird in a 24-hour period. They stumble in the dark to count owls; charter boats and paddle kayaks to count water birds; tromp through cemeteries and parks to tally songbirds and raptors.

Results of the count – sponsored every year since 1900 by National Audubon Society – provide important data to help scientists track trends in bird populations. Information from the CBC was a key part of Audubon’s *2014 Birds and Climate Change Report*, as well as reports by the EPA and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service that help guide bird conservation efforts.

The count started in 1900, when Dr. Frank Chapman proposed replacing the traditional Christmas-season bird hunt with a tradition that would help rather than kill birds. What began with 27 enthusiastic birders and a count of 89 species is now the longest-running citizen science project in the world. Last year marked the 115th year of the count and broke records with 72,653 observers, from Canada to Ecuador, and more than 63 million birds tallied.

(Note: There are a few other counts that have more TOTAL participants than Oakland – but their total includes people counting birds at their backyard feeders from the comfort of their living rooms. For instance, Edmonton -- in chilly Alberta, Canada -- had 489 participants but 339 of them were “feeder counters.” Oakland was #5 in total participants but #1 in people who actually went out into the field. ☺)

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Want to cover a CBC team in the field? We have lots of opportunities in both the Oakland and SF counts, including teams in scenic areas such as the SF Bay shoreline and Lafayette reservoir.

*Contact GGAS Communications Director Ilana DeBare at idebare@goldengateaudubon.org or (510) 301-5573 **IN ADVANCE** to arrange to meet a team in the field.*