



*inspiring people to protect
Bay Area birds since 1917*

For Immediate Release

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**San Francisco to Hold Christmas Bird Count
on Tuesday, December 27**

The wrapping paper may be in the recycling bin by Tuesday, but over 100 intrepid birders will be fanning out across San Francisco looking for a different kind of gift – a rare bird sighting.

San Francisco will hold its 34th consecutive Christmas Bird Count on **Tuesday, December 27**, with eighteen teams of birders scouring parks, streets, and even cemeteries from dawn to dusk to tally local birds.

The San Francisco count is one of over 2,200 similar counts taken from Guam to Labrador and from Alaska to Chile, during the period of December 14 through January 5.

While it doesn't involve as many participants as the record-setting Oakland-area count that took place earlier this month, it usually documents a higher number of species – due to the opportunity to encounter ocean birds as well as Bay and land birds.

The San Francisco count covers a 15-mile-wide circle centered near Lake Merced that includes the City of San Francisco, northern parts of San Mateo County such as Pacifica and Colma, and adjacent areas of San Francisco Bay. Last year, the count found 184 species and 73,095 individual birds.

The Christmas Bird Count had its start in 1900, when conservationist Frank Chapman proposed a holiday-season bird count as a more humane alternative to the tradition of a Christmas bird hunt.

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Data from all the count circles are compiled by National Audubon and used by scientists in tracking national trends in bird populations, as well as in local planning for parks and natural areas.

Among the questions that San Francisco participants will be asking this year are: *Will they sight any California Quail?*

Even though the quail is the State Bird of California and the official bird of the City of San Francisco, it has been almost completely eliminated from within city boundaries due to loss of habitat and depredation by feral cats. Last year's count found no quail inside city limits, and only 22 in northern San Mateo County.

Other local species of concern are diving ducks such as White-winged Scoters and Surf Scoters, whose numbers are declining; Spotted Towhees, a shy, colorful bird that like the quail relies on dwindling amounts of coastal scrub habitat; and some shorebirds like Ruddy Turnstones, Black Turnstones, and Surfbirds. Meanwhile, the count is likely to see a continued spread of American Crows and Common Ravens, which over the past couple of decades have learned to thrive in urban settings.

Media are invited to join a CBC team. But please contact us BEFORE count day if possible, since it is very hard to connect with teams once they are out in the field.

To connect with a team, contact Ilana DeBare at (510) 301-5573 or idebare@goldengateaudubon.org. On count day, you can also try Dan Murphy at (415) 342-7306. Dan will check that number periodically during the day but will turn it off when surveying is underway.

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