***Golden Gate Audubon Society***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: GGAS Communications Director Ilana DeBare, (510) 301-5573 cell

**Golden Gate Audubon To Conduct Annual Christmas Bird Counts**

**in San Francisco and Oakland**

**Data from count are more important than ever, as scientists try to predict how climate change will affect wildlife**

**WHAT:** Christmas Bird Counts (CBC)

**WHERE:** Oakland and San Francisco

**WHEN:** Oakland/East Bay – Sunday, December 16

 San Francisco – Thursday, December 27

**WHY:** To provide insight into the past and present status and health of our bird populations and the general health of our environment, as well as being a social, sporting, and competitive event.

**SPONSORS:** Oakland – Golden Gate Audubon; San Francisco – Golden Gate Audubon and Presidio Trust

**Berkeley, CA. --** On December 16 and 27, from before dawn until dusk, hundreds of hardy volunteer birders will trek through parks, neighborhoods, wetlands, and woods to count birds.

Some will venture onto the bay in kayaks and boats. Others will traverse city streets, cross remote streams and creeks, and skirt reservoirs and bay mudflats, with their binoculars and scopes trained on trees, bushes, buildings, wires, poles, land, water, and sky. They will call out the names and numbers of birds they see at every site and carefully record them. Then the count participants will gather at the end of the day over dinner to tally their results and share stories of their day in the field.

This year marks the 113th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) by the National Audubon Society. But the data generated by these “citizen scientists” is more important than ever, as researchers try to predict how climate change will affect birds and other wildlife.

“This is not just about counting birds,” said [Gary Langham](http://www.audubon.org/gary-langham-audubon-chief-scientist), Audubon’s chief scientist. “Data from the Audubon Christmas Bird Count are at the heart of hundreds of peer-reviewed scientific studies and inform decisions by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of the Interior, and the EPA. Because birds are early indicators of environmental threats to habitats we share, this is a vital survey of North America and, increasingly, the Western Hemisphere.”

Last winter, more than 63,000 people participated in the more than 2,200 counts that the National Audubon Society coordinated worldwide. Each count attempts to identify and record every individual bird encountered within a defined 15-mile-diameter circle — about 177 square miles — during one calendar day. Golden Gate Audubon sponsors the Oakland count and co-sponsors the San Francisco count with the Presidio Trust. Both finished among the top thirty in North America in numbers of species found, with 181 for Oakland and 176 for the San Francisco species count. Oakland attracted 205 field observers, the fourth-highest number worldwide; San Francisco’s 123 field observers tied for the twentieth-highest number in the world.

“Christmas Bird Counts combine many of the things Golden Gate Audubon stands for,” said GGAS Executive Director Mike Lynes. “It’s a fun day with a serious purpose. Everyday volunteer bird-watchers become citizen scientists, contributing data that will help inform future decisions about Bay Area bird life and habitat.”

**Location details**

The Oakland CBC circle extends from Treasure Island northeast to the San Pablo Reservoir and south to St. Mary’s College in Moraga and the Oakland International Airport. The count circle is centered near Lake Merritt and encompasses Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda, including most of the new Eastshore State Park.

The San Francisco CBC circle extends from the north tower of the Golden Gate Bridge to San Bruno Avenue in San Bruno. Its area includes the wetlands just north of the San Francisco InternationalAirport, arcs west to Sharp Park, and then north to include the parks, open space, and neighborhoods of the north peninsula.

**Christmas Bird Count history**

Christmas Bird Counts began in the northeast United States on December 25, 1900, when 27 bird-watcher/conservationists in 25 localities, led by scientist Frank Chapman, changed the course of ornithological history. On that day, they created an alternative to the “side hunt,” a longstanding Christmas day activity in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds and small mammals. Instead of hunting, Chapman was determined to identify, count, and record all the birds they saw, thus founding a conservation effort that has grown exponentially over the last century. Bird Counts have been conducted in San Francisco since 1915, and in Oakland since 1938.

“For Bay Area birders, these two Christmas counts are an integral part of the holiday season,” said San Francisco co-organizer Dan Murphy. “A great day of birding, then a fine compilation dinner, friends sharing adventures in the field, and telling stories of rare birds over dessert – what could be finer?”

The data collected at each count are sent to the National Audubon Society. CBC results from 1900 to the present are available to all at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/) . Generated entirely by volunteers, these data are a crucial part of this country’s natural history monitoring database. CBC data has been used in reports predicting the effects of climate change on bird populations, such as <http://www.audubon.org/sites/default/files/documents/bacc-ecologicaldisruptioninmotion_feb2009.pdf> and <http://ca.audubon.org/sites/default/files/documents/factsheet_iba_climate_020210_final.pdf>

**About Golden Gate Audubon**

*Golden Gate Audubon has been dedicated to protecting Bay Area birds, other wildlife, and their natural habitat since 1917. We conserve and restore wildlife habitat, connect people of all ages and backgrounds with the natural world, and educate and engage Bay Area residents in the protection of our shared, local environment. Golden Gate Audubon is sustained by contributions from 10,000 members and supporters throughout San Francisco and the East Bay.*

**About the Presidio Trust**

*The Presidio Trust’s mission is to preserve and enhance the Presidio as an enduring resource for the American public.*

**For more information or to connect with CBC participants in the field:**

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