

Montana Audubon News Release

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Contact: Amy Cilimburg: 406.465.1141. amy@mtaudubon.org

Janet Ellis: 406.443.3949. jellis@mtaudubon.org

101 YEARS AND COUNTING: AUDUBON'S 2009-2010 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Annual Count Yields Citizen Science Data Vital to Conservation

Helena, MT—The longest running Citizen Science survey in the world, Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will take place between December 14, 2009 and January 5, 2010. From Alaska to Antarctica, tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the hemisphere will add a new layer to over a century of bird population information. In Montana, [33 counts](#) are planned throughout the state! Families, students, scientists and birders of all ages, armed with binoculars and bird guides, will head out on an annual mission to count every bird they see or hear.

"For over one hundred years in Montana, the desire to both make a difference and to experience the beauty of nature has driven dedicated people to leave the comfort of a warm house during the Holiday season and serve an essential role in science. Plus, it's a hoot!" says Steve Hoffman, Executive Director for Montana Audubon.

Scientists rely on the data collected every winter to better understand how birds and the environment are faring throughout North America – and what needs to be done to protect them. CBC data informed the [first U. S State of the Birds Report](#), issued earlier this year by the Department of the Interior in partnership with Audubon and a dozen other conservation organizations.

Last winter, Audubon scientists analyzed 40 years of citizen-science [Christmas Bird Count](#) data, and their findings provide powerful evidence that climate change is having a serious impact on natural systems. Early winter northward movement was detected among species of every type, including more than 70 percent of highly adaptable forest and feeder birds. Common species in Montana are on the move too, including the [Northern Flicker, Spruce Grouse, Northern Pintail, Cedar Waxwing, and Red-tailed Hawk](#).*

"The Christmas Bird Count is all about the power of Citizen Science," says Amy Cilimburg Director of Bird Conservation for Montana Audubon, "It has helped us focus our attention on the threats to birds and people from our warming climate, and this in turn helps us focus on finding solutions."

"Everyone who takes part in the Christmas Birds Count plays a critical role in helping us focus attention and conservation where it is most needed." said Audubon Chief Scientist, [Dr. Tom Bancroft](#), "In addition to Audubon's reports on the impacts of climate change on birds and our analysis of [Common Birds in Decline](#), it is the

foundation for Audubon's [WatchList](#), which identifies species in need of conservation help."

The Christmas Bird Count began in 1900 when the founder of *Bird-Lore* (the progenitor of *Audubon* magazine), Frank Chapman, suggested an alternative to the "side hunt," in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most game, including birds. Chapman proposed that people "hunt" birds only to identify, count, and record them. The first official count in Montana occurred around Bozeman in 1908!

For more information about the Christmas Bird Count in Montana, including information about how community members can get involved, visit <http://mtaudubon.org/birds/cbc.html>.

* Press photos available here: <http://mtaudubon.org/birds/cbc.html#ps>

The Mission of [Montana Audubon](#) is to promote the appreciation, knowledge, and conservation of native birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Founded in 1976, Montana Audubon has built effective programs in public policy, education, and bird conservation to serve its members and Montana's nine community-based Audubon Chapters.

Now in its second century, National [Audubon](#) connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world.

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