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## **LOCAL CITIZENS JOIN AUDUBON'S 110TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

Binocular Brigades May Be Seen in Valley

**Matanuska Valley – December 1, 2009---** 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 will add a new layer to over a century of data vital to conservation. Armed with binoculars, several local volunteers will join this Citizen Science initiative to count birds in our region.

Scientists rely on these data to better understand how birds and the environment we share are faring. Just like canaries in the coal mine, birds serve as early indicators of problems that can eventually affect people and wildlife. Data from Audubon are at the heart of several scientific reports. CBC data informed the first U. S State of the Birds Report, issued earlier this year by the Department of the Interior. CBC analysis also fueled Audubon's report that Climate Change is already having an impact on birds across the continent.

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. These Binocular Brigades often brave winter's chill, ice and snow to record changes in resident populations and ranges.

"When Frank Chapman started the Christmas Bird Census, it was a visionary act," said Audubon President John Flicker. "No one could have predicted how important the CBC would become as a resource and tool for conservation." CBC data also help document success stories. The Christmas Bird Count helped document the comeback of the previously endangered Bald Eagle, and significant increases in waterfowl populations, both the result of conservation efforts.

The Matanuska Valley CBC will be conducted on Sunday, December 20, 2009. Valley Field Counters will attempt to count every bird seen inside of the Matanuska Valley Count Circle, a 15 mile diameter circle centered at Four Corners on the Palmer-Wasilla Highway at Trunk Road. Valley residents who live within 7.5 miles of Four Corners (as the Raven flies), who have bird feeders in their yard, can assist in our local Count by counting the birds that visit their feeders on December 20th. If you would like to participate in this year's Matanuska Valley Christmas Bird Count by counting birds at your feeders, contact Bob Winckler, the Matanuska Valley Count Compiler at <msbirder@mtaonline.net> and he will provide instructions on how the CBC works and tips on how to feeder count birds.

“Each CBC volunteer observer is an important contributor, helping to shape the overall direction of bird conservation,” says Geoff LeBaron, Audubon's Christmas Bird Count Director.

For images, videos and more information, visit [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc)

*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](http://www.audubon.org)*