

Birding That Counts

By Lois Ports



A sharp-shinned hawk is one of the local birds found during the count

Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is the longest running Citizen Science survey in the world. It takes place this year from December 14, 2011 to January 5, 2012 as the 112th Christmas Bird Count. Tens of thousands of volunteers throughout North America will brave winter weather to add a new layer to over a century of data. You can volunteer to work on Elko's count.

Last year, during a total of 2,215 counts, 62,624 people tallied over 60 million birds. Counts took place in all 50 states, all Canadian provinces, plus 107 count circles in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands. There are 13 counts held in Nevada with several located in Northeastern Nevada.

Scientists rely on the remarkable trend data of Audubon's CBC to better understand how birds are faring in North America and beyond our borders.

Each individual count is held within a designated "count circle" with a diameter of 15 miles. Count volunteers follow specified routes through the circle or arrange in advance to count the birds at home feeders and submit the results to the compiler.

The Elko CBC was first started in 1988 by the Northeastern Nevada Naturalists which is now the newly formed Bristlecone Audubon Chapter. The circle includes portions of Elko, Spring Creek, and South Fork. This allows for a variety of habitats to be included thus increasing the number of possible bird species. On average 15 people go out and survey the winter resident birds and any unusual ones that have come in during the latest storms.

Last year 8,482 individual birds representing 61 species were counted. The Elko CBC will be this Saturday, December 17, 2011 from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to be followed by a potluck dinner where the data will be tallied. There is a specific methodology to the CBC, but everyone is welcome to participate. If you are a beginning birder, you will be able to join a group that includes at least one experienced birdwatcher. Contact your local Count Compiler to find out how you can volunteer. There is a \$5 fee to participate in the CBC for all field participants aged 19 or older. Count Compiler contacts for this year are Lois Ports at 738-4270 for the Elko CBC, Pete Bradley at 777-2300 for Battle Mountain, Melissa Renfro at 775-234-7154 for Snake Valley, and Marian Lichter at 775-289-1819 for Ely. For further information, visit www.audubon.org.

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