

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT FOR KIDS

“THE PLAYBOOK” (FOR SPONSORS AND LEADERS)



CBC4Kids



Every year for over a century, “Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) have been organized across the Americas through National Audubon mainly for adults, during mid-December and early January.

Young kids with their families are often not included with this important 24 hour rigorous “citizen science” effort. Tom Rusert and Darren Peterie founders of Sonoma Birding in California established the first “CBC 4 Kids” in 2007. This unique stand alone half day family based event instills some of the important basic ingredients of the grand old birding traditions while encouraging families to discover the great outdoors together during the winter. It only takes 2-4 teams to get started! It is a healthy holiday celebration for the entire families.



Celebrate the holiday season with kids birding!

CBC For Kids

How To Start A Christmas Bird Count For Kids!



1. **FIND A GOOD HOST** - Find a good centrally located facility and 2-3 partner/sponsors to support a half day event that could provide a comfortable space, volunteers, snacks, water, bathrooms and basic supplies, tables, chairs, mic, display tables, etc. A large enough space for a "Tabulation Celebration" and lunch.
2. **Set A Date & Time** - The **half day** event (ex. 8:00AM-2:00PM) should take place in December through mid January when the birds are mostly settled into their winter habitats. This is a very busy season for families and the traditional Audubon CBC's. Start planning by Sept/Oct.
3. **Birding Leaders Are Needed** - Connect with your local Audubon Chapter or birding clubs, nature organization or individual birders. Identify several experienced adult birding team leaders who enjoy working with kids and families. Junior leaders with birding or nature experience can be very helpful.
4. **Establish Safe Interesting Birding Routes In Advance**
(plan for a 90 minute walk) Create routes in multiple nearby locations in advance with defined "start and finish" points. Use Google Maps. Half mile walking routes works. Diversify the habitats to enrich the variety of birds discovered. Encourage birding leaders to scout out their birding routes before the event day. If a birding leader back tracks on the assigned route only add new species that are not already recorded.
5. **Target Age Group (Ages 8-16)** Middle school or junior high age is ideal. Note: Younger family members are invited to the brown bag lunch celebration at noon along with an adult to enjoy
6. the festivities and older kids presentations. Some events choose to offer a program for "budding birders" (ages 4-7) while the teams of older kids are actually out birding. A parent, grandparent
7. or adult must attend with each child participating.
6. **Birding Team Size (4-6 kids per team)** Observing parents are not counted as "birding team members." Parents come along to help with logistics and to be "quiet observers", facilitators and drivers. The birding team need to work together in the field with their birding leaders to get optimum safe and timely results. Ninety minutes of birding produces meaningful results. Typically 15-25 species per team.





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How to started... (con't)

7. Press Release & Public Meeting

We recommend writing a press release, email notification, post on Facebook, us your websites. Offer a helpful public information meeting 3-4 weeks before the actual event date. It is a busy event season for families, so get the word out early. Photos of kids or birds speak volumes!

8. Sign Up & Other Helpful Elements

Consider advanced sign up by phone or email and have a team sign up table staffed

- Have disclaimer forms for safety issues and photos for parents to sign.
- One common bird check list for each team on a clipboard.
- Record results on (eBird website at Cornell Labs). The kids tally results are certainly important but not part of the adult local traditional Audubon CBC.
- Allow for any organizations or individuals to have their own birding team if possible (ex. scouts, school)
- Pre-assign birding teams to birding routes and leaders before the day of the event.
- A Rain or Snow date may be a factor.

9. **What to Bring & Wear** - Binoculars, scope - Local Audubon Chapters, ecology and nature organizations and schools often have a supply of binoculars, also some families have optics. Field bird guide, water, snacks, comfortable shoes, hat, sunscreen, etc. Dress for the weather!

10. **Brown Bag Lunch** - Keep cost minimal. Have participants bring a brown bag lunch and drink. Provide a cooler where kids sign in to store lunches. Donations of drinks, napkins, water and trail snacks help.

Event Day Logistics & Finale

Provide a “Check In” table

Have name tags snacks, water, optics, scopes, disclaimer form for safety & photo's to sign.

- Finalize team assignment asap.
- Distribute the official bird check list and route maps on a clip board to each leader.
- (Event fee is optional depending on expenses)

Binocular Boot Camp & Orientation

- Set up several targets for kids to practice (Ex: keep eyes fixed on the target and lift your optics to your eyes). Consider using signs posted at 75' that kids can read. Have the kids view a live bird. Birding leaders should encourage **the kids** to discover and identify the birds. Use field guides. Learn to observe birds in 4 unique areas: on the ground, mid story, top of trees and sky.

Select a Team Name Have kids select their bird team name

Carpool - Parents shuttle teams to starting point

Length of Hike - **90 minutes really works and keeps it fun and action packed.** Kids will get tired and bored if their not having fun. Return to home base by noon to prepare for group presentations.

One Common (Alpha) Bird List - Have 25-50 local winter species on this list. Use a clipboards. Leave blanks for additional species. This helps summarize the results quickly.

Total Team Effort - Rotate kids on the hike to experience recording, spotting and counting the species and total number of each bird type seen. Add new species not present on the list.

Prepare Room for Tabulation & Lunch Volunteers set up the lunch room in advance. A table and chairs for each team. Guest seating, a mic and screen.

The Finale Kids Presentations Select a boy and girl from each team to stand up front of audience and present the team results. Have an adult “MC” to keep presentations fun, interesting and moving along. (A mic helps)

Presentation to Audience Include: (1) team name and kids names
(2) total individual species, (3) total number of birds counted (4) habitat info
(5) fun highlights (6) Finale with brief guest presentation (ex. bird rescue)



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