

News Release 2010

On Saturday, December 18, Morgantown area families and students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists go out on an annual mission - often before dawn. 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.

Each of the citizen scientists who annually braves snow, wind, or rain, to take part in the Mountaineer Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) makes an enormous contribution to conservation.

Count area is centered on the Morgantown Airport and, like all counts, is a circle with a diameter of fifteen miles. Our impossible goal is to count all the birds within 7-½ miles of where the two runways intersect. We don't worry about our impossible goal, but just have a fun day counting birds. The CBC circle is divided into areas, which are covered by teams. We encourage team efforts. The team is usually out from dawn to dusk, with individual participants joining in for as much of the day as they choose. Once again this year, LeJay Graffious is the coordinator and compiler. He will determine the number of teams based on how many people contact him about participating. Smaller areas give teams a better chance at getting a good sample of species and numbers. The count usually has a minimum four teams covering the count area.

Owling is another phase of the count. It extends the time period up to the entire twenty-four hours. Owling is listening for owls, and the few other nocturnal calls or sightings that might be made. The Morgantown CBC Owling effort has great growth potential.

Feeder Counts are another phase of the count. People interested in this phase tally the greatest number of each species seen at their feeders at any one time during the day of the count and contact LeJay Graffious with their totals Sunday evening or Monday.

Count Week Birds are yet another phase of the effort. Species that are completely missed on count day can be footnoted as "seen during count week", if seen during either the three days prior to, or the three days following the count day. Count Week for the Morgantown CBC is Wednesday, December 15 to Tuesday, December 21.

The Count Day Dinner is the most social phase of the effort. The teams join for the evening meal and tally up the day's results. The final count comes when all feeder counts, counts for teams not represented at the dinner, and any after-dinner owling birds are added in with any count week birds footnoted. The final tally of species and numbers of individual birds, participants, and miles covered in the effort, and number of feeder counts is submitted for inclusion in the collective record of National Audubon Society's 111th Christmas Bird Count.

Mountaineer Christmas Bird Count is free. Both advanced and novice birders are welcome to participate. People who want to get involved may register by calling 304-379-4492 or email to lejaygraffious@gmail.com. Birding is a great activity in which to enjoy the outdoors amongst nature and friends. More information may be found at <http://www.mountaineeraudubon.org/cbc>.