

### Instructions and Tips for Christmas Bird Counters, Choctawhatchee Bay CBC

Each participant is a member of a "Count party" that the "Count Compiler" has assigned to "cover" one "Area" of the "Count Circle".

Each party will submit one official paper "Check-list" at the end of the day, mailed or other means. Each page can be photographed with your phone and texted to 210-452-4899.

Check-lists are available as a download for printing from [www.choctawhatcheeaudubon.org](http://www.choctawhatcheeaudubon.org) (near bottom of home page). Rare Bird Documentation Forms are there too. Print some before Count Day and bring them, too.

Let one person in the party hold and edit the paper Check-list (a clipboard is helpful); feel free to take turns as the day progresses.

Page 1 of the Check-list provides space for running tallies of the most common birds.

A party works as a single unit staying within hearing range of each other. If participants separate, it's OK to include numbers or even species seen only by some people so long as effort statistics are adjusted for that.

Each party shall keep track of the following while looking for birds:

- \* Numbers of birds of each species

- \* Copious details (try to get multiple photos) for any rare bird (the "!!!!" or "!!!!!" on page 2 of the Check-list).

- \* Daylight Hours Walked

- \* Daylight Miles Walked

- \* Daylight Hours Driven

- \* Daylight Miles Driven

- \* Daylight Hours on Water

- \* Daylight Miles on Water

- \* Any of the above at Night

- Earlier than 1/2 hr before sunrise

- Later than 1/2 hr after sunset

Focus on FINDING birds, rather than updating the check-list too frequently. Call out birds to the Check-list person, but don't expect that person to write every single Red-bellied Woodpecker on the spot. Updates can be done about once every 15-30 minutes, depending on your memories.

Visit many places. Be patient, give a brushy patch 5 or 10 minutes, birds hide but are attracted to "pishing" and squeaking. Audio playback can be helpful if done prudently. Birds in the water aren't always up, allow a few minutes for any to surface before moving on. Listen for faint call notes. Look for oddities among flocks.

If someone in your party hears something, try using Merlin software to identify it (them). It's often correct, sometimes incorrect. <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.labs.merlinbirdid.app&pli=1>

Because the Count is a scientific endeavor, the compiler may have to reject the ID of any rare birds for one reason or another. Observers may be asked to clarify something on a Rare Bird Documentation Form, preferably filled out during or just after the observation.

Don't trespass and don't look into people's windows with binoculars. When asked what you're doing, politely explain that you are counting birds for the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

Be safe and careful. Don't park close to the edge of public streets. Be a safe pedestrian. Use emergency flashers if necessary. Don't make unexpected stops while driving. Please be careful.

Check for ticks all over yourselves at the end of the day. Consider wearing repellent, but don't spray while your standing near others.

Some Count Circles have a meeting somewhere at the end of the Count Day. Sorry, we haven't done that in recent years, but someone may organize that in the future.

Good Birding! Feel free to call or text me during the Count, Malcolm Swan 210-452-4899 especially if you spot a rarity. Participants are welcome to eBird during the Count, but doing so is optional.