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**AUDUBON BIRDERS AND NATURE ENTHUSIASTS
IN _____ TO TAKE PART IN
107th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

COUNT PROVIDES ESSENTIAL DATA FOR CONSERVATION

Ivyland, Pennsylvania, October 16, 2006 – Birders and nature enthusiasts in _____ will join birders across the western hemisphere and participate in Audubon's longest-running wintertime tradition, the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC), held on _____ in _____. This year, over 2,000 individual counts are scheduled to take place throughout the Americas and beyond from December 14, 2006 to January 5, 2007.

“Each CBC volunteer observer is an important contributor, helping to shape the overall direction of bird conservation,” says Geoff LeBaron, National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count Director. “Audubon and our partners at Bird Studies Canada, the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and the Boreal Songbird Initiative rely on data from the CBC database to develop Audubon’s ‘State of the Birds’ report and inform Audubon’s WatchList, which is used to prioritize Audubon's bird conservation work.”

During last year’s count, about 62 million birds were counted by over 57,156 volunteers. Thanks in part to Bird Studies Canada, the Canadian partner for the CBC, there were 2,060 individual counts – a record high.

The information they collected revealed the effects of the historic 2005 hurricane season: storms dramatically altered where birds were found on a continent-wide level, and the birds displaced by the storms were then discovered in out of range places. Some western birds, most notably Franklin Gulls, Townsend’s Solitaires, and western warblers and tanagers, displaced to Atlantic Canada by hurricanes, were seen moving back southward through the eastern states. In other cases there were unusually high numbers of a particular bird species counted in an area, such as the astounding number of Gray Catbirds on many counts in northeastern North America.

The CBC began over a century ago when 27 conservationists in 25 localities, led by scientist and writer Frank Chapman, changed the course of ornithological history. On Christmas Day in 1900, the small group posed an alternative to the “side hunt,” a Christmas day activity in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds and small mammals. Instead, Chapman proposed that they identify, count, and record all the birds they saw, founding what is now considered to be the world's most significant citizen-based conservation effort – and a more than century-old institution.

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Since Chapman's retirement in 1934, new generations of observers have performed the modern-day count. Today, over 55,000 volunteers from all 50 states, every Canadian province, parts of Central and South America, Bermuda, the West Indies, and Pacific Islands, count and record every individual bird and bird species seen in a specified area.

The 107th CBC is expected to be larger than ever, expanding its geographical coverage and accumulating information about the winter distributions of various birds. The CBC is vital in monitoring the status of resident and migratory birds across the Western Hemisphere, and the data, which are 100% volunteer generated, have become a crucial part of the U.S. Government's natural history monitoring database.

For more information about CBC participation, visit Audubon's website at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc and click on the "Get Involved" link on the left-hand side of the page.

CBC compilers enter their count data via Audubon's website at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc or through Bird Studies Canada's homepage at www.bsc-eoc.org, where the 107th Count results will be viewable in near real-time. Explore this information for the winter of 2006-2007 or visit a count from the past. See if and how the state of your local birds has changed during the last 25...50...or 100 years.

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.

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