



2023 Palo Alto Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Helpful Information for Participants

Welcome CBC Participant!

Whether you're participating in the CBC for the very first time or have joined the CBC for multiple years; whether you're a beginning birder or an expert—we're glad that you've signed up to help! Thank you for volunteering with Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society www.scvas.org and the Christmas Bird Count. We hope you have a great day out birding, meet new birding friends, and that you see some great birds.

How does the Christmas Bird Count work?

- The CBC is an annual citizen-science enterprise coordinated by the National Audubon Society. Each year birders go out to count all the birds (and species) they can find on a single day in one of about 2500 15-mile-diameter circles, mostly in the United States or Canada. Different circles may perform their count on different days, choosing their CBC date from a 23-day period centered on December 25th.
- Our Palo Alto Count Circle is divided into *sectors*, each with a **sector coordinator** who plans the *parties* of birders who will cover the sector and highlights targeted areas and birds to the party leaders. The Palo Alto CBC has eight geographic **sectors**: four each in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, ranging from the Bay to the Santa Cruz Mountains. Some sectors are more likely to have rare birds than others, but cool birds are everywhere and you might see a rare or at least an uncommon bird no matter where you are birding for us. Each sector is divided into several parties.
- A **party** is a group of birders (or several teams of birders) who survey birds within an assigned area. The designated **party leader** is responsible for planning the logistics, summarizing the party's data and submitting it to the count compiler.
- At the end of the day, the compiler runs a **countdown** event, reviewing the birds seen: exciting or unusual birds, birds missed, birds found, etc. Your party leader will provide you with details for this year's countdown. (In person, hybrid, or virtual—still TBD)
- More information about SCVAS CBCs is here: <https://scvas.org/christmas-bird-count>
View the map of the Palo Alto Count Circle and our Sectors here: <https://scvas.org/capa-sector-map>

Pro tips:

- Be safe. Review your birding area and routes ahead of time, either in person or via Google maps. Identify potential safety issues (e.g. tricky footing; isolated areas; illness; personal safety concerns). Your safety comes first. If you do not feel safe birding in a specific area, then change your plan and do not go there. Do not risk your personal safety for a bird.
- Wear layers. When you start off in the morning, you may have cold temperatures and even fog. As the day goes on, the temperature often warms up, but later, you may have wind. Wearing layers allows you to remove and add clothing so that you stay comfortable.
- Bring a hat. Depending on the weather, you may need a warm hat to keep your head warm, or a brimmed hat to keep the sun off your face.
- Don't forget your sunscreen. Protect that skin!
- Bring water and snacks. You'll need to keep your energy up.
- Wear sturdy shoes. Depending on your birding territory, the ground may be uneven or wet, and you'll need appropriate footwear to be comfortable. Most CBC groups do a lot of walking, so make sure your feet will be comfortable.
- Bring your binoculars. (Hopefully you knew this!) If you typically photograph birds or have a spotting scope, ask your leader if you should bring your camera/scope as well.
- Ask about lunch. Your group may have a picnic somewhere along your birding route, or eat together at a restaurant, or may even finish up birding your territory by lunchtime. You need to know to pack a lunch or bring cash/card to purchase lunch.
- Make a bathroom plan. Your leader should know if there will be bathrooms along the route, or when you'll take a break. Plan your liquid intake accordingly!
- Use eBird. Many birders use eBird during the CBC to record their sightings at each stop. This year we have a new tool (<https://cbctools.org/checklist.php>) which allows you to directly convert a set of eBird checklists into the Palo Alto CBC tally sheet. (Please use this tool rather than eBird's trip report summary.) See the Palo Alto CBC "Instructions for Party Leaders" for proper use of this within the context of the Palo Alto CBC.
- Have any concerns or special needs? Tell your leader. Allergies? Covid concerns? Accessibility issues? Time restrictions? Questions? Chat with your leader ahead of time as needed so that you are safe, comfortable, and in the right assignment.
- Are you eligible for Volunteer Matching Gift? Check with your employer. Some companies offer a program to their employees (and to retirees, in the case of Intel) in which they will make a financial contribution to SCVAS proportional to the volunteer hours the employee reports to the company. Google, Apple, Intel, Microsoft, and others offer this program (use the category "wildlife survey" when you record your CBC time in the volunteer hour reporting tool).