

Palo Alto CBC, Dec. 18, 2023: Instructions for Party Leaders

RESTRICTIONS RELATED TO COVID-19:

- Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society is not enforcing any restrictions this year, but we respect your own concerns. If there are such issues related to forming your party, please let your region coordinator know. And ask your party members to let you know of any such concerns of their own.

BEFORE COUNT DAY

1) The count is meant to be a fun event, but is also part of Audubon's Community Science program. To get a representative count for your area, plan how you will cover it, and whether splitting into two or more teams is called for. Make arrangements to join up with your team members and to have other teams send the party leader their results.

2) Download forms from <https://scvas.org/christmas-bird-count-party-leaders>. Choose

- **Much preferred:** doc (Word) and Excel forms, to be filled out electronically and emailed. Do not print the Excel forms.
- Pdf, if you want to print (single-sided, please) and fill in forms by hand, to be either USPS-mailed or (preferably) scanned (full-sized and clean!) and emailed. If you scan printed forms, hold on to the originals in case of problems.

3) **When you download your forms:** please FILL OUT THE SECTOR AND PARTY ENTRIES AT THE TOP OF EVERY PAGE. (There are 8 sectors; your "party" number is assigned by the sector coordinator. **Feeder watches** - see item (8) below – will get separately numbered,) **Read through these instructions and familiarize yourself with the forms** (including which birds need writeups) ahead of the count. If questions, ask your sector coordinator.

COUNT DAY:

4) On count day, have each party member enter contact information on the **Participant List**. Check entries for LEGIBILITY. Let your party members know about the countdown.

5) On the **Checklist**, all observations of birds with a "W" in the left column, as well as unlisted species, require a **writeup** (Rare-bird documentation form -- **include description**, and elimination of similar more-common species.) **If you use the Excel checklist, do not insert, remove, or re-order any rows** (other than adding unlisted species at the bottom). Feel free to optionally add new columns at the right (*e.g.*, to track teams or sub-areas).

6) On the **Party Statistics form**, include

- Time and mileage information for each team (sub-party). (If you take a non-birding pause, the "Hours" might be less than the difference between start and stop times.) Record any owling (nighttime birding) separately.
- **If you have multiple teams, be sure to include sums of hours and miles.**
- Temperature (range) and weather.
- Summary of all areas covered: identify overall areas, plus **limited** details.

7) **At the time of any Eagle sighting**, note down all information requested on the **Eagle Log**. This will help us resolve possible multiple reports of the same bird(s).

8) **Feeder watches** must be entered on separate forms from assigned parties. Enter the sector number, with FW for the party. On the statistics form identify the exact location, enter total observing time but no distances. The bird count for a species should be the maximum number detected **at a single time**, not summed over separate observations.

COORDINATION WITH EBIRD

9) If you prefer to enter your field observations into **eBird** as you go, there is a new tool (courtesy Curt Bianchi) to convert your eBird checklist(s) into our Excel CBC checklist: <https://cbctools.org/checklist.php> . Use the pulldown menu there to select the Palo Alto CBC, and follow instructions on that page, then download (populated) tally sheet Note

- You should still consult the CBC checklist in the field to see for which entries you need to record rare-bird details.
- Some entries on our CBC list are for forms below species level (*e.g.*, for Yellow-rumped Warbler). To allow you to optionally enter such identified individuals in the eBird mobile app, click the "More" tab at the bottom, then "Settings and Account". Under "SUBSPECIES," enable "Show subspecies for data entry."
- For assistance with the tool, contact Al Eisner (am_eisner@comcast.net) or Curt Bianchi (curtbianchi@mac.com).

10) However, **the party leader must look over the resulting Excel checklist and verify that it is correct** before submission. Adjustments may be needed for a number of reasons:

- If your eBird checklists do not account for all your observations, you should add the missing individual birds to the relevant Excel entries..
- If you include the same individual on more than one of your eBird checklists (proper eBird protocol), it should be subtracted from your Excel total.

- If you see an Eagle, it should be assigned the proper age on the Excel list; eBird does not have a provision for tracking this.
- Anything else you find which does not match your intentions. Be sure to look at the “Other species” at the bottom.

AFTER COUNTING:

11) Count day ends with an evening **countdown**, at which we try to tally everything seen during the day. The nature of this year’s countdown (in-person vs. virtual) has not yet been decided – stay tuned for details. If you attend, you get to announce your own rarities and other neat finds! All participants are welcome, but we particularly want to hear from party leaders. If you cannot attend, please let your sector coordinator know in advance about any **W** or **boldface** species your party has found, as well as other species of interest (your choice, examples might be Wood Duck, Eagles, Pileated Woodpecker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, etc.).

12) By the end of count day, tell your sector coordinator by what method you will return your forms – see item 2 above for choices -- and estimate how soon.

13) **Return your completed forms** to Al Eisner (am_eisner@comcast.net), with copies to your region coordinator if so requested. We strongly encourage electronic submission, especially the bird checklist as Excel; see (2) above for guidance on both this and on the alternative use of printed forms. (If you use USPS, send to Al at 3538 Farm Hill Blvd. #4, Redwood City, CA 94061.) We want **only one set of forms per party**, so if your party consists of more than one team, the party leader should combine the data from all teams (*e.g.*, sum up the species counts, list all party participants). **Rare bird forms and photos** should be sent to Mike Rogers (m.m.rogers@comcast.net); if you send those by email, **please cc to Al**.