

112th Christmas Bird Count Season To Begin Across Area

The National Audubon Society's (NAS) longest-running wintertime tradition, the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC), will take place throughout the Americas from Wednesday, Dec. 14 to Thursday, Jan. 5.

There will be at least 12 Christmas Bird Counts in West River South Dakota and Black Hills of Wyoming, 9 of which are official counts, that contribute data to the NAS data base and 3 unofficial counts that don't contribute data to the national data base.

WHAT ARE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS (CBC)?

Each Christmas season, tens of thousands of volunteers will count and record each individual bird and bird species they encounter during one calendar day, within a 15 mile diameter circle. The results are compiled into the longest running database in ornithology, representing over a century of unbroken data on trends of early-winter bird populations across the Americas. The censuses provide valuable data about the number of bird species and numbers of each species occurring within set geographic areas on an early winter day.

Last year's count shattered records. A total of 2,215 counts and 62,624 people tallied over 60 million birds. Counts took place in all 50 states, all Canadian provinces, plus 107 count circles in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands. The first ever CBC tally was submitted from Haiti, where the count circle is located at Les Cayes, the birthplace of John James Audubon.

Note to potential first-timers: Christmas Bird Counts are open to birders of all skill levels. While there is a specific methodology to the CBC and you need to count birds within an existing Christmas Bird Count circle, everyone

can participate! If you are a beginning birder, on most counts you will be able to join a group that includes at least one experienced bird-watcher. Feeder watchers and backyard watchers are needed too.

WHAT TO BRING?

Participants should bring lunch, drinking water, warm clothing and footwear. Binoculars, field guides and spotting scopes are suggested, for those who have them.

A \$5 fee is paid by adult field participants on official counts and forwarded to the National Audubon Society (NAS). Feeder watchers do not need to pay the fee, and all observers 18 and under may count for free. These fees help to cover the costs of generating materials for Compilers, producing an annual CBC summary issue, and maintaining the CBC website and database.

Rapid City, Sturgis, Piedmont, Bison, Pierre, Shadepill Reservoir, Sundance, Badlands and Spearfish CBC are official Christmas Bird Counts, that send their count's data into the NAS database, contributing to the vast data base and thus request \$5 donation of participants. Hot Springs, Pine Ridge and Wind Cave are not official counts and do not request a fee.

INTERNET REFERENCES

Nationwide (all states):
<http://www.audubon.org/newsroom/press-rooms/christmas-bird-count-press-room>
<http://birds.audubon.org/get-involved-christmas-bird-count>
<https://netapp.audubon.org/cbcregistration/>
South Dakota:
<http://www.homepages.dsu.edu/palmerj/SDOU/Nebraska>
Nebraska:
<http://www.noubirds.org/Activities/CBC.aspx>

Yankton Christmas Bird Count

SUNDAY, DEC. 18, 2011

If you want to participate, show up at Gavins Point Dam (north wall parking lot at 7:30 a.m. to be placed on a team.

SCHEDULE

- If you're going owling, start any time after midnight.
- 7:30 a.m. Meet at the north wall at Gavins Point Dam if you do not have an assigned area
- 7:55 a.m. Sunrise
- Noon lunch at Hy-Vee (located at Highway 81 and 21st Street – everyone picks their own food from many items available.
- 5:30 p.m. Chili dinner & countdown at Dietrichs at 506 Applewood Drive, Yankton.
- 7:30 p.m. Adjourn

For more information about CBC participation as either a field observer or feeder watcher, contact Roger Dietrich at 665-7240 or rogerd@iw.net.

Great Gifts For Gardeners This Christmas

BY KATHY VAN MULLEKOM

© 2011 Daily Press (Newport News, Va.)

Surely, there's a gardener on your holiday shopping list.

Someone who would rather be outdoors than indoors — feeding the birds, cutting fresh flowers or pruning to give a gorgeous tree a special shape.

If so, there's no shortage of gifts for that person. Hand pruners are always needed. Birdseed is welcomed, especially some of the fancier mixes that can be indulging.

If you're not sure what to get that gardener, a gift card to a favorite garden center is certainly appreciated. Tuck the card inside a pair of gardening gloves and tie them with a festive ribbon.

And, please, remember to cultivate the love of gardening and nature with any children in your life.

Here are some favorite picks for holiday gifts.

Help the environment. Birds Choice makes bird feeders from recycled plastic and milk jugs, meaning they don't have to be repainted and last forever. I bought my first one several years ago and have enjoyed how easy it is to clean — remove the mesh wire bottom, scrub everything with Simple Green and hose it off. The colors don't fade and the stainless steel screws don't rust; an extended roof protects birds while they feed and keeps seed dry. I now have three of these feeders in my yard, each stationed so I can see it from different windows. Some models come



PHOTO: BIRDS CHOICE

Birds Choice feeders are made from recycled materials.



PHOTO: BRENT AND BECKY'S BULBS

Buy discounted bulbs and plant them in a pot as a gift for someone special.

you need is a sunny 3-by-10-foot flower bed and you will have fresh-cut flowers from your own back yard all summer long — a perfect project for beginner and seasoned gardeners. The "Easy Cut-Flower Garden Book" and No-Fail Seed Collection Set helps you achieve success with minimum effort. \$37.90 (regularly \$42.90) and free shipping; The Gardener's Workshop in Newport News, Va., www.shoptgw.com or 877-7159.

Plant a gift. Take advantage of the discounts on spring-flowering bulbs at garden centers, in catalogs and on websites and plant them in a pot to give to someone, suggests Becky Heath of Brent and Becky's Bulbs in Gloucester. Or, plant bulbs directly in a full-sun garden for someone on your gift list. "It will be a long-lasting gift that they'll enjoy for many years," she says. You can also purchase paperwhites or amaryllis bulbs, pot them up and they will bloom soon afterward; if the recipient lives in Zone 7, the bulbs can be planted in their garden in spring to be enjoyed more seasons. www.brentandbeckysbulbs.com or 877-661-2852.

Meet happy birds. There's the angry birds app, now there's the happy birds app called "My Bird World," courtesy Birdcage Press and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for use on the iPad. The app is a collection of four interactive bird games that teach kids about 24 species of North American birds, including their songs, food choices and habitats. The game is filled with fascinating facts, real bird calls and great photos. Players "earn" birds to place in virtual woodland, marsh, forest and other habitats by playing "match facts" or "infestation predation." Winning points help "feed" birds; the games test

ideas for training and shaping trees and shrubs are the focus of the new book, "The Art of Creative Pruning." Author Jake Hobson approaches the subject like an artist, depicting photos of how shrubs can be shaped like arches, tunnels, flowing lines, letters that spell words or art-inspired designs that catch the eye and bear no real meaning. It's a book that needs to stay out, on a coffee table if you have one, because it's as entertaining as it is helpful. \$35; bookstores, garden centers, www.barnesandnoble.com, www.amazon.com, www.timberpress.com or 800-327-5680.

Design a new look. Landscape designer Julie Moir Messervy helps create a new look for any yard or outdoor space/room with the Home Outside Design app, \$2.99 through iTunes at www.apple.com, or with the book, "Home Outside: Creating the Landscape You Love," \$30, from Taunton Press. She shows how it's all done in an easy six-step process. www.jmmds.com.

Finally, give yourself something nice. Once you've shopped for the gardeners and everyone else on your list, do something for yourself. Create a nook on your porch or patio and illuminate it with a cozy tealight fireplace log, \$102 at www.kohls.com. Then curl up with the December issue of Organic Gardening, now my all-time favorite gardening magazine. I've been following this magazine for years and it's evolved from being a scientific bore into an environ-



PHOTO: CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY

My Bird World app entertains and teaches kids.

mentally helpful publication with fun mainstream articles on holiday treats for birds, tapas recipes, tech-savvy gardeners, choosing hand pruners and garden railways. Get two years for a one-year price, plus a garden planner guide, for \$23.94; www.organicgardening.com or 800-666-2206.



PHOTO: DAILY PRESS

A subscription to Organic Gardening gives year-round.

with attached suet feeders. Each feeder easily mounts on a 4-by-4-inch post or on a metal pole; install a baffle to deter nuisance wildlife. Bluebird houses, suet feeders and bat houses are also available in recycled material. USA-made recycled double deck hopper platform, \$133; <http://birdschoice.com> or 800-817-8833.

Welcome feathered friends. The time-honored symbol of hospitality, the pineapple, appears in the form of a metal and glass bird feeder in gold and dark bronze with a durable plastic hanging cable. The easy-fill, easy-clean feeder from Colonial Williamsburg holds more than 2 pounds of seed, has drainage holes to keep seed dry. USA-made, the feeder is \$35; Celebrations in the Henry Street Shops in Williamsburg, Revolutions at the Colonial Williamsburg Regional Visitor Center, www.williamsburgmarketplace.com or 800-446-9240.

Grow backyard bouquets. All

WEED PATCH

Life's Recipes Don't Always Follow The Instructions Given

BY LINDA WUEBBEN
P&D Correspondent

Now I have to make a retraction.

I said one of my hats as a farm wife is being a cook and I thought I was a good one. But last month, our church guild catered an annual meeting of a local coop, which is not uncommon in the area. We have done it for many years.

Some of the church members serve the meal which includes a custom-ordered meat dish and the other members donate salads and dessert, usually pie. This year, my job was to provide a cole slaw salad. I needed to purchase the packaged chopped slaw in the produce aisle, chop some carrots and make the dressing. Simple. Everyone has the same recipe for the dressing so it all tastes the same.

It was one of those Mondays, though. I had five stories which had to be written by a 5 p.m. deadline, two projects needed attention for my economic development hat, my cattlemen group wanted a conference call and the salad had to be at the parish hall by 4 p.m. And I had to zip to Crofton to buy the packaged slaw so it was fresh for the evening meal.

I made it to the hall with the salad in a couple large bags and the dressing in a covered bowl by 4:15 p.m. They would mix the two together before the meal. It was close but I had everything under control, I thought. The stories were almost written. (I might have exaggerated a little about how many stories I had to write.) A very rigid schedule had dominated my day but I got it done.

I breathed a huge sigh of relief and zipped home to finish one last story. I was barely in the house when I noticed my answering machine had a message. As I played it, I realized I had counted my chickens before they were all hatched.

One of the cooking ladies had already called and asked about my dressing. So I called the hall back and she told me I had made more dressing than anyone else. I started to laugh. I asked if it was the right color and repeated the recipe. Yep, that was right. But my bowl of



Wuebben

dressing was much fuller than anyone else's.

While laughing, I thought back to the time of day when I made the dressing. It was about noon. I was

cooking something on the stove and since Bob was working at the meat market deboning deer, I never knew when he would come home. I had some time so I thought I could make the dressing and have one more item checked off my list; another notch carved on the butt of my gun.

I remembered halfway through the dressing-making process, one of my lovely daughters called to hash over the weather or the placement of the earth in relation to Jupiter and the sun or some such irrelevant piece of information. I must have goofed the recipe up in the process.

As I was pouring over this cooking mishap, I told the cook I know I only used the ingredients in the recipe but just maybe the amounts were off. I was still laughing and so was she. She assured me she would mix my dressing with all the other dressings and everything would come out OK.

I did talk to someone who ate at the annual meal and asked how it was. The praise was very high. Even the cole slaw I asked? Yes, it was very delicious. I may have stumbled on a new dressing recipe but I will never know what I did wrong, nor will anyone else.

Of course, if I was in high school biology, I probably could have separated each component of the liquid through some scientific process and known exactly what I did wrong or maybe even right.

The only consolation is no one died from the dressing mishap, and I'm relieved. But as I start my holiday baking, I will check and double-check every ingredient in every recipe I mix up.

So may your recipes always be right, tasty and just so; and may no one die from your concoctions, horror, no, no! Merry Christmas!

Taking Care Of Christmas Trees

Q: How can I tell whether a tree is freshly cut before I buy it?

A: Fresh trees will have a healthy green appearance and few brown needles. Needles should be flexible and should not fall off when you run your hand over the branch. Raise the tree a few inches and let it fall on the cut end; very few (if any) green needles should fall off. (It is normal for brown needles to be shed in this way.) Ask the retailer where the trees were grown and when they were cut. Thanks to almost daily rains, cut trees have stayed fresh on the lot this year.

Q: How much water does my tree need?

A: Recently, a friend of mine shared with me that he never adds water to the tree stand once the tree is in place. Yikes! After I picked myself up off the floor, I calmly talked with my friend about the reason the Christmas season coincides with an up-swing in house fires. Combine faulty lights, a little heat and lots of dry needles, and it's a disaster

waiting to happen.

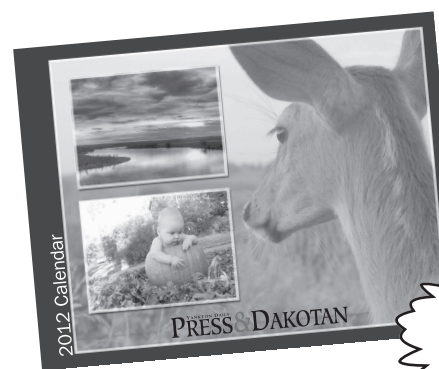
Since about half the weight of a freshly cut Christmas tree is water, it's imperative to supply the tree with adequate fresh water. Once inside your dry, warm home, the needles will rapidly lose water, and this water must be replaced. The general rule of thumb is to provide a quart of water for every inch diameter of the trunk. Most trees will need a reservoir of at least a gallon of water.

The water should be checked daily. Be sure that the water level never falls below the cut end of the trunk, since this can cause resin to build up, thereby preventing water from flowing upward once more water is supplied.

Q: What should I add to the water to keep my tree fresh?

A: It is not necessary to add anything, such as bleach, aspirin, floral preservative or sugar, to the tree water. Studies have shown that plain water does the best job in keeping a tree fresh.

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