

Instructions for Conducting Michigan Christmas Bird Counts

Most Michigan Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) report their data directly to the National Audubon Society (NAS) via their website and follow all NAS rules and guidelines. However, there are still a few CBCs in Michigan that are not NAS-affiliated. For these counts, all NAS rules and guidelines still apply, except that the delineation of the count boundary may not be a 15-mile diameter circle. If you have specific questions about how to run your count or report your data, please consult the NAS website at <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>, or contact the Michigan Regional CBC Editor at the address below. “Frequently Asked Questions – Compilers” should provide answers to just about any question you might have: <http://birds.audubon.org/faq/compilers>. Also very useful is the NAS “Compilers Manual,” which can be downloaded as a .pdf document from the FAQ page: http://birds.audubon.org/sites/default/files/documents/updated_compilers_manual_nov_2013.pdf

The count period extends from 14 December through 5 January each year.

Documentation: Please refer to the enclosed “Documentation Requirements”. Birds require documentation either because they are rare or unexpected in winter (e.g., Brant, Tree Swallow) or they present an identification challenge (e.g., all jaegers, Chipping Sparrow). Since rarity is often geographically dependent, different parts of the state have different review lists. Please inform your counters of which species need documentation so they can take detailed field notes during the sighting. The enclosed form can be used for documenting a rare species, or observers may use the NAS form or other formats. Photographs are also very helpful. **The key is that the documentation must describe the bird sufficiently to differentiate it from all other species with which it could possibly be confused!** Review birds that are not sufficiently documented will be deleted from the NAS database and will not be included in the final summary for *Michigan Birds and Natural History*.

Most CBC’s in Michigan report their data directly to NAS via their data entry website. For only the counts that do not report to NAS, please fill out the attached reporting form as follows:

1. The Count Name is the title used to designate your count last season. If you change your name, which is strongly discouraged, please place the old name in parentheses after the new name.
2. The date should be given as the day followed by the month.
3. List the time the count began (the first daylight party in the field) and when it ended (the last daylight party in the field).
4. Please fill out all the weather variables as accurately as possible. Record these on the day of the count, as they are often difficult to remember at a later date.
5. Fill in the appropriate water variables for the majority of the water in the count circle. For example, if most ponds and lakes are frozen except one small patch on one large lake, then open water is best described as frozen.
6. Fill in snow depth using snow cover on open ground as the minimum and in protected areas as the maximum depth.
7. Record all observers, being careful to separate those in the field from those at feeders.

8. Calculation of party-hours is very important. A party-hour is defined as 1 hour in the field for each party/group (or individual censusing on their own) on the count. For example, if Party A spends 4 hours in the field, and Party B was in the field 6 hours, the total party-hours for the count is 10 party-hours. Feeder-hours and nocturnal-hours are recorded separately and are not included in the total party-hours.
9. Party-miles are recorded as an estimate of the miles each party/group (or individual censusing on their own) walks, drives, or uses other transportation during the count.
10. Fill out the compiler information, including an extra sheet if necessary

(Revised December 2013)