



# Christmas Bird Count

By Cheryl Anderson

## How the count started, and how the data is used today.

Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns—whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist and conservationist Frank M. Chapman, proposed a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them. This began the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) which now takes place any day from December 14 to January 5. The 25 counts completed in 1900 have grown to hundreds of counts and thousands of bird counters throughout North America. The data collected in this long-running wildlife census is used to assess the health of bird populations and guide conservation actions. ([www.audubon.org/conservation/science/](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/))

[christmas-bird-count/history-christmas-bird-count](http://christmas-bird-count/history-christmas-bird-count))

## The Prince Edward County Counts

In Prince Edward County there are two main opportunities to participate in a CBC. The Prince Edward Point Count is based on a circle that extends from and includes Prince Edward Point to Adolphustown including most of the Cressy peninsula and the Black River area. The Sandbanks Count is centred on the park and sweeps through the Point Petre Provincial Wildlife Area and areas in between. As a result, the birds across the South Shore are well documented in December every year.

The Prince Edward Point Count was held on December 17. Six people counted birds in the eastern portion of the South Shore including the waters of South Bay and Lake Ontario on the other side of the peninsula. We documented 46 different species including at least three Bald Eagles.

Nine people joined the South Shore portion of the Sandbanks Count on Decem-



Included in the 2022 count was this Red Shouldered Hawk.—Photo by Joanne Dewey

ber 20. It was a beautiful day and through a combination of driving the roads and walking the trails we tallied 43 species including a Purple Sandpiper found by Dale Smith, Mikaela Naumann and Paul Jones at Charwell Point. The Sandpiper is a rare

visitor to the County this late in the year and this is only the second time it has been found on the Christmas Count. The outing is fun for participants, gathers important data and is a healthy way to celebrate the holidays.

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The "Perfectly Preserved" team from the Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital Auxiliary would like to thank everyone who supported us so generously in 2022. Your donations of jars and produce as well as your presence at the weekly County markets and the Festival of Trees was greatly appreciated, and we look forward to seeing you all in 2023.

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(613)961-9404  
zlammes@hotmail.com  
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