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2016 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SEASON WRAPS UP IN ATLANTA

(Atlanta, Ga,) January 20, 2017 – The results are in from the 2016 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) across metro-Atlanta and, by all measures, it was a very successful CBC season. Counts were held in four “circles” around metro-Atlanta, including In-town Atlanta, Marietta, Peachtree City, and Roswell. When the count results were in, 159 volunteers counted more than 40,500 individual birds representing 93 different species.

The 2016 Christmas Bird Count is an annual tradition dating back to 1900, when ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the then-nascent Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a “Christmas Bird Census” that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunting them as had previously been done.

Each year, from December 14 through January 5 each thousands of volunteers across the Americas brave snow, wind, or rain, and take part in the effort. The National Audubon Society and other organizations use data to assess the health of bird populations, and to help guide conservation action. At 117 years old, the annual Christmas Bird Count is the longest-running citizen science project in the nation!

“This year, both the Marietta and In-town Atlanta counts experienced periods of heavy rain reducing visibility and making some commonly sighted species, like vultures, more difficult to spot,” says Nikki Belmonte, Executive Director of Atlanta Audubon Society, leader of the Roswell CBC circle, and a participant in three of the four Atlanta counts. “The damp weather and frigid temperatures did not dampen the spirits of the volunteers though. We just pulled on our gloves, zipped up our rain coats, and counted the birds.” Typically, the CBCs wrap up with a ‘counting party’ featuring hot chili, soup, and beverage. Volunteers report compare notes, report totals, and tell just a few ‘bird tales’ about the count day. The camaraderie is one of the best parts of this citizen science program.

Here are breakdowns from the four metro counts:

December 15, 2016 – Roswell Christmas Bird Count

- Total number of species: 93

- Total number of birds: 9,705
- Number of volunteers: 38
- Some species highlights included American Black Duck, Spotted Sandpiper, Rough-winged Swallow, American Pipit, and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Top high counts for individuals were Sandhill Crane (1,187), Cedar Waxwing (703), Red-winged Blackbird (663), and American Robin (603). Misses based on previous years include American Wigeon, American Coot, and Fish Crow.

December 17, 2016 – Marietta Christmas Bird Count

- Total number of species sighted: 93
- Total individual birds counted: 11,773
- Number of volunteers: 34
- Total number of hours birded: 112.03
- Total number of miles driven by car: 502
- Total number of miles by foot: 63.12
- Notably missing on count day: Sandhill cranes, however more than 4,000 Sandhill cranes were spotted during the “Count Week” and can be counted towards totals.

December 18, 2016 – Peachtree City Christmas Bird Count

- Total number of species sighted: 92
- Total individual birds counted: 6,353
- Number of volunteers: 17

January 2, 2017 - Intown Atlanta Christmas Bird Count

- Total number of species: 84
- Total number of birds: 12,727
- Number of volunteers: 70
- Notable misses on count day: turkey and black vultures, however, quite a few were reported during “Count Week.”

Media Note: Photos to accompany this article and a MS Word version of this press release are available for download at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/y3l9s32oktcs94e/AADL4n1VHbxzzwGhN455VJ-fa?dl=0>.

The mission of the Atlanta Audubon Society is to protect Georgia's birds and their habitats through conservation, education and advocacy.

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