



A red-tailed hawk sits on a branch keeping an eye out for any potential meals.

Bird is the Word

February's coming up and you know what that means... it's time for the Great Backyard Bird Count! Since 1998, people all over the world have participated in the annual Great Backyard Bird Count to collect information on wild birds by observing areas in their own neighborhoods. The Great Backyard Bird Count gathers data to help scientists figure out what is happening to bird populations around the globe. That means YOU can contribute to science just by taking time to look outside your windows. Scientists can't be everywhere, and that's where you come in!

Birds, Birds, Everywhere

The best part about the bird count is... it's really easy (and free) to join in! All you need is a way to note your observations (a task perfect for your handy [nature notebook](#)), access to the internet, and your enthusiasm! You can look at a local park, your yard, or anywhere you want to go — data from everywhere is useful!

Lord of the Wings

The Christmas Bird Count, which happens at the end of December, found over 24,000 birds in Pittsburgh in 2018.

There were 71 different species represented in the total count. Let's see if we can find even *more* birds this February! [Follow this link to get ready!](#)



A downy woodpecker enjoys food from a birdfeeder.

Ready, Set, Count!

Before you start looking for birds, you'll want to set up an online account through the Great Backyard Bird Count's [website](#). Once that is ready, all you have to do is spend at least 15 minutes looking outside at any time between February 15th and February 18th. Count the number of birds and different species you see, and then submit your observations through your online account. Scientists will use the data, and you can use the information to explore what kinds of birds other people have seen nearby.

Some questions you might help scientists answer are:

- “How does weather and climate change affect bird populations?”
- “How are diseases that birds can catch, like the West Nile virus, affecting birds in different areas?”
- “Are there bird species that only live in certain locations such as cities or rural areas?”