



The Mini Page

Next Week:
Citizen
scientists

Issue 06, 2026

Founded by Betty Debnam



Mini Fact:
This Iceland gull was photographed in Cleveland Harbor, Ohio.

Counting Birds

Twenty-nine years ago, when the internet was brand-new, bird experts at National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology had a question:

Would ordinary people count birds and contribute their results to an online survey?

Of course! In 1997, Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) found 13,000 people from North America entering checklists of birds.

The 2026 Great Backyard Bird Count will take place Feb. 13-16. Will you help count birds?

Why count birds?

Birds are always on the move. Many species **migrate**, or travel, to find warmer weather or better sources of food. It would be impossible for one scientist or even one team of scientists to study the movements of so many birds over a short time. With information collected from bird counts such as the GBBC over many years, scientists can answer questions they have about birds and their environments.

What have we learned?

In 2025, the GBBC counted almost 8,100 species of birds from 217 countries or

subregions. The Cornell Lab estimates that more than 830,000 people participated.

Past GBBCs have provided useful information not only about birds, but also about our environment.

Scientists look at a species' **range**, or where it's spotted, to learn about climate change and diseases, such as the West Nile virus.

How to join in

You can get involved in the Great Backyard Bird Count on your own or with your family, either in your yard or away from home. You can also make the GBBC a project for your Scout troop, classroom or youth group.

1. Count birds anywhere you want for at least 15 minutes. Keep track of the kinds of birds you see and how long you watch.

Include the type of count you did.

Traveling means you walked a trail or drove around a wildlife refuge.

Stationary means you stayed in one place (perhaps watching a feeder from your window).

Incidental means you saw a bird while doing something else.

2. Make an estimate of how many birds you see of each species.

3. Create an online account at birdcount.org. Enter your data there.

Word Nerd
Ornithology is the study of birds.



This Carolina chickadee was photographed in Houston, Texas.



These bird watchers headed into the woods to count birds.

The Mini Page © 2026 Andrews McMeel Syndication

They're counting on you!

Are you ready to count? The Mini Page provides some ideas to help you get started.

To watch birds, you might use:

- a guidebook to help you identify species
- a camera
- comfortable clothing
- binoculars
- a small notebook or checklist to record birds you've seen.



It's important to use good birding manners, including:

- Be quiet! This will also help you listen for bird calls.
- Take extra care when you come upon nesting areas.

When setting up a feeder:

- Make sure there's cover close by for the birds, such as a bush.



Also provide water for birds.

- Use several different types of bird feed and different kinds of feeders if possible.

This will help you attract different kinds of birds.

Good luck counting!

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/4qlA0yI

At the library:

- "Kids' Field Guide to Birds" by Daisy Yuhas
- "Bird Count" by Susan Edwards Richmond

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of counting birds are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

BACKYARD, BINOCULARS, BIRD, CAMERA, CLIMATE, COUNT, DISEASE, ENVIRONMENT, FEEDER, INCIDENTAL, MANNERS, NESTING, NOTEBOOK, ORNITHOLOGY, RANGE, SPECIES, TRACK.

R P Q N S A Z X D K R D N S L
M A W K R R R O R C E I E P A
K C N E S J A N I A D S S E T
O O M G F D C L B R E E T C N
M A N N E R S O U T E A I I E
C L I M A T E X U C F S N E D
K O O B E T O N Q N O E G S I
D R A Y K C A B J S T N Y S C
T N E M N O R I V N E P I K N
T C O R N I T H O L O G Y B I



Mini Jokes



Bina: What bird is known to be very rude?

Bobby: A mockingbird!

Barry: Why do birds fly south?

Brenda: Because it takes too long to walk!

Eco Note



Scientists say millions of migratory birds traveling between Europe and Africa are carrying less energy for their journeys, raising concerns about their ability to survive long-distance migration. A study by Durham University and the British Trust for Ornithology, analyzing 40 years of data from 286 sites, found declining "migratory fuel loads," or fat reserves, among 33 species of birds that fly between Europe and Africa during fall migration. The decline was not seen in spring, suggesting worsening European summer conditions are limiting birds' ability to build energy stores. Researchers also found that birds in northern Europe are fattening earlier.

adapted with permission from Earthweek.com

For later:

Look in your local newspaper for items about the GBBC in your area.

Mini Spy Classics

Mini Spy and her friends are putting up feeders for their backyard birds. See if you can find the hidden pictures. Then color the picture.



Mini Spy Classics appear in the first issue of each month.

Based on materials originally produced and/or created by Betty Debnam.

- letter D
- duck
- number 3
- letter C
- bell
- ladder
- lips
- strawberry
- word MINI
- puppy
- sailboat
- dragon
- sea horse
- needle
- question mark
- butterfly

KidSpot By Dan Thompson 2-7

Which of the following words cannot be made from the letters in the word SPAGHETTI?

1. Shape
2. Plate
3. Tight
4. Stage
5. Great
6. Spite
7. Paste

©2023 ANDREWS MCMEEL SYNDICATION