

Counting Birds, One Backyard at a Time

By Cindy Delaney and Assisted by AI

Each February, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society sponsor the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), a four-day event that invites bird enthusiasts around the world to become citizen scientists. Participants simply watch birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days during the event, whether from a backyard, park, hiking trail, or nature preserve. Every bird seen or heard is recorded and submitted to the project.

Scientists use the information collected during the Great Backyard Bird Count to monitor bird populations, track migration patterns, and better understand the effects of climate change on bird species.

In 2026, the Great Backyard Bird Count was held February 13–16. Participants identified birds using traditional field guides, personal knowledge, or technology such as the Merlin Bird ID app, the eBird Mobile app, or smart bird feeders equipped with cameras.

The results are in! Across the United States, participants submitted more than one million bird checklists. In West Virginia, observers recorded 121 species, with Wood County reporting the highest number of birds observed. All 55 counties participated in the count. The two most frequently identified birds were the Northern Cardinal and the House Finch.

I participated using a solar-powered bird feeder with a built-in camera. After mounting the feeder on a tree, filling it with seed, and downloading the companion app, I was amazed by the variety of birds that stopped by. Some became regular visitors, like old friends, while others made only a brief appearance for a quick snack. The app made identification easy, and I soon found myself looking forward to the notifications on my phone announcing each new visitor. I discovered that birds, much like us, lead busy lives. They feed their young, sing, and socialize, all while adding beauty and enjoyment to our daily lives.

If you've ever considered adding a smart bird feeder to your yard, they can make birdwatching even more enjoyable while helping you learn about your feathered visitors. For more information, visit [Birdfy.com](https://birdfy.com). If you prefer traditional birdwatching, AI-powered binoculars from Swarovski Optik can help you observe and identify birds in the field. On the GFWCI website under library and projects you will find a brochure to identify our avian companions in WV.

Whether you participate for the science, the learning experience, or simply the joy of watching birds, the Great Backyard Bird Count is a wonderful reminder that even a few minutes spent observing nature can contribute to important conservation efforts. Join the fun starting February 12-15, 2027, this would be a great club activity!