

Zone 7 opens its watershed lands for annual Christmas Bird Count

Bird-watching enthusiasts spent the day surveying scores of avian species

by [Julia Baum](#) / Pleasanton Weekly

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Zone 7 Water Agency opened its land last month to continue a tradition now running 12 years of scouting for different bird species in eastern Alameda County.

Following the recommended COVID-19 safety protocols, three volunteers from the Ohlone Audubon Chapter were granted access from Zone 7 to its watershed lands that are normally off limits to the public for the annual Christmas Bird Count.

The national bird survey aims "to promote bird conservation and assess long-term trends in winter bird populations," according to officials.

"The bird count is fun and educational, hones your observational skills, provides friendly competition, contributes to conservation efforts, and gets you outside into some gorgeous areas during the holidays," said Jeff Miller, director of the Alameda Creek Alliance.

Important information about bird populations and trends, as well as data alerting to environmental threats, was sought out by the birders on Dec. 18.

Locally, the count is done in a 15-mile radius encompassing Pleasanton, Livermore and Sunol, as well as five East Bay regional parks, "birding hotspots" like Sunol Wilderness, Sycamore Grove and lower Mines Road, and watershed lands managed by Zone 7.

The birders spent the day "armed with binoculars and spotting scopes to obtain a count of various birds in the sky, on the ground, tucked away in

shrubs and trees, and in the waterways," Zone 7 representatives said, calling the Dec. 18 event "citizen science at its finest."

"These expert hobbyists with their keen attention to detail and vast knowledge of birds spent all day identifying species, sometimes just by the slight difference of a tail feather, the note of a chirp or a hint of color, even from hundreds of feet away," officials said.

More information and the final results of the 2020 Christmas Bird Count can be found at ohloneaudubon.org.