

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Annual Christmas Bird Count On St. Croix Happens Dec. 18

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ST. CROIX -- On December 18, volunteers here will participate in the Audubon Society's Annual Christmas Bird Count, the organization's 117th annual count which is hosted all over the world.

St. Croix residents have been participating in this event for the past 17 consecutive years.

Needed are experienced and amateur bird watchers, as well as novices who can join the mentoring program being launched again this year, which will allow them to work with more experienced counters.

"The count helps scientists evaluate the environment. The growth or decline of overall bird population often indicates changes in the local environment that otherwise would be overlooked," said Bill Boyton, this year's coordinator.

Identification of changes in numbers and in the types of species on the island helps determine whether or not a bird is put on the endangered list. It also gives support to identifying environmental dangers that are present on the island.

"With the wet conditions that we have had lately and the blessing of no major storms this season, we are looking for a count with record numbers this year," Mr. Boyton added. The 2015 tally held on December 27th last year was [3,615 birds that included 75 different species](#).

Volunteers will be assigned ponds and shore lines around the island and given a tally sheet and bird identification card. On the day of the event, they are asked to do a slow walk through the areas assigned and tally the number of birds of each species that are sighted. The event runs from sunrise to sunset.

The volunteer assignment can take a couple of hours or all day depending on the willingness of the volunteer. People may choose an area close to their home or another area where they feel comfortable watching and counting the birds.

Those interested in participating should email Bill Boyton at billboyton@gmail.com or call 340-690-3005. You may pick the area where you would like to count that Sunday. Further instructions will be given to all volunteers as the count day draws near.

Participants are encouraged to bring friends along for the adventure, while making some new ones for what is described as a very worthwhile event.

Detailed information about this year's Christmas Bird Count and last year's results are available online at [Audubon](#), which also maintains a historical record of all past bird counts.

Feature Image: Little Blue Huron at Dorsch Beach. (Credit: Jeffrey Karnes)