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(S.D.)-Residents Encouraged To Participate In Great Backyard Bird Count



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 02/08/2013 09:30 AM

(GERING)-Scotts Bluff National Monument will be participating in the Nationwide Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) on February 15-17. This event is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. It is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation.

At 8:00 a.m. on Friday and Saturday, February 15th and 16th, the public is invited to join Ranger Steve Osburn as he counts birds within the monument's boundaries. A different location will be visited each day. Participants will be able to park at the visitor center and join the ranger in the park's shuttle van as they visit birding sites. Counts will be done on short hikes or from the shuttle van, depending upon the weather. Park entrance fees will be waived for those participating in the bird counts on both days. Remember to bring binoculars and dress accordingly. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org.

Invaluable information is gained from these yearly counts and is added to the national database. Last year, more than 17.3 million birds of 623 species were counted. Scientists have found the count shows an amazing amount of migratory, range and population information. The data from citizen scientists helps researchers understand bird population trends, information that is critical for effective conservation. Their efforts enable everyone to see what would otherwise be impossible: a comprehensive picture of where birds are in late winter and how their numbers and distribution compare with previous years.

Each year, in addition to entering their tallies, participants submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest. Many are featured in the online gallery. Participants in the 2013 count are invited to submit their images to www.birdcount.org.

The Oregon Trail Museum Association offers birding and other nature guides for sale within the bookstore at the Scotts Bluff National Monument visitor center. All books and other sale materials will be discounted 15% both days of the bird count.

The Scotts Bluff National Monument visitor center is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to

5:00 p.m. The summit road remains open from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. All monument trails are open from sunrise until sunset. Visitors can inquire about the Bi-Park Annual Pass valid at Fort Laramie National Historic Site and Scotts Bluff National Monument. Additional information about Scotts Bluff National Monument programs and schedules can be obtained at the visitor center or by calling 308-436-9700.