



Department of Defense  
Partners in Flight

### Our Mission

*Providing expertise on the management and conservation of birds and their habitats to sustain and enhance the military mission*

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### Contacts

Richard Fischer, Ph.D.  
National Coordinator  
Richard.A.Fischer@erdc.dren.mil

Elizabeth Neipert  
Technical Coordinator  
Elizabeth.S.Neipert@erdc.dren.mil

<https://www.denix.osd.mil/dodpif>

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# Citizen Science

Participating in Public Research on Defense Lands

—Content Co-authors: David McNaughton, Naval Facilities Southwest and Jacky Ferrer-Perez, Army Garrison, Fort Hood

## What is Citizen Science?

Citizen science relates to science projects and research initiatives that gather data through crowd sharing, broad user groups, and educational efforts. Government or academic organizations usually host these projects and fund them through grants and donations.

## Who participates?

Anyone and everyone can participate in these projects. Participants often include entry-level and uninitiated (such as young students) to the professional and highly educated (such as career biologists, academics, and even government employees). Defense communities can participate through educational efforts in Military Service schools and homes, as offices and agencies such as installation Conservation Offices, and as backers and funding mechanisms, such as the Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program and the Legacy Resource Management Program.

## Popular Initiatives

### eBird

eBird is an online tool for recording bird observational data. The website and app allow users to enter their data in exchange for tools and resources to find species of interest

and find popular birding locations, and to track lifetime lists of bird species observed at many scales. This project is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, <http://www.ebird.org>.

### Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count, <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>, takes place every February and encourages exploration of the environment closest to home. Observers submit observations on a web portal (or now through eBird) from feeders and “backyards” all over the world. The program also features significant educational material and content for beginner and amateur birders from kids to adults.



*Spruce grouse, Interior Alaska, DoD Backyard Bird Blitz. Photo credit: Elizabeth Neipert.*

### Department of Defense Backyard Bird Blitz

The first annual DoD Backyard Bird Blitz took place during spring migration 2020. DoD Partners in

Flight (PIF) hosted the event with the intention of capturing spring migrant species observed by members of the DoD community. Current parameters require participating individuals to report observations from their backyard or private property. For more information on how to

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participate, visit the DoD PIF page, <https://www.denix.osd.mil/dodpif/groups/education-and-outreach/outreach-opportunities/index.html>. You can also like and follow the DoD PIF Facebook page.

## Hawk Watches

The Hawk Migration Association of North America offers locations to sit and bird watch for the day while the raptors do the work for you. An official counter will keep track of the birds that fly overhead in transit between breeding and wintering ranges, but they need help spotting and identifying those birds. Locations are started and staffed by interested individuals. Some are even on DoD lands. Data are loaded by the designated official but can be viewed by anyone at <http://hmana.org>.

## Bird Banding

While the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service controls who applies bands to birds through Federal permits, anyone can report banded bird information to the U.S. Geological Survey. Simple data like color and location are used to study global migration patterns, but readable individual identifiers can take the data a step further. Whether recovering a band from a photograph or a dead bird, the data are extremely useful to many Federal agencies including DoD. Find out more information at <http://reportband.gov>.

## Christmas Bird Counts

The annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is the world's longest-running wildlife census. It is hosted by the National Audubon Society and dates back well over a century. Birders of all ages contribute to this nationwide community science project, which provides ornithologists with a crucial snapshot of bird populations during the winter months. Each individual count is performed in a 15-mile diameter count circle. At least ten volunteers, including a compiler to coordinate the process, count all birds seen or heard throughout each circle. To find a count circle near you or to initiate one of your own, visit the National Audubon web page,

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>.

## Installation Examples

### Christmas Bird Counts

#### *Fort Belvoir*

The Fort Belvoir CBC started in 1911. The first year of the count, eight volunteers shared five pairs of binoculars, and now there are over 100 volunteers annually. Most years Fort Belvoir averages between 113 and 117 species.

#### *Fort Hood*

Fort Hood initiated their CBC in 2016. To maximize participation, Fort Hood leverages multiple conservation partnerships, which include local Audubon societies, universities, and services members. Currently, the Fort Hood CBC count circle covers the largest area of DoD land at just over 150 square miles.



*Volunteers observe birds in live fire area from a Vietnam-era jeep, Fort Hood, Texas CBC. Photo credit: Scott Summers.*