Christmas Bird Count 2025 *by Alexander deBarros*

I think we can all agree, 2025 has been a very newsworthy year. And it's time to deliver another bit of news, hopefully one that everybody will find good—it's almost time for the Christmas Bird Count! The Christmas Bird Count (CBC), which is the National Audubon Society's annual bird census, will be on Saturday, December 20, and as always, the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society will be joining other Audubon chapters and Bird Alliances across the western hemisphere to help gather critical data on bird populations for National Audubon's 126th CBC. The San Fernando Valley has been providing CBC data continuously since 1957, so this will be our 69th year participating. Over the years, we have tracked some interesting changes in bird populations within our count circle as The Valley has transitioned from an agricultural area into a more residential one.

On last year's count, we totaled 143 species and 19,142 individual birds, our third highest species count ever, and our highest individual count since 2009. Over the last 20 years, we've averaged 132 species and 16,280 individuals; see the February-March 2025 *Phainopepla* for more details.

To properly understand the bird populations in the San Fernando Valley, we need to cover as many parks as possible. CBC participation is free and open to all, and extensive birding experience is not a prerequisite. All you need is a willingness to come out and count, wind, rain, or shine. Thirteen locations that are putting together teams are listed below. If you are unable to join an existing CBC team, you may count on your own at your backyard bird feeders, local parks, and anywhere else in your neighborhood, as long as you are within our survey area, which is a 7.5 mile radius from Balboa and Nordhoff (an interactive map of the CBC circle is available here).

Please report all bird species, the individual numbers of each species, and the time you spent birding to Alexander deBarros by email, alexanderdebarros@yahoo.com no later than January 3, 2026. You may also post your sightings on eBird, but please email the checklist to ensure it gets counted.

SFV neighborhoods/cities entirely within the CBC circle:

Arleta, Canoga Park, Chatsworth, Encino, Granada Hills, Lake Balboa, Mission Hills, North Hills, Northridge, Pacoima, Panorama City, Porter Ranch, San Fernando, Van Nuys, Valley Glen, Winnetka

SFV neighborhoods/cities partially within the CBC circle:

Lake View Terrace, North Hollywood, Shadow Hills, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, Sun Valley, Sylmar, Tarzana, Valley Village, West Hills, Woodland Hills

Neighborhoods/cities not listed are entirely outside the CBC circle.

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve and Lake Balboa

Meeting Time: 7:30 am
Meeting Point: Parking lot nearest the Tillman Reclamation Plant
Directions: Exit 405 FWY at Burbank Blvd. and head west (turn left if you're on the northbound side, turn right if you're on the southbound side). Turn right onto Woodley Ave, and take the second right into the wildlife reserve. Meet in the first parking lot on the right. (34.179677,-118.479737)
Other stops: none
Terrain: flat
Approximate distance: 7.2 miles
Leader: Kris Ohlenkamp, kris.ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net

O'Melveny Park and Bee Canyon Park

Meeting Time: 8:00 am
Meeting Point: O'Melveny Park parking lot
Directions: Exit 118 FWY at Balboa Blvd and head north (turn left if you're on the eastbound side, turn right if you're on the westbound side). Turn left onto Session Blvd and take the second right into the park. (34.307617,-118.511292)
Other stops: None
Terrain: Mostly flat, some light hills
Approximate distance: 3.8 miles
Leader: Paula Orlovich, (747) 237-3720

Bull Creek

Meeting Time: 8:00 am
Meeting Point: Bull Creek parking lot
Directions: Exit 101 FWY at Balboa Blvd and head north (turn right if you're on the northbound side of the freeway, turn left if you're on the southbound side). Take the second possible right into Anthony C. Beilenson Park/Lake Balboa. Meet in the first dirt parking lot on the left. (34.1814216,-118.4983283)
Other stops: none
Terrain: mostly flat
Approximate distance: 4.2 miles
Leader: Rose Leibowitz, roselbirds@gmail.com

Old Mission Trail and nearby parks

Meeting Time: 8:00 am
Meeting Point: Limekiln Canyon at Tunney Ave
Directions: Exit 118 FWY at Tampa Ave and head south (turn left if you're on the westbound side, turn right if you're on the eastbound side). Turn right onto Tunney Ave (the second light), and park on the side of the road. (34.258808, -118.557684)
Other stops: Mason Park, Zelzah Park
Terrain: mostly flat, some light hills
Approximate distance: 5 miles
Leader: Diana Hilberman, diana.hilberman@gmail.com

Veteran's Memorial Park & El Cariso Park

Meeting Time: 8:00 am
Meeting Point: Veteran's Memorial Park western parking lot
Directions: Exit the 210 FWY at Hubbard St and head east (turn right if you're on the westbound side, turn left if you're on the eastbound side). Turn left onto Eldridge Ave, then right onto Sayre St. Follow Sayre into Veteran's Memorial Park, where it ends. Turn left and meet in the parking lot where that road ends. (34.326364,-118.419471)
Other stops: El Cariso Park
Terrain: mostly flat, some slopes
Approximate distance: 5 miles
Leader: Joey Di Liberto, jfdiliberto@gmail.com

Reseda and Encino Parks
Meeting Time: 8:00 am
Meeting Point: Reseda Park
Directions: Exit 101 fwy at Reseda Blvd and head north (turn right if you're on the northbound side, turn left if you're on the southbound side). Turn right onto Victory Blvd, travel about 700 ft, and turn left into the parking lot by the tennis courts. 34.1868749, -118.5329935
Other stops: Encino Park, Los Encinos State Historic Park, Holy Spitit Retreat Center
Terrain: completely flat
Approximate distance: 2.5 miles
Leader: Pat Bates, batesbird@gmail.com

Hansen Dam Golf Course & nearby parks
Meeting Time: 8:00 am
Meeting Point: Hubert Humphrey Memorial Park
Directions: Exit 118 FWY at Glenoaks Blvd and head east (turn left once if you're on the eastbound side, turn left twice if you're on the westbound side); this places you on Paxton St. Turn right onto Dronefield Ave, the left onto Filmore St. Park in the parking lot on the right side of the road. (34.281768, -118.407290)
Other stops: Roger Jessup Park, Hansen Dam Golf Course, Stonehurst Rec Center, Sun Valley Park
Terrain: Flat
Approximate distance: 3.5 miles
Leader: Robin Share, robindshare@gmail.com

Aliso Canyon and Wilbur-Tampa Park
Meeting Time: 7:30 am
Meeting Point: Wilbur-Tampa Park
Directions: Exit the 118 FWY at Tampa Ave and head north (turn right if you're on the westbound side, turn left if you're on the eastbound side). Turn right onto Wilbur Ave, and park on the street. (34.288315,-118.556146)
Other stops: none
Terrain: light to moderate hills
Approximate distance: 7 miles
Leader: Charlie Wilken, cswilken@gmail.com

Wilson Canyon and Stetson Ranch Park
Meeting Time: 8:00 am
Meeting Point: Wilson Canyon Park
Directions: Exit 210 FWY at Roxford St, and head north (turn right if you're on the westbound side, turn left if you're on the eastbound side). Stay on Roxford as it turns right and becomes Olive View Dr. After passing the hospital, turn left into Wilson Canyon Park, then turn left to reach the main parking lot. (34.329932,-118.444875)
Other stops: Stetson Ranch Park
Terrain: light to moderate hills
Approximate distance: 4 miles
Leaders: Valeree Catangay, valereecatangay@gmail.com & Rujin Yu, yurujinemp@gmail.com

East Valley Small Parks
Meeting Time: 7:00 am
Meeting Point: Dearborn Park
Directions: Exit 405 FWY at Nordhoff St and head west (turn right if you're on the southbound side, turn left if you're on the northbound side). Turn right onto Amestoy Ave. and immediately turn left onto Dearborn St. Park on the street. (34.237221,-118.508417)
Other stops: Valley Sod Farms, Sepulveda Rec. Center, Panorama Park, Branford Park, Branford Settling Pond, Sheldon-Arleta Park, Fernangeles Rec. Center
Terrain: completely flat, except for very light hills at Sheldon-Arleta Park
Approximate distance: 7 miles total
Leader: Oscar Rodriguez, rodthebirder@gmail.com

Devil's Canyon
Meeting Time: 7:00 am
Meeting Point: Canoga Ave at 118 FWY
Directions: Exit the 118 FWY at De Soto Ave and head south (turn right if you're on the eastbound side, turn left if you're on the westbound side). Turn right on Chatsworth St, then right again on Canoga Ave. Park on the street, just after you cross under the freeway .
(34.275852,-118.595369)
Other stops: Porter Valley Country Club
Terrain: light to moderate hills
Approximate distance: 5.5 miles
Leader: Carolyn Wilcox, cfwilcox@yahoo.com

San Fernando Mission and nearby parks
Meeting Time: 7:00 am
Meeting Point: Carey Ranch Park
Directions: Exit 5 FWY at San Fernando Mission Blvd and head east (turn right if you're on the northbound side, turn left if you're on the southbound side). Take the first left onto Laurel Canyon Blvd, then turn right onto Crestknoll Dr. Take the first possible left into Carey Ranch Park and meet in the parking lot. (34.289057,-118.459727)
Other stops: Brand Park, San Fernando Mission, Pacoima Wash Natural Park, Sylmar Rec. Center
Terrain: completely flat
Approximate distance: 3 miles
Leader: Brenton Cooper, bcoop@outlook.com

Upper L.A. River
Bicycle route
Meeting Time: 8:00 am
Meeting Point: L.A. River at Owensmouth Ave and Bassett St.
Directions: Exit 101 FWY at Topanga Canyon Blvd and head north (turn right if you're on the northbound side, turn right then left if you're on the southbound side). Turn right onto Victory Blvd, go one block, then turn left onto Owensmouth Ave. Turn right onto Bassett St and park on the street. (34.195593,-118.601129)
Other stops: none
Terrain: flat
Approximate distance: 8.4 miles
Leader: Danielle Awad, awad.danielle.e@gmail.com

Birds & Beer. Saturday, December 20. 4:30-7 pm. Join us for appetizers (no host bar) at Best Ball Bar/Woodley Lakes Golf Course, 6331 Woodley Ave, Van Nuys, CA 91406, to share our count numbers and kick off the Holiday Season. Sign-up on Eventbrite so we know how much food to order.