

# Bird watching spreads its wings in Grand Bahama

## *178 Bird Species Found*

GRAND BAHAMA ISLAND, THE BAHAMAS, February 10, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Bird watching in Grand Bahama has taken flight after 30 birdwatchers from the US and The Bahamas recently found 178 bird species in two locations on the island.

Erika Gates of the Garden of the Groves organized a Christmas Bird Count that took place from December 15-January 4.



The Christmas Count was established 115 years ago globally and has been conducted in Grand Bahama for the past 15 years.

Its objective is to monitor the status and distribution of bird populations across the Western Hemisphere.

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*Jacqueline Ramsey, Family Islands/Bahamas Sustain. Tour.*

When results of the count are entered into the Audubon database officials can gain a clearer picture of how bird populations have changed over the years.

The information is also vital for conservation.

Gates said it took two days for the participants to tally the bird count in West End and Freeport.

“I am happy that this event is becoming an attraction for visitors from abroad. Grand Bahama Island is truly known as a birding destination. Our local birding group has helped to put the island on the map by submitting their observations throughout the year with the eBird database at Cornell University,” she said.

“Before a birder from abroad decides on a birding destination, he consults the sightings and birding sites on [www.eBird.org](http://www.eBird.org) where Grand Bahama ranks high in number of bird species and easily accessible birding locations.”

The results of the West End, Grand Bahama count were 77 species plus four during count week, bringing the total to 81.

The Freeport, Grand Bahama count resulted in 97 species plus six for count week bringing the total to

103.

Four species of endemics here are the Bahamian Swallow, Bahama Yellow Throat, the Bahama Oreo and the Bahama Woodstar.

In America alone, birding is a \$32 billion activity.

The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism (BMOT), the National Audubon Society (NAS) and the Bahamas National Trust (BNT) recently held a special bird watching training workshop in Central Andros to help train persons looking to get involved in this new, lucrative niche market.

The \$2.6 billion project – funded by the Inter-American Development Bank – partners with local NGOs in Belize, The Bahamas, Guatemala and Paraguay to utilize the bird-watching market to create sustainable jobs in communities while simultaneously protecting biodiversity and natural resources.

About 66 Bahamians have trained for bird watching as a result of the program – 43 in Central Andros and 23 in Inagua.

Director of Family Islands Jacqueline Ramsey, who is also responsible for the Bahamas Sustainable Tourism Department, said, “The Ministry of Tourism is ecstatic about the growing interest in birding in The Bahamas. The advanced course will commence on February 26, 2016 with a total of 31 participants from Andros and Inagua.

“Participants in the advanced portion of the course would have met all of the requirements in the basic course including bird identification, successful completion of the written evaluations and the Bahama host course and shown a keen interest in the birding industry as a whole.”

The advanced course will incorporate the following aspects an in depth study of bird biology and its ecology; focus heavily on bird vocalization; revisit the various habitats frequented by birds and introduce a few additional habitats; tour guiding and entrepreneurship.

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