

Annual bird counts give scientists climate clues

December 22 2012, by Ramit Plushnick-Masti

(AP)—Conservationists and bird enthusiasts across the Western Hemisphere are taking part in a massive, annual bird count that they hope will help scientists understand how birds adapt to climate change and habitat loss.

The National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count began Monday and runs through Jan. 5. More than 2,200 groups will count birds in their area as part of the effort. Each local count runs for 24 hours.

In Texas, Nature Conservancy scientist Rich Kostecke and others counted 233 [species of birds](#) during a 24-hour count that began Monday at the Mad Island preserve along the Gulf Coast. The initial report includes 11 fewer species than last year, raising questions about how last year's historic drought in Texas and on-going [climate change](#) are affecting the birds.

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