

NEWS RELEASE



BIRD WATCHERS URGED TO LOOK FOR SIGNS OF TREE PESTS DURING ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Looking for sickly or damaged trees and shrubs during the annual bird count can help preserve vital wildlife habitats.

Arlington, VA—February 15, 2013— This weekend, bird watchers worldwide participating in the 16th annual [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) (GBBC), February 15-18, are encouraged to look for and report signs of tree pests like the emerald ash borer, Asian longhorned beetle, and many more. During the bird count, participants simply watch birds at any location for at least 15 minutes, tally the numbers of each species they see, and report their tallies online. While conducting these surveys, bird watchers are also encouraged to look at the birds' habitats for signs of invasive insects and diseases.

“The Great Backyard Bird Count is an ideal opportunity for bird watchers to check the trees for signs of invasive pests like Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) and Emerald Ash Borer (EAB),” said Jennifer Forman Orth, State Plant Pest Survey Coordinator at the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. “The damage from these insects can easily be seen in winter, when there are no leaves on the trees, and birdwatchers are typically armed with a pair of binoculars that will help them check high-up branches for the perfectly round holes left by ALB in maples and other hardwoods, or the D-shaped exit holes and increased woodpecker activity associated with EAB infestations in ash trees.”

Many of the forest pests and diseases that affect trees can be stopped or slowed if they are found and treated early enough by the proper authorities. The Nature Conservancy’s Don’t Move Firewood program works with USDA APHIS and many state agencies nationwide encouraging people to report all signs of potential forest pests.

“Trees and forests are an essential part of our lives, and they provide shade and shelter, jobs and products, and clean air and water. From tree-lined neighborhood streets to national parks, we count on trees to provide benefits today and for generations to come,” says Bill Toomey, Director of Forest Health Protection for The Nature Conservancy. “That’s why it’s critical for everyone to be aware of the trees around them, and to report the signs of destructive tree pests to the proper authorities.”

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Participants in the Great Backyard Bird Count should report any suspicious damage or signs of forest pests as soon as they have concluded entering their bird data. Bird watchers are encouraged to take digital photos of any damage observed, identify the species of tree with the damage if possible, and then report findings using websites or state hotlines. Below is a sampling of websites for regionally and nationally important invasive forest pests.

- Asian longhorned beetle, <http://www.beetlebusters.info>
- Emerald ash borer, <http://www.emeraldashborer.info/call.cfm>
- Thousand Cankers Disease of Walnut, <http://thousandcankers.com>
- Gypsy Moth, <http://www.hungrypests.com/YourMoveGypsyMothFree/>
- Goldspotted Oak Borer, <http://www.gsob.org>
- Sudden Oak Death, <http://www.suddenoakdeath.org/>
- Laurel Wilt, <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/foresthealth/laurelwilt/>
- For other pests of high interest to the United States Department of Agriculture, please look up the appropriate state on the map at <http://www.hungrypests.com/>

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To learn more about *Don't Move Firewood*, visit <http://www.DontMoveFirewood.org>

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. The Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 18 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 117 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit us on the Web at www.nature.org.