

# THE BIG YEAR

## General Information and Press Packet

### General Information



- *The Big Year*, produced by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, opens in theatres nationwide on Friday, October 14, 2011.
- The film stars Steve Martin (*It's Complicated*, *The Pink Panther*), Owen Wilson (*Cars 2*, *Little Fockers*) and Jack Black (*Kung Fu Panda*, *King Kong*), and was directed by David Frankel (*The Devil Wears Prada*, *Marley & Me*).
- Synopsis: In *The Big Year*, an extraordinary race becomes a transformative journey for wealthy industrialist Stu (Steve Martin), computer code-writer Brad (Jack Black), and successful contractor Kenny (Owen Wilson), who race across the continent on a “Big Year,” a whirlwind competition to see who can identify the most species of birds in North American within one calendar year.
- Audubon has a presence in the film:
  - In the beginning of the film, actor John Cleese explains how the concept of a Big Year got started. He says people used to compete to see how many birds they could shoot over the holidays, but Frank Chapman and the Audubon Society decided to count birds instead of shoot them. Chapman made is appeal in Bird Lore magazine, which evolved into *Audubon* magazine..
  - In at least two instances, Owen Wilson (who portrays the defending champion birder) is pictured on the cover of *Audubon* Magazine.
  - Audubon logos and signs appear at several points in the movie.
  - In general, birding is treated with remarkable respect throughout the movie. There are many scenes where the wonder of birds and the joy of seeing them are featured.
  - The trailer for the movie highlights the "buddy comedy" aspects of the film, which isn't really a bad thing. We understand that the studio has to sell tickets, and that a buddy comedy has a better chance of getting people in the theater than a birding movie. Moreover, this focus on the personal relationships isn't a bad thing at all. We all know that one of the great joys of birding is the human relationships that form around it.
- Watch the trailer at: [www.thebigyearmovie.com](http://www.thebigyearmovie.com)
  - In the trailer, Fox is obviously promoting the “buddy comedy” aspect of the film.
  - While of course Audubon people want to focus on the birds, this isn't a bad point of departure for us to talk about how birding brings people together, how the best that we do in our lives is all about human relationships and connecting to nature.
  - You can download a movie poster at that same site, or use the image provided on the Chapter Resources web site at <http://bit.ly/pEXrtT>.
- Tweet about the movie using the hashtags: #bigyear #audubon.

# THE BIG YEAR

## General Information and Press Packet

### Ways to use *The Big Year* to build local publicity for your Chapter

- Use the “template” press release to generate interest from local media. Fill in the blanks with your local chapter information and email or fax editors and reporters who cover entertainment, local news, and nature/science.



- Pitch local media – newspapers, talk radio, TV morning shows and news programs, and online outlets that focus on things to do in your city (i.e. CitySearch), to do stories on the local Audubon chapter tied to the new movie, *The Big Year*, which opens in theaters nationwide on Friday, October 14. Use local angles/hooks to get them interested.
  - Find your most articulate birder or staffer and pitch them for interviews. Make sure they wear a vest, cap or a shirt that has the Audubon logo.
  - List the top 10 birds in your area that people can find/see on a regular basis, and one or two that are more challenging to find.
  - Pitch a TV segment to take the “human interest” reporter or morning show host out “birding” in a local park, bird sanctuary or estuary that would be taped to air on the station timed to the opening of the movie.
  - Pitch online media who blog about local events to do a story on your Audubon chapter and the best places in the area for bird watching. Ask them to post the movie trailer and photos to make the connection between Audubon and *The Big Year*.
  - Pitch the science/nature/or entertainment editors at your local newspaper to do a story on your Audubon chapter and how you approach “birding” compared with the characters in the movie.

# THE BIG YEAR

## General Information and Press Packet

### Set up a local screening

- A local screening of the film can be a great way to connect your chapter's supporters to the film.
- Unfortunately, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox is not offering the movie for private screenings at this time, so the easiest way to put a screening event together is to do so through your local theater.
- There are several ways to pursue this:
  - First step is to contact your local theater and inquire if it is going to be showing the movie. Odds are it will be, because the movie is in wide release.
  - The simplest thing to do is just bring a lot of people to a scheduled showing of the movie. If you call ahead, you may be able to get a group discount.
  - If you want to put together a larger event, talk to the theater management about renting a whole auditorium. This can be expensive, but costs should be lower mid-week.
- Your screening can take a lot of different shapes. If the theater is near a local restaurant, you can book a room there and walk over. Or you can set up a table outside the theater and welcome your guests. Feel free to be creative – there are lots of different ways to use the screening to build community, make a connection between birding and your chapter, and have some fun!



**THE BIG YEAR**  
**General Information and Press Packet**  
[insert chapter logo]

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact name

Contact phone number and email address

***Make it your Big Year-Discover Local Birds with Audubon***

**World of Birding Shines in *The Big Year* Opening Oct. 14**

**CITY, STATE (Date)** – It's going to be a big year for birding and the [insert chapter name] when 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox releases *The Big Year* in theatres on Friday, Oct. 14. The new movie starring Steve Martin, Owen Wilson and Jack Black features America's second fastest growing hobby after gardening – birding.

The movie provides a great opportunity for local media and citizens to find out more about this popular hobby and meet real Audubon experts who can show you how to identify birds in your neighborhood. There are 48 million birders in the United States, and now is a great time to meet those in your own backyard ... and maybe join them!

In *The Big Year*, the three stars undertake a whirlwind competition to see who can identify the most species of birds in North American within one calendar year.

To interview a local Audubon spokesperson for a news story, or go out on an actual birding field trip to see some of the area's most popular birds, contact **(name, phone/email for local chapter rep)**

**ADD Chapter boilerplate with web link and/or National language below:**

For more than a hundred years, Audubon has harnessed America's love of birds and channeled that energy into a real force for conservation. Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. Visit Audubon online at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).

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# THE BIG YEAR

## General Information and Press Packet

### TALKING POINTS ABOUT AUDUBON

#### What is Audubon?

- Audubon's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.
- The National Audubon Society serves as the central hub of a grassroots conservation network of nearly 500 Chapters working locally and combining their efforts to safeguard birds, habitat and natural resources across the country and the hemisphere.
- It was founded in 1905, taking its name from the great wildlife artist John James Audubon
- Founders were ladies protesting the slaughter of birds for plumed hats—Their efforts led to the passage of a model law that protected the birds and showcased the power of citizen action to protect our natural heritage
- Today Audubon has half a million members
- Through our national network of Audubon centers and chapters, we engage people in conservation discovery and action through education, science, public policy.

#### Conservation Priorities:

- Safeguarding and habitats vital birds and biodiversity across the America's.
  - Landscape conservation programs conserve large and important tracts across Americas, including the Mississippi River Ecosystem, the [Everglades](#), Long Island Sound, [Sagebrush](#) habitat.
  - [Important Bird Areas](#) denote sites vital to the well being of birds, wildlife and people around the globe. through our partnership with Birdlife International.
- Slowing and mitigating the effects of global climate change.
- Inspiring new audiences to enjoy and protect the natural world.

#### Why birds?

- Birds are not only beautiful to behold but serve as early indicators that the environment we share is in trouble.
- Birds are “canaries in the coal mine” when it comes to pollution, pesticides and global warming. They are also the most visible victims of oil spills.
- Action to protect birds and their habitat often safeguards quality of life for human communities
- Bird watching is soaring in popularity – one in five Americans watch birds.
- It's the second fastest growing hobby after gardening.

#### Can you give an example of conservation success?

- The rescue of the Bald Eagle from the brink of extinction ranks among the greatest victories of American conservation. The success is evident in the Audubon Christmas

## **THE BIG YEAR**

### **General Information and Press Packet**

Bird Counts. Over a 40-year period, bald eagle sightings have gone up nine-fold and increased an average of six percent per year every year.

- Audubon was also pivotal in restoring American's greatest wetland –the Everglades, and continues to fight for its protection today.
- Audubon has been a leading voice for protection of Alaska's wilderness and wildlife, from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to Teshekpuk [pronounced Te SHECK puk] Lake to the Chukchi Sea. [pronounced CHOOK-SHE]
- Audubon's response to the Gulf Oil Spill provided volunteer support to bird rescuers and continues to provide monitoring of habitats. Audubon's Mississippi River Initiative and Louisiana Coastal Initiative, in place before the Deepwater Horizon incident, are bold long term plans to restore the health of the Mississippi River and the resiliency of coastal wetlands.
- In 2008, Audubon helped win protection for 90 per cent of the 240,000 acre Tejon Ranch near Los Angeles- vital habitat for California Condor.
- In 2009, Audubon Wyoming created a mapping model to balance wind energy needs with sensitive wildlife habitat for imperiled Sage Grouse. The mapping initiative since adopted by BLM has now been extended to 11 states where Sage Grouse occur.

#### **How can people get involved with Audubon?**

- Participate in Chapter activities. With 463 chapters across the country, there are hundreds of field trips and other activities to learn, enjoy and participate in birding.
- Visit an Audubon Center. With nearly 150 throughout the U.S., Audubon Centers and sanctuaries provide an opportunity to connect with nature.
- Take part in Citizen Science: Since 1900, Audubon's annual [Christmas Bird Count](#) has produced the world's most complete repository of data on bird population trends, providing vital information for scientists and conservation planning. Recent ground breaking reports based on this data revealed the steep decline of some of our most popular species, and confirmed the shifting ranges of birds in response to climate change.
- Join Audubon's Activist Network - our combined grassroots strength can help ensure the passage and enforcement of policies that protect birds, other wildlife environmental health.
- Make lifestyle changes that benefit birds and the environment. The [Audubon At Home](#) program provides resources and information for positive actions from conserving energy to creating backyards healthy for birds – and people, too

#### **Why is nature important for people?**

- Connecting with nature has real benefits for all of us. Children today are revealing some of the high costs of alienation from nature, including attention disorders, depression and obesity. [Richard Louv](#) *Last Child in the Woods* reveals a direct connection between the absence of nature in the lives of today's wired youth, a phenomenon he called "Nature-Deficit Disorder."
- Audubon Centers have been connecting people with nature for decades. Many of our newest centers are found in urban areas such as Los Angeles and Brooklyn– where you

## **THE BIG YEAR**

### **General Information and Press Packet**

might not expect to see a nature center. This enables us to provide people of many different backgrounds with an opportunity to experience the natural world.

- Bird watching is soaring in popularity – one in five Americans watch birds.
- It's the second fastest growing hobby after gardening.

#### **What are your tips for bird watching?**

- Watch birds in the morning
- Bird with others to share the fun; start out with an experienced birder.
- Point out locations using a clock method
- Locate birds first by spotting the bird without binoculars; lock your view and then lift the binoculars.
- Consult an Audubon Field Guide to identify your bird after the bird has flown away. Don't flip through the pages or consult your app as your bird escapes view.
- Talk about the new Audubon field guide apps for phones

#### **How else can people get involved with Audubon?**

- Join Audubon. Membership includes a subscription to *Audubon* magazine.
- More info [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)