

2024



NEW JERSEY
AUDUBON



Rules of Competition

These rules establish the standards and practices applied to the World Series of Birding (WSB) event. The rules are in fundamental accord with Big Day Count Rules established by the American Birding Association (ABA). Any differences have been made to meet the needs imposed by team competition.

All rules apply to Level I Bird Conservation and Level III Youth Birding Challenge teams as they are competing with others in their categories. Some categories may have additional rules that need to be followed. If in doubt, ask the event organizers.

Level II NJ Audubon Ambassador teams that are birding together should comply with these rules. However, since they are not competing with other teams for awards based on their final species count, certain rules may not apply. For example, 95% Rule are not possible when teams are dispersed across states or countries.

New Jersey Audubon's World Series of Birding strives for inclusivity and welcomes all participants. Some rules have been modified or clarified toward this goal.

ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST BE FAMILIAR WITH THE RULES IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE. Failure in this regard may result in the disqualification of the team. First and foremost, if birds are intentionally disturbed to gain a verifiable identification (ID), team members may be banned from competition depending on the nature of the infraction, and at the discretion of the event organizers (see Section XI. Call of Foul and Protest, below).

I. Ethics

Each participant must maintain proper birding ethics at all times as defined in the ABA Code of Birding Ethics. However, the WSB does not allow the use of electronic or recorded calls to attract birds or entice them to vocalize. This includes iPhones, iPads, any hand-held phones, or similar devices. Using such devices may result in the elimination of the entire team. Only "pishing" is allowed.

Teams should be able to identify species by sight or sound unaided. Tools such as Merlin ID, birding by ear recordings and field guides may be used to confirm or negate an identification, but not as the primary source of the identification.

Electronic aids can be used for identification while practicing and during scouting.

Teams and individual team members visiting private properties, National Wildlife Refuges (NWR), Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) or other identified places must abide by the landowners'

rules and regulations including securing permits and adhering to up-to-date access instructions.

The exception to the paragraph above is Great Swamp NWR. Refuge management has ask that the WSB organizers supply the names and license plate numbers for those wishing to explore the refuge during off hours or to gain access to areas that are otherwise off limits. Please contact the organizers if you plan to visit Great Swamp for the purposes of the WSB between Monday, May 6th and Saturday, May 11th.

The primary interests of all teams should be the welfare of the birds and safety of all participants. No birds, especially endangered, threatened or sensitive species, such as raptors and birds on nests, may be disturbed or harassed at any time before or during the event. While not a complete list, harassment/disturbance includes getting too close to sensitive species such as nesting raptors, flushing birds from nests or cavities or wet areas, and/or spotlighting birds during nighttime hours. See New Jersey's Listing of State and Federally Endangered and Threatened Species <https://www.nj.gov/dep/fgw/tandespp.htm>, or the comparable list in your state. Documentation of disturbance or harassment may lead to team disqualification, as well as the potential for team members to be barred from WSB competition. If you witness a participant disturbing birds, you should lodge a "Call of Foul." See information at the end of this document.

II. Participants – What Makes a Team?

All participants must be listed on a team via online registration by 12 midnight on Friday, May 10th. Online registrations and submitted checklists are time stamped.

Team Members and Ages

Teams consist of varying numbers of people depending on their level of competition. An individual can be part of only one team.

- Bird Conservation Challenge (Level I) – team members must be at least 18 years of age. Teams must consist of a minimum of 3, but not more than 6 members. Designated drivers are not included in the team total.
- NJ Audubon (NJA) Ambassador Challenge (Level II) – team members can be any age. Teams can be as few as 1 person and there is no upper limit of the number of members as long as all are active participants.
- Youth Birding Challenge (Level III): – team members are designated in their category by grade (or equivalent). Teams must consist of a minimum of 3, but not more than 6 members. Designated drivers and/or mentors are not included in the team total.

Designated Drivers are part of the team ONLY as drivers. They may not alter or contribute to the route or strategy of the team or identify species while acting as drivers. Designated drivers may be added or released at any time.

III. Team Conduct

Teams must have a minimum of three individuals in the field at all times, excluding designated drivers or youth mentors. This rule does not apply to NJ Audubon Ambassadors (Level II).

Team members need not remain together for the entire 24-hour period. One or more team members may leave the team at any point during the competition. Members may join the team in accordance with the following stipulations:

Team members may leave for reasons of health, fatigue or safety, and can return as they are able. The 95% rule is applied to the remaining team members in their absence.

Team members must remain at distances that permit direct, unamplified voice contact at all times. Yelling and shouting disturbs birds and fellow participants.

Any number of non-birding participants may accompany the team, but these participants may not assist the team in any way in the location or identification of birds.

IV. Geographic Area

Level I and Level III teams must conduct their counts only within the boundaries of the State of New Jersey. Level II teams can count birds in any location and in more than one geographic area.

A team may cross into a neighboring state for convenience, or expedience, but no bird may be counted until the team member is back in New Jersey.

In New Jersey, birds seen in the Delaware or Hudson Rivers may be counted providing the observer is standing in New Jersey or short of midpoint on any bridge.

Birds seen in the Delaware Bay or in the Atlantic Ocean to a distance of 100 miles may be counted as long as the team member is within New Jersey territorial waters.

Any Level I team not designating a category at registration will be automatically included under the Boundless Birding category totals. Teams can only compete in one category.

V. Travel during WSB

All vehicles except aircraft may be used during the competition. Those competing in the Carbon Footprint Cup or Carbon Free Kids categories may not use any motorized conveyances from the time they begin birding until they finish. (See clarifications under these categories).

Participants are not required to travel in the same vehicle, so long as team members are within unamplified voice range when identifying birds.

All team members must comply with the traffic rules and laws that apply to their state. Failure to do so will result in team disqualification.

VI. Reporting and Using eBird

Each team must appoint an official designee who will finalize the team's checklist in eBird, which will be submitted as a Trip Report (see requirements for details). It is up to the teams to design their communications in a fashion that gets their total submitted before midnight (or within the designated timeframe for their youth division).

Teams participating in Level I Bird Conservation Challenge and the Level III Youth Birding Challenge, are required to use eBird Trip Reports.

Teams in the Level II NJ Audubon Ambassador Challenge are highly encouraged to use eBird Trip Reports even if team members are from more than one state. If absolutely necessary, NJ Audubon Ambassador Level II teams can email their final checklists to wsb@njudubon.org with the understanding that their results may not be reflected on the WSB website, nor included in the cumulative total.

VII. Counting and the 95% Rule

Birds counted must be alive, wild and unrestrained. Sick, injured or oiled birds may be counted if still at large in the countryside and not in captive confinement. Eggs do not count as birds.

Count only full species as defined and indicated by eBird. Non-native or re-established species may only be counted in accordance with the current Bird Records Committee list in your state. Flagged species must include a written description at minimum in eBird, and a photo or audio recording if possible. Flagged species do not appear as such in the final eBird Trip Report, but eBird will not add them to your list without additional information. All rarities will be vetted by the WSB Judge; the judge's decisions are final as they related to the WSB, even if they are later negated by an eBird reviewer.

If using the official, printed checklist for NJ (updated annually), birds that are deemed regionally restricted, generally rare or otherwise difficult to identify, are highlighted in red and will require additional documentation such as time of sighting (hh:mm am/pm) and location (general location, nearest town, and county). If "flagged" birds are ID'd in other states where they may be more common, please note "common in this area."

All birds tallied must be identified by at least two members of the team. Identifications made by just a single team member may not be counted.

Audio enhancement devices, other than personal hearing aids, may not be used.

Electronic or recorded bird calls may ONLY be used to assist in the identification of birds when not actively birding outdoors (i.e. it is OK when indoors, sitting in a vehicle, traveling between destinations, etc.). Online and phone app-based products may not be consulted until the team or team member has made its identification. They may be used after the fact to confirm or negate the ID. If there is any question, the bird should not be counted.

The use of spotlights, Q-beams or other bright hand-held lights is strictly prohibited at any time during the competition. Small, handheld flashlights may be used as needed for personal safety only (i.e. walking trails or local streets at night).

A bird identified as to one of a species or group (i.e. scaup either greater or lesser) may be counted as a species, if no other bird in that group appears on your list. FOR EXAMPLE: Scaup, sp. counts as one bird. Greater Scaup and Scaup, sp. still counts as one bird. Greater Scaup and Lesser Scaup count as two species. Species not noted on eBird should be noted in the Team comments and/or via an email sent to wsb@njudubon.org prior to midnight on May 11th, such as "WSB Total 151, 150 on eBird plus 1 scaup sp."

The 95% Rule: Ninety-five percent of all birds recorded by a team (by sight or sound) must be identified by all members of the team. However, it is not necessary for all team members to record the same individual bird of any species.

Example: For every twenty birds recorded, one bird may be counted that was heard or seen by fewer than every member of the team, but by at least two members.

Example: Three team members ID a Belted Kingfisher and the fourth does not, the 95% rule applies. If the fourth team member later identifies a different Belted Kingfisher, the 95% rule can be lifted and the species has been recorded unanimously as long as the second bird was identified by at least one other team member as well.

Example: Nocturnal Flight Calls (NFCs) present challenges to even the most experienced

birders. A team may have one or two NFC experts, but unless all team members can confirm the ID based on sound alone, the species should be counted as a 95% bird if it is identified by at least two team members, or not counted if it is identified by only one team member.

Birds must be conclusively identified by sight or sound. Team members who are legally blind do not have to identify birds that are not vocalizing. These birds can be counted by the team, and don't qualify toward the 95% rule when all remaining team members agree on the ID. Team members who communicate primarily using American Sign Language (ASL) or who use a Cochlear implant do not have to identify birds that are 'heard only' birds. These birds can be counted by the team, and don't qualify toward the 95% rule when all remaining members agree on the ID.

VIII. Sharing Information

While the World Series of Birding is a competitive event, the event organizers encourage collaboration and sharing of information using open-source or globally-accessible platforms such as eBird, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other non-pay-for-service listserves and bird alerts, such as the WSB What's App. It is prohibited to privately share information between individuals other than team members or between members of one or two teams (i.e. texting a sighting to a participant on another team without sharing broadly). NOTE: World Series of Birding event organizers accept no responsibility for unverified bird sightings announced to the public; use of open-source information is a risk that is the sole responsibility of the team.

Certain locations are likely to be occupied by more than one team at a time, such as the Cape May Springwatch platform, Heislerville WMA and/or Forsythe NWR. It is inevitable, and natural, and good that birders help one another. Whenever possible, birds being shared by participants in proximity to each other should also be shared with all on a globally-accessible platform, such as the GroupMe chat group set up by the WSB organizers.

No participant shall pre-arrange to have someone scout ahead on the day of the event to tell them about staked out birds.

IX. World Series of Birding Branding Requirements

All teams are required to refer to this event as "New Jersey Audubon's World Series of Birding." Teams raising funds for organizations other than New Jersey Audubon must be officially registered for the event, follow all rules, and reference the event properly while using the official logo. Please see Branding Requirements on the Rules/Forms tab on the WSB website.

X. Checklist Submission and Team Totals

All competing teams must submit their final list for the day on eBird using the Trip Report function and following the naming protocols outlined in the instructions.

Checklists from Level II NJA Ambassador teams should be submitted via eBird, but if necessary, they can be emailed to wsb@njudubon.org. Email submissions will be time stamped but may not be reflected in the results in time for the Sunday Awards Brunch. In case of duplicate transmissions, the earliest time stamped document is the only one accepted. If you are unfamiliar with the email process or eBird, be sure to test them at least one week prior to the event, and clearly mark TEST on any email.

Totals are considered final when they are submitted. NO alterations or corrections may be made after checklists have been submitted via eBird or emailed to wsb@njudubon.org.

In the event of a tie between two teams in a competitive category (Levels I and III), the recognition will be shared.

XI. Call of Foul and Protest

Note: A Call of Foul relates to a team or individual not following the rules, whereas a Protest means contesting a team's species total. Any decision of the review panel is considered final.

The WSB strives to maintain the highest ethical standards. All participants in this event are, by the nature of their participation, committed to this ideal. Likewise, accuracy and honesty are fundamental to birding and this event.

If a team or individual team member is perceived to be NOT following WSB rules (either during scouting or on the day of the event), a Call of Foul can be brought to WSB event organizers for review and action. In the event that any team's total is for whatever reasons suspect, any *registered* WSB participant may file a "protest" with WSB event organizers. Allegations will be reviewed by a panel of New Jersey Audubon staff and other individuals deemed necessary to review the protest and make a determination.

During the scouting period one week prior to the event, any rules violation should be reported immediately in the form of a written Call of Foul sent to wsb@njudubon.org. Action in the form of a warning or penalty to the team or individual in question will be determined by the WSB event organizers. Photographic and/or video documentation, as well as the corroboration of others, will be taken into consideration. The final decision is the sole responsibility of WSB event organizers.

If a violation occurs during the event, a written Call of Foul must be received by event organizers no later than 5pm on the Tuesday following the event. The affected team's Captain will be given 5 business days to present a defense of the allegations and the WSB panel will make a ruling within 5 business days of receipt. Because of time considerations, a Call of Foul or Protest may not affect team standings in the days following the event. However, if the evidence warrants, the panel is empowered to adjust a team's standing and/or disqualify a team at a later date.

In the event allegations related to a Call of Foul are found to have substance, the team and its members, or an individual team member, will be banned from WSB participation for a minimum of one year. If the infraction is assessed to have given the team unfair advantage, their record for the year in which the infraction occurred will be voided.

In the event that allegations related to a "protest" are found to have substance, then the following may happen depending on severity: 1) the team's total is adjusted to delete suspect birds from the team list, 2) the team is disqualified; its total, standing and any awards nullified, and/or 3) the team and/or its members may be banned from any number of future competitions.

Final Reminders

Team members must be familiar with the rules of the competition before the event and abide by them to the best of their ability.

Team members must count only birds personally and unquestionably identified.

No team or individual team member may intentionally harass or disturb a bird or flush or drive into hiding any bird to prevent another team from finding it.

This is a family-friendly event, and all participants must comport themselves accordingly.

Teams participating as a group together must remain within voice contact at a conversational level of all other members at all times while birding.

Drivers should be just that, driving and paying attention to road conditions, speed limits and other safety considerations.

Alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs or substances, and weapons of any kind are strictly prohibited at this event.

All participants must practice common sense health and safety measures throughout the event.

Have FUN!