

# 2026

## Team Mentor Guidelines



**New Jersey Audubon's World Series of Birding is the nation's premier Big Day event for bird conservation. In the past, teams have come from around the US and the world to compete and enjoy the camaraderie of the WSB. The role of the Mentor is particularly important.**



Webster's Dictionary defines a mentor as follows:

*"Someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person."*

A youth birding mentor could be a teacher, a parent or an interested birder who knows the birds well enough to help a team of students learn bird identification. WSB youth birding mentors or teachers working with teams in grades 1 through 8 have additional responsibilities as follows:

1. Ensure that all youth team members are familiar with the WSB rules of competition and the Zeiss Youth Challenge Rules.
2. Ensure that all youth team members are familiar with the ABA Code of Birding Ethics.
3. Instill an appreciation of nature.
4. Elicit enthusiasm for participating in the WSB.
5. Monitor the youth team members' identification of birds during the WSB, and double check the accuracy of the list.
6. If mentoring a youth team in Division A or Division B, the mentor is responsible for submitting the final list.

The ideal situation would be for the mentor to work with the youth team on a regular basis in preparing for the WSB. This could be weekly or biweekly, with the mentor teaching birding identification skills in the field and/or in a home or meeting place. Even meeting only once before the event can be beneficial to help youth teams get ready as they plan their strategy and learn to work together.

Perhaps the most critical role of the mentor is teaching the importance of maintaining the highest quality of birding ethics. In the field, there are no "bird police" that monitor correct bird identification. Youth need to understand that their integrity about bird identification is paramount. Making ID mistakes is easy to do and is expected. However, youth need to fully understand that each bird must be individually identified on that day, preferably by sight in addition to song. It is up to the mentor and the

participant's team mates to question any dubious calls. Accepting questionable identifications (i.e., "because it was there yesterday," etc.) is against the rules.

The mentor has the responsibility to help the young birders monitor the accuracy of their identification. He/she is also obligated to remove a species if it is clear the ID is incorrect. For example, if a team member comes to a consensus on the identification of a bird, and the mentor knows it is wrong, the mentor should state such, the bird is not counted, and the team should move on. Teams should not engage in a guessing game with the mentor when it comes to species identification. If a team member encounters that species again and identifies it correctly, it can then go on the list.