

Zeiss Youth Birding Challenge



New Jersey Audubon encourages schools, scouts, youth groups, environmental clubs, science clubs, education centers, and, most importantly, dedicated adult mentors to enter a team in the Youth Division of the World Series of Birding (WSB).

New Jersey Audubon's WSB team and education staff will work with any groups interested in participating in the WSB to help them get started. The WSB can be a tremendous educational experience as well as a fund raiser for the team's selected conservation program.

The WSB Youth Challenge is open to all youth groups within Grades 1 thru 12. If you are a youth in Grades 1 thru 12 and want to participate and do not have a team to join (WSB rules state that a team must consist of at least three members), please contact NJ Audubon well in advance of the event and we will work hard to help find a suitable team.

All Youth Challenge teams must have a mentor, whose role is outlined later in this document.

Youth teams who are competing to win these divisions MUST use the phone app to record their sightings.



Youth Challenge Divisions and Geographic Coverage

There are four different divisions that youth teams can enter for the WSB:

Division A: Elementary School: Grades 1 thru 5. (No team member shall be past 5th grade on the day of the event.)

Teams can bird in one location, such as a local park or on school grounds, or can expand their geographic coverage up to any two adjacent New Jersey counties. This rule is designed to encourage more birding and less time in a vehicle.

Hours of Competition: 5am to 8pm

Division B: Middle School: Grades 6 thru 8. (No team member shall be past 8th grade on the day of the event.)

Teams can bird in one location, such as a local park or on school grounds, or can expand their geographic coverage up to any four adjacent New Jersey counties. This rule is designed to encourage more birding and less time in a vehicle.

Hours of Competition: 3am to 10pm

Division C: High School: Grades 9 thru 12. (No team member shall be past 12th grade on the day of the event.)

Teams can bird anywhere in the state, and may attempt to cover "the whole state." The mentor can be the designated driver. No high school team members may be drivers.

Division D: Carbon Free Kids Challenge: Grades 6 thru 12. (No team member shall be past 12th grade on the day of the event.)

Teams compete from dawn to dusk, which we have defined as from 5:00 am until 8:00 pm

Carbon Free Kids will abide by the same rules as the adult teams participating in the Carbon Footprint Cup, and must be accompanied by a mentor who is also willing to abide by the Carbon Footprint rules.

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When participating in the Carbon Footprint Cup (CFC) or the Carbon Free Kids Challenge (CFKC) teams can walk, run, bike, skate, row a boat, kayak, etc., but cannot use any mode of motorized transportation while finding species.

CARBON FREE KIDS RULES

(same as Carbon Footprint rules):

All competition rules and ethics apply along with the following:

1. Under Rules of Competition, Rule IV Travel (a & c) does not apply within the CFC category. Once a team is in place and has begun birding, no mode of motorized transportation may be used. Team members may walk, run, bike, skate, use any type of non-motorized boat (canoe, kayak, etc.) or any combination throughout the event. Motorized transportation may be used only up to the point when the team begins birding and after the team has stopped birding for the event.
2. Any CFC team member operating or riding in any motorized transportation during the course of the competition will disqualify the entire team. The exception would be as stated under Rules II Participants (c) as long as there is a minimum of three team members remaining.

Carbon Free Kids teams are encouraged to have a support team. For example, a team may wish to bike in some places and hike in other places, and it is acceptable for the support team to move the bikes and/or keep an eye on the bikes. Carbon Free Kids support teams are not permitted to accompany the team in a vehicle all day, because that defeats the purpose of the Carbon Footprint Challenge.

The Role and Responsibilities of the Youth Team Mentor in the World Series of Birding

New Jersey Audubon's World Series of Birding is the nation's premier Big Day event for bird conservation. Teams come from around the US and the world to compete and enjoy the camaraderie of the WSB. The youth that come to participate get swept up in the fun of the event and the attention that they receive from the best birders in the nation. New Jersey Audubon has developed a mentor program to assist these youth in developing birding skills and birding ethics that will last a lifetime.

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 to identify birds. WSB youth birding mentors or teachers have additional responsibilities as follows:

1. Ensure that all youth team members are familiar with the WSB rules of competition and the Youth Challenge Rules, which follow in this document.
2. Maintain the safety of the youth at all times.
3. Ensure that all youth team members are familiar with the ABA code of ethics.
4. Instill an appreciation of nature.
5. Elicit an enthusiasm for participating in the WSB.
6. Monitor the youth team members' identification of birds during the WSB.

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The ideal situation would be for the mentor to work with the youth team on a regular basis in preparing for the WSB. This would be weekly or biweekly with the mentor teaching birding identification skills in the field and/or in a home or meeting place. Even meeting once a month can be beneficial to help youth teams get ready as they plan their route 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, by all team members, and that accepting questionable identifications (i.e., "because it was there yesterday", etc.) is bad form.

The mentor has the responsibility to help the young birders monitor the accuracy of their identification and the obligation to remove a species if they know the ID is incorrect. For example, if a team comes to a consensus on the identification of a bird, and the mentor knows it is wrong, the bird will not be counted, and the team should move on. If they encounter that species again and identify it correctly, it can go on the list. Teams should not engage in a guessing game when it comes to species identification.

Youth Challenge Rules

The following rules govern youth team participation:

- a. All Youth Challenge Teams must be accompanied by a mentor, who may or may not be the driver.
- b. School groups doing the WSB as part of their school curriculum may participate on a regular school day within the week preceding the official WSB date. All checklists must be received in accordance with WSB rules. Teachers and/or mentors are to monitor bird identification for accuracy but not help in identification in any manner.
- c. Teams may be comprised of mixed ages, grades, schools or groups. Teams must compete within the age division as stated above, with any team competing in the age group of its oldest team member. No exceptions will be granted.

- d. Youth teams must be familiar with and follow all of the general rules for competition in the WSB.
- e. Adults over the age of 21 may accompany the team but cannot participate, aid or contribute in location or identification of birds in any manner or the team will be disqualified.
- f. The WSB rules for a Designated Driver apply to all youth teams.

Entry Fees Explanation

Youth team entry fees are specified in Exhibit A. Independent youth team registration is just \$15 per member. However, if teams wish to purchase the official WSB shirt (\$20) or attend the Awards Brunch (\$25 per person), expenses can add up. Local businesses can help with these costs so be sure to seek out community support early and often!

Some youth teams have obtained corporate sponsorship. (Please see the rules concerning team sponsorship and what is required of the sponsor.) Sponsorship in conjunction with a participating Bird Conservation Challenge (Level I) sponsored team is also a possibility. We encourage youth teams to try to find a sponsor.

Fundraising for Your Conservation Cause

One of the founding principles of the WSB is that registered teams raise funds for the conservation cause of their choice. The WSB is a perfect opportunity to raise funds for a butterfly garden in a local park or school grounds; a science project within your school; setting up a bird feeding station at a local nursing home; or a clean-up project at a local watershed.

Another alternative is to donate the money you raise to one of the New Jersey Audubon centers by visiting the WSB website and making a pledge to any of the Center or Century Run teams.

Last but not least, have fun! ■