

World Series of Birding

May 14, 2022

Rules of Competition



(Updated as of March 8, 2022)

The following rules apply to both competitive and non-competitive teams.

These rules establish the standards and practices under which ALL World Series of Birding participants must comply. The rules are in fundamental accord with Big Day Count Rules established by the American Birding Association (ABA). Changes, where they occur, have been made to meet the needs imposed by team competition. Note that some categories of competition may have additional rules that govern participation in that category. Youth team members, and mentors, must familiarize themselves with the rules and information listed in the [Zeiss Youth Birding Challenge](#) document.

ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST BE FAMILIAR WITH AND COMPLY WITH ALL OF THE RULES IN ORDER TO COMPETE IN THE WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING. Failure in this regard may result in the disqualification of the team. In addition, if birds are intentionally disturbed in order to gain a verifiable ID, team members may be banned from competition the subsequent year or more, depending on the nature of the infraction, and at the discretion of the event organizers (see Section X. [Call of Foul and Protest](#), below).

I. Ethics

- a. Each participant must maintain proper birding ethics at all times as defined in the ABA Code of Birding Ethics <https://www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics/>, with the following exception to the use of recorded/digital sound;
 - Electronic or recorded bird calls (such as iPhones, iPads, any hand-held phones, or similar tools) may not be used to attract birds or entice them to vocalize during the WSB event. To do so will result in elimination of the entire team if reported. Only “pishing” is allowed.
- b. Teams and individual team members visiting National Wildlife Refuges, Wildlife Management Areas or the equivalent, private properties and other identified places must abide by the landowners’ own rules and regulations. For those planning to visit the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and/or certain areas in the Meadowlands in New Jersey, please be aware of the latest access instructions. In short, all teams must obtain whatever permits may be necessary for various spots in their own state.
- c. Although electronic aids can be used for practice and during scouting, they are prohibited as a primary means of identifying species during the World Series of Birding. 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. Use them just as you would have a field guide book, when that was the only thing at your fingertips.

II. Participants – What Makes a Team?

- a. In order to compete in any of the Level I: Bird Conservation Challenge award categories, ALL team members must be 19 years of age or older.
- b. Teams must consist of a minimum of three but not more than six registered members (except for the NJ Ambassador Challenge Level II where a team can consist of only one person, and there is no upper limit on the number of team members) as long as all team members are active participants and are able to maintain appropriate COVID safety protocols on the day of the event. Drivers and Designated drivers, if any, and mentors, are not included in the team member

- total.
- c. All participants must be listed on a team via online registration by 12 midnight on Friday, May 13th. Online registrations and submitted checklists are time stamped.
 - d. An individual can be part of only one team.
 - e. 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:
 - i. Teams will at all times be comprised of a minimum of three individuals in the field, not including designated drivers or mentors.
 - ii. Team members joining a team already in the field must do so before 4 AM. These team members may not have used the time between midnight and 4 AM for scouting, or the team will be disqualified.
 - iii. Designated drivers may be added or released at any time. Designated drivers cannot alter or contribute to the route or strategy of the team. Their job is strictly to drive.
 - iv. Team members leaving the team for reasons of health, fatigue, appointment (whatever) cannot rejoin the team during the competition, but will remain an official member of the team. This includes drivers who are “birding” members of the team, not acting in a role of strictly designated driver. The team will remain competitive as long as there are three individuals in the field, not including designated drivers or mentors.
 - v. Team members must remain at distances that permit direct, unamplified voice contact at all times.
 - f. Driver vs. Designated Driver: A team member can also be the team driver. However, when driving, the team member may not participate in identifying birds – they are driving. A designated driver is not a team member in terms of identifying birds. Designated drivers may not alter or contribute to the route or strategy of the team or identify species while acting as drivers. Their job is strictly to drive, as directed by the team.
 - g. Each team must appoint an official designee who will finalize 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 the designated time limit for their youth division).
 - h. Any number of non-birding participants may accompany the team members, but these participants may not assist the team in any way in the location or identification of birds.

III. Using eBird

In 2022, New Jersey Audubon will be using eBird Trip Reports for all teams to input their official WSB tally and submit their final list at the conclusion of their birding for the event. Teams who wish to participate in the Level I Bird Conservation Challenge as well as the Level III Zeiss Youth Birding Challenge, are required to use eBird. Teams in the Level II NJ Audubon Ambassador Challenge are also required to use eBird. Every team must select one person to review and finalize the team checklist in the Trip Report function, 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. If a team does not use eBird, its results may not be reflected on the WSB website, and its results will not be included in the cumulative total.

IV. Geographic Area

- a. Only birds tallied by participants conducting their count within their chosen state or area may be added to their checklist and counted, except Level II teams, whose members may be in more than one state.
- b. A team member may cross into another state for convenience, or expedience, but no bird may be counted until the team member is back within its chosen state.
- c. 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. The same applies to participants in states that have river borders or are linked to another state by a bridge over a river or bay.

- d. 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. The same holds true for coastal states on the Atlantic Flyway.
- e. Teams can only compete in one category. Any Level I team not designating a category at registration will be automatically included under the Boundless Birding category totals.

V. Travel during WSB

- a. All vehicles except aircraft may be used during the competition. Those competing in the Carbon Footprint Cup or Zeiss Carbon Free Kids categories may not use any motorized conveyances from the time they begin birding until they finish. (See clarifications under these categories).
- b. Participants are not required to travel in the same vehicle, so long as team members are within unamplified voice range when identifying birds.
- c. 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. Counting

- a. 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 state 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. 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.
- b. Birds must be conclusively identified by sight or sound. 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 14th, such as "WSB Total 151, 150 on eBird plus 1 scaup sp."
- c. 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.
- d. Electronic or recorded bird calls (such as iPhones, iPads, any hand-held phones, or similar tools) may not be used to attract birds or entice them to vocalize during the WSB event. To do so will result in elimination of the entire team if reported. Pishing is allowed.
- e. Audio enhancement devices, other than personal hearing aids, may not be used.
- f. 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 the ID. If there is any question, the bird should not be counted.
- g. 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).
- h. 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.
- i. Ninety-five percent of all birds recorded by a team must be tallied and identified by all members of the team. In essence, it means that for every twenty birds recorded, one bird may

be counted that was heard or seen by fewer than every member of the team, but at least two. It is not necessary for all team members to record the same individual bird of any species. For example, if 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.

- j. The WSB species list was created with New Jersey birding at peak spring migration in mind. It is useful as a reference tool and can be used in the field prior to submitting your list on eBird. Birders in other states should seek a similar list for reference, and share it with the organizers and on a public forum associated with the WSB.
- k. Birds that are deemed regionally restricted, generally rare or otherwise difficult to identify, will require additional documentation such as time of sighting (hh:mm am/pm) and location (general location, nearest town, and county). In New Jersey, these birds are “flagged” on the official WSB checklist with space to provide the information. If “flagged” birds are ID’d in other states where they may be more common, please note “common in this area.”
- l. The primary interest of all teams should be the welfare of the birds. 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. 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, in the form of a Call of Foul or Protest, will lead to a team disqualification, as well as the potential for team members to be barred from WSB competition the following year or more. While not a complete list, harassment/disturbance includes getting too close to sensitive species such as nesting raptors, flushing birds from nests or cavities, and/or spotlighting birds during nighttime hours. If you witness a participant disturbing birds, you should lodge a “[Call of Foul](#).” See Section X below.

VII. Outside Information

- a. 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 What’s App that is specifically set up for the WSB. It is strictly 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). 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.
- b. No participant shall pre-arrange to have someone scout ahead on the day of the event to tell them about staked out birds.

VIII. World Series of Birding Branding Requirements

- a. 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.

IX. Checklist Submission and Team Totals

- a. 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. Further details about the WSB eBird process are forthcoming. Checklists from non-competing teams also 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 e-mail process or eBird, be sure to test them at least one week prior to the event, and clearly mark TEST on any email.

- b. 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.
- c. In the event of a tie between two teams in a category that is competitive in 2022, the recognition will be shared.

X. 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.

The World Series of Birding 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.

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. 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.
- e. The decision of the review panel is considered final.

XI. Conduct – Final Reminders

- a. Team members must be familiar with the rules of the competition before the event and abide by them at all times.
- b. Team members must count only birds personally and unquestionably identified.
- c. 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.

- d. This is a family-friendly event and all participants must comport themselves accordingly.
- e. Team members must remain within voice contact at a conversational level of all other members at all times while birding.
- f. Alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs or substances, and weapons of any kind are strictly prohibited at this event.
- g. All team members must conduct themselves within the COVID-19 restrictions in place in their state and area on the day of the event, and practice common sense safety measures throughout the event.