



Rules for the 1st Annual

Virginia Birding Classic

Team members must be familiar and willing to comply with the following rules of the Virginia Birding Classic before the event.

I. Participants

- 1) The Virginia Birding Classic is open to all birders.
- 2) All team members must register and pay registration fee in order to compete. There is no fee for registrants under the age of 16, but they still must register. All proceeds go to the [Virginia Wildlife Grant Program](#).
- 3) Teams must consist of at least three (3) but no more than six (6) participants.
- 4) Mentors, chaperones, and non-birding support people may accompany the team without registering, but these participants may not assist the team in any way with the identification of birds. All registration forms and registration fee payments must be received by **April 1, 2024**.
- 5) The Virginia Birding Classic takes place between **12:00am April 15** and **11:59pm May 15, 2024** in any **CONSECUTIVE** 24-hour period within those dates.

II. Conduct

- 1) Each team must count only birds identified beyond a doubt by either sight or sound.
- 2) Team members must remain at distances which permit direct, unamplified voice contact at all times. Voice contact is defined as shouting distance. Electronic communication in any form is prohibited. This includes CB radios, hand-held radios, cell phones, texting, etc.
- 3) No team may intentionally flush or drive into hiding any bird to prevent another team from finding it. The well-being of the bird is paramount. Any actions that intentionally harms birds or damages their habitat will result in immediate disqualification and could result in legal action at the federal and/or state level(s).

- 4) Team members must follow federal, state, county, and municipal laws as well as all park rules and regulations and are responsible for any permits, passes, or fees required for access to public properties.

III. Counting

- 1) Count only full species as defined by the current [Virginia Society of Ornithology \(VSO\) Official State Checklist](#).
- 2) Birds counted must be alive, wild, and unrestrained. Eggs or nests do not count as birds.
- 3) Birds must be sighted or heard while the birder is within public land boundaries. This includes federal, state, county, and municipal public parks during regular or expressly permitted open hours. If a bird is seen or heard from within the park then it is countable, even if the bird itself is outside of park boundaries.
- 4) All birds must be identified by at least two members of a team.
- 5) The use of a light source to identify a bird is prohibited. Small, handheld flashlights can be used as a light source as needed for personal safety (i.e., while walking on trails).
- 6) Birds must be conclusively identified by sight or sound. A bird identified as 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. Lesser scaup and *scaup* sp. still counts as just one bird species.
- 7) Electronic or recorded bird calls may not be used to attract birds or entice them to vocalize during or prior to the event. Bird call recordings and mobile phone apps may only be used to help in the identification of birds, but they may not be audible in the field and are restricted to vehicles or earbuds/headphones. Pishing and other bird sounds made by mouth are acceptable.

IV. Travel

- 1) Boating is allowed on navigable inland waterways provided boats are launched from public boat ramp. Off-shore boating is prohibited except within 200 yards of shore belonging to public property.
- 2) Birds sighted while driving outside of park boundaries do not count. Birds sighted while driving within park boundaries are admissible. ALL TRAFFIC LAWS MUST BE OBEYED AT ALL TIMES.

V. Ethics

- 1) Each participant is required to maintain proper birding ethics at all times as defined in the [ABA Code of Birding Ethics](#).
- 2) Teams are encouraged to share information with other teams during the event.
- 3) Any information received prior to or during the Birding Classic may be used.
- 4) A team which, in the course of the event, observes what it perceives to be an infraction of the Virginia Birding Classic Rules by another team may file a written protest to tournament administrators. The Virginia Birding Classic Leadership Team will consider the accusation and decide accordingly. The decision of the Leadership Team is final.

VI. Scoring

- 1) All teams must create or use an existing eBird account to submit the final team eBird trip report. Teams **must include their team name** in the "Comments" section of the "Step 2: Date and Effort" page of their eBird trip report submission.
- 2) Each team must submit ONE official team eBird trip report for their tournament day to Virginia eBird using the appropriate protocol option. See the "eBird Submissions" section of the website for further instructions.

- 3) Although we encourage team members to submit personal eBird checklists from each site visited to help support eBird's data collection, for the purposes of the Birding Classic's final records and judging, all teams must share **only one final cumulative team eBird Trip Report to VA Birding Classic staff via eBird**. Do not share a checklist for each site visited to the VA Birding Classic account. Do not submit a checklist or eBird Trip Report for each team member.
- 4) Final eBird trip reports must be submitted to the official Virginia Birding Classic eBird account—"VA_Birding_Classic"—via [eBird](#) by 11:59pm on May 17th.
- 5) Winning is accomplished by identifying the most species of birds in each tournament category.
- 6) If a species is listed as rare or accidental during spring migration for the region you are birding based on the [VSO Official State Checklist](#), additional documentation (photo or sound recording preferred) must be included within your eBird checklist and/or Trip Report. Teams can add these details on the checklist itself by using the "Add Details" button next to each bird needing additional documentation.

VII. Prize Categories

- 1) Winners' certificates will be awarded to the members of the winning team.
- 2) The winning team will have their team's name engraved on the trophy which will be prominently displayed for the following year in the Headquarters office of the Virginia Dept. of Wildlife Resources.