



Rules for the 2nd 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. All proceeds go to the [Virginia Wildlife Grant Program](#).
- 3) Each under-16 team member must be accompanied by an adult. There is no fee for registrants under the age of 16, but they still must register by having their team captain email max.goldman@dwr.virginia.gov with the name and birthdate of each under-16 participating team member and their registered accompanying adult.
- 4) Teams participating in “The Cardinal Cup” tournament category must consist of at least two (2) but no more than six (6) participants. Teams participating in “The Big Sit” tournament category must consist of at least 2 participants, with no maximum limit on the number of team members.
- 5) 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 10, 2025 at 11:59pm**.
- 6) All tournament categories within the Virginia Birding Classic take place between **12:00am April 15 and 11:59pm May 15, 2025** 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) **Know Before You Go:** 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. It is the participant’s responsibility to confirm operating hours and to confirm that there are no temporary closures at each property visited prior to arrival.

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 physically within public land boundaries. This includes federal, state, county, and municipal public parks during regular or expressly permitted open hours (know before you go). If a bird is seen or heard by participating team members 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 count as just one bird species.
- 7) Electronic, recorded, or mechanical 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 shoreline belonging to public property.
- 2) Birds sighted while driving outside of park boundaries do not count. Birds sighted by participating team members 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 Virginia 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 Rules Committee 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's 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 send a link to **only one final cumulative team eBird Trip Report to VA Birding Classic to max.goldman@dwr.virginia.gov** by 11:59pm on May 17th. Do not share a checklist for each site visited. Do not submit a checklist or eBird Trip Report for each team member.
- 4) If a species is listed as seasonally rare or accidental 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. Tournament Categories

The Cardinal Cup

- 1) Observations can be made only from within the boundaries of any property within the Commonwealth of Virginia that is owned by Federal, State, County, or Municipal governments AND that is open to the general public during the time visited by a participating team. To find locations, search public lands in Virginia using *Explore the Wild* at www.dwr.virginia.gov/explore.
- 2) There is no limit to the number of public properties visited during a team's Cardinal Cup attempt.
- 3) Your Cardinal Cup attempt can last as many hours as are convenient and fun within any consecutive 24-hour period during the VA Birding Classic.
- 4) Participants on your Cardinal Cup team can work in shifts. No one person needs to be there throughout the whole attempt, but there must be at least two team members participating the whole time, though not necessarily the same two.
- 5) If a bird is seen or heard by participating team members from within the public land boundary but is itself outside of that boundary, the bird may still be counted.
- 6) Keep track of the number of birds and species you observe using eBird via the guidance and guidelines within the "Counting" and "Scoring" sections of this document.
- 7) Should the record keeper need to leave, they should end their eBird session and a new record keeper should begin to log subsequent sightings. This can happen as many times as necessary, and all checklists should be submitted as a single trip report according to the instructions included in the eBird instructions (**LINK**).

The Big Sit

- 1) Observations can be made only from within your pre-determined 30-foot (9.2 meter) diameter circle.
- 2) Your circle may be in any Virginia public lands location you choose for the event. To find a location for your Big Sit, search public lands in Virginia using *Explore the Wild* at www.dwr.virginia.gov/explore.
- 3) If a bird is seen or heard from within the circle but is too distant to identify, you can leave the circle to get a closer look/listen to confirm the bird's identity. However, any new bird species seen or heard while confirming the original cannot be counted unless it's seen or heard by someone who stayed behind in your circle or you see it again when you return to your circle.
- 4) Your Big Sit can last as many hours as are convenient and fun within any consecutive 24-hour period during the VA Birding Classic.
- 5) Participants in your circle can work in shifts. No one person needs to be there throughout the whole Big Sit, but there must be at least two people within the circle the whole time.
- 6) Keep track of all participants and the hours they spend in the circle and submit that information along with your species list.
- 7) Keep track of the number of birds and species you observe using eBird via the guidance and guidelines within the "Counting" and "Scoring" sections of this document.
- 8) Should the record keeper need to leave, they should end their eBird session and a new record keeper should be identified and begin to log subsequent sightings. This can happen as many times as necessary, and all checklists should be submitted as a single trip report according to the instructions included in the eBird instructions (**LINK**).

VIII. Challenge Categories

Within each tournament category, there are multiple opportunities to be recognized.

- 1) People-powered Challenge Award is granted to the team within the Cardinal Cup tournament category that identifies the most species using only human-powered transportation to travel between 3 or more public properties.
 - a. For the purposes of the Virginia Birding Classic, “human-powered” means travel by foot, non-motorized bicycle, or by non-motorized watercraft. If you would like your team to be considered for this challenge, please submit an email describing your birding day and how you traveled to max.goldman@dwr.virginia.gov with the subject heading “People-powered Challenge 2025”.
 - b. Travel to the first of the three or more locations visited may be accomplished by motorized vehicle, but there can be no more vehicle travel from that point on. Once the Cardinal Cup attempt is completed, motorized travel may be resumed regardless of where the attempt ends.
 - i. For instance, a team may leave a vehicle in the lot of a public park in which they intend to end their Cardinal Cup attempt, drive to the parking area of a public park to meet and begin their Cardinal Cup attempt, and travel by foot, bicycle, or paddle craft to 2 or more other public parks. Once the Cardinal Cup attempt has concluded, the team can shuttle via vehicle back to their starting location.
- 2) Regional Challenge Award is granted to the team within each tournament category that finishes their attempt with the most species identified in each Region as defined by DWR. To find which of the four (4) DWR regions applies to your sightings, refer to the map found by visiting this URL: dwr.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/media/DWR-Region-Map.pdf. Four Regional Award winners will be recognized for each tournament category.
- 3) Generation Gap Challenge Award is given to the team within each tournament category that has the largest age gap between the youngest and oldest team members. If you would like your team to be considered for this challenge, please submit the birthdays of each team member via email to max.goldman@dwr.virginia.gov with the subject heading “Generation Gap Challenge 2025”.

IX. Prizes

The Cardinal Cup

- 1) The Cardinal Cup Grand Prize goes to the team that finishes their 24-hours of birding with the most species and consists of the following:
- 2) Each member of the winning team will get to choose from a list of DWR Wildlife Experiences that only we can offer! Check the Virginia Birding Classic webpage for more information.
- 3) A year-long membership to the Virginia Society of Ornithology and a VSO hat.
- 4) Recognition throughout the Virginia birding community via multiple outlets.
- 5) The winning team’s name and their year of victory will be etched into history on the coveted Cardinal Cup.

The Big Sit

The Big Sit Grand Prize goes to the team that finishes their 24-hours of birding with the most species and consists of the following:

- 1) Winners’ certificates to the members of the winning team.
- 2) Recognition throughout the Virginia birding community via multiple outlets.

Challenge Categories

The team that wins each challenge category will receive recognition in the form of a winners’ certificate and acknowledgement on public webpages and social media accounts touting their achievement