

Shaver 's Creek Birding Cup Rules and Guidelines of the Competition

The Birding Cup is our annual fundraising event to support educational programming, related research projects, and care for our resident hawks, eagles, and owls. Although there is no participation fee, in the spirit of the fundraiser and to help defer costs, teams are encouraged to solicit pledges and contributions to support bird-related programs. In lieu of outside support, teams can simply make an in-kind donation.

The Birding Cup is awarded to the team that counts the most bird species during the 24 hours of the event. The following set of rules establishes the standards and practices under which all Birding Cup participants must comply. The rules are adapted from the Big Day Count rules established by the American Birding Association and the World Series of Birding. All participants must be familiar with and willing to comply with all of the rules in order to compete in the Birding Cup.

I. Participants

- Teams must consist of a minimum of three individuals at all times. Submit a list of members **no later than four days prior to the start**, and include the level of competition (see below). Please call or email Doug Wentzel with questions and to register your team at 814-863-2000 or djw105@psu.edu.
- In addition to the Birding Cup, teams may compete for the County Cup (see [rule III 2.](#) for more details), the Potter Mug (if the team has more than half of its members with fewer than two years' bird watching experience), or the Birding Boot (birding by nonmotorized means). Teams in this last category may use a vehicle before the count begins and travel to the finish line after the counting has stopped.
- In the event of a team winning both the Birding Cup and another category, the second place finisher for the other category is awarded that prize. For example, when a team stays within a single county yet still manages to record more species than any other team and is therefore awarded the Birding Cup, the County Cup goes to the team with the next highest tally that stayed within one county.
- Any number of nonbirding participants may join the team, but these participants may not assist the team in any way in the location or identification of birds. A designated driver who is a member may assist in the identification or location of birds, as long as they drive safely.
- Participants may join the team throughout the day, as long as the birds sighted and recorded are in accordance with the [counting rule IV 7.](#) For example, if your team started with five people, you should be tallying birds that are seen/heard by at least four team members. If you are joined by two additional members from noon to 3:00 p.m., the total team members that you now have is seven. In order to count a bird during that time frame, it must be seen by three-quarters of your team members, which would be at least six members. Members joining their team during the competition should not supply the team with information gathered after the start time.

II. Event Schedule

All counting must take place between 7:00 p.m. on Friday and 7:00 p.m. on Saturday — twenty-four hours. To allow for out-of-county travel, all teams **must** turn in their checklist at Shaver 's Creek Environmental Center by **7:30 p.m.** Saturday to be official and to enjoy food and good company. Visit www.shaverscreek.org for the exact Birding Cup dates.

Friday of Birding Cup

7:00 p.m. — Start counting!

Saturday of Birding Cup (usually the first Saturday in May)

8:30 a.m. — Coffee and tea available throughout the day at Shaver 's Creek.

7:00 p.m. — Stop counting.

7:30 p.m. — Turn in checklist.

7:00–9:00 p.m. — Share stories, review the checklist, enjoy food donated by Benjamin 's Catering, along with other snacks, and award the prizes!

III. Geographic Area

1. Only birds recorded in the following counties will count: Clearfield, Centre, Clinton, Mifflin, Juniata, Huntingdon, and Blair.
2. A team may compete for the County Cup by restricting their counting to one of the above counties. Teams should declare their intentions when they submit a list of team members four days prior to the start.
3. Teams may begin their route anywhere in the count area, but must finish counting promptly at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday.

IV. Counting

- Count only full species as indicated by the current checklist.
- Birds must be conclusively identified by sight or sound. A bird identified as one of a species or group (e.g., 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, spp. counts as one bird. Greater Scaup and scaup, sp. still counts as one bird.
- Introduced or reintroduced species may be counted, providing they appear on the current checklist.
- Birds counted must be alive, wild, and unrestrained. Sick or injured birds may be counted. Birds in cages, or eggs, do not count.

- Electronic or recorded birdcalls **may not** be used to attract birds or entice them to vocalize during Birding Cup. Bird recordings may be used to help in the identification of birds and may be included among your gear, but you may only use the recordings as a reference.
- All birds tallied must be identified by at least two members of the team. Identifications made by one team member do not count; but then again, you may have quick learners on your team!
- Any bird tallied must be seen and/or heard by at least three-quarters of the team members (or all members of a three-person team). So, if you have five members on your team, at least two people need to identify a tallied bird and at least four people have to hear and/or see the bird. It is not necessary for all team members to record the same individual bird. If three members of the team hear a Downy Woodpecker and a fourth person does not BUT manages to record another Downy Woodpecker later in the day, then Downy Woodpecker has been recorded successfully.
- To minimize disturbance to nesting threatened and endangered species, teams that know the location of these species — whose nest must be approached within flush distance to be viewed — need not physically view the adults or young. Teams need only approach in relative close proximity during daylight hours, (or during the night if the species is considered nocturnal, e.g., Barred Owl) and wait for five minutes or for as long as it would have taken for all members to view young or attending adults.

V. Travel

- All vehicles except aircraft may be used. Participants are not required to travel in the same vehicle so long as they make an effort to stay together and comply with other travel rules when counting birds.
- Team members must remain at distances that permit direct, unamplified voice contact at all times. Voice contact is defined as shouting distance.
- Please travel safely and use good judgment. All teams **must** comply with Pennsylvania highway, biking, and boating laws. Failure to do so will result in disqualification.

VI. Conduct and Ethics

- Team members must remain within voice contact of all other members at all times.
- Team members must count only birds personally and unquestionably identified.
- Team members must be familiar with the rules of the competition before the event.
- Each participant must maintain proper birding ethics at all times and be good ambassadors. A copy of the American Birding Association Code of Ethics may be found at www.aba.org/about/ethics.html
- All teams should enjoy themselves and keep the big picture in mind — the event is designed as an educational fundraiser rather than a strict competition. Your support and good conduct is greatly appreciated.

VII. Outside Information

- Any information received **prior** to the count period may be used. **During** the competition, teams must make every reasonable effort to avoid receiving bird-finding help from other sources. Phone, radio contact, and prearranged field encounters (except encounters whose purpose is to gain access or entry to private or restricted areas) are not permitted. When other birders are encountered accidentally, participants may not solicit bird-finding information and should avoid receiving any information from them (unless the other team is in a good mood and feeling generous). If an accidental encounter occurs, despite all precautions and in the spirit of raising money, the team may use the information received.
- Exceptions: The bird sighting sheets at state parks and other locations where bird sightings are regularly listed may be used.

Congratulations, you made it through the rules. Good luck and good birding!