



Rules for the 3rd Annual **Virginia Birding Classic**

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

I. Participants

- 1) The Virginia Birding Classic is open to all birders.
- 2) All team members must register in order to compete. There is no cost to participate in the 2026 Virginia Birding Classic.
- 3) Any participant under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult, either as a registered team member or as a mentor, chaperone, or non-birding support person (see Section I.5).
- 4) Teams must consist of a minimum of two (2) and a maximum of six (6) registered participants.
- 5) Mentors, chaperones, and non-birding support persons may accompany a team without registering; however, they may not assist in identifying birds in any way.
- 6) All registration forms must be received no later than April 14, 2026 at 11:59 PM.
- 7) All tournament categories take place between 12:00 AM on April 15 and 11:59 PM on May 15, 2026. Each team must select one consecutive 24-hour period within those dates for its official attempt.

II. Conduct

- 1) Teams may count only birds identified beyond a reasonable doubt by sight or sound (see Section III for Counting rules).
- 2) Team members must remain within unaided voice contact (“shouting distance”) at all times. Electronic communication between team members is prohibited during the official 24-hour period. This includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, texting, radios, and other communication devices.
- 3) No team may intentionally flush, disturb, or drive birds into hiding to prevent another team from locating them. The well-being of wildlife is paramount. Any intentional harm to birds or damage to habitat will result in immediate disqualification and may result in federal and/or state enforcement action.
- 4) Know Before You Go: Teams must comply with all federal, state, county, and municipal laws, as well as all property-specific rules. Participants are responsible for obtaining any required permits, passes, or access permissions. Teams must verify property hours and confirm there are no temporary closures 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 must be alive, wild, and unrestrained. Eggs and nests do not count.
- 3) Birds must be seen or heard while team members are physically within the boundaries of qualifying public lands (see Tournament Categories). If a bird is detected from within public land boundaries, it may be counted even if the bird itself is outside those boundaries.
- 4) Each bird species must be identified by at least two registered team members.
- 5) The use of artificial light to locate or identify birds is prohibited. Small handheld flashlights may be used solely for personal safety while navigating trails.
- 6) Birds must be conclusively identified by sight or sound.
- 7) If a bird is identified only to a species group (e.g., "scaup sp."), it may count as one species only if no other species within that group appears on the team's list.
- 8) For example, "scaup sp." counts as one species. If "Lesser Scaup" is also recorded, the group entry does not add an additional species.
- 9) Electronic, recorded, or mechanical bird calls may not be used to attract birds or provoke vocalization before or during the event. Bird call recordings and mobile apps may be used only for reference and must not be audible in the field. Playback is restricted to vehicles or personal earbuds/headphones. Non-mechanical vocalizations (e.g., pishing) are permitted.

IV. Travel

- 1) Boating is permitted on navigable inland waterways, provided boats are launched from public ramps.
- 2) Offshore boating is prohibited beyond 200 yards from shoreline belonging to public property.
- 3) Birds observed while traveling outside public land boundaries do not count. Birds observed while driving within public land boundaries may be counted. 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 obtained before or during the Classic may be used.
- 4) A team that observes a potential rules violation by another team may submit a written protest to tournament administrators. The Virginia Birding Classic Rules Committee will review the matter. The decision of the Leadership Team is final.

VI. Scoring

- 1) Each team must create or use an existing eBird account to submit its official team Trip Report.
- 2) Teams must include their official team name in the "Comments" section of the eBird Trip Report.
- 3) Each team must submit ONE official cumulative team eBird Trip Report covering its selected 24-hour period.
- 4) Individual site checklists are encouraged for data quality but may not be submitted separately for scoring.
- 5) The final cumulative Trip Report link must be emailed to max.goldman@dwr.virginia.gov no later than 11:59 PM on May 17, 2026. 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. The Cardinal Cup

- 1) Observations must be made from within public lands owned by federal, state, county, or municipal governments within the Commonwealth of Virginia and open to the general public during the time visited.
- 2) There is no limit to the number of public properties visited during an attempt.
- 3) The attempt must occur within one consecutive 24-hour period during the official event dates.
- 4) Team members may work in shifts; however, at least two registered team members must be actively participating at all times.
- 5) If a bird is detected from within a qualifying public land boundary, it may be counted even if the bird itself is outside that boundary.
- 6) Teams must follow all Counting and Scoring rules outlined above.

VIII. Prizes

- 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) Recognition throughout the Virginia birding community via multiple outlets.
- 3) The winning team's name, member names, and their year of victory will be etched into history on the coveted Cardinal Cup.