



## 2023 Seaturck Birding Challenge *Participant Rules & Guidelines*

The following rules establish the standards and practices under which **ALL** Seaturck Birding Challenge 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.

**ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST BE FAMILIAR WITH AND COMPLY WITH ALL OF THE RULES IN ORDER TO COMPETE IN THE SEATUCK BIRDING CHALLENGE.** Failure in this regard may result in the disqualification of the team.

### **I. Counting**

- a. Count only full species. For convenience, teams have been provided with a field checklist of bird species likely to occur on Long Island during late September and early October, but the ultimate authority for countable species is the current NYSOA checklist.
- 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 just one bird.
- c. Introduced or reintroduced species may be counted if (a) the species appears on the current NYSOA checklist, and (b) the birds involved appear to be part of an established population. Obviously non-wild or captive individuals cannot be counted, even if the species is otherwise represented by natural populations on Long Island.
- d. Birds counted must be alive, wild, and unrestrained. Sick, injured, or oiled birds may be counted. Eggs do not count as birds.
- e. Electronic or recorded bird calls may not be used to attract birds or entice them to vocalize during the Birding Challenge or while scouting prior to the event. The use of digital or electronic song detection devices, including IPODs or similar tools, are also prohibited during the event. Bird recordings may be used to help in the identification of birds and may be included among your gear but are restricted to vehicles and may

only be used as a reference when teams are traveling between destinations and may not be used while teams are actively birding. “Pishing” is allowed.

- f. 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).
- g. All birds tallied must be identified by at least two members of the team. Identifications made by one team member do not count.
- h. Ninety-five percent of all birds recorded by a team must be tallied and identified by all members of the team. This is your OFFICIAL TOTAL. In essence, it means that for every twenty birds recorded, you may count one bird that was heard or seen by fewer than every member of a team (in accordance with Rule ‘g’ above). It is not necessary for all team members to record the same individual bird. If three members of a team hear a Belted Kingfisher and a fourth member does not BUT manages to record another kingfisher later in the day, **and this sighting is corroborated by at least one other team member**, then Belted Kingfisher has been recorded unanimously.
- i. Checklists may include “write-in” species, not included on the standard checklist provided, provided these are in accordance with Rule j below.
- j. A species account, signed by the appropriate team member, must be submitted with checklists for all “write-in” species and for all species listed in bold on the official checklist. At a minimum the account must include a simple description and/or photos as documentation. Seatuck Birding Challenge officials will review write in and rare species accounts at the finish. All questions must be addressed.
- k. Flushing birds from cavities or roosts for the purpose of getting an identifiable look is grounds for disqualification. This applies during the event and during scouting. If a species is not visible, wait. If you run out of time, leave. The bird does not count.
- l. The primary interest of all teams should be the welfare of birds. Sharing information regarding the locations of birds is encouraged (prior to the Birding Challenge), but secondary to the primary directive. Locations of any species that are sensitive to intrusion and/or necessitate approach to within or close to flush distance should not be divulged to other teams.

## II. Time

The counting window for the Seatuck Birding Challenge is from **5 a.m. to 5 p.m.** Birds identified outside of this time frame do not count.

### III. Geographic Area

- a. For the purpose the 2023 Birding Challenge, teams can only bird in ONE of the following categories:
  - 1) All Long Island
  - 2) Brooklyn Borough
  - 3) Queens Borough
  - 4) Nassau County
  - 5) Western Suffolk County (Babylon, Brookhaven, Huntington, Islip and Smithtown)
  - 6) Eastern Suffolk County (East Hampton, Riverhead, Shelter Island, Southampton and Southold)
  - 7) A “Big Sit” location anywhere on Long Island; the designated area must be a circle that is no larger than 17 feet in diameter.

Each area also includes any location on or over the Atlantic Ocean or Long Island Sound up to a distance of 100 miles or half-way to a land area not on Long Island or within the jurisdiction of the selected area, whichever is less.

- b. Only birds recorded within a team’s selected area may be counted.
- c. Team members may travel outside of their area or off Long Island for convenience or expedience, but only birds observed/heard within their selected area may be counted.
- d. Birds seen in the Atlantic Ocean or Long Island Sound may be counted as long as the team is within Long Island.

### IV. Checklist Submission / Totals

- a. All registered teams must turn in their checklists by **5 p.m.** on the day of competition. Checklists must be submitted to Seatuck officials either:
  - 1) via email to [staff@seatuck.org](mailto:staff@seatuck.org). All checklists will be time-stamped based on the receipt of the email.
  - 2) In person at the “Finish Line” table at the Scully Estate - Suffolk County Environmental Center, 550 S. Bay Ave, Islip NY 11751 (site of the compilation & Awards Dinner)
- b. Only the current official checklist will be accepted. In case of duplicate transmissions, the earliest time stamped document is the only one accepted; no other checklists will be counted.

- c. Teams that fail to meet the 5 p.m. deadline will forfeit one bird from their official total for every five-minute period that their checklist is late.
- d. Totals are considered final when they are submitted. No alterations or corrections may be made after checklists have been submitted by e-mail or turned in at the Finish Line.
- e. Team members or surrogates may not seek or solicit information relating to team standings while the team's signed and completed checklist is still in hand.
- f. In the event of a tie between two teams, the place and any award will be shared.

## **V. Travel**

- a. All vehicles except aircraft may be used.
- b. All teams must comply with New York highway laws. Failure to do so will result in disqualification.
- c. Participants are not required to travel in the same vehicle so long as there is compliance with Rule V (d) below.
- d. Team members must remain at distances which permit direct, unamplified voice contact at all times. Voice contact is defined as shouting distance.

## **V. Participants**

- a. Teams must consist of a minimum of three registered members. Designated drivers are not included in this count.
- b. Designated drivers are permitted, but they cannot alter or contribute to the route or strategy of the team; nor can they aid or contribute in the location or identification of birds in any manner. Their job is strictly to drive.
- c. Team members need not remain together for the entire 12-hour period. One or more team members may leave the team at any point during the competition and members may join the team in accordance with the following stipulations:
  - 1) One or more team members joining a team in the field must do so before 9 a.m.

- 2) Teams will at all times be comprised of a minimum of three individuals in the field.
  - 3) Designated drivers may be added and released at any time.
- d. Team members leaving the team for reasons of health, fatigue, appointment 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.
  - e. Any number of non-birding participants may accompany the team, but these participants may not assist the team in any way in the location or identification of birds.

## **VI. Conduct**

- a. Team members must remain within voice contact of all other members at all times.
- b. b.Team members must count only birds personally and unquestionably identified.
- c. All participants must be familiar with the rules of the competition before the event and abide by them at all times.
- d. No participant may intentionally flush or drive into hiding any bird to prevent another team from finding it.
- e. This is a family friendly event and all participants must comport themselves accordingly.
- f. Alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs or substances, and weapons of any kind are strictly prohibited at this event.

## **VII. Outside Information**

- a. While the Seatuck Birding Challenge is a competitive event, the event organizers encourage collaboration and sharing of information. Open-source or globally-accessible information is acceptable to use during the competition. The Birding Challenge event organizers accept no responsibility for unverified bird sightings; use of open-source information is a risk that is the sole responsibility of the team.
- b. Phone, e-mail, or radio contact and prearranged field encounters (except encounters whose purpose is to gain access or entry to private or restricted areas) are not

permitted. Participants may not travel with or walk any substantial distances with non-participants except with companions as provided in Rule V. When other birders are encountered accidentally, participants may not solicit bird-finding information and should avoid receiving any information from them. If, despite all precautions, information is received during an accidental encounter, the team may use it.

- c. Teams may not use mobile devices to solicit or procure information relating to birds on Long Island or to access birding hotlines, blogs or updates, unless such information is available through open source, globally accessible media. Mobile devices may also be used to gain information regarding weather or traffic. If during the use of such devices, the presence or whereabouts of a bird is divulged through the use of sources other than open source, globally accessible media, the information MAY NOT be used by the team and, if located, the species cannot be counted on the team's checklist.
- d. Any information received prior to the count may be used during the count.
- e. Outlaw Birds – The ethic of sharing an uncommon or highly desirable species is fundamental to birding and the Seatuck Birding Challenge has no desire to compromise it. If, therefore, a team knows of the existence or whereabouts of an exceptionally desirable bird and encounters another team, they may inquire of the other team whether they wish details on an “outlaw bird.” If so, then Rule VII (b) is waived for this specific bird but the “outlaw bird” cannot be counted in the official total of the team receiving the information.

## **VIII. Ethics**

Each participant must maintain proper birding ethics at all times as defined in the ABA Principles of Birding Ethics. A copy of the principles can be found at [www.aba.org/about/ethics](http://www.aba.org/about/ethics).

## **IX. Call of Foul**

The Seatuck Birding Challenge strives to maintain the highest ethical standards. All participants in this event are, by the nature of their participation, committed to this ideal.

- a. A team, which in the course of the event, or while scouting before the event, observes what it perceives to be an infraction of Birding Challenge Rules by another team may file a written protest to Seatuck Environmental Association. A review panel, drawn from Birding Challenge participants and Seatuck staff, will consider the charges. Because of time considerations, a call of foul may not affect team standings at the Awards Dinner; however, the panel is empowered to disqualify a team within twenty (20) days of the competition if evidence warrants.

- b. If the charge is found to have substance, the team and its members will be banned from future 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.
- c. The decision of the review panel is considered final.

## **X. Protest**

- a. Accuracy and honesty are fundamental to birding and this event. Accordingly, and in the event that any team's total is for whatever reasons suspect, three team captains with the full support of their respective team members, may file a protest with event organizers.
- b. This protest, detailing the nature of the charge and supporting evidence, must be submitted in writing, within ten days of the event. It will be forwarded to the captain of the team in question who may either offer a plea of "no contest" or submit a defense and rebuttal of the acquisitions in writing within thirty days.
- c. If a team whose total is questioned elects to defend, both the written protest and defense will be reviewed by a panel drawn from Birding Challenge participants, Birding Challenge organizers, and experts with standing to comment.
- d. If the captain of the team whose total is questioned refuses to comply, then the team is disqualified; its total, standing, and any awards nullified.
- e. If, after review, the challenge to the team's total is determined to have merit, the panel is empowered to delete suspect birds from the team's list. If the situation warrants, the panel may disqualify a team and/or ban the team and its members from any number of future competitions.

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Please contact Enrico Nardone at [staff@seatuck.org](mailto:staff@seatuck.org) with any questions or comments.