



Colorado Birding Challenge Official Rules, version 2022



These Rules shall be the official rules for the Colorado Birding Challenge competition and shall supersede and take priority over any official rules for ABA Big Day competitions. For clarification of any rule or resolution of any conflicts in interpretation of these rules or the ABA Big Day rules, as they relate to this competition, please consult the event judges by emailing cobc@cobids.org.

1. General Rules. In general, the Colorado Birding Challenge (hereafter referred to as “the Event”) will follow the [ABA Big Day rules](#).
2. Participation eligibility. Anyone who registers for the Event may participate. Officers of the Colorado Field Ornithologists Board of Directors are not eligible to receive prizes.
3. The goal of the Event competition is for a team to get the highest score in their category.
4. Scoring
 - a. Teams will be scored based on the number of species reported and the county selected.
 - b. A ‘par’ has been calculated for each county, and teams will attempt to have the highest percentage of a county’s par.
 - i. For example, if Denver County has a par of 100 and Team A sees 83 species, they will have 83% of par. If Team B finds 45 species in San Juan County, and the par is 50 species, Team B’s 90% of the par is a higher score.
 - c. Each team must submit a single county level eBird checklist or trip report to the judges by 11 PM on the day following the event.
 - i. Checklists for photo/audio teams must have an identifiable photograph or audio clip for each species.
 - ii. See the Participant’s Guide on the Event website for how to submit a eBird Trip Report or county level eBird list if you do not already know how to submit one.
 - iii. To submit your final checklist to the judges, copy the trip report link, and email it to cobc@cobirds.org with your team name and category in the subject field. Alternatively, you may create a county-wide day list with an x for each species observed during the day, and share this list with the CFO eBird account for this event, which is COBC2022. Place an asterisk in the details box for any species that was not shared by all teammates (see Rule 5.c.). To avoid sharing your summary counts on eBird alerts, click in eBird “hide from eBird output” (these birds should already be included on specific location-based eBird checklists).

- d. In the unlikely event of a first-place tie, the team with the largest number of location-specific eBird checklists submitted during the Event will be declared the winner.
 - i. Checklists must be complete and of 3 minutes duration or longer to be considered for the tie-breaker.
5. Teams
- a. To be eligible for prizes, a team must consist of 2-4 members.
 - i. Teams may have an additional non-competing driver or support person that does not count towards the team size.
 - b. All team members must remain within direct voice contact distance of other team members when in the field and searching for birds.
 - i. If teams travel in separate cars due to COVID restrictions, teams may count birds seen from the vehicle regardless of the distance to other team members.
 - c. All team members must see at least 95% of a team's total species.
 - d. All species in a team's total must be seen by at least 2 team members or, if seen by a single observer, accompanied by photographic or audio documentation.
 - e. All participants must complete an electronic copy of the CFO waiver prior to the competition. This is done for all team members as part of the registration process. If a team is utilizing a non-competing driver or support person, who does not register, they must sign and submit a waiver. Email cobc@cobirds.org to get a copy of this waiver.
6. Categories
- a. Automobile - This category is the least restrictive and is open to any group that does not fit into one of the other categories below.
 - b. Green (Non-motorized) - Teams that only use human-powered methods throughout the day between their starting point and ending point are eligible for the green competition. It is permissible to drive to your starting point before starting your official count, and from your ending point, after ending the count. You may not however interrupt your count by driving between locations. Emergency disruptions requiring motorized travel will be considered on a case by case basis by the judges panel. Disruptions will be accepted if they were not orchestrated for the purpose of increasing the list total.
 - c. Big Sit (Stationary) - This category is new in 2022. Participants must observe all species from a circle with radius 50 feet. Disruptions are permitted. So that the data are useful for science via eBird, start a new eBird checklist after each disruption. It is good practice to limit eBird stationary checklists to short periods. We recommend ending your checklists after 2 hrs of observation and starting a new checklist. All checklists from the day can be combined using the eBird Trip Report tool for reporting purposes. For additional guidance on how to submit your list totals to the COBC judges, consult the Participant Guide.
 - d. Photo/Audio - Teams in this category will compete to document the most species during the course of the competition. All birds reported in a team's total must have photographic or audio documentation that clearly identifies each species. A

panel of judges will be consulted for resolving any disputes regarding list totals for teams competing in this category.

- e. Youth- Teams with all members in high school or younger may enter the youth category. Youth teams must have an adult driver(s) over the age of 21 to transport the team during the competition.
 - f. Non-competitive- Teams that do not plan to follow all the rules of the competition (eg. team size, geographic area, etc.) but still want to raise money for CFO may enter the non-competitive category and receive acknowledgement (and potentially a prize) for the funds raised.
7. Timing
- a. The competition runs for 24 hours on the published event day, beginning at midnight. In 2022, the event is scheduled for May 7.
8. Geographic Area
- a. During the competition, teams may only count birds seen in a single Colorado county.
 - i. Birds seen within the specified county while the team is standing in a different county may be counted.
 - ii. Birds seen in a different county, even if the team is standing in the specified county are not countable.
 - iii. Teams may leave their specified county for travel but are not allowed to count any species they see during that travel.
9. Countability: What birds you can count
- a. Only species currently on the CFO checklist or currently under review from the Colorado Bird Records Committee count towards a team's score.
 - i. For example, Mute Swan does not count towards a team's total since it is not included on the CFO checklist.
 - ii. Potential first state records must be adequately documented and submitted to the Colorado Bird Records Committee. The event judges will assess the documentation submitted to eBird to determine inclusion in the team species list total.
 - b. All birds must be alive, unrestrained, and from an established population (if non-native).
 - i. Dead birds and eggs do not count towards a team's total
 - ii. A team cannot count any bird that has its movement intentionally restrained, but you can count injured waterfowl that have migrated on their own but are no longer capable of flying.
 - iii. Non-native species in small isolated populations generally considered non-established do not count towards a team's total.
 - 1. Any Chukar on the Front Range, Northern Bobwhite away from eastern plains, free-ranging Indian Peafowl, escaped exotics like Budgerigar, African Collared-dove or Mandarin Duck, and domesticated species like Swan Goose and Greylag Goose are not countable.

- iv. If you have questions about countability before the competition, send inquiries to cobc@cobirds.org. Your inquiry will be submitted to the panel of judges who will let you know if an introduced species is countable.
- c. Difficult to identify species pairs/groups may be counted if no other members of the species pair/group are reported in the team's total.
 - i. If a team sees a distant gull but are unable to identify it to species they may include 'Gull Species' in their total if no other gulls are reported on their list.
 - ii. A team may include Dowitcher Species if they see a dowitcher but are unable to determine if it is a Long-billed or Short-billed Dowitcher.
- d. A hybrid may be counted as one species if neither of its parental species were recorded. For example, if a hybrid California x Herring Gull is observed, it would count provided that no California Gull or Herring Gull is counted. Any such hybrid would require documentation. Some common hybrids that might be counted include Snow x Ross's Goose, Indigo x Lazuli Bunting, Black-headed x Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Spotted x Eastern Towhee, and Eastern x Black Phoebe.
- e. All team members reporting a species must see or hear that species well enough to conclusively identify the bird.
 - i. If you are unsure of a bird's identity during the competition, do not count it on your list.
 - ii. Do not guess at species identifications during the competition.
- f. Any species flagged as rare in eBird must be accompanied by a written description or photo/audio documentation that will be reviewed by the judges.
 - i. Species flagged for high numbers do not require a description or documentation. eBird requires a comment to ensure that the number entered was intentional and not human error.
 - ii. Some species that are flagged for being only in one part of a county and rare throughout the rest of the county still require a description.