

AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION: BIG DAY COUNT RULES

Prepared by the ABA Recording Standards and Ethics Committee

A Big Day Count is a single-team effort in which the primary objectives are (1) to identify as many bird species as possible during a single calendar day and (2) to strive to have all team members identify all species recorded. An official ABA Big Day Count must be conducted in accordance with the following rules:

I. Counting

- a. Count only full species as indicated by the current ABA Checklist and Supplements, or for non-ABA species outside the ABA Area, by James F. Clements *Birds of the World: A Checklist or Morony, et al., Reference List of the Birds of the World*, or a recognized local guide.
- b. Birds must be conclusively identified by sight or sound. Use common sense: if in doubt about the bird's identity, don't count it. Identification may be confirmed after the original observation if that identification is based solely on field notes made while the bird was living and unrestrained. A bird identified to one of a species group (i.e., scaup, small alcid, Western/Semipalmated Sandpiper, Common/Arctic Tern) may be counted as a species if no other in that group is counted.
- c. An introduced species may be counted if its status in the Count area meets the criteria for the ABA Checklist.
- d. Birds counted must be alive, wild, and unrestrained. Birds attracted to tape-recorders or feeders may be counted. Injured birds may be counted if wild and unrestrained. Eggs do not count as birds.

II. Time

- a. All counting must be within a single 24-hour period, on a single calendar day, determined by where the Count begins or ends.
- b. The compiler may designate a time-out for gas, food, rest, or separate motorized travel. A bird first seen or heard during a time-out may not be counted, nor may the same individual be counted if located during regular counting time.

III. Area

Any geographic area may be covered.

IV. Travel

- a. Travel may be by any means, provided that all participants remain within direct voice-contact distance during all travel except timeouts.
- b. When motorized vehicles are used, all participants must travel in the same vehicle, except during time-outs.

V. Participants

- a. Any number of participants may constitute a team.
- b. Nonparticipating companions may accompany the team and may record or may drive the vehicle. A companion may not aid in identification of, nor in any way indicate to the participants the presence of any bird not previously identified by every participant.

VI. Conduct

Each participant must:

- a. remain within direct voice-contact distance of all other participants at all times, except during time-outs.
- b. make every reasonable effort to identify personally and to help other team members identify every species counted by the team.
- c. count only birds personally and unquestionably identified
- d. review the Big Day Count Rules before the start of the Count.

VII. Outside Information

- a. During the Count, teams must make every reasonable effort to avoid receiving bird-finding help from nonparticipants. Phone and radio contacts and pre-arranged field encounters are not permitted. Participants may not travel with or walk any substantial distance with non-participants, except with companions, as provided in Rule V-b. When other birders are encountered accidentally, participants may not solicit bird-finding information and should avoid receiving any information from them, to the extent that common courtesy allows. If despite all precautions information is received during an accidental encounter, the team may use it.
- b. Any information received prior to the Count may be used during the Count.

VIII. Ethics Each participant should strive to maintain proper birding ethics at all times.

IX. The ABA Big Day Report Form

The ABA Big Day Report Form, or a photocopy thereof, must be used for submitting Big Day Counts to ABA. The Report Form includes an appropriate pledge to be signed by the team compiler affirming that all participants have reviewed and complied with all ABA Big Day Count Rules.

X. Publication

Only Counts that observe all of the foregoing rules will be published as "Big Day Counts." Other team efforts may be published (under another designation) at the discretion of the Big Day Editor.

XI. Eligibility for "Champion"

"A Count will be eligible for "Champion" in any ABA Big Day category if all of the foregoing rules have been observed and if it meets the following additional requirements: (a) the team consists of two or more participants, and (b) the ratio of Shared Total to Grand Total is 95% or greater in any ABA category. The eligible Big Day Count with the highest Grand Total shall be the "Champion."

Additional Condition by Big Day Editor

Tape recordings of birds that are locally or nationally rare, threatened, or endangered in the area of your Big Day may not be used, either during counting or on the Big Day itself.