Great Texas Birding Classic Rules

These rules are subject to revision.

The following rules establish the standards and practices under which Great Texas Birding Classic 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 dictated by team competition and the structure of the Great Texas Birding Classic. In several cases these rules are more stringent than the ABA rules.

ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST BE FAMILIAR WITH AND WILLING TO COMPLY WITH ALL OF THE GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CLASSIC RULES IN ORDER TO COMPETE IN THE TOURNAMENT. Failure to do so may result in the disqualification of the team.

I. Counting

A. Count only full species as defined by the current American Ornithologist's Union (AOU) checklist (1998) and annual supplements.

B. Birds must be conclusively identified by sight or sound. A bird identified as 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: *Dowitcher* sp. counts as one bird. Short-billed Dowitcher and *Dowitcher* sp. still counts as just one bird species.

C. Birds of questionable origin, and introduced or reintroduced species may be counted providing that they appear on the current Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) checklist, and each population has been established in Texas for a minimum of ten years. For example: Black Swan and Yellow-headed Parrot are uncountable under this rule. Any disputes over applicable species will be settled by the Great Texas Birding Classic judge.

- **NOTE:** For the purposes of the Great Texas Birding Classic, teams may count the Greater (Attwater's) Prairie-Chicken and the Aplomado Falcon.

D. Birds counted must be alive, wild, and unrestrained. Sick or injured birds may be counted, but permanently injured wild birds incapable of normal migration or seasonal movements (i.e., found or relocated to parks, yards, zoos, gardens, boat ramps, fish cleaning stations, or other unnatural settings where they may receive intended or unintended critical human support or protection) may not be counted. Eggs or nests 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 Great Texas Birding Classic or while scouting prior to the event. Bird tapes and mobile phone apps may be used to help in the identification of birds and may be included among your gear, but tapes and use of mobile apps are restricted to vehicles and may only be used as a reference when teams are not in the field, and are traveling between destinations. Recorded bird calls may not be used while teams are actively birding. Pishing and other bird sounds made by mouth are acceptable.

F. Spotlighting is prohibited at all times during the Great Texas Birding Classic and while scouting prior to the event. Small, handheld flashlights can be used as a light source as needed for personal safety (i.e., while walking on trails). Q-beams and other bright hand-held lights are not allowed.

G. Only 5 percent of all passerine species recorded by a team may be identified by nocturnal flight calls.

H. All birds must be identified by at least two members of a team. Identification made by only one team member can never be counted. Ninety-five percent of all birds recorded by a team must be identified by the entire team. The remaining 5 percent may be identified by two or more members.

- **EXCEPTION:** The Big Sit! Tournament requires only one member to see/identify a species for it to be counted.

- **SPECIAL NOTE FOR ROUGHWINGS AND GLIDERS TEAMS:** Team members must locate and identify all species UNAIDED by adult team captain, mentors, chaperones, or drivers. Adult assistance is only allowed for verification, not identification or location.

I. It is not necessary for all team members to record the same individual bird. For example: if three members of a team hear a Belted Kingfisher and a fourth member does not, but manages to see another Belted Kingfisher later that competition day, then Belted Kingfisher has been recorded unanimously.

J. Disturbance to nesting species increases exponentially in relation to the number of people who know about a site. Don't tell other people the location of any nesting species. Nest harassment will not be tolerated.

II. Time

A. All tournaments must occur from April 15, 2013 to May 15, 2013, on any date during that time period.

B. Final checklists must be submitted to eBird within 24 hours of your team's selected tournament day.

- **Examples:** If your team participates in a single day tournament and chooses to compete on Wednesday, May 1st then your checklist must be submitted to eBird and shared with GTBC staff through eBird, per **Rule IX**, by 11:59pm on Thursday, May 2nd. If you are a Weeklong Adult team and choose to compete April 20th through April 25th then your checklist must be submitted to eBird and shared with GTBC staff through eBird by 11:59pm on Friday, April 26th.

C. Teams may select their tournament date ahead of time or during the month (based on weather, last minute scheduling, etc.) but **all teams must indicate their selected tournament date(s) in an email to the Nature Tourism Manager** (gtbc@tpwd.state.tx.us) within 24 hours of their official tournament day(s) for Birding Classic records.

D. Tournament length by category:

- Adult Regional Big Day, Adult Statewide Big Day, Gliders, Big Sit!, Human-Powered, and State Park Tournament teams participate for up to 24 hours on their tournament day, from midnight to midnight on the date of their team's choice.
- Adult Weeklong teams participate for up to 6 complete days in a row, from midnight of the first day through 11:59pm of the sixth consecutive day (example: 12:00am on Wednesday, May 1st – 11:59pm on Monday, May 6th). Teams need not bird the entire time and are encouraged to rest, as needed, during this birding week.
- Roughwings teams participate for up to 8 hours on their tournament day (8 hours need not be consecutive; can be split up throughout the day).
- Outta-Sight Song Birder teams participate for up to 12 hours on their tournament day (12 hours need not be consecutive; can be split up throughout the day).
- Sunrise to Noon Tournament teams participate from dawn to 12:00 noon on their tournament day.

III. Geographic Area

A. Regional Tournaments (Roughwings, Gliders, and Adult Regional Big Day Tournaments):

1. Teams choose one of the nine regions of the Great Texas Wildlife Trail based on the map provided online. All regional tournament teams must indicate their region on the official registration form.

2. Both the bird and the birder must be in the same state, country, and chosen region of the Great Texas Wildlife Trail at the same time. There are nine regions to the state (refer to regional maps provided online to see county boundaries), and your team must indicate on your registration form the region in which you choose to compete.

3. The teams may begin and end their route anywhere within their selected Great Texas Wildlife Trail region.

4. Birds seen in the bays or in the Gulf of Mexico to a distance of 200 miles may be counted.

B. Statewide Tournaments (Adult Statewide Big Day, Adult Weeklong, Outta-Sight Song Birder, Human-Powered, and Sunrise to Noon Tournaments):

1. In the Weeklong Tournament, the bird and birder must be in the same state and country (i.e., within the boundaries of the state of Texas).

2. The teams may begin and end their route anywhere within the state of Texas.

3. Birds seen in the bays or in the Gulf of Mexico to a distance of 200 miles may be counted.

C. Big Sit! Tournament:

1. Both the bird and the birder must be in the same state and country at the same time.

2. Observations can only be made from within a 17-foot (diameter) circle.

3. If a bird is seen or heard from within the circle, but is too distant to identify, the circle can be left to get a closer look for confirmation. However, any new bird seen or heard while confirming the original bird cannot be counted unless it is seen from an "anchor" team member who stayed behind in your circle, or by you once you return to your spot.

4. The same circle must be used for the entire Big Sit! Tournament. Teams must designate their circle's location on their official registration form.

5. All teams must have a unique circle location and indicate that circle's location on their team registration form. Two Big Sit! circles may not bird the same circle on the same day. If more than one team indicates the same circle location on their registration forms, the Birding Classic staff will contact those teams to make sure that they choose different tournament days.

D. State Park Tournament:

1. Both the bird and the birder must be in the same state and country at the same time.

2. Observations can only be made from a single Texas Parks and Wildlife State Park. Teams must designate the state park on their official registration form.

3. If a bird is seen or heard from within the park then it is countable, even if the bird itself is outside of park boundaries as long as team can be sure the bird is in the same state and country as the birders, per rule III.D.1.

4. All teams must select one specific state park location and indicate that selection on their team registration form. Multiple teams may choose the same state park for their tournament day.

IV. Travel

A. All vehicles except aircraft and airboats may be used.

- **EXCEPTION:** For the Human Powered Tournament, only non-motorized transportation may be used. This includes walking, biking, kayaking, canoeing, etc.

B. Team members must remain at distances which permit direct, unamplified voice contact at all times. Voice contact is defined as shouting distance. Electronic voice transmission in any form is prohibited. This includes CB radios, hand-held radios, cell phones, texting, etc. for teams using multiple vehicles.

C. Participants are not required to travel in the same vehicle so long as there is compliance with Rule IVB. During scouting days, teams may split up to cover more than one area, but this cannot be done on any tournament day.

V. Participants

A. Teams must consist of a minimum of three with a maximum of five members.

- **EXCEPTION:** Big Sit! teams must consist of one or more team members. Only the first 20 team members listed on the team registration form receive event t-shirts. Any additional team member names should be emailed to the Nature Tourism Manager (gtbc@tpwd.state.tx.us) for Birding Classic records and for accurate team listings.

B. Any number of non-birding participants and media personnel may accompany the team, but these participants may not assist the team in any way with the location or identification of birds. A designated driver who is not a team member may not assist with the location or identification of birds. Scouts that are not official team members cannot assist any team.

VI. Conduct

A. Team members must remain within voice contact of all other members at all times (see Rule IVB).

B. Each of the members of the team must count only birds personally identified beyond a doubt.

C. Team members must be familiar and willing to comply with the rules of the Tournament before the event.

D. No team may intentionally flush or drive into hiding any bird to prevent another team from finding it.

E. Team members must follow federal and state laws, for example: speed limits and laws against trespass on private property. PLEASE NOTE THAT TEXAS IS A PRIVATE LANDS STATE, AND TRESPASSING IS CONSIDERED A SERIOUS OFFENSE. BEFORE THE EVENT, YOU MUST OBTAIN PERMISSION FROM THE LANDOWNER OF ANY PRIVATE LAND YOU PLAN TO ENTER. Do not enter the closed areas of public sites (i.e., closed portions of National Wildlife Refuges).

VII. Outside Information

A. Teams are encouraged to share information with other teams during the event.

B. Any information received prior to or during the Birding Classic may be used. **Hired scouts are not permitted.**

VIII. Ethics

A. Each participant is required to maintain proper birding ethics at all times as defined in the ABA Code of Ethics.

IX. Scoring (this section will be updated before April 15th as new information on eBird checklist entry is available)

A. All teams must create an eBird account under their team name. Account name requires a "First Name" and "Last Name" but multiple words can be in each space.

- **Example:** "The TPWD Whirligigs" could be written as "First Name: The TPWD", "Last Name: Whirligigs" in eBird).

B. Each team must submit ONE official team checklist for their tournament day(s) under their team account name to Texas eBird using the "Other – Great Texas Birding Classic" protocol option (available by April 15th under Observation Type on the Date and Effort page). See Checklist area of website for further instructions.

C. Share the official team checklist through eBird to the official Birding Classic eBird account, "GTBCStaff".

B. Checklists are due within 24 hours of your team's selected tournament day (see **Rule IIB**).

C. Winning is accomplished by identifying the most species of birds in each tournament category.

D. If a species is listed as uncommon, scarce, rare, or accidental during spring migration for the region you are birding based on the TPWD regional checklists, additional documentation must be included within your eBird checklist. Documentation should include information required for the TBRC Bird Report Form. Teams can add these details on the checklist itself by using the "Add Details" button next to each bird needing additional documentation.

- **ADDITIONAL LISTS OF BIRDS NEEDING DOCUMENTATION:** Lists of birds always requiring documentation include: Birds listed on the Texas Bird Records Committee Review Species list, Species not yet documented for Texas list, or the Specimens Not Located list.
- **NOTE:** If your team submits scouting checklists (which is encouraged), use the standard eBird protocols under "Date and Effort" such as Stationary, Incidental, or Traveling. DO NOT USE the "Other-Great Texas Birding Classic" protocol for scouting lists. **"Other-Great Texas Birding Classic" should only be used when submitting your final official tournament checklist for scoring.**

X. Prize Categories

A. Winners certificates will be awarded to the members of the winning team in every individual tournament category.

B. Individual prizes will be awarded to winning regional Roughwings and Gliders teams.

C. The winning sponsored Adult Statewide Weeklong Tournament team will have their team and sponsor name engraved on the memorial Roger Tory Peterson trophy which will reside for the following year in the offices of the team sponsor. If the sponsor does not have space for trophy display, TPWD will display the trophy at their offices for the year.

D. Winning teams in certain tournament categories will be eligible to win the Conservation Grants. These winning teams will work with Birding Classic staff to determine which birding enhancement, avian habitat restoration, or acquisition project will receive the grants. Number of grants awarded each year and grant amounts are dependent on funds raised through registration fees and sponsorship dollars.

XI. Call of Foul

A. A team which, in the course of the event, observes what it perceives to be an infraction of the Great Texas Birding Classic Rules by another team may file a written protest to the TPWD Nature Tourism Manager. The Great Texas Birding Classic judge and staff will consider the charges. Because of time considerations, a call of foul may not affect initial team standings posted online; however, the panel is empowered to disqualify a team within ten days of the Tournament if evidence warrants.

B. The decision of the judge and staff is final.

XII. Eligibility, Fees and Deadlines

A. The Great Texas Birding Classic is open to all birders of good character.

B. All teams must pay registration fees in order to compete. See fee structure below for all tournament categories. Teams are either independent or sponsored and entry fees vary based on tournament category.

- Independent teams in any tournament category must pay their own registration fees and travel expenses to enter the Tournament for all team members. Designated drivers and chaperones do not pay entry fees and must cover their own travel expenses.

- Sponsored teams may secure sponsors or co-sponsors to offset the costs of the team by paying their sponsored team registration fee. Teams can work with their sponsor on additional travel expenses.

C. All registration forms and registration fee payments must be received by **April 1, 2013**. Teams will receive a website link with the team's registration form submission confirmation and must use this link to pay registration fees.

D. Late Fees: Independent teams will be charged an additional $25 per person for late registration. Sponsored teams will be charged an additional $200 per team.

Tournament Category	Independent Teams	Sponsored Teams
Adult Regional Big Day Tournaments, Adult Statewide Big Day Tournament, or Adult Statewide Weeklong Tournament (19 years and older)	$50 per team member (drivers are free)	$1000 per team
Gliders (14-18 year olds), Big Sit! {for the first 20 members - all members over 20 are free}, State Park , Outta-Sight Song Birder, Human-Powered, or Sunrise to Noon Tournaments	$30 per team member (drivers, mentors, chaperones are free)	$500 per team
Roughwings (13&under) Regional Tournaments	$20 per team member (drivers, mentors and chaperones are free)	$250 per team