



PA Big Day of Birding

April 25th, 2026

Rules and Guidelines

The PA Big Day of Birding is a statewide, single-team effort in which the primary objectives are

1. To identify as many bird species as possible during a single day and
2. To strive to have all team members observe the species recorded.

Rules

1. Counting:
 - a. Count only full species. A bird identified to one of a species group (ex. chickadee, tern, etc) may be counted as a species if no other species in that group is counted. Rare sightings must be documented.
 - b. Birds must be conclusively identified by **sight** or **sound** by at least one team member. Use common sense: if you are in doubt of 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 or photographs made while the bird was living and unrestrained.
 - c. Species suggestions solely by AI or Digital Apps (ex Merlin) are not sufficient evidence on their own for identification. Consider these a tool, similar to a field guide, to help confirm your own identification.
 - d. Birds counted must be alive, wild and unrestrained. Birds attracted to feeders may be counted. Injured birds may be counted if wild and unrestrained. Eggs do not count as birds.

- e. Recorded sounds cannot be used to attract birds, but can be used in the field to help confirm an identification.

2. Time and Location

- a. All counting must be done within the set timeframe of 12:00am to 11:59pm on April 25th, 2026.
- b. All birds must be identified within the boundaries of Pennsylvania. Any identifications outside of the state border will not count.

3. Teams

- a. Teams should be between 2 and 6 members. Individuals or larger groups are still allowed to participate, but small groups are optimal.
- b. Non-participating companions may accompany a team and may record data or drive a vehicle.
- c. Teams should stay together. Strive to be within direct voice contact distance during bird observations so that all team members have the chance to observe the bird.

4. Conduct

- a. All participants should strive to maintain proper birding ethics at all times.
ABA Code of Birding Ethics:
<https://www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics/>
- b. All participants must make a reasonable effort to identify personally and to help other team members observe every species counted by the team.
- c. Teams can only count birds personally and unquestionably identified.
- d. All participants must obey traffic laws, park rules and basic safety guidelines and be courteous to the public during the count.
- e. Trespassing on private land is not allowed.
- f. Failure to follow the rules can result in a team being eliminated from the event.