SUPERBOWL OF BIRDING 2027 OFFICIAL RULES

Rule 1: Time and Date of Contest

The Superbowl is a 12-hour birding contest that runs from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Saturday, January 30 (snow date: January 31). No species may be counted before or after the specified time period. Scouting of the contest area before the event is allowed and encouraged.

Note: In case of inclement weather, postponement will be posted on Massbird and NHBirds by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 29, and an email will be sent to all team captains.

Rule 2: Location of Contest (Contest Area)

The contest area is restricted to Rockingham County, New Hampshire, and Essex County, Massachusetts. Official maps will be provided to each registered team. The contest area includes the immediately adjacent waters of the Atlantic Ocean. For safety reasons, teams are not permitted to use boats.

To be counted, each bird must be seen from within the designated contest area.

Teams competing for the Townie Award must identify all birds within a single municipality (town or city).

Rule 3: Team Composition

Each team must have between 4 and 7 members. The team must remain together for the entire contest. Teams may not split up to bird different areas simultaneously. The use of radios and/or cell phones is allowed only to stay in contact with team members, access publicly available resources, or call the Joppa Flats Education Center. Birds identified when traveling from one area to another can be counted if the birds are observed and identified by a majority of the team members. Mass Audubon employees are welcome to participate as members of a team.

Rule 4: Objective

Teams compete to score the most points. Points are awarded for each species identified during the contest period. Each species on the official contest checklist is assigned a points value of 1 to 5 based on the perceived difficulty of finding the species during the contest period. Each species may only be counted once. The team that amasses the greatest number of points will be declared the Joppa Cup winner.

Each team must fill out and email the provided spreadsheet to kyoung@massaudubon.org by midnight on the day of the contest. This is to ensure the accuracy of point totals. Paper checklists are for your records and do not need to be submitted.

Rule 5: Special Rule for Townie Award

The Townie Award is intended to encourage getting to know a local patch and energy conservation. Teams competing for the Townie Award must identify all birds within a single municipality (town or city).

To compete for the Townie Award, team captains must announce by **Friday, January 29**, that their teams will be competing for the award and which municipality they intend to bird. Announce your choice by emailing kyoung@massaudubon.org

Rule 6: Special Rules for Sitting Duck Award

The Sitting Duck Award is intended to be an accessible and low-carbon exercise in local birding. Teams must designate a single location for their contest participation and stay within a building or within a 25-foot diameter circle while observing birds.

To compete for the Sitting Duck Award, team captains must announce by **Friday, January 29,** that their team will be competing for the award and where they will be birding. Announce your choice by emailing kyoung@massaudubon.org

Rule 7: Identification of Species

Each species must be conclusively identified by sight and/or sound by the majority (3 out of 4 or 5, 4 out of 6 or 7) of the participants on each team. Conclusively means that members have observed sufficient field marks or sounds to eliminate the possibility of the bird being any other species. The bird must be alive, wild, and unrestrained when encountered.

Team members may use publicly available resources during the competition, such as Massbird, NHBirds, e-Bird, and information about 5-point birds available from Superbowl of Birding judges.

Deliberately gaining assistance or an unfair advantage from non-team members during the event is prohibited. For example, a non-team member may not stake out a bird for the team or tell the team about the location of a bird.

Rule 8: Use of Mechanical Devices to Attract Birds is Prohibited

The use of mechanical devices, tapes, electronic calls, or other recordings to lure or attract birds is strictly prohibited. Teams that utilize these devices will be disqualified.

Rule 9: Long-eared Owls are not to be sought, reported, or counted

Due to concerns over past disturbance of Long-eared Owl roosts, for this contest, this species does not exist and is not countable. Teams reporting Long-eared Owls may be disqualified at the judges' discretion. Other Owls are permitted, unless they are 5-point birds.

Rule 10: Definitions and Access to the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge:

Teams competing for the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge Award may count any species observed on the island, mainland, and headquarters portions of the Refuge:

a. Refuge Headquarters:

The grounds of the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters are located at 6 Plum Island Turnpike, Newburyport.

b. Mainland Portion of the Refuge:

The mainland portion of the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge that is open to Superbowl of Birding participants is the parking area at the eastern end of Stackyard Road.

Please note: The marsh trail that leads from the parking lot toward Nelson's Island may be closed to birders due to hunting.

c. Island Portion of the Refuge:

Under normal conditions, the island portion of the refuge opens to the public starting at sunrise. Currently, there is no special access to the island portion of the refuge for this event.

Please note: The main gate to the refuge **may close well before sunset**.

Penalties:

Follow all Refuge signage and rules while on Refuge property, including any area closures for hunting. Teams that violate the statutory regulations of our national wildlife refuges will be disqualified and will be subject to prosecution under federal law.

Rule 11: Checklist Submission and Rarity Reporting

To be counted, all species must be listed on the Official Superbowl of Birding Checklist and must be electronically recorded via the provided means. Please enter your sightings carefully. If you record a species that is not on the list, it should be written in and assigned a point value of 5.

Teams must submit their checklists by midnight on the day of the competition to kyoung@massaudubon.org. Teams that do not submit their checklists by the deadline will be disqualified.

All 5-point birds must be called in to the Superbowl of Birding Judges (978-462-9998), whether they are on the checklist or are write-ins, and regardless of whether another team has already reported the species.

If you do not call in a 5-point bird, you will not score **any** points for that species. If your team is the first to call in a 5-point species, you will receive three (3) bonus points.

The Superbowl of Birding judges may require the submission of a rare bird report with your final tally (here are the Massachusetts rare bird sighting form, and the New Hampshire one). All five-point birds called in will be posted to Massbird, NHBirds, and the Joppa Flats Education Center sightings board and Facebook page.

Notes:

1. The purpose of this reporting rule is to ensure that we notify the birding community of any rarities observed as soon as possible and to keep tabs on the birds throughout the day, if other teams observe them.

2. When calling in a 5-point species, the team must provide sufficient information so that other teams or individuals can find the location. For example, it is not adequate to say that your team saw the 5-point bird in Gloucester. You must provide more details, such as where the bird was seen in Brace Cove or along Atlantic Road near Bass Rocks.

3. In the spirit of fair play and to ensure that your team receives the three bonus points, you are required to call in your 5-point birds as soon as practical.

Rule 12: Award Categories

The Superbowl of Birding gives the following awards, and the year's worth of bragging rights that accompany them:

a.) Joppa Cup: This award is given to the team that earns the greatest number of points. (See the Official Superbowl of Birding Checklist.)

b.) Dave Larson Award: This award is given to the team with the greatest number of species tallied.

Note: A team cannot win more than one of the team awards. For instance, if one team has both the most points and the most species, the team that has the second-highest number of species will be declared the winner of the Dave Larson Award.

c.) Essex County Award: This award is given to the team with the greatest number of points for birds in Essex County only.

d.) Rockingham County Award: This award is given to the team with the greatest number of points for birds in Rockingham County only.

e.) Seekers Award: This award is given to the first team that finds all the species included on the Seekers Checklist.

f.) Fledgling Award: This award is given to the first youth team (at least two team members must be 16 years old or younger) to find all the species included on the Fledgling Checklist. (Note: This is a half-day program.)

g.) Parker River NWR Award: This award is given to the team with the most points for birds on the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge only.

h.) Townie Award: This award is given to the team that sees the greatest number of species from a single municipality (town or city); see Rule 5.

i.) Newbies Award: This award is given to the team with two or more members, 16 years of age or younger, that earns the greatest number of points.

j.) Sitting Duck Award: This award is given to the team with the most points for birds tallied following the Sitting Duck Rules (Rule 6).

k.) Lifer Award: This award is given to the individual in a team who sees the most new birds ("life birds") during the competition.

Note on Award Eligibility:

When submitting your team's checklist at the end of the contest, the team captain is responsible for indicating the awards for which the team wants to be considered. Teams that do not designate this on their checklist will not be considered for any awards other than the Joppa Cup and Dave Larson Award.

Rule 13: Judging

While results will be tabulated electronically, a panel of judges will verify each team's checklist and point total and will determine the winner in each award category.

Tie-breakers: Ties in points will be broken by the number of species involved. Ties in species will be broken by the most 8-point birds observed. For example, if two teams are tied with the same point total, the team with the most species will be declared the winner. If the teams are still tied, then the 8-point, 5-point, 4-point, 3-point, and 2-point species will be compared until the tie is broken. **In all matters pertaining to the Superbowl of Birding, the decisions of the judges are final.**

Rule 14: Awards

A virtual awards ceremony will be held online at 6 p.m. on Sunday, January 31 (weather date is Monday, February 1) using Microsoft Teams. Winners of each award will be announced at that ceremony and then on Massbird, NHBirds, and the Mass Audubon Superbowl website.

Rule 15: Ethics

All birds must be encountered under conditions that conform to Mass Audubon's Standards for Birding Programs and Leaders (supplied in registration packet). Failure to follow these rules may result in disqualification of the team.

Important Notes to Team Leaders

The staff and volunteers of Mass Audubon have developed these rules to ensure that the event is an enjoyable celebration of our winter birds. For example, Rule 11 rewards the team that sees a 5-point bird first with 3 bonus points, but also requires that teams share all their 5-point bird sightings with the other teams. We want to be sure that everyone has a chance to see any rarities reported.

Rules 1 and 4 set the time limits for the event. Under these rules, each team must plan its itinerary carefully to ensure that it starts and finishes on time. In fairness to the other teams, the beginning and ending times are strictly enforced.

Please read all the rules carefully and share them with your team members. We want every team to get full credit for their observations, to have fun, and to stay safe. If you have any questions about these rules before the event, please email Kai Young (kyoung@massaudubon.org) If you have any questions about the rules during the contest, please call the Superbowl of Birding judges at 978-462-9998.

END OF RULES