



PennState



THE 2020 SHAVER'S CREEK *virtual* BIRDING CUP

Participant Information

While the Birding Cup has traditionally been Shaver's Creek Environmental Center's annual fundraising event to support educational programming and related research, this year it will focus on keeping us connected. It will also encourage as many people as possible to participate in Citizen Science through the use of eBird.

There is no participation fee for the event. This year, in response to the coronavirus, we have chosen not to emphasize fundraising; however, individuals, families, or "teams" participating this year are still welcome to provide donations to support Citizen Science.

The Birding Cup, County Cup, Birding Boot, Potter Mug, and Micro Cup will not be awarded this year. Instead we will work collectively (at a distance) to see as many species as we can in 24 hours, hopefully from all over the world!

Whether you have participated in the Birding Cup before or if this is all new to you, below are some things to consider to make participation in the event successful and safe.

Who can participate?

For 2020, participants may register as individuals, families, or as a team – all birding at a distance to maintain safe physical distancing. We invite you to actively look for birds and submit eBird checklists for any portion of the 24-hour event that you choose. Checklists should be submitted with [eBird best practice protocols](#) in mind.

Please [visit our website to register](#). Email Doug Wentzel with questions at djw105@psu.edu.

When do I count birds?

Counting and checklist submissions will take place between 7:00 p.m. on Friday, May 1, and 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 2, 2020.

Friday of Birding Cup

6:00 p.m. – Log in to an optional Birding Cup Zoom meeting for event kick-off and updates. (Details to be emailed to event participants.)

7:00 p.m. – Start counting from anywhere in the world! Share all eBird checklists with "shaverscreek" or "shaverscreek@gmail.com."

Saturday of Birding Cup

7:00 p.m. – Stop counting (for now).

7:30 p.m. – Log back in to the optional Birding Cup Zoom meeting to share stories and review checklist totals from the whole group.

We hope this event will get you excited about eBird and that you will continue to bird and submit checklists beyond this 24-hour window.

Where can I count birds?

While traditionally limited to certain counties in Pennsylvania, this year we welcome you to record bird species from anywhere in the world.

During the event we ask that you adhere to any pertinent “Stay at Home” orders in your particular state or country. Bird data from your yard is just as valuable, and in fact urbanized areas are largely underreported in eBird.

In Pennsylvania, [Gov. Wolf’s Stay at Home order](#) does allow for “engaging in outdoor activity, such as walking, hiking, or running” if we maintain physical distancing. If you choose to leave your home and encounter others in outdoor spaces, please observe safe physical distances to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

How do I count birds?

Everyone will use the Cornell Lab of Ornithology [eBird](#) platform to count birds during the event. While we usually only count the **number of species** seen or heard during Birding Cup, this year you will tally **each individual bird** that you encounter.

If you are unfamiliar with eBird, the Cornell Lab has great [tutorials on their website](#). There are also many other [eBird questions answered here](#). If you really want to get down into the weeds, you can also create a free account and watch tutorials through [Cornell Lab’s Bird Academy](#).

If you have a mobile device, the eBird mobile app is excellent to have with you in the field to keep track of your time and distance birding and allows you to add observations on the go. Alternatively, you may keep a notebook of observations and add them into eBird when you get back to your computer.

In the field, eBird will display a checklist of species likely to be seen in your area, with some being indicated as infrequent or rare. eBird will ask for documentation (e.g., photos and field notes) to verify any rare species seen during your count.

We encourage you to use field guides, [the Merlin app](#), the knowledge of others, and other references to aid in the identification of birds in the field. Bird recordings may be used as a reference to help in the identification of birds as well. However, as they can cause stress to birds, please do not use them to attract birds or entice them to vocalize during Birding Cup. We thank you for maintaining good birding ethics at all times. If you would like to read more, you can review the [American Birding Association Code of Birding Ethics](#).

Unlike most years, participants are encouraged to share sightings and stories throughout the 24-hour event. Participants can also use eBird, rare bird alerts, and the special Birding Cup Zoom channel and Discord server (more information below) to connect with other participants.

If a rare bird occurrence is discovered this way during the event, participants are welcome to choose to seek the bird – as long as they adhere to state and federal guidelines and safe physical distancing to prevent the spread of coronavirus. If other birders are encountered accidentally, participants may solicit bird-finding information while maintaining safe physical distancing.

How can I stay connected throughout the event?

Besides eBird, two other tools that can help you stay connected during the 24-hour event are Zoom and Discord.

Zoom is a remote video conferencing service. A Zoom “meeting room” will be available for participants to join throughout the 24 hours. We will also use Zoom in the days leading up to the event to answer any technical questions you may have about Zoom or any other application we use. Further, we will connect in the hour before the event to kick off and then again at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 2, to share stories and bird numbers. Sign up for [Zoom here](#) or look for Zoom in the App Store.

We will also utilize Discord as an optional communication tool during the event. This app will be available to participants who want to keep in touch throughout the 24 hours – think of it as a bulletin board to leave notes about neat birds you have seen, post pictures of birds you may need help identifying, share funny stories, etc. These posts can be asynchronous – left for the next birder to see when they log in – or they can be a text conversation if others are online at the same time. There is also a voice channel that acts like a conference call. If several birders find themselves on the app at the same time, they can hop onto the “Live Birding Banter” channel and say hi, swap stories, or hold the phone up to a puzzling bird call for others to help id. Visit the [Discord website](#) to create a free account and learn more.

After you [register for the Birding Cup event](#), we will send you links to our Birding Cup Zoom “meeting” and Discord “server.”

Please enjoy yourselves and keep the big picture and your physical health in mind – the event is designed as a fun way to keep us connected to both the natural world and each other during the coronavirus outbreak.

Be safe, good luck, and good birding!