



2021 Birdathon Instructions and Answers to Your Questions

What is a birdathon?

A birdathon is a competitive birdwatching event and fundraiser. It is intended to be fun for everyone and friendly to beginners. Funds raised are used to provide environmental education for children, young people and adults in West Michigan.

What if I'm new to birdwatching?

If you are new to birdwatching we would be happy to help you participate. If you need help getting started please contact Scott Hutchings at 616.340.9071, or Jill Goodell at 616.204.3316. We would be happy to find a team for you to participate with and learn from.

Covid guidelines: GRAC follows all current state, local and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for COVID-19 prevention. All Birdathon participants must adhere to the guidelines – including but not limited to:

- 1) Social distancing (stay 6 feet apart), and
- 2) Masking requirements – with the more easily spread virus variants (“mutants”) it is recommended to layer 2 masks that fit our face well so viruses can't get around or through the mask when you breathe, and
- 3) Even if you have been vaccinated and you feel fine, you could be carrying a virus or mutation that could infect someone else. So remember to continue wearing your mask when with people not from your household, and
- 4) If you have been exposed to someone with a Covid diagnosis you need to protect others by quarantining yourself from others for 14 days after the exposure and monitor for symptoms.
- 5) THANKS!!!

Much more information is available at these websites: www.Michigangov/Coronavirus and for the terminally curious www.cdc.gov.

How do I participate?

1. Form or join a team of two or more people. Fun team names are encouraged! Teammates must be within sight of each other during the bird counting period of up to 6 hours. Choose a time between Saturday, April 17, 2021 and May 31, 2021, (between 12:01 a.m. in the morning on Saturday, April 17, and 12:00 p.m. on

Monday, May 31) to get out together and birdwatch. Or join a group participating in a Big Sit watching someone's feeders or in a wilder (non-feeder) setting, counting the birds seen, and enjoying each other's company.

2. Collect pledges. Ask friends and family to fill out pledge forms* and return them to you. (Pledge checks should be written to GRAC or Grand Rapids Audubon Club, Inc.) The team that raises the most pledge money will win a special trophy – so include your team name on the check.
3. Participate on as many teams as you can. Choose separate names for each team and birdwatch at different times. Also keep separate bird lists* and pledges* for each team. (Teams have been formed “in the field” when participants did not want to stop after 6 hours or saw a rarer bird!)
4. Birdwatch!!! Record the team's bird sightings on our Official Birding Report Sheet*. Spend up to 6 continuous hours with your team anywhere in Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa and/or Barry Counties. Each recorded bird must be positively identified by at least two members of the team.

The BIG SAFE SIT option. Have a 'watch party' and invite your friends to your property to count birds - even at your feeders, or at a similar viewing party at an agreed-upon bench along a trail or in a park (without feeders).

[***Remember to social distance or gather only with people from your household. Even if you've been vaccinated you could be carrying a new variant of the virus and it could infect someone else.***]

With either of the Big Safe Sit options anyone can participate and enjoy this event!!

5. Have great fun!!
 6. For each team submit a completed Official Birding Report Sheet (OBRS)*, team registration*, and pledges*.
 - Mail your completed OBRS*, and
 - your team registration form* and fee of at least \$30.00 (for each team)*, and
 - your pledge forms* and funds collected to:
Ed Bolt, 233 Glenhaven NW, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504.
- Must be hand delivered or postmarked by June 15, 2020, to be eligible for awards and bragging rights!!

* Forms can be downloaded from www.graud.org.

* All checks should be written to “GRAC” or “Grand Rapids Audubon Club”

Award categories:

- Most money raised by a team
- Most money raised by an individual
- Most species observed by a team
- Rarest birds on a single team's list
- Wild-card bird: Eastern Bluebird – the most seen by a team
- Youth team (“Fledging”) competition – Most species observed by a team with at least half of the members under age 18 years
- Big Safe Sit / Feeder - Most species sighted while sitting near a specific feeder
- Big Safe Sit / No Feeder - Most species spotted while sitting in one place, without a feeder nearby