



Great Texas Birding Classic EZ-Guide

Will this be the year that your site:

- ✓ wins \$1,000, \$5,000, or \$10,000?
- ✓ increases visitation by hosting a team?
- ✓ boosts teambuilding to a new level?



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What's It All About?

This year marks the **28th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic**, billed as the world's

Biggest, Longest, Wildest

birdwatching tournament.

The Birding Classic is a team birdwatching tournament that gives beginning and avid birders the opportunity to go out birding *anywhere* in the state of Texas! There are several tournament categories for participants to choose from—to fit their age, interests or schedules.

Team registration fees support habitat conservation projects throughout the state, and winning teams win the right to select which projects are funded. In fact, the tournament raised enough money through registration fees and sponsorships to award **\$47,000** in conservation grants in 2023, bringing the 27-year total for all grants awarded throughout Texas to **\$1,163,000.**

Three ways for your site to win money:

- (1) Enter a team made up of staffers, friends and family — and ID the most birds
- (2) Host a park team and invite the public to join in — and ID the most birds
- (3) Fill out a grant request form telling what you would do with the money (you can do this whether or not you enter a birding team).

TIMING

Registration deadline: April 1, 2024

Tournament dates: April 15-May 15, 2024 (teams choose the date that works best for them)

Questions: Shelly Plante, Nature Tourism Manager, (512) 389-4500 (cell: 512-241-9163) or shelly.plante@tpwd.texas.gov

Why GTBC could be a Very Good Thing for your Site

➤ Win a Grant of up to \$10,000

Earn funding for your birding site - **\$1,000, \$5,000 and/or \$10,000**. Money can be used for restoration, enhancement or acquisition. Simply enter your own GTBC team and win, or submit a proposal for consideration. **Just ask the City of Port Aransas, Fairfield Lake State Park, Armand Bayou Nature Center, and Trans-Pecos Bird Conservation who each won \$5,000 or \$10,000 grants in recent years!**



➤ GTBC as a team-building opportunity

Encourage your staff to work together, teach each other, and have fun together while participating in or promoting the GTBC! Staff at Caprock Canyon State Park said they were “able to see their park in a new and different way”.

➤ Increase Site Visitation

We’ve provided a local marketing field kit for you to use which includes:

- pre-written social media posts for your FB pages
- flyers to post or handout
- press release template for local media
- copy for local community calendars (newspaper, radio, online, etc.)

There will also be a **Statewide promotion** of the GTBC (January – April):

- event flyers distributed at birding festivals and events
- posts on Birding Classic Facebook page and main TPWD Facebook page
- emails to over 1,000,000 outdoor enthusiasts, and
- press releases sent statewide.

Show Me the Money — Win \$1,000...\$5,000...or \$10,000

Conservation Grant Project Funding Opportunity: Whether you have a team in the tournament or not, DO SUBMIT a grant request for a chance to win conservation project funding! And, if you field a team and your team wins, you'll be in a position to select your group's project proposal: <http://bit.ly/17zw7hK>.

Conservation Grant Projects



Conservation Grants

Conservation Grants can be awarded to projects anywhere in Texas. In its first 27 years the Birding Classic has donated \$1,163,000 in conservation funding to nature tourism and avian habitat restoration, enhancement, and acquisition projects throughout the state!

Number of grants awarded (and their amounts) are determined based on team registration fees (independent and sponsored) and corporate sponsorship dollars collected each year. The Birding Classic is a cost-recovery event, so once minimal event costs are covered all remaining funds go to conservation grants in Texas. Organizations are not required to register a team in the Birding Classic to be eligible to submit a project proposal.

All approved projects submitted by the May 1st deadline will be provided to winning Birding Classic teams to select which projects are funded by Conservation Grants. Conservation Grants awarded each year will include projects meeting [conservation grant criteria](#) for at least one each of the following (dependent on funds raised):

- **General Conservation Grant** – Birding Classic staff and winning team(s) work together to select project(s) from approved project list. Winning team(s) include one or more of the top scoring Adult Weeklong and/or Big Day teams (Statewide Tournament category and/or Regional category(ies) with the highest number of registered teams).
- **Lone Star Bird Award** – One randomly selected Big Site! team chooses grant award project from approved project list (team selection is based on the Lone Star Bird rules and does not necessarily go to the top scoring team).
- **State Parks Grant** – Birding Classic staff and the winning State Park Tournament team work together to select a state park project to receive funding from the approved project list.
- **Nature Tourism Grant** – partial funding for Texas Parks and Wildlife nature tourism programs (such as Great Texas Wildlife Trail map reprints).

Does your organization want to propose a project for funding consideration?

[Conservation Grant Criteria](#)

[Conservation Grant Proposal Form](#)

Conservation Grant Proposal Due Date: May 1, 2024

Field Marketing Kit: The more you tell, the more you sell....

To help spread the word about your site's participation use:

1. Social media (pre-written posts you can put on Facebook or Twitter)
2. Copy for local community event calendars (radio, TV, newspaper, online)
3. Press Release (localized)
4. Website: www.BirdingClassic.org

Marketing will be supporting GTBC with statewide:

- Press release to statewide and some national media
- Emails going out to 1,000,000 outdoor enthusiasts
- Posts on Birding Classic and Texas Parks and Wildlife Facebook pages

1. Social media (posts you can use on Facebook or Twitter)

For Facebook:

Join the (your site name)'s Big Sit! team this _____(fill in day of the week/date) at _____(times) to help us spot and ID as many birds as possible throughout the day. We'll also have birders on hand to help teach you a little about birding! <http://youtu.be/x6bSYNzP1wQ>

See how much fun birding at (your site name/community) can be in this year's [Great Texas Birding Classic](#) starting in April. Open to all ages and experience levels, it's a great way to experience Texas' famous spring migration. Choose a category that fits your lifestyle at <http://bit.ly/TxGTBC>

Thinking about doing a Big Sit! or Texas Two-Stop Tournament team in this year's Great Texas Birding Classic? (your site's name/community name) is a great spot for either! Check it out: <http://youtu.be/AQFHm5zum4o>

Thinking about doing a Big Sit! or State Park Tournament team in this year's Great Texas Birding Classic? (SP Name) is a great spot for either! Check it out: <http://youtu.be/AQFHm5zum4o>

Thinking about doing a Big Sit! or State Park Tournament team in this year's Great Texas Birding Classic? (SP Name) is a great spot for either! For more information: www.birdingclassic.org.

2. Copy for local community event calendars (radio, TV, newspaper, online)

- Join (insert your site name) in the 28th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic for a day of fresh air, bird watching and fun with friends. Form your own team or show up for our organization's/site's/park's official "BIG SIT" on (date) at (time). It's described as "the world's biggest, longest and wildest bird watching tournament" but is essentially a friendly competition to see how many birds can be identified. If you've never tried birdwatching this is a great introduction.
- (Your site/community) invites you to join the "Big Sit" on (date) at (time to time) as part of the 28th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic. Join other nature and wildlife lovers in this family friendly competition to see how many birds can be identified. Call (phone) or email (address) for more info. www.BirdingClassic.org.

3. Press release:

April 1 Registration Deadline for Annual Texas Birding Contest

(YOUR CITY) – Looking for something fun to do outdoors that involves nature and wildlife? (State Park, organization site, or nature center name) has just the answer--birdwatching. Whether you're a first-timer, a novice birder or a "fool" for birding who enjoys a little friendly competition, the 28th Annual [Great Texas Birding Classic](#) is a must. Form a team and enter to compete by the April 1 deadline.

Enter one or several categories lasting from a morning of birding to a full 24 hours of competition during this year's Birding Classic being held from April 15 through May 15. Participants choose from among dozens of different categories that offer something for everyone, regardless of bird watching experience, age, ability, location, length of time available to bird and other variants.

Last year's Great Texas Birding Classic attracted more than 1,100 participants from throughout Texas, who recorded 413 bird species during a host of regional and statewide tournaments. 202 teams entered, attracted by the format flexibility and lower registration fees.

"Participation over the past few years has been the highest we've seen in the past decade," says GTBC coordinator Shelly Plante, TPWD's nature tourism manager. "The Classic is a perfect fit for naturalists, birders, communities, nature centers, bird clubs and school groups. Besides, it's a fun way to spend the day outside with family and friends."

Participating teams can choose from a variety of tournament categories including:

- The Big Sit!: This category is great for teams that have one or two "ringer" birders or if you have lots of people wanting to be on one team together.
- The State Park Tournament, Big Sit! or Sunrise-to-Noon Tournament: Ideal for a team seeking a more laid-back day without too much traveling around and for teams composed of mixed ages, so kids, teens and adults can be on a team together.
- Regional Big Day: Perfect for those who want to test their skills against others in your part of the state, while birding for most or all of a 24-hour period. Mentor a Roughwings (13 years and younger) or Gliders

(age 14-18) or do your own adult tourney. Categories are separated by age groups and this year the adult category includes an “intact” and a “dispersed” version of the statewide Big Day category to accommodate a fun twist that was added during the pandemic.

- Adult Statewide Tournaments: Take on birders throughout Texas for the “Intact Flock” Statewide Weeklong Tournament or the “Dispersed Flock” Statewide Big Day Tournament for 24 hours of birding with friends from anywhere in Texas.

To register online and learn the rules and tournament details, visit: www.BirdingClassic.org. All registration fees and sponsorship dollars go toward conservation grants benefiting birding, nature tourism, and habitat restoration and enhancement projects throughout Texas. Some winning teams even help select which projects will be funded.

- **Have questions? Talk to (your contact name, phone, email)**

Copy for local media for a Big Sit

Great Texas Birding Classic at (your site name): Sign Up Now!

How many of Texas’ 664 documented bird species have you seen? Join Texas’ biggest birding roundup – the [Great Texas Birding Classic](#) and search for a few more. (Insert name of your site) is inviting everybody to play in the world’s biggest, longest and wildest bird watching tournament! Here’s the [speedy video version](#) of what it looks like.



[Text if your site is doing a Big Sit! team] One of the easiest ways to participate is to take part in a Big Sit! team, so (your site name) will be hosting their own Big Sit! on _____(date) at _____(time) where all are invited to join the fun! **[If your site finds a team sponsor, then the first 20 people will get a free t-shirt with the opportunity to purchase more if you have more than 20 team members].** So, gather your friends and family to join the (insert name of your site’s team) for the Big Sit! and put your binoculars and your bird ID skills to work.

[Alternate text if not doing a Big Sit! team] Categories range from half-day tournaments to full days and vary by age group, with some all-age tourneys. There’s truly something for everyone! So gather your friends and family and put together your team. Be sure to head out to (your site name) during your tournament or even field a State Park Tournament team right here in our park. We’d love to have you out!

Keep these dates in mind:

- April 1: Registration deadline for participating teams. All fees and forms are due. Late registration fees begin on this date.
- April 15 - May 15: Official Birding Classic tournament days. For inspiration, [watch "Flocking with Friends"](#) about one team's enthusiastic participation.

How to participate <http://bit.ly/1dNevMl>

How to Participate!



Please note: Please read rules, category descriptions, and registration forms closely.

Join the fun in a few easy steps:

1. **Pick a tournament category and read tournament rules.**
2. **Find team members.**
Ask friends, family, co-workers, bird club members, or other people in your community to join you in the field.
3. **Find a sponsor(s) or collect registration fees from your teammates.**
See [Sponsorship Tips](#) for strategies to find one or more team sponsors to cover your entry fees.
4. **Fill out a team Registration Form and pay registration fees online.**
5. **Register on the Texas eBird portal.**
Teams need an eBird account in order to submit a final tournament checklist. You should practice entering your bird lists from scouting trips into eBird before the tournament if you are new to eBird. This will help you get used to the way eBird works. This [online field checklist](#) can be a handy tool to have in the field as it lists most statewide springtime Texas birds in eBird order to make data entry of your official list easier. For more information, visit [Bird Checklist Submission](#).
6. **Select tournament day(s), and go out and bird!**
Send your selected tournament date(s) to gtbc@tpwd.texas.gov within 24 hours of your competition day(s) for official Birding Classic records.
7. **Submit official tournament checklist through eBird within 48 hours of completing your tournament.**
Follow submission directions provided at [Bird Checklist Submission](#). Once you've entered your checklist into eBird, you will need to share that list in eBird with the Birding Classic account, GTBCStaff. If you don't use a phone app that syncs with eBird, this [statewide field checklist](#) of springtime Texas birds (listed in eBird order) can be a good tool to record species your team sees/hears. Printing this list for use in the field can make data entry of your official checklist easier.
8. **Share!**
Are you on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram? Use #GTBC24 on any platform so other birders can follow the action. Like the [Birding Classic Facebook page](#) and post photos directly.
9. **See how you did!**
Final Results will be posted online once checklists from all teams are received and scored from eBird. GTBC staff will work with winning teams from several tournaments to select conservation project grant recipients. Conservation grant amounts and number of grants awarded is dependent on money raised through team registration fees and sponsorship dollars.
10. **Start planning for 2025!**
29th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic dates are April 15 - May 15, 2025.



- Chart explaining all tournament categories: <http://bit.ly/1hrqtvR>

2024 TOURNAMENT CATEGORIES						
Tournament Category	Age group	Number of team members	Length of time spent birding	Regional *	Statewide **	Additional Information
Expanded Big Sit! Regional Tournaments	all ages	1 or more	up to 24 hours in a single day (midnight to midnight)	X		Teams select a 50-foot diameter circle from which to bird (NOTE: THIS IS A MODIFICATION TO ALLOW FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING). Team members can rotate in shifts or can be the same members all day. Birds identified and counted may be inside or outside of the 50' circle, but they MUST be seen/heard from a team member WITHIN the circle. Event t-shirts provided for up to 20 people on sponsored teams, but team can consist of more than 20 people (additional shirts may be purchased for \$20 each).
Adult Statewide Weeklong Tournament - Intact Flock	19+ years old	3-5	up to six consecutive full days (midnight to midnight each day)		X	Intact Flock = Team members bird and travel together. Teams may bird from anywhere in the state.
Adult Regional Big Day Tournaments - Intact Flock	19+ years old	3-5	up to 24 hours in a single day (midnight to midnight)	X		Intact Flock = Team members bird and travel together. Teams must bird within a single region of the state.
Adult Regional Big Day Tournaments - Dispersed Flock ***	19+ years old	3-5	up to 24 hours in a single day (midnight to midnight)	X		Dispersed Flock = Team members bird individually anywhere within their region. All team members must be in the same region of the state. Teams combine bird lists to submit ONE team checklist for the day to judges through eBird.
Adult Statewide Big Day Tournament - Dispersed Flock ***	19+ years old	3-5	up to 24 hours in a single day (midnight to midnight)		X	Dispersed Flock = Team members bird individually anywhere within the state. Each team member may be in any region of the state. Teams combine bird lists to submit ONE team checklist for the day to judges through eBird.
Roughwings Regional Tournaments - Intact Flock	13 years and younger	3-5	up to 8 hours in a single day (midnight to midnight); hours need not be consecutive	X		Intact Flock = Team members bird and travel together. A mentor/driver does not identify or locate birds for the team but can help verify once ID'd by youth.
Roughwings Statewide Tournament - Dispersed Flock	13 years and younger	3-5	up to 8 hours in a single day (midnight to midnight); hours need not be consecutive		X	Dispersed Flock = Team members bird individually from anywhere in the state. This is a Statewide tournament category, not a Regional tournament. A mentor/driver does not identify or locate birds for the team but can help verify once ID'd by youth.
Glidens Regional Tournaments - Intact Flock	14-18 years old	3-5	up to 24 hours in a single day (midnight to midnight)	X		Intact Flock = Team members bird and travel together. A mentor/driver does not identify or locate birds for the team but can help verify once ID'd by youth.
Glidens Statewide Big Day Tournament - Dispersed Flock ***	14-18 years old	3-5	up to 24 hours in a single day (midnight to midnight)		X	Dispersed Flock = Team members bird individually from anywhere in the state. This is a Statewide tournament category, not a Regional tournament. A mentor/driver does not identify or locate birds for the team but can help verify once ID'd by youth.
Human-Powered Tournament - Intact Flock	all ages	3-5	up to 24 hours in a single day (midnight to midnight)	X		Intact Flock = Team members bird and travel together. All birds identified must be seen/heard after the team has become fully human-powered (walking, bicycles, kayaks, canoes, etc.). No motorized vehicles/watercraft may be used to move between locations once tournament day is begun.
State Park Tournament Intact Flock	all ages	3-5	up to 24 hours in a single day (midnight to midnight)		X	Intact Flock = Team members bird and travel together. Teams select a TPWD state park and all birds identified must be seen/heard from within that park's official boundaries. Teams must make advance day-pass reservations and pay all park entry fees (or use their Texas State Parks Pass http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/park-information/passes/spass-faq), including any overnight fees if starting the count before the park opens.
Sunrise to Noon Tournament - Intact Flock	all ages	3-5	sunrise to 12:00noon	X		Intact Flock = Team members bird and travel together. Teams begin birding at dawn and can bird until 12:00noon. Teams must bird within a single region of the state.
Texas Two-Stop Tournament - Intact Flock	all ages	3-5	up to 48 hours in a two-day period (midnight first day to 11:59pm the following day)		X	Intact Flock = Team members bird and travel together. Teams select two birding sites that have distinct boundaries (examples: state/county/city park, NWR, WMA, nature center, TNC property) and may bird for up to 24 consecutive hours at each site, minus driving time between sites, in the 48-hour period. Final checklist is combined list total for both sites. No birds may be counted while driving between sites, only within boundaries of each of the two sites.
Outta-Sight Song Birder Tournament - Intact Flock	all ages	3-5	up to 12 hours in a single day (midnight to midnight); hours do not need to be consecutive		X	Intact Flock = Team members bird and travel together. This tournament is for birders who are blind or visually impaired. One sighted person per team allowed but not required. Sighted person must be blindfolded restricting bird identification to sound-based ID only. Driver/record keeper may not assist with bird location or identification.

- **Registration fees for all tournament categories:** <http://bit.ly/1dvqeLJ>

All Teams Register as Either Independent or Sponsored Teams

The Birding Classic is a cost-recovery event paid for through team registration fees and sponsor donations. Once event costs are covered all remaining funds will be used for nature tourism and avian habitat conservation and enhancement projects in Texas. [Conservation grants](#) awarded (number of grants and grant amounts) are determined based on registration fees (independent and sponsored) and corporate sponsorship dollars collected each year.

Independent Teams:

Independent teams must pay their own **independent team registration fees** and travel expenses for all team members to enter their tournament category. Designated drivers and chaperones do not pay entry fees and must cover their own travel expenses. Independent teams may not carry an organization's or site's name. Only sponsored teams may promote an organization's or site's name.



Sponsored Teams:

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 or can pay their own travel expenses. Sponsored teams can be named for their sponsoring organization or site and may promote their sponsor's/sponsors' name on clothing, car decals, or any other appropriate promotional materials. See [Sponsorship Tips](#) for ideas and tips on finding a team sponsor.

Registration Fees:

Tournament Category	Independent Team Fees * (no team sponsor)	Sponsored Team Fees
Adult Regional Big Day (Dispersed and Intact Flock), Adult Statewide Big Day (19 years old and older), Adult Statewide Weeklong (19 years and older); or Texas Two-Stop (all ages) Tournaments	\$50 per team member *	\$1000 per team
Big Sit! **, Gliders (14-18 years old), Human-Powered, State Park, Sunrise to Noon, or Outta-Sight Song Birder Tournaments	\$30 per team member *	\$500 per team **
Roughwings Tournament (13 years old and younger)	\$20 per team member *	\$250 per team

* Drivers, mentors and chaperones are free but may purchase event t-shirts through registration payment portal.

** Sponsored Big Sit! team fee includes t-shirts for the first 20 members only, but additional event t-shirts may be purchased through registration payment portal (select option for "non-birding team member, t-shirt only").

All registration fee payments (sponsored and independent teams) must be received online via a link included with the team's registration form submission confirmation. Independent teams will be charged an additional \$25 per person for late registration. Sponsored teams will be charged an additional \$200 per team.

- Official event registration information: <http://bit.ly/1jltbjq>

Event Registration



REGISTER YOUR TEAM:

Please note: Please read rules, category descriptions, and registration forms closely.

Official Event Registration Form


- Review [How-to Participate!](#)
- Select a [Tournament Category](#). If participating in a Regional Tournament, refer to the [Regional Tournament Map](#) to select your region.
- Review [tournament rules](#).
- [Register your team](#).
- Please make a copy of your registration for your records. The team captain will receive a confirmation email with a link for fee payments.
- **Pay your Registration Fee** (or have your sponsor pay) for your total team [registration fees](#). **(PLEASE NOTE: Teams receive the payment link by email once they submit their online team registration form. The Birding Classic accepts online payment via credit card only. Do not mail a check for registration fees to TPWD.)**
- Team registration is complete once you have completed your registration form and paid your registration fee in full.
- You must email the [GTBC coordinator](#) with your **selected tournament date(s)** within 24-hours of your team's competition day(s). This email with your chosen tournament date(s) is for GTBC record keeping purposes since all team checklists must be entered into eBird within 48-hours of your tournament completion.




- **Official Tournament Rules:** <http://bit.ly/1gBGkgo>

Review full tournament rules online.

Rules



Great Texas Birding Classic



2024 Tournament Rules


All teams must follow the tournament rules for the Spring 2024 Birding Classic in order to have official standing in their tournament category. Please review all [rules](#) for your selected tournament(s) so that you follow the rules in place for 2024.

There is only one big tournament change for 2024 (please review [complete rules](#) for all tournament details):

- The Sunrise to Noon Tournament is now a **Regional Tournament!** Your team must select which **region** your team will bird during your Sunrise to Noon half-day event. This will no longer be a statewide event, instead having teams within the same region compete against each other (similar to the Regional Big Day, Big Sit!, and Roughwings Tournaments).

Please pay special attention to the following definitions and rules:

- "Dispersed Flock" teams include team members who may be located anywhere in Texas or in their selected region (depending on if they're entering a statewide or regional tournament). Several tournament categories will offer this option.
- "Intact Flock" teams include team members willing and able to travel together during their tournament day.
- Big Sit! teams select a 50-foot diameter circle from which to bird. Any number of birders may be in your Big Sit! circle at a time. Teams can plan shifts to allow for social distancing.
- All rules, terms, and conditions are subject to change up to and including during the dates of the event to comply with federal, state, and/or local restrictions and quickly evolving best practices. [Complete rules for the 2024 Birding Classic](#) can be found online.
- The 95% Rule will not apply in any "Dispersed Flock" tournament categories nor to the Big Sit! In "Dispersed Flock" tournament categories, team members will be remote from one another, so it is up to fellow members to accept or question any dubious identifications before adding them to the team's official tournament day checklist. Big Sit! teams continue to only need a single team member to see/identify a species for it to count.
- The 95% rule applies only to the "Intact Flock" categories. This means 95% of all birds recorded by an "Intact Flock" team must be tallied and identified by all members of the team. 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.



How to Find Financial Sponsors

Friends Groups, convention and visitors bureaus and economic development groups, local businesses and more could sponsor your team(s) or split a team sponsorship as co-sponsors. Learn more here: <http://bit.ly/1BONt7M>

Team Sponsorship Tips



How to Find a Team Sponsor

Teams may participate in the Birding Classic as a sponsored team if they have a corporate, community, or non-profit sponsor (or sponsors) willing to pay the Sponsored **Team Registration Fee** for their tournament category (price range of \$250 - \$1000, depending on the tournament category).

If one sponsor is not able to cover the entire sponsored registration fee, teams may choose to find multiple sponsors to split the fee and share co-sponsorship name recognition in Birding Classic materials and in the team name.



Where should you look?

Think Local! Would the company you work for be interested in sponsoring your team for recognition during the tournament and on the Birding Classic website as a team sponsor? Do you have any connections with local businesses?

Approach organizations such as a birding club, a state Audubon society or local chapter, a non-profit organization, a business or corporate enterprise, an individual, or a combination of organizations to cover your sponsored entry fees.

Sponsors in the past have been as varied as:

- Local grocery stores (could possibly donate food to your team for competition day)
- Hardware stores (think of all the bird seed and feeders they sell!)
- Banks
- Environmental consulting companies,
- Car dealerships (can also loan you a vehicle for the tournament day potentially)
- Optics companies
- Birding magazines
- Oil and gas companies
- Convention and Visitors Bureaus or Chambers of Commerce
- Local nature centers

They can pay all or part of the sponsorship, but your team must be covered by the full Sponsored Registration Fee amount in order for your team to carry any organization's name in your official team name.

How does the sponsor benefit?

Team sponsors receive name recognition in the following:



How to Run a Birding Tournament...and look good doing it

Tips for mentoring a youth team, hosting a Big Sit!, doing a Big Day Tournament, and more can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1gBGwvY>

Tournament Advice



Need help? Looking for advice from previous participants?

You've come to the right place!

- [GTBC EZ Guide](#) - a complete guide for site managers and community leaders who want tips on how to promote their team(s) locally, manage team members for team-building or for a public event, apply for bird conservation grants, find sponsors, and more!
- [Big Day Regional Tournament Strategy](#) - Strategy advice from a winning team member and past participant in various tournament categories on how to best take on a "Big Day" of birding.
- [Weeklong Tournament Strategy](#) - Strategy advice from a multi-year winning team's captain on how best to tackle the whole state over multiple days.
- [How to Field a Big Sit! Team](#) - Tips from past teams to help make your Sit! go smoothly.
- [How to Plan a Team for the State Park Tournament](#) - Tips from some state park staff and past participants to help you start your team!
- [Mentor/Chaperone Tips and Activities for Youth Teams](#) - Advice from several past youth mentors and chaperones on how best to engage and prepare the 18 and under set. Includes game ideas!
- [Tip Sheet for Birding with People Who Are Blind](#) - Guidance from birders who are blind on best ways to assist while in the field.
- [How to Find a Sponsor](#) - Suggestions on how to find a great local or corporate sponsor to help pay your entry fees (and maybe your travel expenses).



2019 Chatty Chickadees team

Want a sneak peek of the Birding Classic? [View the video below!](#)

Post Tournament — It's a Wrap <http://bit.ly/1LOd4PX>

Once your team completes its tournament day(s), the final step is to officially turn your team checklist in to the [Texas eBird portal](#). Find all of the information you need to submit your list here. Call Shelly Plante, Nature Tourism Manager, at 512-389-4500 if you need assistance. Checklists are due within 48 hours of completion of your tournament day.

Bird Checklist Submission



The Birding Classic is now using the Texas eBird portal for Birding Classic team checklist submission. This is a great opportunity for teams to contribute to citizen science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology while raising money for birding and avian habitat conservation projects throughout Texas (through team registration fees and sponsorships).

Step-by-Step Instructions on Using eBird for the Birding Classic

Enhanced How-to Guide for the eBird beginner (or those who like all the details):

[eBIRD HOW-TO GUIDE WITH SCREENSHOT GRAPHICS](#)

Basic How-to Guide for Those Familiar with eBird:

1. Go to the Texas eBird portal online: <http://ebird.org/content/tx>
2. Each individual team must create an eBird account or **use their existing personal eBird account**. Teams must include their team name and tournament category in the "Comments" section of the "Step 2: Date and Effort" page of their eBird checklist submission. You must submit one final checklist for your team.
3. Enter all scouting data into eBird using the standard eBird Observation Types under the "Data and Effort" page. **Submitting scouting lists gives you eBird practice before your tournament day while also contributing to the eBird international database which helps other birders, biologists, and more!** Visit [eBird](#) for more information on how to use the online tool and for information on how this data is used.
4. Submit **ONE** checklist corresponding to the day of the competition that represents your official tournament date for the event. When submitting your **OFFICIAL CHECKLIST**, use the "Other – Great Texas Birding Classic" Observation Type listed on the "Data and Effort" screen. Almost all of you will be doing "Traveling Counts" (with the exception of Big Six teams), so do your best to estimate the distance traveled. An estimate is fine. Fill in as much of the other information as you know (acreage is usually not applicable, for example). Under "Comments" fill in your team name and tournament category for the Birding Classic.
5. Fill in your checklist with the species seen/heard definitively during your tournament days, based on the [Rules](#) of the Great Texas Birding Classic for counting (**Rule IA-J**). Use the following guidelines in your checklist reporting:

- Reporting the total number of each species seen gives much better data for eBird, so hopefully during scouting days at least you will be able to provide that level of data.



Announcement of Winners and Awarding of Prizes !!!!!

<http://bit.ly/1wmBAi2>

The Awards Ceremony is a favorite with past participants as it gives everyone a chance to share their stories from the field and meet the winners. This year we will have two events to make distance easier for the majority of teams. More information about these events will be posted online and teams will receive invitations in early May to these events.

Awards Ceremonies



28th Annual Birding Classic Awards Ceremonies



When: TBD, June 2024

Where: TBD in Houston, Texas

Thanks to Awards Ceremony sponsor, Audubon Texas, for hosting our 2023 hybrid ceremony.

We look forward to seeing everyone again in 2024!

Why Attend the Awards?

- Meet teams from your area.
 - Have a chance to introduce your teammates and thank any team sponsors.
 - Take part in an annual favorite: Sharing your team's highlights (or lowlights!) - funny stories, life birds, near misses on your list, the one that got away - share it all!
 - Learn who won each category.
 - Enjoy snacks and beverages while chatting with like-minded fellow competitors.



The 2023 event was a great year:

- Event attracted 202 teams and recorded 413 species.
- The birding tournament raised enough money through registration fees and sponsorships to award \$47,000 in conservation grants in 2023, bringing the 27-year total for all grants awarded throughout Texas to \$1,163,000.

What are People Saying about the Birding Classic?



“It’s an excellent program and a great excuse to get out and do some birding. The conservation grants program that comes out of funds raised from the Classic supports worthy projects that benefit bird habitat, birding, conservation, education and outreach...It was a great party... I mean big sit. And a great weekend for birding all around!” - Rick Laughlin, **Rio Brazos Audubon Society**, member of Brazos Banditry Big Sit! team in local community park, 2015

“We had a blast – and yes, we plan on making this a yearly event!” - Michael Price, Executive Director, **I-20 Wildlife Preserve & Jenna Welch Nature Study Center**, Big Sit! team 2015



We had so much fun competing together, and the staff have already let me know that they want to do it again next year! - Marisa Oliva-Rodriguez, Manager, **Edinburg Scenic Wetlands & World Birding, Center**, member of Wetland Waders, Lower Texas Coast Big Day team, 2015



“Having sponsored and participated in the Great Texas Birding Classic since its inception, Port Aransas has increasingly benefited from the exposure that we receive through this outstanding program. Sponsorship is one thing, but when you involve both birders and non-birders from the community through participation, the awareness of what’s ‘in your own backyard’ is most rewarding. Participation then turns into winning, and the recognition and awards bring even more awareness and esteem to the community. I can say without a doubt that the GTBC has definitely brought great rewards, to not only the Chamber, but the entire community of Port Aransas.” - Ann Vaughan, President and CEO, **Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce**

What are People Saying about the Birding Classic?



Regional Lower Texas Coast Big Day winning team from (mostly) **Estero Llano Grande State Park** winning the right to designate \$7,500 in funding to a conservation project.



“What a fun and enjoyable way to spend an afternoon with good friends and coworkers. A good time was had by all and I think we all learned a little about birding, **Caprock Canyons State Park** and each other... I know I can't wait until next year to do it again! I am thinking that next year will be a competition with different teams in the park and maybe even other parks within the region! Who's with me???” – Donald Beard, Park Superintendent, Caprock Canyons State Park, State Park Tournament team 2013



Galveston Island State Park Assistant Superintendent, Kyle O'Haver, (above) showing how to do a solo Big Sit! while also catching up on your beauty sleep. He let us know that Facebook became his birding buddy for the day as he posted great shots of sunrise, sunset, birds, and other views throughout the day. It was definitely a fun day to follow on social media!