Our Delaware Bird-a-Thon is coming up soon!! From Sept 5th-12th we are very excited to be having a modified Bird-a-Thon; our focus this year is simply to get people outside, enjoying nature, and seeing some cool birds! Take a look at some of this year’s new rules and recommendations, so you can be prepared!

In a typical Bird-a-Thon, the winners are selected with two metrics: the amount of money raised and the number of species seen are combined to get a winner. This year, we will only be selecting winners based on the number of species seen NOT the amount of money raised. We know that fundraising is difficult right now, with so many novel stressors in everyday life and we don’t want our participants worrying about raising money.

We know that some of you have already started fundraising and we know that others of you still want to do so. That’s absolutely fine! Any money that is raised by this year’s Bird-a-Thon efforts will be put towards the Bill Stewart Memorial Fund; this recently announced DOS-managed fund will help to support youth birders and young conservationists.

We want everyone to be safe and careful! When you are out birding remember the following:

Please AVOID stopping for food, gas, and drinks. Fill your cars up ahead of time and bring snacks and water bottles from home. If you do have to stop somewhere for supplies, wear a mask and follow all social distancing guidelines.

Please AVOID car pooling when at all possible.

Please AVOID high traffic areas. This may include some parks and beaches that are commonly used for birding. Research and plan ahead of time and try to be flexible in case crowded situations arise.

This year, we will NOT have any team categories. Categories that used to be split between a team winner and an individual winner will be collapsed into one.

The year we will be adding the following categories:

Photography Challenge: For this challenge, we invite photographers and birders alike to submit a list of all of the birds they were able to successfully photograph during the day; if you want to participate in the photography challenge, instead of recording every bird that you saw during your Bird-a-Thon effort, only record those that you were able to photograph on your official Bird-a-Thon checklist. We welcome posts to our Facebook page and eBird checklists with photos attached, but in order to be recognized for winning, you need to include an official Bird-a-Thon checklist.
Yard Challenge: Do your best from your home and backyard! Submit an official checklist only of the birds you saw from your backyard during your Bird-a-Thon effort; this can include birds visiting feeders, flying over your yard, migrants feeding in trees and bushes on your property, etc.

Patch Challenge: A patch is your backyard away from your backyard! If you have a local park or waking trail or waterfront park that you visit when you need a quick birding fix, but don’t want to travel to far from home, go do your Bird-a-Thon there! Keep an official Bird-a-Thon checklist of birds you saw just at your patch!

Most Bird-a-Thon Lifebirds: Newer birders will love this category! Along with your official Bird-a-Thon checklist, include a list of all of the birds that you saw that were lifebirds: that list, all of birds that you saw which you had never seen before. If you saw your first-ever Black Skimmer and your first-ever Cape May Warbler on your Bird-a-Thon, tell us!

Outside the Park-and-refuge Challenge: Many birds love birding at our state and national refuges and parks. For this challenge, though we invite you to find less well-visited spots. Search through some more obscure hotspots and try to stay away from famous wildlife refuges and state parks like Cape Henlopen and Bombay Hook.