



Colorado Birding Challenge Official 2026 Rules



Following are the official rules for the 2026 COBC governing the three competitive categories: The Challenge, The Under-25 Challenge and The Green Challenge. The fourth category, Bird Your Own Way, is non-competitive.

REGISTRATION

The leader for each team will complete registration using the COBC Registration Form that can be found on the CFO website and providing the team's name, the category you will compete in and the county you will bird in. A nonrefundable registration fee of \$75, \$50 for CFO members, will be charged at the time of registration. Under-25 and non-competitive "Bird Your Own Way" teams will not be charged a registration fee.

CATEGORIES

The Challenge. The most competitive category, teams of two or more go all out to find as many species as they can within their chosen Colorado county.

The Under-25 Challenge. As the name implies, teams must be made up of individuals aged 25 years or younger, although an adult may accompany them for supervision and/or transportation.

The Green Challenge. This category is for those who want to minimize their carbon footprint by using only self-propelled (non-motorized) transportation (walking, pedaling, paddling, etc.).

Bird Your Own Way. For everyone else there's BYOW! In this non-competitive category you can participate on your own, host a birding party, do a "Big Sit" in your yard or favorite hot spot or any other plan that strikes your fancy.

FUNDRAISING

One of the main goals for the COBC is to raise funds for CFO programs and our conservation initiatives. All registered teams will receive a link to set up their team's COBC page on Pledgert. You can list the members of your team, the county you'll bird in, your species goal for the day and your fundraising target. Share this page with your friends, family and co-workers and they will have the option to support you with a donation or by pledging a dollar amount per species your team finds.

COMPETING

The three competitive categories, The Challenge, The Under-25 Challenge and The Green Challenge, will have 24 hours on September 5, 2026, to identify and count as many bird species as possible within the Colorado County they chose.

ABA BIG DAY RULES

The ABA has published rules for how to conduct a Big Day Count. COBC teams must follow the [ABA Big Day Rules](#).

Of particular importance is **the 95% Rule**. Teams are encouraged to have all members positively identify each species on its list throughout the day. This means if one member hears a Gray Catbird, s/he should try to have each team member hear it and confirm the identification. When the team reviews its official species total, 95% of the species must have been seen/heard by all team members. For example, if your team reports 100 species for the day, just five that were seen/heard by only some of the team members can count toward your total.

COUNTY PAR

Not all Colorado Counties were created equal! Our great state has 64 unique counties, some are bigger than others, some have mountains, some have reservoirs. All have different habitat types and given the geographic diversity, the number and timing of migrants varies. In an effort to create as level a playing field as possible, the COBC Committee has developed a proprietary formula that we call “par.” Using 10 years of eBird data, and taking into account how intensely each county has been birded, we’ve determined how many species might reasonably be expected to occur in each county in September 2026. Each team’s official total will be compared with the par value for the county birded, and this is how we will determine which is the winning team. For example, if one team competes in Conejos County (par 62) and reports 75 species, that represents 120% of par. A team birding in Larimer County might have a higher total, say 95 species, but since the par value for Larimer is 109, that would represent 87% of par. Thus, the team birding in Conejos would finish higher.

For clarification of any rule or resolution of any conflicts in interpretation of these rules, or the ABA Big Day rules as they relate to the COBC, please contact the COBC Committee by emailing cobc@cobids.org.