



ORGANIZATIONAL TEAMS GUIDE

Participating nonprofits, bird clubs, and Bird Cities get to keep **50% of the funds they raise during the Great Wisconsin Birdathon.**

That's right! **Fifty percent.** If your team brings in \$1,000 of donations to the Birdathon, your organization gets a check at the close of the event for \$500 to put towards your mission. The rest goes to our **Bird Protection Fund**. It's as simple as that—and the birds win both ways!

You'll have fun birding and **we'll handle all the nitty gritty details**—the payment processing, the credit card fees, the tax receipts. We want it to be easy for you to invest this money back into your community and help #BringBirdsBack!

In this guide:



**Frequently
Asked
Questions**



**Tips and Ideas
for a Successful
Birdathon**



**Event
Planning
Checklist**

Gathering Waters team Gathering Warblers by Creal Zearing / Members of Feminist Bird Club team Yes We Pelican! by Caitlynn Schuchhardt / Ice Age Trail Alliance team Yellow-Blazed Sapsuckers by Maura Hanley



[WISCONSERVATION.ORG/BIRDATHON](https://www.wisconservation.org/birdathon)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I know if my organization qualifies?

If your organization is a **nonprofit**, a **bird club**, or a **Wisconsin Bird City** ... you qualify! Bird clubs do not need to be 501c3 certified in order to take advantage of this opportunity. The only requirement is that your organization uses your funds for 501c3 purposes and adds your name to the list of endorsers of the **Wisconsin Bird Conservation Partnership**. **[Click here](#)** to fill out the Endorser Agreement.

If you have any questions about whether or not you qualify, contact our Event & Donor Relations coordinator, Naomi Hadley at WIBirdathon@WisConservation.org.



What can my organization use our funds for?

Funds may only be used for **charitable, educational, or scientific purposes** as defined in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code—even if you aren't a certified 501c3. Funds must be used to support organizations, projects, programs, and opportunities that **support birds or otherwise support lands, waters, and wildlife or connect people to nature**. Here's a list of **some examples** of how other organizations have used their past Birdathon funds:

- constructing and building birdhouses
- purchasing binoculars and/or scopes for bird outings
- installing ADA-accessible scopes and bird-related interpretative signage at local parks
- purchasing native plants and/or supporting land restoration
- paying field trip leaders on organized bird outings with youth
- supporting bird-focused community science programs
- supporting "sister organizations" in South America doing bird conservation work
- funding GPS trackers for birds through support of banding and research stations

How can my team register and take advantage of this opportunity?

When you register your team on WIBirdathon.org, you'll be asked a few questions. **Complete the organizational funds form when prompted during registration.**



Elm Grove Bird City team Birders of the Grove by Karen Lloyd

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS, cont.

Does my organization have to be an environmental or conservation-focused organization to participate?

No! We naturally see high participation from "Friends Of" groups, land trusts, bird conservation organizations, and bird clubs, but **this opportunity is not limited to such groups** alone. If you're looking for a way to get your nonprofit staff and/or board members out and enjoying nature together, consider the Birdathon! However, keep in mind that if you choose to keep 50% of your funds raised, it must be used to support projects, programs, and opportunities that support birds or otherwise support lands, waters, and wildlife or connect people to nature.

Will my organization be able to access donor information?

You'll be able to view all your donors and their gift amounts on your team page. Individual participants receiving donations and pledges can even contact and thank donors directly through our platform! If you need an exported list of your donor names, email addresses, and donation amounts for your records, please email WIBirdathon@WisConservation.org to receive a spreadsheet with this information.

Who can join my organization's team?

Anyone that supports your organization! **The team captain must be affiliated with your organization**, but team members can be anyone that you'd like to invite to join you in supporting the cause! If you'd like to keep your team focused on just staff members, or staff and board, or volunteers, that's fine too!

How should my team fundraise?

You should make a point to **customize your fundraising page with your organization's mission!** Make it clear that 50% of your earnings will go to YOU! If you've got plans for your funds, say so! Get people excited about all the ways they'll be supporting birds. Then, **share your page widely**—share it on your social media, send it in your e-newsletters, tell your members and supporters how they can get involved by donating (or joining your team!) in support of your Birdathon. Our **Fundraising Guide** is here to get you started.

When are donations closed? When will our organization get a check?

Birding ends on June 15, but **donations are accepted through June 30**. Organization teams will receive a check for 50% of the funds they raised after the donation period closes. Checks will be issued by the **Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin**. It takes a few weeks to process the checks and mail them, so you can expect a check around August.

TIPS AND IDEAS

Bird your way!

The Birdathon is a **customizable** event. You have the **freedom to choose where, when, and how** you bird, as long as it's between **April 15 - June 15**.

- There's nothing wrong with **small and simple**. If you've only got time for an hour or two of birding and a few quick social media posts, that's okay!
- You can **set the tone** of your event. Will it be low-key and casual, with a focus on gathering outside in nature rather than IDing everything you see? That's great! Will it have a competitive edge with an ambitious species goal? That's great too!



The last thing we want is for the Birdathon to be a drain on anyone's capacity. This event is a **celebration** of birds! It's an opportunity for folks to **get outside**, experience some **bird joy**, and raise donations in support of our feathered friends. We're happy to have you join, no matter how casual or grand your plans are!

Designate a team captain to be "point person."

The person who registers your team's fundraising page will automatically be assigned as your **"team captain."** They'll be able to make edits to your team page and will be the person the Event coordinator contacts if questions arise. We suggest designating one person from your organization to be the team captain who keeps an eye on donations, posts updates, and communicates with the Event & Donor Relations coordinator. Other team members are welcome (not required) to make their own sub-pages as team members, but those users will only be able to edit their individual pages, not the team's page.

Make it clear where your funds will go!

Research shows that people are **more likely to donate** when they understand how their money will be used. You might not have all the details ironed out and that's okay, but do your best to share a plan for your funds that is more specific than "supporting our organization." If you're returning to the Birdathon again, consider updating your donors with how you used last year's funds so they can see the impact of their donation.



Volunteers from the Neighborhood Habitat Improvement Project building birdhouses by Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory

TIPS AND IDEAS

Curious about how fellow organizations have planned their Birdathon day(s)? Below are just a few examples from recent years. These are great suggestions, but don't forget to consider your capacity and what would be the most fun for your team!

- **McFarland Bird Festival** raised funds for an ADA-accessible scope system and interpretive signage at Lewis Park. Their donors knew ahead of time how their donation would have a local impact on a park they love.
- **Glacial Lakes Conservancy** took their supporters to bird on private property held in their land trust, showing their donors the work they do, up-close and personal!
- **Holy Wisdom Monastery** turned their Birdathon into a community event, hosting multiple inclusive walks throughout the day and inviting families and birders of all ages to explore their trails and learn about the ecological restoration they are doing.
- **Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance** used their Birdathon to raise awareness about bird collisions. They posted updates throughout their day to educate donors about the impact of bird collisions and used their funds to support their citizen science program, Bird Collision Corps.
- **North Country Trail Association - Chequamegon Chapter** birded along nine different sections of the North Country Trail and used their funds for trail improvements.
- **Elm Grove** and the **Village of DeSoto**, both **Wisconsin Bird Cities**, used their Birdathons to host educational events that taught the community about bird-friendly habitat. They raised money to support their Bird City goals!
- Madison's chapter of the **Feminist Bird Club** held drop-in birding events throughout the day and invited members to bird solo while sharing sightings over eBird! They raised money to provide binoculars to new members.



Scopes at Lewis Park by Shawn Miller / Team GLC Chickadees by Jennifer Rutten / Team Wrens of Wisdom Prairie by Amy Alstad / North Country Birders by Ellie Williams

EVENT CHECKLIST FOR ORGANIZATIONAL TEAMS

It's go time! Here's a list that will help you get all your ducks in a row.

- ☐ Choose a team captain. They'll be responsible for registering your page and be able to edit your content.
- ☐ Pick a birdy team name! (Puns are encouraged but not required!)
- ☐ Set a fundraising goal.
- ☐ Set a goal for how many bird species you'd like to see.
- ☐ Choose a profile picture to represent you on the Leaderboard.
- ☐ Choose the main photo for your fundraising page.
- ☐ Write a custom message for your fundraising page. Consider including details about why your organization is participating, why you care about birds, or what you plan to do with your portion of funds raised.
- ☐ Get registered! Upload your content to your new fundraising page. (Read our [**Registration Steps!**](#))
- ☐ Start sharing your page! Craft 2-3 social media posts to share in the lead-up to your Birdathon to encourage donations. You can also post updates and messages directly on your fundraising page for donors and visitors to see.
- ☐ Write a paragraph about your team to share in a newsletter, email, or other online communication with your audience. Get them excited about your event!
- ☐ On the big day, don't forget to post on social media and keep your audience updated. Consider sharing some live, in-the-moment updates in your Stories on social media.
- ☐ Take photos of your day! Capture memories of your team, birds you saw, places you went.
- ☐ Keep a list of your bird species seen (eBird is helpful, a Google spreadsheet works great, or you can download our [**Birdathon Species Checklist!**](#))
- ☐ Report back! Let us know how it went. Share a paragraph about your day, your bird species list, and some pictures to WIBirdathon@WisConservation.org. You can also post these items as "updates" to your team page.



Struggling to take flight? Let us help!

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Natural Resources
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of Wisconsin