

Bob Billings Big Year Award

John R. (“Bob”) Billings was a member of DVOC for 44 years, from 1965 until his death in 2009. In his will, he left the club \$2,000 to be invested, with the interest being used to give an annual award of \$200 to the person who recorded the largest number of birds in the calendar year. He left it up to the club to determine the rules for the competition. The club has raised additional funds, aided by a \$1,000 matching challenge from Hart Rufe, to add to the investment, so that the award can be given annually in perpetuity.

The competition is open to all DVOC members, as further specified in the rules. The person who identifies, by sight or sound, the largest number of bird species in the calendar year will be the winner and will be awarded a \$200 prize. The competition area is restricted to the DVOC checklist area (southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware), as further specified below.

The Bob Billings Big Year is a regional big year birding competition open to members of the DVOC.

Committee Members:

Art McMorris – Chairperson
Tom Bailey
Hart Rufe
Chris Walters

These rules are the result of the work of the Billings Award Committee in consultation with the Trustees, with input from many other club members:

1. Name of Award: The award shall be named the “Bob Billings Big Year Award.”

2. Term and Duration: The competition will be held each calendar year and the award given each year, in perpetuity.

3. Amount of Award:

a. The winner will be awarded \$200.00, as specified in Bob Billings’ will.

b. If there is a tie, the \$200.00 prize will be split equally between the winners.

c. The \$200 award will come from the earnings of the invested funds earmarked for this award; and the investment will be managed, and each year’s earnings will be determined, by the Trustees.

d. If the earnings from the investment in any given year are less than \$200, the Billings Award Committee will fund-raise to make up the difference. If the earnings from the investment in any given year exceed \$200, the excess will be re-invested.

4. Eligibility:

a. All DVOC members are eligible to compete for the prize, so long as they are members in good standing for the entire year in which they are competing.

b. The previous year’s winner can compete, but no one can win 2 years in a row. This includes ties: a person who wins or ties in one year can’t win or tie in the immediately following year.

c. (Revised 9/2011) Beginning 2012, all contestants must notify the Billings Award Committee that they are competing no later than March 31 of the competition year.

5. Geographic Area:

All birds must be identified, by sight or sound, in the DVOC checklist area, as defined in the current checklist published on the DVOC website, and as further defined in the counties list and map below, which include only whole counties; plus the pelagic waters of New Jersey and Delaware as defined by the NJ and DE state records committees.

6. Birds Allowed, and Documentation:

a. All birds in the current DVOC checklist are eligible, and write-in species as detailed below; full species only (subspecies will not count as separate birds). Persons competing for the award should print out a copy of the full checklist (not the abbreviated “field checklist”), carry it with them while birding, and mark where (e.g., county) and when each bird was seen.

b. Species listed in the Checklist as “casual” or “accidental” on the date seen, and any write-in species, will be accepted at the discretion of the judges, if accompanied by adequate documentation as detailed on the Rare Bird Report Form.

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c. Any changes due to lumps or splits since the publication of the most recent DVOC checklist will follow the most recent AOU checklist and its supplements, in force as of December 31 of the year of the competition.

d. Listing will follow current ABA rules: each bird recorded must be seen and positively identified, or heard and positively identified, by the person competing. In addition, the ABA Code of Ethics must be followed during the competition (no trespassing, etc.).

Revised Rule 6, in force beginning with the 2014 competition

6. Birds Allowed, and Documentaion:

a. Except as detailed in rule 6b below, all birds on the official bird list of the state in which the bird is seen, as established by the official state records committee for that state, are eligible; full species only (subspecies will not count as separate birds). Persons competing for the award should carry an appropriate checklist in the field and record the date and the location (county and state) of each sighting. A Composite List of the three states' official lists is available.

b. Species that are not on the official bird list of the state in which they are seen, or that are on the official review list of that state (also called "documentation required" or "under review") will be accepted at the discretion of the judges, if accompanied by adequate documentation as detailed on the Rare Bird Report Form. State review lists are included in the Composite List.

c. Any changes (due to lumps or splits, newly-accepted species, etc.) will follow the most recent revision of each state's official checklist, in force as of December 31 of the year of the competition.

d. Listing will follow current ABA rules: each bird recorded must be seen and positively identified, or heard and positively identified, by the person competing. In addition, the ABA Code of Ethics must be followed during the competition (no trespassing, etc.).

7. Judging:

a. Everyone competing should hand in their checklists and any supporting documentation to the Billings Award Committee within 1 month of the end of the year in which they are competing. On the back of the checklist they should list their name, species total, write that they have adhered to all the rules of the competition, and sign and date the checklist.

b. The person recording the largest number of bird species, according to the above rules, will be declared the winner. If two or more people have the same total, the winner will be a tie.

c. Judging will be done by the Billings Award Committee. The committee will review the submitted checklists, accept or reject reported rare species based on the supporting documentation, verify the species total, and make a judgment on whether all rules were complied with.

d. No member of the Billings Award Committee who is competing will participate in the judging during the year in which they are competing. If this results in fewer than three committee members being eligible to judge, the DVOC President will appoint one or more ad hoc judges for that year, to bring the number of judges up to three. Ad hoc judges appointed by the President may or may not be DVOC members.

e. Judging will be completed before the end of February and the winner will be announced, and the award presented, at a regular DVOC meeting soon thereafter.

8. Amendments:

These rules can be amended at any time by majority vote of the Billings Award Committee, so long as the rules continue to comply with the terms of Bob Billings' will and the financial implications are acceptable to the Trustees. Changes will not apply until the following year's competition.

Recent Winners of the Bob Billings Big Year Award

2011 – Mike Fritz – 363 species

2012 – Ken Tischner – 369 species

2013 – Patty Rehn and Linda Widdop (Co-winners with 356 species)