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## Young Birders Community Service Project

### *Finding the Birds of St. Johns and Eastern Putnam Counties Independent Study Project*

- I. **Purpose:** Help collect data on bird distribution in St. Johns and eastern Putnam Counties for use by scientists, local government officials, planners, and the general public.
- II. **Why require eBird for this project:** These independent study projects are based on the use of [eBird](#) for the following reasons:
  - A. The independent study student (student) will add data for a specific site to the largest global database in the world for recording bird observations that scientists, researchers, and other birders use.
  - B. Each eBird checklist is time and site-specific.
  - C. Odd or rare bird findings submitted in checklists are vetted by regional experts to ensure that the data is as accurate as possible.
  - D. The student will have free access to the eBird database, which will allow him/her to build their own “life list” and study specific species or areas for birding.
  - E. Before starting an independent study, we strongly suggest that each student take The Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s free “[eBird Essentials](#)” on-line course.
- III. **Accounting for time:** Using eBird, the student will keep track of his/her time spent birding and keep track of the specific areas birded via eBird.
  - A. When submitting a checklist to eBird, the student must add “SJRAChapter” as an additional birder to his/her eBird checklist in order for the SJRA to receive the checklist.
    1. Alternatively, if the student forgets to add “SJRAChapter” to his/her checklist at the time a checklist is submitted to eBird, he or she may email a link to the checklist to [stjohnsaudubonsociety@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnsaudubonsociety@gmail.com).

*Celebrating and protecting birds from the river to the sea*

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- B. At the end of the semester, or when needed, the SJRA will complete any community service report that a student needs to verify his/her community service hours.
    - 1. The SJRA will only document actual time recorded by eBird as time spent on this community service project. Travel to and from the birding site will not be counted.
    - 2. The SJRA will not document less than five (5) hours per semester for an independent study project.
  - C. Upon request, the SJRA provide a letter or other documentation regarding the student's independent study project.
- IV. **Study method / criteria:** Birding public parks, state forests, preserves, conservation areas, and recreational areas using eBird to collect data through independent study.
- A. The student and the SJRA will jointly decide on the area (park, preserve, etc.) that the student will document for this independent study.
  - B. The student will bird the area for at least one (1) hour (documented by eBird) per visit.
  - C. Birding is generally best in the early morning and late afternoon, so at least 75 percent of a young birder's submissions should be between the hours of 7:00 - 10:00 AM and 3:00 - 6:00 PM.
- V. **Other requirements:** Participation in this independent study program also requires:
- A. The parent or legal guardian of the student must execute a waiver of liability and photo waiver.
  - B. The student must provide the SJRA with photo documentation from at least one (1) birding excursion for use by the SJRA in its advertising.
  - C. The student is strongly encouraged to attend at least one (1) SJRA bird walk during his/her independent study.
- VI. **Needed / recommended equipment and resources:** The independent study student will need to provide the following:
- A. Binoculars ("8 X 42"s are recommended).
  - B. Access to a computer to establish a free eBird account with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to record data. (A cell phone to record findings in the field with the free eBird app is also recommended.)

- C. A birding guide, either the on-line app [Merlin Bird ID](#), or a paper field guide, such as the Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America.
- VII. **Helpful resources:** In learning how to identify birds, we recommend that all beginning young birders take advantage of these resources:
- A. Free training on the use of [eBird](#).
  - B. The “All About Birds” [tutorials](#).
  - C. The National Audubon Society bird identification [page](#).
  - D. The SJRA Young Birder walks and our walks for the general public. See our [website](#) for our calendar of events.
  - E. If requested, a mentor can be assigned to the student.
- VIII. **For Assistance:** For any questions or request for assistance, the independent study student should contact the SRCA at [president@stjohnsaudubon.com](mailto:president@stjohnsaudubon.com) or [education@stjohnsaudubon.com](mailto:education@stjohnsaudubon.com). The SRCA will help with eBird issues, identifying birds, and methods of birding to assist the student.

