

September 2026

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 "sjra24" 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 "sjra24" 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.

- 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 or education@stjohnsaudubon.com. The SRCA will help with eBird issues, identifying birds, and methods of birding to assist the student.



Independent Study Application

1. Name: _____ Age: _____
2. Name of Parent or Legal Guardian if Applicant is under 18:

3. Address: _____

4. Email: _____ Phone: _____
5. Do you have an eBird Account? (If not, we'll help you set one up.) Yes No
6. Where do you want to do your eBird Independent Study (which park, preserve, etc)?

7. When do you want to start (date)? _____
8. Do you agree to submit a documentation of one of your birding excursions for use by SJRA? Yes No
9. _____
Signature of Applicant
or Parent/Legal Guardian if Applicant is under 18 years of age:
- Date



INDEPENDENT STUDY RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND PHOTO RELEASE

WAIVER AND RELEASE OF LIABILITY

In return for being allowed to participate in St. Johns Regional Audubon's Young Birders Independent Study Program ("Independent Study Program"), the undersigned **Parent/ Legal Guardian of the participant (hereinafter "Student")**, _____, **on behalf of the Student**, (hereafter referred to collectively as "I", "me", or "my") releases and agrees not to sue St. Johns Regional Audubon ("SJRA") or its officers, directors, members, sponsors, agents and affiliates from all present and future claims that may be made by me, the Student, his or her family, estate, heirs, or assigns for property damage, personal injury, or wrongful death arising as a result of the Student's participation in the Independent Study Program wherever, whenever, or however the same may occur.

I understand and agree that the SJRA is not responsible for any injury or property damage arising out of the Independent Study Program, even if caused by the SJRA's ordinary negligence or otherwise.

I understand that participation in the Independent Study Program could involve certain risks, including, but not limited to, serious injury and death. The Student is voluntarily participating in the Independent Study Program with knowledge of the danger involved and I agree to accept all risks of participation.

I also agree to indemnify and hold harmless the SJRA for all claims arising out of the Student's participation in the Independent Study Program.

I understand that this document is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the state in which the Independent Study Program takes place and agree that if any portion of this Agreement is invalid, the remainder will continue in full legal force and effect.

I also acknowledge that the SJRA has not arranged and does not carry any insurance of any kind for my benefit or that of Student, his or her parents, guardians, trustees, heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns. I represent that, to my knowledge, the Student is in good health and suffers no physical impairment that would or should prevent the Student's participation in the Independent Study Program.

I also understand that this document is a contract which grants certain rights to and eliminates the liability of the SJRA.

I am the parent or legal guardian of the Student. I am of legal age and am freely signing this agreement. I have read this form and understand that by signing this form, I am giving up legal rights and remedies.

(Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian)

Date



INDEPENDENT STUDY RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND PHOTO RELEASE

PUBLICITY RELEASE

In return for being allowed to participate in St. Johns Regional Audubon Society ("SJRA") Young Birders Independent Study Program ("Independent Study Program") and all related activities, including any activities incidental to such participation ("Student Activities"), the undersigned Parent/Legal Guardian of the Student (hereafter referred to collectively as "I", "me", or "my") hereby grants to the SJRA, and all officers, directors, agents, employees, respective successors and assigns (collectively, "Authorized Parties"), the absolute and irrevocable right and permission to use, publish, broadcast and/or copyright the use of Student's name, address, voice, photograph and/or likeness, and personal information, in its current form or as retouched, digitized, cropped, altered, distorted or modified in any way, in any and all advertising, promotional, or other materials based upon or derived from the Independent Study Program in any manner, in any media whatsoever for any and all purposes, including by way of example but without limitation advertising, promoting or publicizing the SJRA, in perpetuity, in any and all media now known or hereafter devised (including without limitation on the Internet), without additional compensation. I further agree that anything derived there from will be owned solely by the SJRA. I shall not authorize the use of any print, negative or other copy thereof by anyone other than the SJRA.

I understand that this document is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the state in which the Independent Study Program takes place and agree that if any portion of this Agreement is invalid, the remainder will continue in full legal force and effect.

I am the parent or legal guardian of the Student. I am of legal age and am freely signing this agreement. I have read this form and understand that by signing this form, I am giving up legal rights and remedies.

(Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian of Student) Date

