



Everything Jersey

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Birdwatchers competing in World Series of Birding

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For the sixth year in a row, a team of dedicated birdwatchers representing U.S. Silica Co. will compete in the New Jersey annual World Series of Birding and continue its perpetual challenge of trying not to come in last.

While other teams have the entire state in which to bird, the SANDerlings have voluntarily limited themselves to U.S. Silica properties located in Cumberland County. This certainly reduces the team's chances of challenging the top contenders, who consistently see more than 200 birds, but when you consider that U.S. Silica is a sand and gravel company and its properties are sand mines, the challenge becomes huge.

The SANDerling sightings all-time high was 62 species. Finding birds on USS property has become even more of a challenge since USS has sold some of its prime birding spots to the New Jersey Green Acres program during the last five years, but that won't stop the SANDerlings from improving their record. The goal this year is to see 100 species in the 24-hour time period.

The World Series of Birding is North America's largest, oldest and most prestigious birding competition. The objective is for each team to spot as many species of birds as they can in 24 hours within the state. Teams are sponsored by local, national and international research and conservation organizations, as well as corporations like USS, who have a positive environmental ethic.

Sponsorship fees go toward supporting New Jersey Audubon Society's conservation efforts and this year the sponsors hope to raise more than \$100,000. Scott Eves, captain of the SANDerlings, said he is cautiously optimistic that the team will double its count this year because of the hard work members have done finding the best spots to locate the birds.

"We just need to up the number of species from the more productive sites and be out there even earlier than our usual 4 a.m. starting time in the middle of a sand dune in Cumberland County," Eves said. "I know with a little luck and good weather that the SANDerlings can do it."

SANDerlings team members are Eves, Roz Ryan, Jeff Cogshall and Lenore Keeney.

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