

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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News Release

October 1, 2007

Local Refuges and Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society Host The Big Sit! Events

What in the world is The Big Sit!?! The Big Sit! is an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event hosted by Bird Watcher's Digest and founded by the New Haven (CT) Bird Club thirteen years ago. For 2007, Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges, in partnership with the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society, are organizing The Big Sit!- one on each refuge. The 13th annual Big Sit! will take place on Sunday, October 14, 2007. Remember, this FREE EVENT is open to every person and club in any country! Some people have called The Big Sit! a "tailgate party for birders." Today there are Big Sit! circles all over the world, including Guatemala, India, the Netherlands, England, Vietnam, and New Zealand.

The simplicity of the concept makes The Big Sit! so appealing. The directions say "Find a good spot for bird watching—preferably one with good views of a variety of habitats and lots of birds. Next, create a real or imaginary circle 17 feet in diameter and sit inside the circle for 24 hours, counting all the bird species you see or hear. That's it. Find a spot, sit in it, have fun."

THE BIG SIT! is like a Big Day, or a bird-a-thon in that the object is to tally as many bird species as can be seen or heard within 24 hours. The difference lies in the area limitation from which you can observe.

Although The Big Sit! is a non-competitive birding event, there are three basic categories in which teams can "win":

1. Best Overall Count (Most species seen by a single circle - you win Big Sit "braggin' rights")
2. Best State Count (Highest combined total from circles within a state - you win State "braggin' rights")
3. The Big Prize!: Swarovski Optik is offering \$500 to the circle who finds the "Golden Bird". What is the "Golden Bird"? Check out The Big Sit! website for details:

<http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx>

Bucket Taylor, Coordinator for the 2007 Alligator River Big Sit and Director of the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society invites any folks who are interested to come out and enjoy the comradery. "This is a chance for experts and novice birders to work together and learn from each other. It should be a laid-back, enjoyable experience - a way to connect with the refuges, the resource, and each other.

" Jeff Lewis, a local birder, held an unofficial Big Sit on Pea Island last year and is the 2007 coordinator for the Pea Island Big Sit.

To participate in either or both of the refuge Big Sit, please contact the refuge office at 252-473-1131 ext 230 or email bonnie_strawser@fws.gov. During the events "walk-ins" are allowed during regular refuge hours; however, to participate fully, please sign up ahead of time. The refuges are open to the public only during daylight hours.



credit: Birdwatchers Digest