



Laredo Birding Festival

Code of Conduct



Introduction

The Laredo Birding Festival (LBF) is committed to a safe, respectful, inclusive, and environmentally responsible experience for all participants, including attendees, staff, interns, volunteers, guides, vendors, and sponsors. By attending or participating in any LBF activity (including field trips, workshops, socials, online spaces, and communications), you agree to this Code of Conduct, which Incorporates the American Birding Association's (ABA) Principles of Birding Ethics. This document must be read carefully prior to on-site registration.

1. Respect for Property and Local Communities

- Always obtain permission before entering private property.
- Treat public and private lands with care. Do not damage fences, crops, landscaping, or other property.
- Park vehicles legally and without blocking roadways or driveways.
- Respect local customs, cultures, and community members.

2. Respectful Conduct

- Treat fellow birders, guides, volunteers, and residents with respect and courtesy.
- Avoid disruptive behavior, including shouting, loud music, or arguments, and be mindful of noise, line of sight, and space in the field and at venues.
- Follow staff and guide instructions designed to protect people, wildlife, and property.

3. Harassment & Safety

LBF is committed to an environment free from harassment, discrimination, and intimidation. Harassment of any kind, i.e. verbal, physical, digital, is prohibited.

Prohibited conduct includes, for example:

- Yelling, threats, or intimidation.
- Derogatory or demeaning comments, slurs, or epithets.
- Unwanted sexual or suggestive comments.
- Stalking or following.
- Photographing or recording an individual after they've asked you to stop.
- Repeated unwelcome contact, in person or online.

Enforcement: Individuals who engage in prohibited conduct are subject to corrective action, including verbal warnings, immediate removal without refund, and/or exclusion from future festivals. Where appropriate, LBF may involve venue security or law enforcement.

Anti-retaliation: Retaliation against any person who, in good faith, reports a concern or participates in a review is prohibited.

4. Ethical Birding Practices

- Do not disturb birds or their habitats. Avoid flushing, chasing, or otherwise stressing birds.
- Use playback and other recordings sparingly and never near nesting areas.
- Stay on marked trails and designated areas.
- Keep a respectable distance from wildlife and avoid crowding around sensitive species.

5. Leave No Trace

- Pack out all trash and belongings.
- Do not remove natural items (e.g. but not limited to, rocks, feathers, nests, plants, fossils, arrowheads, antlers, and horns).
- Minimize your impact on the landscape.

6. Respect for Wildlife

- Do not feed, touch, or harass birds or other wildlife.
- Avoid disturbing nests, roots, or breeding sites.
- Limit noise and movement around wildlife-rich areas.

7. Compliance with Federal and State Guidelines

- Follow all local, state, and federal laws related to wildlife protection and land use.
- Do not trespass, litter, or collect specimens.

8. Photography Ethics

- Do not manipulate settings or habitats to get a better photo.
- Avoid flash photography around sensitive species or nesting birds.
- Give wildlife and fellow photographers space.

Obtain consent before photographing identifiable individuals when a reasonable person would expect privacy, and stop if someone asks you not to photograph or record them.

9. Group Birding Conduct

- Stay with your group and follow the guide's instructions.
- Group leaders should model respectful and ethical behavior.
- Be mindful of noise and movement so as not to disrupt wildlife or fellow birders.

10. Reporting & Response

- If you experience or witness a violation, please report it as soon as possible to any LBF staff member or guide, or via email, phone/text (onsite), or in person:
- Our commitment: LBF will (1) acknowledge receipt, (2) conduct a timely review, and (3) take appropriate action consistent with this Code. We will strive to maintain confidentiality to the extent feasible and will share information only with those who need to know to address the concern.
- Anti-retaliation: Retaliation against good-faith reporters or participants in a review is prohibited.
- Possible outcomes: coaching, warning, removal without refund, exclusion from future festivals, or referral to venue security or law enforcement where appropriate.

11. Vendor & Guide Responsibilities

- Vendors, sponsors, and guides must comply with this Code and ensure their staff and subcontractors do the same.
- LBF may remove or discontinue work with any vendor, sponsor, or guide whose conduct or whose staff's conduct violates this Code.

12. ABA Principles of Birding Ethics

We endorse the ABA's principles, which guide responsible birding:

- Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.
- Respect the law and the rights of others.
- Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and artificial environments are safe.
- Exercise special care in organized or impromptu group birding.
- Group leaders bear responsibility for modeling ethical behavior.

For the full ABA Principles of Birding Ethics, visit: <https://www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics/>.

Violations of these principles, as incorporated into this Code, may result in corrective action as described above.

Emergency Contact (name/phone): Sandra Lopez – LBF Coordinator 956-964-4102