

Big Mammal Day rules

A **Big Mammal Day** involves a team of people trying to see and identify as many mammal species as possible during a single calendar day. The Big Mammal Day rules (which have borrowed heavily from the Birding Big Day rules) have been developed to standardise the process. The emphasis is on making the exercise equitable and on developing our mammal identification skills and knowledge, while allowing for the fact that many of the smaller mammal species can be really difficult to separate in the field. The rules work on the honour system – there is no authority keeping tabs on people.

We recommend that for species that are very difficult to identify, like bats, participants do a trial run to look for bat roosts and to sort out the identity of species they are likely to see on the day itself. External bat experts may be consulted on identification at this point allowing participants to learn the features they will need to accurately identify the animals on their Big Mammal Day.

Once completed, we strongly recommend that people submit their Big Mammal Day totals to mammalwatching.com, preferably with a report of the event. And don't forget the ultimate goal of a Big Mammal Day – going out and having fun watching mammals.

The rules are as follows:

What to count

Count only full species as indicated by the mammal list on mammalwatching.com.

Mammals must be conclusively identified by sight, sound or sonogram by the team participants. Identification may be confirmed after the event from the original observation based on field notes, photographs and sound recordings or sonograms. Where sounds or sonograms are used for identification, observers must either hear it directly or be in the immediate vicinity of the recording device.

For difficult species where morphology or calls are very similar, participants should keep call records and, if possible, photos, to help verify the record. If in doubt leave it out.

Mammals may be identified solely to genus level.

In cases where two mammals of the same genus are clearly visually different then up to two species may be ascribed to genus level without definitive identification of either (e.g. small *Myotis* and large *Myotis*).

The use of sonograms alone to identify bat species is only permitted where calls are unambiguous.

The 'species identification' feature on bat detectors cannot be used as identification confirmation due to unreliability.

An introduced species may be counted if there is a wild, self-sustaining population.

Mammals counted must be alive, wild, and unrestrained. No trapping or handling of animals is permitted.

Mammals seen only through a thermal imager can be counted if a conclusive diagnosis can be made.

Time period

All counting must be within a single 24-hour period, on a single calendar day or across two calendar days, determined by where the Count begins or ends.

Area covered

Any geographic area may be covered. If a somewhat arbitrary area is covered (a city for instance), the boundaries of the area should be listed with the report to allow others to cover the same area should they wish.

Mode of travel

Travel may be by any means except aircraft, provided that all participants remain within direct voice-contact distance during all travel.

When motorized vehicles are used, all participants must travel in the same vehicle.

Team participants

Any number of participants may constitute a team.

Nonparticipating companions may accompany the team and may record or may drive the vehicle. A companion may not aid in identification of, nor in any way indicate to the participants the presence of any mammal not previously identified by every participant.

Conduct

Each participant must remain within direct voice-contact distance of all other participants at all times.

All members should make every reasonable effort to identify personally and to help other team members identify every species counted by the team.

Each participant should keep their own list of species recorded, though the final group count is the combined list of all group participants.

Outside Information

During the Count, teams must make every reasonable effort to avoid receiving help finding mammals from nonparticipants. Phone and radio contacts and pre-arranged field encounters are not permitted.

Any information received prior to the Count may be used during the Count.

Ethics

Each participant should maintain proper mammalwatching ethics at all times. Ethics guidelines can be accessed here:

<https://www.mammalwatching.com/resources/conservation/responsible-mammalwatching/>

Good luck and keep the community posted on how you get on.