

How to Raise \$\$\$

The Art of Dunning

by Pete Dunne

Pete Dunne is the founder and veteran of the World Series of Birding.



So here you are, an environmentalist committed to helping NJAS by raising money on the World Series of Birding, *except...*

Except you feel bad, *bad*, bad about asking anybody for a pledge, right?

Well, relax. You are in good company. *Nobody* likes asking people for money, and this is understood by everyone *including* the people you will be asking for a pledge.

First, remember that people in general are wonderfully generous; it's part of our character, something we take pride in. We particularly support causes endorsed by those we know — because we respect their judgement. They can be confident that your cause is a good one.

And your cause is a good one. One that your friends believe in, too. A healthy environment where we can work, live, and play. A state that values its natural heritage. Your friends have probably heard about the World Series of Birding — we are mentioned in numerous newspaper and magazine articles and featured in television documentaries.

If they want to know more about our mission, you can tell them that annually New Jersey Audubon:

- Reaches over 500,000 people with its environmental message.
- Gives programs to over 50,000 children.
- Works in Washington, DC and Trenton to hold the green line with federal and state wetlands protection laws.
- Spearheads the drive to protect New Jersey open space.
- Conducts research on Delaware Bay beaches and tributaries for horseshoe crabs and migrating shorebirds; Hawkwatch and Seawatch for research of migrating raptors and seabirds; songbird and owl banding research to examine the needs of migrating species.
- Developed the Breeding Bird Atlas of New Jersey.

And these are just some of the highlights.

You see, you already have all you need to enlist the support of your friends. The first thing is your own commitment. The next is a cause worth supporting. The rest, as you will discover, is simple.

Face First

The best way to get people to pledge your World Series effort is just to ask them. Go up in person. Tell them you want their support for your Big Day effort.

Explain what you are doing. How you are getting up at some unholy hour to stand in the cold.... Running around like a kid on a feathered scavenger hunt...courting a terminal case of warbler neck and beating yourself into cross-eyed exhaustion while they are sleeping in.

They might question your commitment to New Jersey's environment. So you should have proof. Show them a copy of your Big Day itinerary or your route drawn on a map. Cut them in on your Big Day strategy. Show them a check list of New Jersey birds and highlight the ones you hope to see. Get them interested. Get them excited. It's not difficult. New Jersey offers a lot to get excited about.

Dear Mom...

Another way to get pledges is to draft your own personal World Series appeal letter. Send it to everyone you know. Tell them what you are doing, why, and how. Ask for their support.

You can be as zany as you like. Invent a name for your team or solo effort — *Raven Loonatics, Beasts of Birdin'*. Draft a logo or a motto — *Veni, vidi, computavi* (I came, I saw, I counted).

Send them only half of your Big Day map. (Tell them they'll get the other half when they make good on their pledge.) It's a great excuse to contact old friends you haven't written to in a while. In fact, if your friendship antedates your interest in birding, you can almost bet your letter is going to prompt them to call.

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The First Pledge is the Easiest

The first thing to do, of course, is make a pledge yourself. Place your name first on the pledge form. It demonstrates your own commitment to your cause. It will give your friends some idea of how much they should pledge themselves.

Whom to Ask?

Ask everyone! That states it plainly enough. Everyone you know. Everyone you work with. Every vendor you patronize. Everyone who has asked you to support their own favorite cause.

Seek out the people you are sure you can count on first and those individuals you know you can count on to match your own seed pledge. There is a snowball effect to pledging, because people will want to see what other people are giving. If pledges start high, they stay high.

Don't forget to seek the support of your employer and take pains to see that their support is recognized. Your World Series effort is in-house newsletter-worthy — deserves a feature, at least. Contact the local papers and radio station. Get a reporter or interviewer to cover your effort before your Big Day or ask them to go with you for part or all of your World Series effort. Your employer would love to have this kind of publicity and if they support the World Series of Birding, they deserve it, too.

Why Not Take Them With You?

You get hours of challenge and pleasure out of watching birds. Why not open the eyes of your friends to the world around them. Take them on your Big Day. Make a field trip out of it and make them part of this international event. They'll love it.

Get sporting about your effort. In return for their pledge, let them challenge you. Agree that your sponsors only have to make good on the birds they personally see — but in return, try to get them to double their pledge for very special birds, hawks, owls or bluebirds and such.

If you work for a major corporation, one with lots of property and mixed habitat, you might consider doing your Big Day on-site. Boy! Wouldn't that be good for publicity if you managed to find 30-40 species of birds. (It's very possible.)

We're Here if You Need Us

The World Series of Birding is New Jersey Audubon's major annual fund-raising event. We will be more than happy to help you help us.

If you need additional registration forms or check lists, just call Sheila or Marleen at (609) 884-2736. If you would like to include copies of NJAS's Annual Report with your visits or letters to potential sponsors, call them. If you would like an info packet for Corporate Sponsors, call them. If you would like someone from New Jersey Audubon to accompany you on your visit to the person in charge of corporate funding, we can probably arrange that, too. Don't forget to check out where you work for their matching funds program. Every little bit helps.

Don't Forget to Say...

Thank you! It's the most important part of fundraising, and the most enjoyable, too. With their pledges, your friends have said: "*We support you and your cause.*" They deserve your thanks when they pledge and later when they honor their pledge with their contributions.

Consider printing up a summary of your World Series of Birding effort and distributing it to your sponsors. They'll want to know how you did, and what trials you had to surmount. Include a list of sponsors — thank them publicly. Do you have a company newsletter? People like to be recognized.

Don't forget: Helping to protect the environment is not a once-in-a-lifetime endeavor. There will be another World Series next year. And you'll want the support of your friends again. Saying *thank you* for their generosity this year is a good start for next. ■